



Print Article



Art L.A. at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium



Amanda Ross-Ho at cherryandmartin, 2006



Louis Stern Fine Arts director Marie Chambers, Warren Beatty and Louis Stern



Henry Taylor
Untitled
2006
Sisterla

L.A. CONFIDENTIAL

by Emma Gray

All it took to bring together the rambling and disparate art communities that make up the blooming Los Angeles' art scene was: a cocktail party, held at former Hollywood power broker **Michael Ovitz's** Family Collection offices and headquarters in Santa Monica, an art fair (**Art L.A.**) held at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium and the fever pitch contemporary art goodwill that seems to have grabbed a hold of this city in the afterglow of **Art Basel Miami**.

The Art L.A. cocktail event was a soignée affair with delectable snacks served up by **Tom Peters**, who caters all the best Los Angeles art events, I am told. But the X-factor luring dealers and collectors alike was the chance to glimpse the much talked about Ovitz collection, which by and large deserves its hubristic renown in town. My complaints are not with the works themselves, though they are very *impressive*, but that they are crammed so tightly together with so little back up room and surrounding wall space that they all meld into one nightmarish glom, creating a kind of wallpaper out of some of the most highly sought after paintings in the world.

This was particularly the case for the some of the Leipzig paintings by the likes of **Neo Rauch** and **Tim Eitel**, which really require breathing space. Other pieces included a coveted nurse painting by **Richard Prince**, a stunning **Julie Merhetu** painting (at least this one had some standing space with which to view it) and works by **Marcel Broodthaers**, **Cecily Brown**, **Inka Essenhigh**, **Barnaby Furnas**, **Martin Kippenburger**, **Julie M**, **Paul Pfeiffer**, **Michael Raedecker** and **Dirk Skreber**.

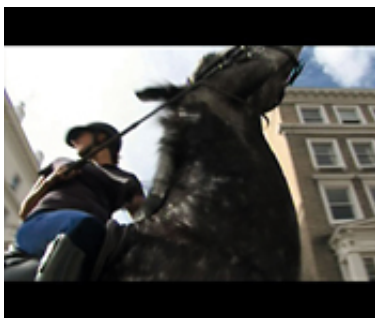
I was so bombarded with Big Important Works that I retreated to the hallway where the smallness of a **Nigel Cooke** work on paper -- and access to the stream of caviar -- provided much-needed relief. It was all very powerful, but not a collection that really speaks to his hometown art community or curatorial restraint.

After witnessing the abysmal sales and poor turnout of last year's Art L.A., I thought the fair was over and done for. And despite *Artforum* diarist **Andrew Berardini's** verdict that Art L.A. is the art fair for "munchkins" -- whatever that means -- I would have to pronounce it as the scrappy little fair that could. Yes, unofficial Art L.A. ambassador **Daniel Hug** did proudly show off the rather shabby-chic scuffs on the wall of his booth, explaining it was part of the laid-back Los Angeles approach -- no poncing about in fancy gear -- and therefore meant that we could all wear jeans and sneakers on opening night. It's about the art, you see.

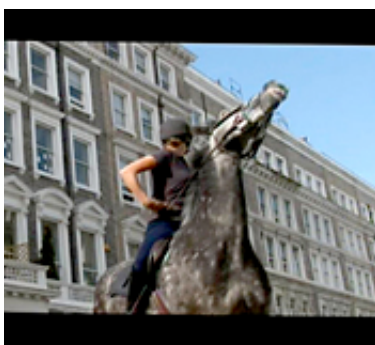
Art L.A. organizer **Tim Fleming** and art dealer Hug -- who were colleagues in Chicago, when the **Chicago Art Fair** was still held in high regard -- both touted the fair as "L.A.-centric" and a real opportunity for the community to come together, for once joyfully unbounded by freeways and parking lots. As a community-building effort, Art L.A. was a triumphant success, and almost every dealer showing had the feel-good vibe characteristic of the California dream. And for those visiting from out of state, it was great opportunity to dig the scene without having to rent a car.

And as the figures bear out, there was nothing scrappy about **Patrick Painter** racking up nearly \$500,000 in sales, with **Mike Kelley's** *Test Room* photo from 2001 hungrily snapped up by **Don and Mera Rubell** and a high-

Sisterla



Kim Schoen
still from *Rotten Row*
2006
Bank



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Terence Koh
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key Plexiglas work by **Won Ju Lim** bought by **Dean Valentine** (who once again blurs the distinction between patron and dealer when he organizes a show at **Kantor Feuer** this coming spring). Dealers such as Venice's **Cherry and Martin** seemed especially buoyant, selling in the first few hours four pieces by young-up-and-comer **Amanda Ross-Ho**, whose works included a spidery Black Widow sculpture based on a doily and photos of counterfeit cash and seized drugs.

And no one can laugh at the **Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art**, which made \$18,000 at the door at the benefit vernissage despite giving freebies to every man and his dog. Celebs in attendance at the gala included **Warren Beatty, Beck, Albert Brooks, Rachel Griffiths, Michael Keaton** and **Marisa Tomei** (top that, New York!). But it was the Rubells who came in with a fat checkbook, and made the event an official art affair.

Attendance was up to 6,500 from 5,000 last year -- not exactly breaking the banks with punters, but a measurable increase. The modest stats could be explained away by the fact that most of the galleries came on board in the last six weeks, which didn't really give the organizers enough time to hawk their wares.

But Patrick Painter and **Peres Projects** with their mojo and Daniel Hug rallying the troops ultimately generated the buzz and convinced major art players like **ACME, Suzanne Vielmetter, Sister** and **China Art Objects** to jump on board. The frenzy was so pronounced I asked if they had given the booths away for free. I was severely admonished, however, but suspect the rates were easy on the checkbook.

Highlights from the show included a black-and-white painting of underwear at the **Sisterla** gallery by L.A. superstar artist **Henry Taylor**, who has a solo show coming up at the **Studio Museum** in Harlem in April 2007. Taylor handles oil paints like butter and seems like a real natural. **Kim Shoen's** uneasy video loop *Rotten Row* at **Bank**, showing a disoriented female rider on horseback galloping through the streets of London, garnered plenty of crowd attention.

Peres Projects showed one stunning neon piece, *My Little Cochichina* (2007), by the much sought-after **Terence Koh**. It was quickly snapped up. The new **David Patton Los Angeles** from Highland Park displayed what looked like a Tibetan prayer flag hung across the gallery entrance. Titled *Cashing in 20*, the work was, in fact, a string of banners made from *Artforum* ad pages by artist **Keith Holbrook**.

Monkeys abounded at Art L.A. Daniel Hug displayed a funny collage by **Michael Wilkinson** of a chimp on an exercise machine, aptly titled *Dealer* and priced at \$3,800. And **Raid FC** showed **Ed Porter's** charming water fountain, in which the water spouts from a ceiling-high heap of stuffed monkeys and other tschotchkes.

Also eye-grabbing were the Surrealist-style gouaches by **Tomoo Gokita** at **Honor Fraser Inc.** (the Rubells are interested, people say). But it was **Machine Project** staffer Jason Brown who turned his booth into a DIY art workshop that scored big with hipster musician Beck's young son, who apparently was the sole audience for the gallery's one-hour-long sine wave solo.

EMMA GRAY is West Coast editor of *Art Review*.

Peres Projects



Keith Holbrook

Cashing In 8

2007

David Patton Los Angeles



Michael Wilkinson

Dealer

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Daniel Hug Gallery



Ed Porter

Fountain

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Raid Projects