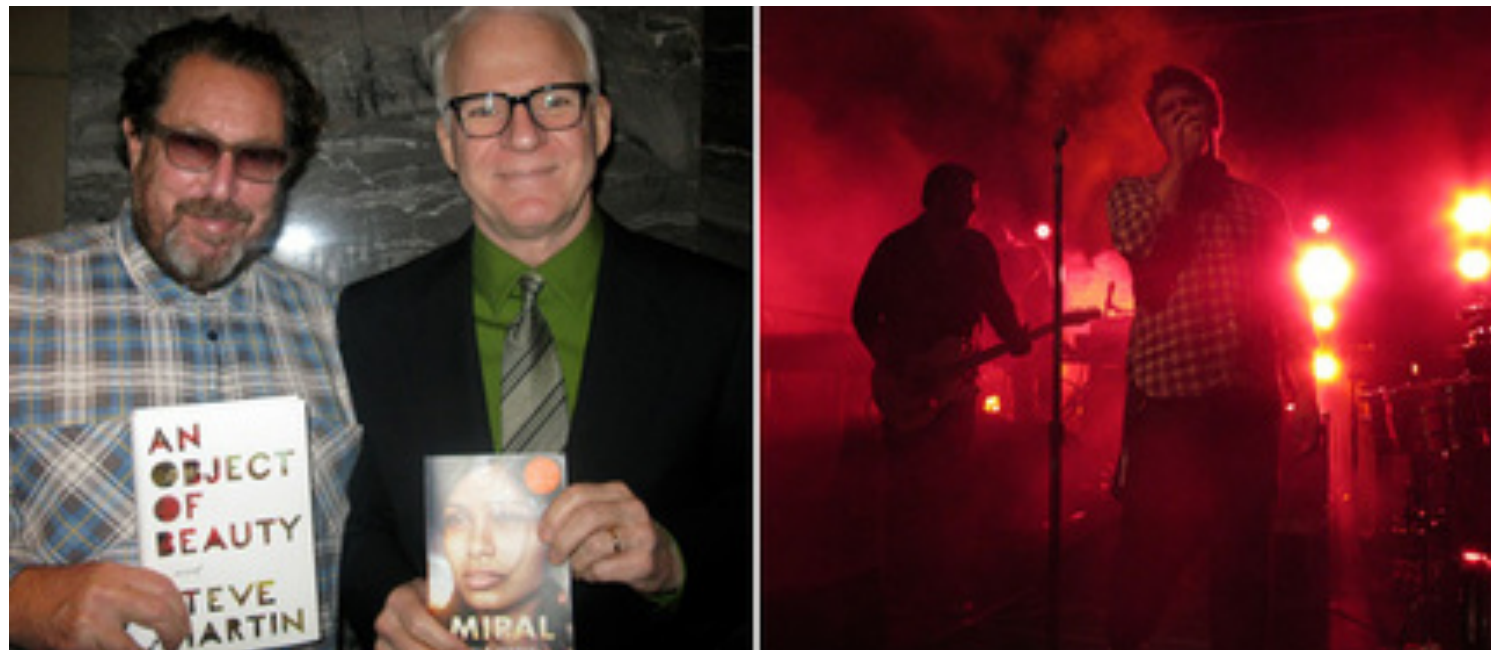


DIARY

INTIMATE STRANGERS

December 05, 2010 • Miami • Linda Yablonsky at Art Basel Miami Beach



Left: Artist Julian Schnabel with Steve Martin. (Except where noted, all photos: Linda Yablonsky) Right: LCD Soundsystem. (Photo: Andy Guzzonato)

ART BASEL MIAMI BEACH is never just a marketplace. It's a devil's playground where the moral order is determined by commercial sponsors and there is no hell to pay for it.

Despite the somnolent morning-after atmosphere following the party kickoff night before, the giant fair, 250 galleries strong, was not sleeping off the still-depressed economy or anything else. If celebrity spotters at Wednesday's VIP preview had to make do with George Hamilton, this year's Sylvester Stallone, art itself was stretching its legs and leaping over bottom lines as if by prearrangement. Top shops such as Gagosian, Zwirner, Pace, and Gladstone sold out nearly all their wares in the first two hours, though nearby dealers looked askance when handlers started moving fresh material into Gogo's booth as soon as works were sold.

With the clock ticking, I found the entire Hort clan at Hauser & Wirth, eyeing a powder-blue glass ottoman by Roni Horn. But Michael Hort had a bigger nose for a suite of constructions at Untitled made by Phil Wagner—an artist, dealer Joel Mesler claimed, who expressed the “generic optimism” of Art Positions, where small galleries like his are restricted to presentations of single artworks.

At the fair this week, both the AP and the Art Nova booths surround interior palm courts of what dealer Tim Nye termed “assassination-ready” grassy knolls of Astroturf, while the confounding nine-circles-of-hell layout of last year’s fair has relaxed into a more comforting modernist grid. It allows for wider aisles and more spacious stands, both of which enhance the chance encounters so critical to membership in the international art club.



Left: L&M Arts's Robert Mnuchin and Dominique Lévy with collector Raymond Learsy. Right: Andrea Rosen with collector Charlotte Ford.

During the preview, that cozy clan even sported a team color—Day-Glo orange—worn by Andrea Rosen and Charlotte Ford as well as Emmanuel Perrotin’s onetime Miami partner Cathy Vedovi, who snagged a spectacular Sterling Ruby bronze excavation at Xavier Hufkens. “It’s a commitment!” she admitted, eyeing the tonnage. “But worth it.” Yet blue was the mediating color of Piotr Uklański’s found-vase relief at Gagosian, one of the most deservedly attention-getting works at the fair. “Yeah,” the superdealer joked, “people really like that piece. We can’t keep ’em in stock, and our fulfillment centers are working overtime.”

When I stopped in to David Kordansky’s stand, the dealer and the art adviser Meredith Darrow were hard-selling Miami collectors Carlos and Rosa de la Cruz on “remade readymades” by Kathryn Andrews. The LA-based artist had already made an impression at the Rubell Family Collection’s “How Soon Now” exhibition the night before, where installations

of work by Kaari Upson and Nathalie Djurberg had pride of place.

The Rubells, meanwhile, seemed taken with Simon Denny's Max Headroom–inspired, interventionist “video aquarium” sculptures at Daniel Buchholz, while I found Yael Bartana's first animated video at Sommer, and the Richard Hughes/Luke Fowler combination at the Modern Institute, entrancing. But it was at L&M Arts that an accidental power summit convened, when Christie's Brett Gorvy, Sotheby's Anthony Grant, Aby Rosen, Alberto Mugarib, Julian Schnabel, Jane Holzer, Norman Rosenthal, and the natty collectors Mari and Peter Shaw all happened on the booth at the same moment. “The only way to do an art fair is on your own,” Rosenthal concluded when it broke, leaving Robert Mnuchin and Dominique Lévy looking spent and Sarah Watson with the responsibility of answering strangers' questions like, “How much for the Koons terriers?” (\$2.1 million was the whispered answer.)



Left: Artist Kaari Upson with collector Dean Valentine. Right: Dealer Tim Blum with China Chow and dealer Sam Orlofsky.

Just then, Bob Lynch, CEO of the Washington advocacy group Americans for the Arts, sidled up with colleagues Nora Halpern and Kate Gibney. They spoke of the developing brouhaha over the Smithsonian Secretary's removal of David Wojnarowicz's *Fire in My Belly* video from a current exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. Other than a trickle of news about the tempestuous storm grounding planes from New York, it was the only hint of a world outside the ABMB bubble I detected all week.

Certainly no one, not Peter Brant or Raymond Leary, Melva Bucksbaum, Hammer Museum director Ann Philbin, or Ben Stiller (this year's Val Kilmer), deemed it appropriate to protest any issue at Aby Rosen's W South Beach Hotel, where Steve Martin read a Miami Basel dinner scene from *An Object of Beauty*, his deep-inside new novel about a ruthless young skirt from

Sotheby's on the make for art-boom success. After all, the chapter, absent the protagonist, was all about *them*.

I would have stayed for the reception, had it not been for the American premiere of Isaac Julien's sumptuous nine-channel film *Ten Thousand Waves* at the Bass Art Museum. Only that event coincided with a dinner hosted by Gagosian, Dasha Zhukova, and Wendi Murdoch back at the W's Mr. Chow. Anyone who wasn't there was probably at the dinners David Zwirner or Jeff Poe and Tim Blum were giving elsewhere. But one look around the restaurant's bar gave clear evidence that this year's fair had at last dispatched the vulgar and the tasteless from the bustle of conventioners.

There were no place cards at the tables but plenty of recognizable names and faces in couture that ran from Alexander McQueen to Lanvin, Prada to Yves Saint Laurent. All the Chows (Michael, Eva, Max, and China) were present, along with a gaggle of museum directors (Thomas Campbell, Klaus Biesenbach, Arnold Lehman, and Adam Weinberg); curators Gary Tinterow and Ann Temkin; collectors Steve Cohen, Wendy Stark, and LA MoCA board cochair Maria Bell; artists Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, Marco Brambilla, Ryan McGinness, Aaron Young, and Schnabel; a bevy of fashion types (Calvin Klein, Linda Evangelista, Stefano Tonchi, the ultrafabulous Daphne Guinness); Martin and Stiller; and even the slightly scandalized baseball star Alex Rodriguez.



Left: LA MoCA director Jeffrey Deitch. Right: Dasha Zhukova and MoMA PS1 director Klaus Biesenbach.

I was fascinated to see Campbell consult with Zhukova about bringing an exhibition to Moscow, while Weinberg extolled the Whitney's probable ten-year lease of its Breuer building to the Met. Before dessert, Gagosian thanked everyone for coming to this "intimate" dinner (the in-joke of the week in publicist-speak). Yet the evening was still young enough for me to

pummel my way through the enraged pack of fair rats at the Raleigh, where bouncers forcefully limited the size of the mosh pit that LCD Soundsystem “activated.” The show’s presiding éminence grise was the boogie-down Jeffrey Deitch, who had cleverly maintained his grip on first-night entertainment by getting MoCA and Maybach to sponsor it.

Next morning, breakfast at Ella Cisneros’s CIFO Art Space was a gooey red Kreëmart-sponsored cake so closely resembling freshly butchered entrails that I couldn’t quite bring myself to eat it. The sickly sweet was actually the substance of a performance engineered by the Los Carpinteros duo, Marco Antonio Castillo Valdes and Dagoberto Rodriguez Sanchez. Still in need of more edible art, I stopped into Jennifer Rubell’s *Just Right*, a DIY affair in a derelict house behind the building containing her family’s collection. Porridge bowls were in one room, spoons in another, oatmeal, raisins, sugar, and milk in still others. There weren’t many bowls left. “I wanted four thousand,” the culinary artist said. “But there were only 750 for rent in all of Miami.”

After a visit to Debra and Dennis Scholl’s World Class Boxing and the Margulies Warehouse, where an envious Bucksbaum called the installation of recent and vintage works the best she had ever seen there, I discovered a younger scene unfolding at the lively Small Gift fair, co-organized by Roger Gastman to celebrate fifty years of Sanrio, the mother ship of Hello Kitty. (Gastman is Jeffrey Deitch’s pick for curating the street art show coming to MoCA in April.) For sale were artworks by cartoonists and graffiti artists such as Gary Panter and Crash, while a pop-up tattoo parlor accommodated fans by inking them with designs made under Sanrio’s cultish influence.



Left: Petionville (Haiti) Golf Club President Bill Evans, Sean Penn, and Julian Schnabel. Right: Emilia and Ilya Kabakov.

There was a long night ahead—longer than I ever would have guessed, even in Miami. So after

taking another turn around the convention center, meeting artist John Stezaker at the Approach (sans collages—he's turned a new leaf), and admiring both a wall-climbing installation by Allen Ruppersberg at Margo Leavin and Cory Arcangel's belly-dancing jungle gym at Team, I had just enough time before nightfall to note how many dealers had changed over their stands. Having missed any chance at the beach, I headed to the Webster, where *Fantom* editor Cay Sophie Rabinowitz had put together a show of by-the-sea photographs sponsored by La Mer. I would have stayed, but I wanted to catch friends at the *raffiné* dinner that Lisson Gallery was giving on a yacht docked at the Miami Marina. Naturally, I couldn't stay. Schnabel's new film, *Miral*, was about to unspool at the Colony Theater.

Based on a novel by the artist's current squeeze, Rula Jebreal, it takes on the intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with *Slumdog Millionaire*'s Freida Pinto in the lead. As if that didn't give the audience enough fat to chew, it was just a prelude to a Maybach-sponsored dinner at the almost subdued, Frank Gehry-designed New World Symphony building now nearing completion.

Outside the entrance, where the temperature had dropped to a blustery 59, sat a gleaming white Maybach at the foot of Schnabel's *Queequeg, the Maybach Sculpture*, a white behemoth with a whale flipper for a head. (It is now part of the Daimler Art Collection.) Indoors were Sam Keller, Bruce Weber, Johnny Pigozzi, Tony Shafrazi, Stavros Niarchos, Vito Schnabel, Lisa Phillips, Peter Brant, Naomi Campbell, Sandy Brant and Ingrid Sischy, Douglas Cramer, and many French-speaking people, like the bow-tied fashion designer Alber Elbaz.

On view were five large Schnabel paintings on found maps. They were to be auctioned for the benefit of Sean Penn's Haitian relief charity, JP/HRO. The *intimate* dinner for several hundred commenced, but as soon as the appetizer plates were taken away, we were treated to a film too obscure to describe and a series of speeches extolling Schnabel's many virtues. Finally the artist mounted the podium, promising that food would soon be served—it was 11 PM—but, seemingly unaware that there were other events calling all over town, he wanted first to say something about the relief effort in Haiti, and then there were more speeches and another film. And the auction.



Left: Artist Nate Lowman. Right: Collector Aby Rosen, Michael Chow, and Calvin Klein.

Faint from hunger, I bailed with *Nowness* editor Zoe Wolff and filmmaker Alison Chernick when Penn unleashed a screaming tirade about Haiti’s suffering. What about us? I thought, but I was so cranky. Besides, it was time for the performance that “Greater New York” artist Mariah Robertson had put together, under the auspices of MoMA PS1 and *Interview*, at the Delano pool . . . uh, excuse me . . . “water salon.”

While the auction was raising an amazing million dollars for Haitians, thanks to Jebreal’s strenuous exhortations to “you rich people” to cough up the bucks, the several hundred guests at the Delano unaware of the cause cheered synchronized swimmers, a naked male dancer, and a procession of costumed Caribbean drummers in a show that had no purpose other than comic relief.

Still starving, but in better spirits, I made for the W, where Vito Schnabel, Alex Dellal, and Niarchos were hosting a hands-in-the-air, dancing-on-the tables sort of frat party so wildly uninhibited that even the buttoned-down Benedikt Taschen was lit. It would be pointless to report how rich people drunk with their own success relax after making and spending vast amounts of money on the art of others. Suffice to say that, though no actual business was done, they let down their hair in ways as vulgar and tasteless as lesser folk and further cemented their kiss-but-don’t-tell relations.

At 2 AM, these intimate revels showed no signs of slowing, and I would have stayed, but the falafel place on Collins was still open.

— Linda Yablonsky



Left: Collector Maja Hoffmann with Kunsthalle Zurich director Beatrix Ruf. Right: Hard Rock Cafe's Peter Morton and Linda Evangelista.



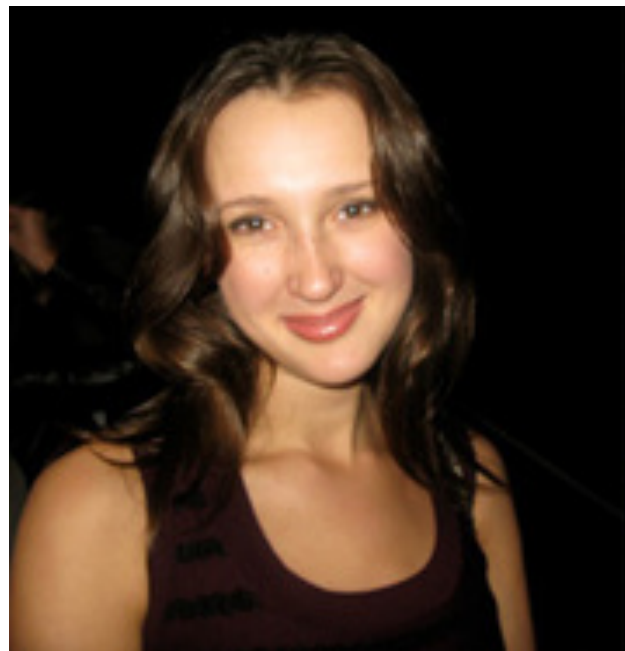
Left: Ben Stiller. Right: Pace Gallery's Vita Zaman with dealer Martin Klosterfelde.



Left: Daphne Guinness. Right: *Fantom's* Cay Sophie Rabinowitz with Thomas Dozol and Michael Stipe. (Photo: Andy Guzzonato)



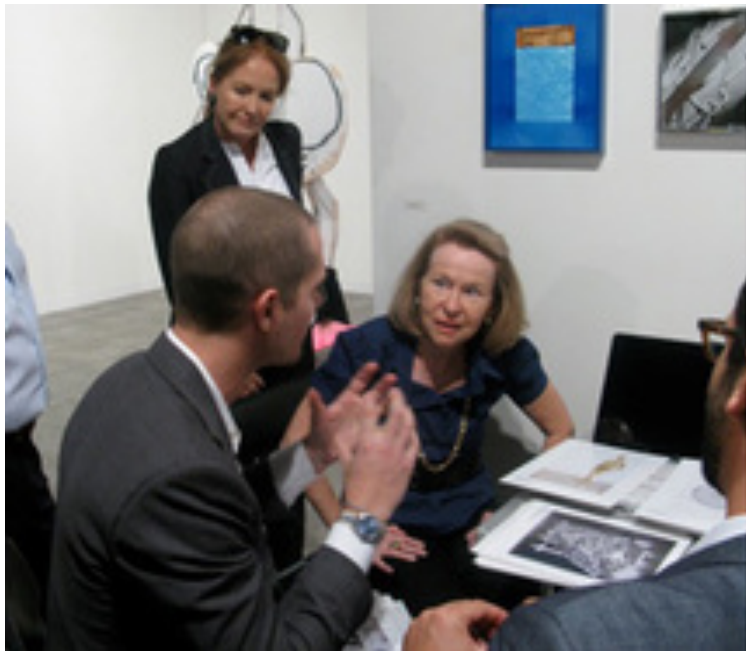
Left: Dealer Larry Gagosian. Right: Art Basel co-directors Annette Schönholzer and Marc Spiegler.



Left: Maria Baibakova. Right: Jake Miller of the Approach with artist John Stezaker.



Left: Artist Kathryn Andrews. Right: Artco's Cary Leitzes and collector Jean Pigozzi.



Left: Collector Rosa de la Cruz at David Kordansky's booth. Right: Dealer Perry Rubenstein.



Left: Michael, Susan, Jamie and Peter Hort. Right: Wendi Murdoch.



Left: Collector Debra and Dennis Scholl. Right: *W* editor Stefano Tonchi with Eva Chow.



Left: Dealer David Kordansky. Right: Designer Alber Elbaz.



Left: Artist John Kessler. Right: *Nowness* editor Zoe Wolff with *AnOther Magazine* editor Jefferson Hack.



Left: Dealer Andrew Kreps. Right: Hammer Museum curator Ali Subotnik with artist Ryan Sullivan.



Left: Emma Fernberger with dealer Alex Logsdail. Right: Dealer Darren Flook.



Left: Curator Michael Darling and dealer Joel Mesler. Right: Hammer Museum director Ann Philbin with collector Rosette de Lug.



Left: Artist Kehinde Wiley. Right: Artist Jacqueline Humphries and Tony Oursler.



Left: Dealer Simon Preston. Right: Fitz & Co's Sara Fitzmaurice, Sotheby's vice president Lisa Dennison, collector Beth Rudin DeWoody, and *Art Basel Miami Beach Magazine* editor Sue Hostetler.



Left: Artist Marco Brambilla. Right: LA MoCA board cochair Maria Bell.

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