

Art | Basel | Miami Beach | 4-7 | 12 | 2008

Art | Basel | Conversations

Thursday | Dec 4 | Premiere | Artist Talk

Chuck Close | Artist, New York

Vik Muniz | Artist, New York

Moderator | **Richard Flood** | Chief Curator New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York

Welcome | **Marc Spiegler**

Good Morning, we'd like to welcome you to the premiere of Art Basel Conversations for this year at Art Basel Miami Beach 2008, with Richard Flood as a moderator, Vik Muniz and Chuck Close. I'm actually done: I know that you came to see them, so I let them start. Thank you very much for your time, thank you very much for coming this morning.

In Conversation | **Chuck Close, Vik Muniz**
Moderator | **Richard Flood**

Richard Flood: Thank you. We will converse for a while and at the end we will take some questions – the number of which will be determined by the time. Basically it is a great pleasure to be here with two amazing artists – two artists that I was kind of given on a silver platter. I was like “Why Chuck and Vik together?” It took about three minutes, then I thought “Wow, these two guys are running parallel in the most amazing way!” One of the things that triggered my response to having the privilege to be here with them was something that another artist had written and that's Lawrence Weiner. For many, many years, prior to joining the New Museum, I was at the Walker Art Center. Inscribed on the building is a work by Lawrence and it says “Bits & Pieces Put Together to Present a Semblance of a Whole.” And I thought that really could have been the title of this morning's conversation. The other thing that unites the two artists that I find very, very interesting is... I shouldn't be talking about other institutions but in the interest of being fully forthcoming I will mention another institution that I have nothing to do with, which is MoMA. It has a series called “Artist's Choice” which has had some pretty rarefied moments, one being the late Scott Burton doing an exhibition of the pedestals for the sculpture of Brancusi. Another being an amazing exhibition of portraits by Chuck. And Vik – do you want to tell us what you have got coming up?

Vik Muniz: Yes. It is a really tough act to follow. When they asked me to do that, the first thing that came into my mind was that I came into contact with that program through the exhibition that Chuck has curated there. And that was like “Wow – what a responsibility!” – After seeing some of these shows that were really remarkable... I started to think “What could I do?” And it seems to be easy to pick from a collection like the one from the Museum of Modern Art but it is the opposite because you have so many choices. I have been curating shows as probably as long as I have been working as an artist and I am picking works from other people as a subject for my work. So what I did for MoMA is something that I always wanted to do: to start with one piece and then look in the entire collection to figure out what will be the next one. You go on a single line, it's a single narrative. And the pieces start to develop different themes and organizing themselves to color, pattern, use... There is a little underscoring theme, which is objects and it's really interesting to put up like a plastic bucket from Rubbermaid next to Duchamp's shovel and Matta-Clark next to Fischli and Weiss' installations. By now I am 47 and it feels that I always already know what it is going to look like before I do something. Insecurity is a really good feeling and I am curious what is going to happen when people walk through. It is like a little ride – you just go on a single line to the end of the show. It is very different than Chuck's show.

Richard Flood: Before I ask Chuck the next obvious but necessary question: What was the first object or picture that you chose?

Vik Muniz: It's a Sigmar Polke drawing, which looks like a brick. It is just a little simple pencil drawing.

I have something else to say: I was flying here yesterday. And I was thinking that you know that you are not a young artist anymore when you get to sit and talk to people who actually had an influence on making you become an artist. On my first visit to New York I went to the Museum of Modern Art and I saw a few things: I saw Jackson Pollock and I confess, I really hated it, and I saw pieces of Chuck's work and I really loved it. I liked Chuck's work for all the wrong reasons. Because I am a psycho for photo realism – you see how I say that – *[whispers and stutters]* “photo realism”? There is Louis Meisel's gallery on Spring Street in SoHo and I remember in the eighties artists – cool artists – were looking around to see if nobody was looking when they went there. It was like they were walking into a peep show! But everybody went there.

Richard Flood: Chuck, when you did that show, the response from the public was so amazing. So many different things came up with it...

Chuck Close: I was just two years older than Vik. They seem to pick people in their late forties. There were three other shows that I remember: John Baldessari had a show in the “Artist’s choice” series, Ellsworth Kelly had a show and Elizabeth Murray. Everybody’s take on the collection was so different...

Vik Muniz: How many years after that you had your retrospective? I am just asking because of my retrospective...

Chuck Close: I have to tell you a funny story about this later. Remind me! When I curated the show I just have gotten out of the hospital and people were not quite sure if I was dead or alive, if I was brain-dead or just more brain-dead than I already was. One of the great gifts that Kirk Varnedoe gave me was this show to curate. That gave me a chance to let people know that I was alive and I was still functioning. At that point there never had been an exhibition at the Modern which combined work from the other departments than painting and sculpture. This is almost inconceivable when you start to think about it now. But I literally was the first person to use things from two and more departments! Kirk gave me a passport to the various fiefdoms of the Modern. So they had to let me in. But the curators of the other departments were so pissed off that they had to deal with me. They kept saying: “Why do we have to deal with him? This is a painting and sculpture show!” I am probably the only person who saw everything in all the departments except architecture and design. But painting, sculpture, drawing, prints and books and photography... I spent 24 8-hour-days going through the collection. No one had seen the stuff of all the departments, so Kirk said that he wanted to give a test to the curators, especially the department heads: they had to know all the work that came from their department, but they got extra credit for knowing what came from other departments. This was really fun. When I put all the stuff together, I had the opportunity to do something from what Vik just said that he enjoyed, too: to put things next to each other that had never been next to each other before and never will again. I remember hanging Paul Cadmus next to Duchamp. There were really great comparisons and opportunities. One of the funniest: I had the Frida Kahlo piece with her and the monkey. It’s a dyptich with a mirror. So I had the mirror hanging on the wall and right next to that there was a Wegman portrait of Holly Solomon. So here is Holly at the opening, looking at the picture, looking into the mirror, checking out, going back – so I even got a little performance at the opening!

I had 200 works in a very small room. And I had the most expensive work in the Modern’s collection, which was van Gogh’s portrait of the postman and I had an 8x10 black-and-white Bunny Head by Ray Johnson which said “Willem de Kooning”. Of course all bunnies look alike but it said “Willem de Kooning”. Before I had said to Ray, “Too bad that you do not have a portrait in the collection I am doing a show” and he said “Maybe I can get a collector to get one.” And then he said “Oh fuck it!” and he mailed one directly to Clive Phillpot, the librarian. And this librarian took the work into the Modern’s collection, going around all the curatorial departments. So we picked this 8x10 black-and-white Xerox and hung it in the same room with the van Gogh! The young curators came to me and said “Oh God, we love what you are doing – if only they would us let do this!” You can’t be subversive from inside. You can only be subversive from outside.

Vik Muniz: It is amazing that people don’t realize how departmentalized the Modern is. Also they took a little bit of that structure into the new building and now it’s part of the architecture. People are jealous of me because I have this magnetic key that opens even the broom closets and they say “Can you open there, can you try here, can you...?” Because if you work in the department of photography your keys don’t work in the sculpture department or architecture and design – mine opens everything! And there is another element of museum practice which is a lot in the way, I guess, which is conservation. I’m trying to figure out how to negotiate this Jeff Koons piece, the vacuum cleaner, which has a lot of lights, next to a color photograph. We are like “It’s okay, we can print another one.” But it’s very hot.

Richard Flood: You are going too far now.

Vik Muniz: I know.

Richard Flood: Earlier you said that you repudiated Jackson Pollock, Vik. I remember reading an interview with you, Chuck, where you said that when you were a child you discovered Jackson Pollock. Could you both talk about that a little?

Chuck Close: I always wanted to be an artist from the age of about five. For my fifth Christmas my Dad made me an easel and shortly after that I saw a set of genuine artist oil paints in a wooden box in a catalogue. For the young people in the audience: Before you got things online you had to look into catalogues! Then my father found me a private art instruction from a woman who had studied at the Art Students League. So from the age of eight I was drawing from nude models which made me the envy of everyone in the neighborhood...

Anyhow, it was in 1951, I was eleven and I went to the Seattle Art Museum and I saw my first Jackson Pollock. I was really outraged. I have been studying with that Art-Students-League-trained person but it really got under my skin and in those days I was dripping paint on top of my realist paintings.

Vik Muniz: The first time I went to the Modern there were a few things that I liked. I liked Gorky and Matta. But Pollock... I remember, it was the first time I came to New York and it was the 4th of July. I left the museum and followed some people going to the park and I saw the orchestra playing and the firework and that was the moment I decided: "I am going to live here." This was 26 years ago. In the same night I met people at the park and they invited me to go to a party and there was this very attractive young lady. I told her that I really didn't like Jackson Pollock and she said "Oh, but Pollock is so cool, he peed in Peggy Guggenheim's fireplace." And she had this nice voice. After that I was the first person to get into the Met when it opened again and I loved it. So I wasn't introduced to it properly. But I never painted like Jackson Pollock... Oh God, I did! I remember now! I just did!

Chuck Close: My friend Chris Finch wrote a book on Norman Rockwell. Norman Rockwell did this famous "Post" cover with the man in the grey suite standing in front of what appears to be Jackson Pollock. And when Chris interviewed Rockwell for the book, he said it was the hardest thing he ever did, trying to make a fake Jackson Pollock. He just couldn't do it. Finally he had to climb into the rafters of the studio and drip from fifteen feet above to get rid of the control. To get rid of his hand-writing, the way his hand wanted to move and make it look spontaneous enough. Then he copied it square by square, inch by inch. The struggle between realism and abstractionism will be going on forever.

Richard Flood: You've both spoken very frankly about having disabilities, which I find fascinating. You, Chuck, are in fact dyslexic and you, Vik, talked about being self-taught dyslexic...

Chuck Close: You taught yourself to be dyslexic?

Vik Muniz: No, my grandmother taught me to read the way she taught herself how to read. She taught me to read the shapes of words. I was like seven and I started with first grade, we were reading "Gulliver's Travels" and "Treasure Island". It took me two years to learn how to write in cursive. In that time whenever I didn't know how to write a word, I just made a little drawing. So my copybooks were like the Egyptian section of the Metropolitan Museum. And you start to draw a little better and a little better and this is how I started grasping things just visually. And then when I was fourteen I got a little scholarship to learn academic drawing. That's when I saw naked people for the first time. And then I knew that this was it! I mean, for life.

Richard Flood: And you, Chuck – I mean it sounds like a very disturbing thing to find yourself in a forest with no way to identify.

Chuck Close: The biggest problem was convincing my teachers that I was interested in the material since I can't memorize and I couldn't remember the facts. So I would do a 24 foot long mural of the Lewis and Clark trail and drag it in to show my history teacher that I was interested in the course even I thought I wouldn't remember the names and the dates and the places. I also have a face-blindness and I don't recognize anybody. I once didn't recognize a woman with whom I lived with for a year! Try to explain that!

I never learned how to multiply, nor to add and distract, I do addition by using the spots on dominos. So six and five – I don't know what that is, so I take six as the bigger number. This is how you do it. This is how I got through life. But you know, every aspect of my work is totally determined by my learning disabilities. I am overwhelmed by the whole and I can't make a decision, so I break things down on small size pieces. I don't know how to make a nose, but if I make a lot of little squares I'll end up to making a nose. And I am lazy, so I had to find a way that requires that I go to the studio every

day. And I have a short attention span, so today I am doing what I did yesterday and tomorrow I will do what I am doing today. And if I sign on to this process, eventually at the other end a painting falls off. Every aspect of my work, including painting portraits, is determined: I can't recognize people but if I flatten them and scan them and make them two-dimensional it works. I have an almost photographic memory for the two-dimensional and no memory for anything three-dimensional or things that moves around. So I am a product of my biggest problems being turned into strength. Instead of bashing my head against the wall I am trying to do something that I am equipped to do.

Richard Flood: And after the paralysis – I think that's another amazing story. On the one hand you were clearly one of America's greatest artists and then you had this thing happen, completely out of the blue, completely unpredictable. And yet you managed totally to keep the integrity of what you had been doing and completely change it yet into this almost besetting response to a physical problem.

Chuck Close: The last show I had before I went to hospital was pretty much like the first show I had after the hospital. Rob Storr, when he curated my MoMA retrospective purposefully combined the works from the show before and the first show after in one big room and mixed them together in the sense to defy people to decide for themselves which ones were before and which ones were after. Since you asked about getting a retrospective I have to tell you something very funny: I was for eight months in the hospital and the first time that I was allowed to get out for a day the ambulance came and took me to the Modern. Kirk Varnedoe took me through the Warhol exhibition that he had just done. And then he took me and some friends up to the trustee's dining room for lunch. I was so weak, this was just the first day out. And so I am sitting there and Dick Oldenburg came in. I guess I must have looked like hell because I saw the shock on his face when he saw me. He came over and he said "Chuck, it's so good to see you. It's so great to have you back in the museum. What can we do for you? Name anything." I said: "A retrospective would be nice!"

Richard Flood: Vik, could you maybe elaborate a moment in your life, when you had to leave the country to get back into the States with the right paperwork. What were you confronted with when you returned to your studio? It's another kind of story about recovery and transcendence.

Vik Muniz: I was a victim of a relatively early success in the mid-eighties because the boom just happened a few months ago. Actually it was good, because it gave me an opportunity to know what's going on, to know the structure of the business of art and to be able to function in it. But I was making objects. I was making sculptures. And the fact that I was making sculptures was because I had a career in advertising before and I took this very iconoclastic approach, I didn't want to have anything to do with images anymore. But as soon as people came to photograph my objects at the gallery I became more interested in the pictures than the objects themselves. I didn't care if they would burn them or throw them away. And as long as I had a good picture of them it would be enough. The first time I saw a sculpture being photographed I thought that it was the apotheosis of it. He came with this big ancient object that I had never seen in my life, lots of lights and assistants. It looked like, you know, as if the object was made for that single reason – to be photographed. But when I picked the beautiful 4x5 photos, the works perfectly lit, I thought that the works looked wrong. I looked and looked and looked and I kept thinking "Why are they wrong?" One thing I do usually when I find a problem: I try to solve it myself. So: I didn't have a camera. I went to the wrong store bought the wrong camera loaded it with the wrong film. Shot under the wrong light. Took it to the wrong 1-hour-store. But the pictures were right! I looked at those two pictures for a long time and I realized what was happening. As we get old we lose the ability to rotate objects in our minds. And when we imagine an object we imagine under a specific vantage point. We also imagine it when we make it and the object is made try to find it... So the photographer, when he came to the gallery, he did not know that specific vantage point. And that I did. And since I made that connection photography became much more important to me.

Around that time I had to leave the country to get a green card. Because of some problems with my lawyers I had to stay two years outside. I lived in France and that was exactly the moment of the recession of the early nineties. When I came back I had no career. I didn't have a gallery, I didn't have anything and that was actually good. If people are concerned about what's going on now economically – no! Some good things will come out of it! This gave me space to think about myself as a different artist and I started thinking about photography as a primary form of art making.

Chuck Close: It's funny you have to make a painting in order to make a photograph. I have to make a photograph in order to make a painting.

Vik Muniz: Did you say when you met de Kooning that you were glad to meet somebody who made more de Koonings than you did?

Chuck Close: A few more, than I did, yes.

Vik Muniz: I was always worried about the guy, who photographs your works for Pace, coming to me and saying "Oh I am so glad to meet somebody who made more photographs of Chuck Close than I did."

Richard Flood: In the early eighties there was a photographer in lower Manhattan, she was *the* photographer of the art world. If you opened an art magazine you saw her photos or if you were a dealer she was the one who came in and photographed – especially sculpture. And at one point I thought "There are hundreds and thousands of people out there who are looking at all of those sculptures only from her point of view!" It's really bizarre if you think about it, because the point of sculpture is that you actually go around and you do even have your favorite angles. But she had kind of basically just created this autobiography of her way of looking.

Vik Muniz: I think Fraenkel Gallery in San Francisco did a show in the early nineties called "The kiss of Apollo" which was about the photography of sculpture. It is fascinating. I have this little catalogue and I think it was Eugenia Parry who wrote a brilliant essay about it. You know, a photograph has the power to ruin completely the spirit of a three-dimensional object but it also has the power to make it look better. I have seen a lot of sculptures in catalogues and when I went to the museum to see them I thought "The photographer was really good!"

Chuck Close: It's the same in the auction world. The works look so much better in the auction catalogue than they do when they go to see them.

Richard Flood: We live in a high-gloss world! But Chuck, now you are in an interesting position, where the technology that you embrace to assist you, is now becoming obsolete. What do you do with that?

Chuck Close: Well, it's hard that Polaroid essentially went out of business. Last week Fuji announced to continue to make the film which hopefully will happen. Well, I mean I got involved in digitalizing my own images before there was computer-generated imagery. I remember going to Bykert for my first dot drawing show. There is that Modern's piece which has 104,086 dots or something. And I was on my way to that show and there was this news stand and hanging on that news stand was "Scientific American" with the very first computer generated image. I thought "Jesus Christ, now nobody will believe that I made these things without the aid of a computer!" But you know, I hate technology and I love just taking a stick with hairs at the end, rubbing it in some kind of dirt and wiping it off on a piece of cloth. It still has the most magic for me, the most transcendent. Sculpture you walk around like I would walk around you. But a painting is an incredible magic window.

One of the many things which interests me about Vik's work is: Here is a photograph. But the photograph is taking you on a trip that could only happen because of that slow process of building. I think of myself as building a painting, rather than painting it, usually with layers of paint or whatever. And I think when Vik punches holes out of a magazine, photographs reproductions and pastes them together to build an image – it is really different from painting in a normal or traditional sense of the word. And I think we both share that it's always unfinished before it is finished, it is always wrong before it is right; the journey that you take until you get how to make what you want.

Richard Flood: And also I want to mention that Vik did, by using Pantone colors, an amazing portrait of Chuck.

Vik Muniz: It was actually the only image in that set for the Venice Biennale that didn't come from another representation. I actually went to Chuck's studio to photograph him. And I asked you: "How do you develop a vocabulary, an alphabet?" And you told me: "I just do it."

Chuck Close: Yes, that's right.

Vik Muniz: And I realized: "Oh God, I am not a painter." You know, my wife is a painter and I envy her, because she starts with a blank canvas and then she develops this ongoing dialogue. It is a ticket that you can go anywhere with. I am an illustrator or a conceptual artist. I think of things and then I put them together. And I have to rely on the photograph to create that critical distance, that sort of ambiguity. When you look at a photograph of something that you are not quite sure about how it was done, it immediately inspires you to think about the process.

I find it very annoying that people are so blasé with technology. Even when they look at a painting they don't get into it. You know, a few people, really specialized people can go into how it was done and start thinking about the brush going through and how that was put together. I talk about my wife again: She was photographer, she was a video artist and then she started making paintings. And she said: "Well, when I get people to my studio now, they don't say anything!" I think there is nothing to say! If you see a photograph you can say "Oh, it's a photograph of paper, or it's a photograph of this and that", but with painting it's completely different. It's very hard to talk about a painting. Even for an artist.

Richard Flood: But in the end, for you the nature of sculpture is incredibly important as something to get you going. In the end – are you looking at a two-dimensional or at a three-dimensional thing when you finish?

Vik Muniz: I feel closest to painting. It's amazing: When people go to museums they walk towards the painting and as if there is an X on the floor they stop there. And you wonder why do they stop there and do not go a little bit further. It is because the painting has filled the visual field comfortably and they feel like they are almost inside that image. But then they do something amazing: They do this [*moves back and forth*]. And I kept wonder why people keep doing this. When they lean forward they see paint, material, things that come from the ground, pigments, oil. When they go back they see an image. And they keep going back and forth not because of the material or because of the representation, but because of the exact moment when you cross that boundary. You know, that's sublime, that's beautiful: When something transforms into something else. What I find interesting especially about Chucks painting: He has managed actually to enlarge that moment. Chuck, you extend that sublime moment where things are transforming as you walk towards it or you approach it. You increase it and make that experience thicker. But still, in painting it is very hard to do that because you are dealing with the vocabulary of things that are ergonomic. In photography you have the advantage of scaling things the way you want to. So you can make something tiny become very big.

Richard Flood: People tend not to lean into photographs.

Chuck Close: But they like to go close to his photographs.

Richard Flood: Because they know that something is wrong. Normally the response to photography is that it is proof. It's evidence of something. In your case it is almost exactly the opposite.

Vik Muniz: It is very nice to be a photographer in the moment that photography is getting completely useless. It is just like for the painters around the time of the invention of photography. The term realism for instance just became relevant after the invention of photography. It's a relatively new notion. When you think about Courbet and what was back in the 1840s... But now the ghost of painting came back to haunt photography in form of digital image. The painters were asking themselves probably the same questions when photography was invented as photographers have to deal with now. It's amazing – the technological advance is so rapid. For the last four years I am trying to figure out how to get the resolution of an 8x10 chromogenic in a digital format. I am working with people in Switzerland trying to figure it out, but it is very frustrating. This quest for resolution, something that I know you, Chuck, are obsessed with, that is something we share. If I could do a picture that is as ten times as sharp as I can do it now, I would. I think that started with the "Big Nude" – very early you were into things like this, right?

Chuck Close: Yes. I still make things with my hand and I want to suck up the people right to the painting to see how it was done. The reason I never liked the term realist, was that I was interested in artificiality as I am in reality. I want to be sucked up to the surface and that distribution of marks on a flat surface. It's really a pictorial syntax – when we work incrementally it is not unlike a writer. If you

write a novel you have to slam a lot of words next to each other and it takes a certain amount of time to fashion a sentence, or a paragraph, or a thought out of words – you have to throw that word out, put another word in. And when we work incrementally it's a visual syntax. But much of the pleasure of a book is the way the words drip off the tongue, not just the story that's being told. It is the vocabulary, the choice of the particular words. I think that is for me what has made me lastingly engaging and has such urgency for me – after 40 years of making work this way! The most dreaded word in the art world is the “C”-word, which is “craft”. No painting or anything like what I do or what you do ever get made without a certain level of craft. If you show up and you spend some time and you have anything that could be seen as obsessive or compulsive or crazy...

Vik Muniz: People praise you for the compulsiveness and not for the fact that the thing is made by hand.

Chuck Close: If you have a certain kind of idea, you just have to be there long enough to resolve it. It is not that time itself is important. Actually I have been in therapy for 35 years and I thought I would never have another break-through. But recently I had one and it was to realize the role that my grandmother played in my life. When I was eleven my father died and we went to live next door to my grandparents. My mother went to work outside the home for the first time so when I came home from school I would go over to visit my grandmother because they had a TV and we didn't. I played Canasta and watched TV. But my grandmother, who is similar to me, was a nervous wrack and had all kinds of problems. She had busy hands and she would knit and crochet and quilt. I have always been enamored with what used to be called women's work. So I remember sitting and watching my grandmother, she would crochet, lets say: stars. She would crochet stars. Each star would be different. She does stacks of these stars on the floor and she had hundreds of them. Then she would take those individual units of stars, crochet those together, take them out to the backyard and stretch them on a wooden stretcher that had little metal pins and she made this big size crochet table cloth out of these incremental little units. I saw how soothing it was for my grandmother, how it calmed her down, how she loved what she was doing and how it gave her tremendous room to be creative, to do variations on a theme and still make something big out of all these small things. And I thought “Oh my God, this is exactly what I am doing and I watched her do it!”

And the other thing was: I remember us watching the McCarthy-hearings on TV, and she was knitting a cable sweater. Each cable was different. She is almost done with the sweater, but she starts to rip it out and roll it up again to a ball. I was like: “What are you doing? You put so much time in this!” And she was like: “Well I don't like the way it's going. Why would I put any more time in something that is not going the way I want? It is not the time that's important; it is that you did something you really love.” So there are those two things – working incrementally and the notion that the time that goes into a work is not important.

I make only three paintings a year. If everybody else did that we wouldn't be here... At least I should get credit for self control or something. For my grandmother it was like raking the gravel in a Zen Buddhist garden. It made her calm. And I do the same thing! I work every day, I work seven days a week, I work 365 days a year, and I try to paint six hours a day, three hours in the morning, and three hours in the afternoon. It is very calming. It frees me up to be far more intuitive and inventive than I ever was before. You think that kind of structure would be limiting but in fact it's very freeing creatively.

Richard Flood: Vik, you have used the most bizarre materials in the history of art making.

Vik Muniz: Oh, not really. People from the Renaissance used banana oil and mummy powder – I never used dead people powder to make art work. You know, it's just material. The fact that something comes from the kitchen or something comes from the art store... most of the stuff actually comes from the animal: fat, egg – I don't do stuff with egg! – it's just stuff. And then it's what you make out of it. The thing is, if you get something from a tube, people have lost to wonder about pure, simple representation.

I always tell a story that some of you must have heard a thousand times: I paid sixty dollars to see Anthony Hopkins do King Lear in Central Park. And I felt that I had wasted my money, because when the great actor started acting he stopped to be Anthony Hopkins, and I paid to see Anthony Hopkins. It was just that king I knew already. On the other hand I paid on another occasion three dollars, some bus ride to Queens, to an abandoned firehouse, to watch a very amateurish presentation of “Othello”.

And the guy who was doing Othello was a plumber, his name was Joey. He had this heavy thick Brooklyn accent. But when the performance started, he managed to be the Moorish general. You know, he was really strong. And then after five minutes he started to become the plumber again. And then: general – plumber – general – plumber. For three dollars I watched two tragedies for the prize of one! Something that really amazed me was that while the great actor, Sir Anthony Hopkins, was able to deliver a character, the plumber Joey could actually deliver representation and theater. By watching him I was doing this [*moves back and forth*], you know, going back and forth, and every time he became this fantastic character it was so fascinating.

I think, what I do is: I miscast all my actors instead of drawing with pencil. Pencils are good actors, but if you look at a pencil drawing you don't question anymore how it was made. You just judge it by the degree of resemblance with something. I think by using weird stuff you invite people to think. Photography has this amazing possibility that it allows you to recognize material. You know, what it is. You don't know the substance exactly. It can be diamonds. Or chocolate, you don't know what chocolate is exactly, but you know what the material is. It invites you to think about how it was done. Sometimes it's really difficult to do, sometimes it's painstakingly hard. And I am probably like Chuck. I have the attention span of a fruit fly. I probably don't answer your question anymore...

Richard Flood: If you are happy, it's fine.

Vik Muniz: I am fascinated with magic. The magic is exactly the point where art meets science. And it requires a lot of both. But the craft of the magician can go into two ways: The one is that you make something very hard look easy, or something very easy look hard.

There is one of these pictures of pigments, it took me five months just to put grain by grain of pigment to make a picture of Manet that I love. It is called "La Japonaise" and is in Boston. It is a very odd picture – you see a woman and in her robe, her kimono, there are lots of other representations. It is a picture within a picture within a picture. It is a lovely picture. But it took me five months to make it. And then there is something like, let's take this chocolate things. It takes literally ten minutes to make one. Those of you who have them, don't feel disappointed, it is a different process. It's like the Chinese guy who studied twenty years to paint a crab but then he could do it in one go. So sometimes you have to practice. Because the chocolate dries you have to do it very quickly and photograph it. Caviar is stuff that gets spoiled very easily too, you have problems with refrigeration...

I work at night, because it is very complicated and I cannot have anything disturbing me. I work very late at night. Normally I work until four in the morning. And then I go back to bed. I love the morning and I love the night. But I hate the afternoon. I sleep most of my afternoons. I am not answering your question anymore.

Richard Flood: That's alright. We are drawing to the end of our conversation anyway. I just want to ask Chuck one final question, having had the opportunity to live for three years with one of your paintings, the painting of Kiki Smith. It basically, like all of your great portraits, just doesn't stop delivering. That's the amazing thing. The point you, Vik, made earlier about the approach to the painting and that final nod into the painting. What was amazing was – there were thousands of other paintings in that portrait and each one was like going down the rabbit hole. Once you were there you were just like kind of cascaded into... there were million paths that you could take to another interiority of the work. I'm just curious – do you take that kind of pleasure from what you are doing?

Chuck Close: Absolutely! That's where the rubber meets the road! There were good days, there were bad days, I had a good start and then I screwed the painting up. I have a little bit of pleasure with each little piece that I finish. I don't have to postpone the pleasure all the way until the end, you know. In fact I can have the pleasure all long and make a painting I don't like and then I throw the painting away. There are still the little pieces of pleasure.

Vik, you mentioned reading "Gulliver's Travels" when you were a kid. And for the big heads I was really thinking about Gulliver. I want to give you all this information about this head. More than you ever wanted to know: every zit, every pore, everything. And it will be like Gulliver's Lilliputians crawling across the head of the giant. Knowing everything about that head and not even knowing that they were on a head. They took a journey and they stumbled over a beard hair and fell into the nostril. They had explains to that thing: It's a landscape, it's a journey,... I try in my paintings to throw crumbs along

the trail in Hänsel-and-Gretel-style. So if somebody wants to pick those crumbs up, he can vicariously experience the decision-making process while building this image. If they just want to look at the image as one thing, that's fine. But if they care to, they can actually retrace the steps of that journey. I do the same with Vik's work, when I look at it. I think about him doing each one of the things. And I think "Oh, why did you chop this little piece and there..." It is the same thing.

I was living in Italy and I went to see the Byzantine mosaics in Ravenna. I hated them: theatrical, way up high, dark, you couldn't see the end. But I loved the humble roman floor mosaics. Since it's your height it never stops being chunks of stone on a flat surface. But then it warps into a lion and then it flattens back out and it becomes stones on a floor again. It's like I am looking over the shoulder of the artisan through all those centuries – it is a totally contemporary experience. Because I see all the decisions that he – and undoubtedly he was a he – made: putting this little chunk of stone there and putting that there and whatever. I think, that's precisely what we do: We are distributing marks that transcend the physical reality. They are not just whatever it is. They become something you can relate to through life experience.

Vik Muniz: Somebody is recording this, right? I want to use this, too.

Richard Flood: I really couldn't do it better than Chuck, thank you. That was a masterful summation. Now we take three, four questions.

Audience: Chuck, are there people who don't want to be painted by you?

Chuck Close: I just paint family, friends and other artists. But you are talking about trying to make an image of somebody who doesn't want an image made. Some of my best friends, Sol LeWitt would never let me paint him; Brice Marden would never let me paint him. Sol didn't like the cult of the artist, he didn't want to be photographed, and he didn't want that anybody knew how he looked like. He just wanted to do work that stood for itself. So I have to respect that and I would never betray that. Brice bothered because it wouldn't be cool enough. But there are people who give me their image, an act of tremendous generosity. And with great risk, because they have no idea what I might do with it and how long I might recycle it. I have been using the same 1968 photograph of Philip Glass for forty years and I am sure that he regrets having ever said "Yes". But it is just endlessly interesting for me to take the same image and pump it through other materials and other processes and other scales and whatever.

Vik Muniz: What I am always trying to deal with in my work – maybe because I didn't grow up around art, the first time my parents went to a museum was actually to see one of my shows – is that I always try to evoke this idea of familiarity. I think the artwork starts to happen when somebody is looking at it. And you to consider the baggage that the viewer comes with, which is a lot richer than the viewer imagines it to be. I pick images that are part of a collective archive. And the most of them are archetypes, icons, stereotypes. As I get old I get very cocky. I am not afraid of a poster-store iconography anymore, you know. But also I deal with those images with materials that are very simple, they are just around, they are in the kitchen. Some of them are not so simple, like diamonds, I don't find them around like this. Sometimes I bump into a material: a bunch of diamonds was shown to me and I was asked if I could do something with it. When you look at diamonds, with light on it, you go like "Yeah, sure!" They are beautiful!

Chuck Close: ...and you put them on a skull!

Vik Muniz: The problem is: You have the material and then you have to think of what to do with that. And sometimes you are just very interested in a certain kind of image or a family of images. You can go both ways. And I keep both options open.

Audience: You spoke about Philip Glass. You have done many portraits of Philip Glass along with many of your other friends. Following your work from the 1960s in which you did a self-portrait and the one of Philip Glass – the technique was so unique in the sense that I believe that I read correctly that you never used a paint brush on it. So what technique did you actually use?

Chuck Close: Well a few times I have actually used a paint brush. But I realized that my habits were all connected to the tools that I used. When you are a good student, you are a good student because

you have a great hand, that means you make shapes that look like art. Mostly they look like somebody else's art or they wouldn't look like art. Getting de Kooning out of my paintings was one of the hardest things I ever had to do. So I threw away my trusted brushes and things and I thought "Now I get things which I have no facility with, no history."

You were talking about the baggage that viewers bring to the work. The baggage that we take into the studio is everything we have ever seen, everywhere we have ever worked, habits. The other thing besides my hand wanting to make art shapes was that I was told that I have a good sense of color. I learned that certain color combinations look more alike art than other color combinations. So I had to get color out of the picture at first. And then, to force myself to make decisions early and live with them, I only used black paint on white Canvas. Every mark that was on was still there at the end. So all these things were ways to move me from what I was doing as a student and as a young artist into something that got me free of a lot of bad habits. The interesting thing is that the de Kooning color came back into my work. There is still a lot of "Pink Angel"-color – he is still my favorite artist, de Kooning. But now I use all the de Kooning stuff to make something that looks like Chuck Close instead of something that looks like de Kooning.

Audience: Where is the connection with the divine in your work?

Vik Muniz: You want to answer that first?

Chuck Close: No.

Vik Muniz: Okay, that's a tough one. When I think about creation, I think immediately that the divine appears to me as the natural. And the natural is something variably complex. We have this universe and through the artifice of attention we do one thing at a time and make the world possible for us to live in. And this is civilization, this is culture. It has to do with hygiene, has to do with cleaning, has to do with habits. But everything is happening at the same time beyond the realm of attention... Still, as I said, when you are doing this [*moving back and forth*] you are dealing with two notions. You are dealing with something that's material. It's there. And it's the way you deal with the world. And then you try to mediate that with this feasible, that what can be understood or grasped. That little thing that we do is already enough for me. I have a problem with artists who have this lofty ambitions of portraying or illustrating God. But it is a hard subject to talk about.

Chuck Close: Were you raised in church?

Vik Muniz: My grandmother, she was very catholic. And I used to go to church with her a lot. I liked it, because it was lot of singing. I liked it for the sensorial environment it gave me.

Richard Flood: Don't you think that the very choice of the profession is actually a belief in the unknown in a way, and the unknown is the divine without modifications? There was a wonderful quote from you, Chuck. You were talking to a poet and you said that being a poet was the only choice that was more absurd than being an artist.

Chuck Close: No, I like poets. The people who make less money than we do are poets and then they make great critics because they need a few extra bucks.

Richard Flood: Anyone else? We take one more if there is one more. Alright then. Thank you very, very much. And I especially want to thank Vik and Chuck for being so divinely forthcoming.

Art | Basel | **Miami Beach** | 4-7 | 12 | 2008

Art | Basel | Conversations

Friday | Dec 5 | **The Future of the Museum | Africa, America and the World**

Glenn Ligon | Artist, New York

Raphael Chikukwa | Independent Curator, Harare/London

Georges Adéagbo | Artist, Cotonou, Benin with Stephan Köhler | Chair, Kulturforum Süd-Nord e.V., Hamburg Co

Moderators | **Thelma Golden** | Director and Chief Curator, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York

Hans Ulrich Obrist | Co-Director of Exhibitions and Programmes and Director of International Projects, Serpentine Gallery, London

Hans Ulrich Obrist: Good morning ladies and gentlemen, friends and fellow travelers!

Thanks to Art Basel Miami Beach for the invitation to do this panel. I want to say that this is not the first panel about museums here. The reason to do this whole series of panels about the museum, which we have been doing over the last five years, was inspired by Édouard Glissant's idea of how we could actually, at the moment – the homogenizing forces of globalization are also at stake in the art world – think about what could be different models of museums. And how there could not only be continental museums but also a sort of polyphony or what Glissant calls an “archipelago-condition” of museums. So we did panels on the future of the museum in China, India, the Middle East, North America, South America, Western Europe and Eastern Europe. This series of panels has actually also developed in other parts of the world. We hope it will be the same case for the panel today. It will be a beginning and we have further and other discussions about this topic. I am very, very thankful to all the speakers and it has been a wonderful process with Thelma Golden, a ping-pong, to build up this panel. It was actually in this dialogue that we came to the conclusion that it could be interesting to talk here about the African and the African American museum as almost a dual issue.

Thelma Golden: As Hans Ulrich said already: Thank you! We are thrilled to be here. I am the director of a museum that was founded in '68 to present the work of African American artists and more recently reformed to present the work of artists of African descent. This idea of the museum and specificity – cultural specificity, geographic specificity, and what a place like The Studio Museum in Harlem represents – seemed like a good place for us to start a dialogue. Since Hans Ulrich and I are both curators it's a dialogue we wanted to have with one another as curators, and also with artists as a way to open up a broader sense of possibilities. We are all deeply living in wonderful, new possibilities and this moment presents itself as a way to begin to see the world differently, through culture and through museums.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: This is the moment now to introduce our first speaker. It is a great pleasure and privilege to introduce Georges Adéagbo, legendary artist who has pioneered his practice ever since the early seventies. Georges was telling me that it all started in the sixties, soon after May '68, when he was very inspired by newspapers and had written thoughts in relation to newspaper as well his first text, published in Bellevue in 1969. And that all in France. When Georges returned in the early seventies to Benin he started to do his first exhibitions. One can call them exhibitions – it was a very regular practice he had of doing exhibitions in a courtyard of his house. And these incredible installations that he has done for many decades have appeared in many international group shows all over the world since the nineties. Georges has had a DAAD grant, he has participated in many international group shows, we have worked together with Georges on a big project at Villa Medici and also at the Musée de l'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 2000, two experiences which remain unforgettable to me. He has also, and that is very important, in Harald Szeemanns Biennale received the prize of the Jury and was the first artist from Africa actually, to win such a prize in Venice. He has been one of the protagonists of documenta11. So a very warm welcome to Georges Adéagbo and a very warm welcome as well to Stephan Köhler, who is Georges' curator. Thank you very much for coming to Miami!

Thelma Golden: And next to Georges is Raphael Chikukwa. We are thrilled that he is with us today, from Zimbabwe by way of London. Raphael is a curator and an art historian who works in and around contemporary art. He currently lives in London, working on a PhD. The topic of his research and dissertation is the politics of curating African art. He has participated in conferences and symposia around the world, speaking not only about artists from Zimbabwe and Southern Africa, but from the continent generally, as well as making the connections between those of us working in and around African and African American art and contemporary art. In 2004 he made an exhibition called “Visions of Zimbabwe” which catalogued and thoroughly represented work in that country. And in Manchester, Raphael curated a show called “African Heroes”. He was also a volunteer in the '97 biennial in South Africa. That was, as he says, the impetus for him to go back to Zimbabwe because at that time, there weren't curators, or people working in a contemporary curatorial context. It was the impetus to begin curating and to redefine and create a curatorial practice that engaged and enhanced what we can be understood about the art practice in that country. We are thrilled to have Raphael here today.

Immediately next to me is Glenn Ligon, artist, living and working in New York. Glenn most currently is showing an exhibition at Yvon Lambert gallery in Paris and will have an exhibition-opening at Thomas Dane Gallery in London at the end of January. Glenn is an artist whose practice engages curating and thinking about curating. He is currently working with Bennett Simpson on an exhibition that will look at contemporary art and blues at LA MOCA, which opens in 2010. Glenn is also a writer who has contributed significantly to the dialogue of contemporary art. He has recently completed a review on "Prospect.1", the biennial in New Orleans that will be published in the January 2009 issue of "Artforum". Recently he wrote a diary of his time in Memphis, on the occasion of an exhibition he had at the Powerhouse Gallery for "ArtReview" and he also writes consistently and constantly when asked, reflecting in many ways on exhibitions and exhibition practice. His work is in the collection of the Whitney Museum, The Museum of Modern Art, the Tate, the Art Institute of Chicago, San Francisco MoMA and the Studio Museum in Harlem. His work is currently on view here in Miami in the exhibition "30 Americans" at the Rubell Collection, where he also contributed a brilliant text to the catalogue. Welcome, Glenn.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: We thought actually, before we discuss it would be good that each of the participants gives a short statement. I'd like to invite Georges Adéagbo to give his statement.

Georges Adéagbo (translated by Stephan Köhler): The museum... The museum is a place that shows the traces. It is a place to show how a culture has developed and how a certain life form has developed. The museum... for me the greatest museum is water, which is the source of life. So when we talk about the artworld... I like going to the riverbank and think about and ask myself questions about how do fish live and move in water and I also draw parallels and analogies how we live on earth. The museum... The master has his eyes to see things and the student has different eyes to see things.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: Tell us something you told us before, when we had a coffee, about your favorite museum.

Georges Adéagbo (translated by Stephan Köhler): My preferred museum is the museum in Kiel, in Northern Germany, where I currently also show my Bismarck-installation.

Stephan Köhler: It is an exhibition, where several artists were invited to use the collection of the Museum Kiel to introduce them and interweave them with their work. And Georges found quite a few paintings of Bismarck by Lenbach and he introduced those paintings into his narration of talking about and criticizing German colonial politics and history. So he found a lot of interesting material in the museum of Kiel to use in his installation. And that is why now his preferred place is the museum of Kiel. The show is still going on until June 2009.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: One last question: Georges, did you ever think about your own museum?

Georges Adéagbo (translated by Stephan Köhler): My museum would be a museum which talks about my life. Whoever can accept how I live and how I work could accept my museum. So my museum is my life.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: Thank you.

Raphael Chikukwa: I would like to start by saying that I hope that this gathering will actually look at some of the issues affecting museums around the world, in particular the issues pertaining to the repatriation of objects from Africa and the issues pertaining to the representation of Africa and African art in the international community.

I feel that Africa has been misrepresented a couple of times on a number of platforms in the West, and I also want to thank the African Diaspora who have played a very pivotal role in making sure that the visibility of African art is taken seriously. A couple of contemporary African art exhibitions which happened in the West, curators like Okwui Enwezor, Salah Hassan and Simon Njami have curated, also have played a pivotal role in making sure that the visibility of contemporary African art is recognized in the Western Metropolis. But it is important to note that out of these entire exhibitions, there is one exhibition that managed to go back to Africa, which is "Africa Remix". This particular exhibition went back to South Africa in 2007. I would like to say to the audience here that South Africa is not Africa. There is a tendency of the West thinking that South Africa is Africa, but South Africa is a part of this huge African continent with 53 countries and four islands. Africa is not a country. This issue

pertains to the Venice Biennale and the African pavilion. To me it still raises many questions which are still unanswered. To have an African pavilion is an insult to the African society and an insult to the African artists at large because you are looking at a continent which is the second large continent on earth. I am sure if you fly from Cape Town to Tripoli it takes you about nine or ten hours. But we cannot blame other people for thinking that Africa is a country because we allow ourselves to take part in some of these events under that banner.

The other issue is the cultural genocide which I hope we will be able to discuss. The British Museum is a good example: I do not know what is British about the British Museum? Some of the museums in the West are full of stolen objects from Africa. Those objects were actually taken from Africa by force. And today the collections of a lot of African museums are smaller than what is actually in western museums. So those are some of the issues which I hope we will be able to talk about today in our discussion and to see how we can come to terms and how Africa fits in this whole thing which is the so-called global village.

Museums in Africa still depend on international foundations and the artists practicing and working in Africa do not have enough exhibition space and studios and they remain sidelined from the mainstream. There are a number of issues, which museums in Africa suffer. And the African politicians, they have also let us down. There is only one African leader whom I can think of who is actually playing a very important role for Africa in terms of African arts: It is the former Senegalese president Léopold Senghor. Today we can see the Dakar Biennale has been growing, although they have their difficulties, still there is an event and am sure all Biennales have their own challenges. But it is not enough for Africa to have one biennial. In Africa a number of artists and audiences do not have access to art journals, they do not have access to information. Today we are sitting here and those who are working and practicing in Africa are not here. But they are the most important people! It would be very important for them to be able to share this part with the audience because most of the time there is a tendency to have the same names in these events internationally. Artists, curators and museum people working in Africa are a sideline from the whole international scene also because museums in Africa do not have the money to pay for the flights. Also artists don't have the money to come to these events.

Thelma Golden: You have opened up a number of topics for us to explore. I would love it if you would talk a bit about some of the efforts you have been involved in with trying to redefine or recreate the context of the museum or exhibition spaces on the continent. You have spoken about the issue of collections which have been disseminated through the international trade. But can you also speak about the context of some of the projects you have done?

Raphael Chikukwa: Well, there is an exhibition which I have curated in 2006 which is called "African Heroes". I think there is a story to be told by the Africans. "African Heroes" is an exhibition which was for the Africans to speak for themselves about the experience fighting for the British Empire. So it's trying to give a voice to the Africans who have been voiceless for a long time. These are some of the interventions: I am trying to bring those voices to the international community and to the African audience because there has been an issue of neglecting them for a long time. I try to have them speak for themselves. A number of times we have had African stories told by other people, it is high time for us to tell our own story.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: I have a question about the "Africa's Heroes" exhibition. You were mentioning this morning at breakfast the oral tradition. Museums are maybe not only about objects. And that is something which came up in many previous panels, when we discussed for example the future of the museum in China or in India, that maybe there are possibilities or necessities of thinking about museums that are different to western museums which are so much focused on objects. Could you talk a little bit about this: ways beyond objects...?

Raphael Chikukwa: Well, I mean there are actually a number of museums in Africa that become very popular in Africa at the moment. A good example is the Robben Island Museum in South Africa. It is not only about objects, it is about people's stories and their experiences. Those stories are very important and they are appealing to a great audience in Africa because a lot of African people during the colonial era were not allowed to go to museums. These kinds of initiatives bring local audience to Museums and remember during the colonial era Museums were only for the white people. The Musée Historique de Gorée and the Robben Island Museum – I think it is important for us to engage with or to promote those kinds of museums.

Glenn Ligon: I want to start with a story. I had a show somewhere in the United States, maybe it was in Cleveland or in Chicago, I cannot remember exactly. And I think I cannot remember exactly because this has happened before. A number of times this has happened to me: There was a very lovely dinner at a collector's house afterwards and she was showing me through her collection – fantastic William Kentridge drawings, amazing de Koonings, Susan Rothenbergs. And so we were doing this tour. And after twenty minutes she stops and says: "Oh, are you actually interested in any of this?" I was a bit stunned, because why giving someone a twenty-minute tour if you don't think they are interested? I didn't know quite what she meant. But then I realized "Oh, there are no African American artists in that collection so therefore I shouldn't be interested in this and she thinks I am just polite." And I am polite. So I said "Oh, when I was in college de Kooning was really important for me and my entire painting practice is based on my study of de Kooning and then the later generation, people like Johns were very, very important to me... and Susan Rothenberg! One of the first important shows for my career was seeing her at Willard Gallery, it was 1978 maybe." – Just as a way to say "Of course I am interested in this in the way that any painter would be interested in the history of painting."

And I have another story: We were going around New Orleans, looking at "Prospect.1", which is a fantastic biennial that has been organized by Dan Cameron. One of the presentation sites was a museum in New Orleans. In the lobby of that museum were very large drawings by an artist named Willie Birch, she was African American. Huge cycle drawings, maybe thirty or forty of them, in the lobby of the museum, a big neo-classical space. And then there were some other projects as well, Kalup Linzy and Xu Bing, and they were located on the second floor of the museum. So we were wandering through the galleries, my friend and I. We suddenly found ourselves in a room, maybe 30 square feet big, and we looked around. I said "Mhm, Jacob Lawrence... Beauford Delaney – the black room! We are in the black room!" But it was an unmarked black room. There was no didactic text that said something like this. Obviously they were showing this room as a way to say that they were committed to the collection of African American artists – these were artists that were in their permanent collection. And that is actually a good thing. But the fact that the room was unmarked was very interesting to me. I presumed that it was unmarked because they didn't want to make a big deal out of it but that it was unmarked in some ways made a bigger deal of it. Because there was this sort of obvious segregation of that room and the joining room with the other artists. And also the fact was interesting that in this room with all the African Americans the works were hung without any regard to chronology or medium. If you didn't know that some of the artists were African American before, you would know it just because they were placed in that room. If they were placed in other contexts they would be in dialogue with other kinds of work. So that was very problematic and interesting. I guess the presumption was that African Americans are only interested in the work of African American artists and to save time for black visitors the staff of the museum can just say "In the back there is the black room!" I found it sort of fascinating, because I was there to see "Prospect.1". That was located all over the city and there were very strong presentations of a whole range of artists from Nari Ward to Katharina Grosse, there were no presumptions made on the biennial what kind of art an audience needs.

This made me think of another thing, too. In the Rubell Collection there is a very nice room – that I am in – and I mention it because there is a very beautiful David Hammons piece in that room. When I walked in I was so touched and honored to be in a room with David Hammons. And then I thought "Where else has that happened?" And it has happened at the Studio Museum in Harlem. I thought that it is really interesting that that's the space where that has happened: Why hasn't it happened in other kinds of spaces? But there sometimes happen other kinds of juxtapositions that are interesting to me, too. Like showing in MoMA, and next to my drawing they have a Gober piece. Again, incredible for me to be next to Gober, one of my heroes. These kinds of juxtapositions can happen. Maybe this is something we could talk about in terms of the Studio Museum – the Studio Museum has a mandate to make these kinds of juxtapositions and I find it fascinating that they do not happen enough in other spaces. Or when they do happen, they happen in these very over-determined ways, you know, the "black room" at the back of the contemporary galleries...

And the other thing I want to talk about briefly is the idea of curating. I am not a curator, but I am working with Bennett Simpson at MOCA in LA, who is a curator and who approached me with an idea to make an exhibition about contemporary art and the blues. We right away agreed that we didn't know what blues was, the easy definition of what that might be was what we were going to try to work against and that it was not a historic show. It was about how contemporary art thinks about the blues as a strategy. It is less about pictures of guitar players and more of an aesthetic strategy. It is interesting to me to work with a curator because there is this free flow of ideas between us and he does all the heavy lifting in terms of the acquisitions and budgets and all those things. Actually I like working that way.

And there is another project, which is at The Andy Warhol Museum. They gave me access to their archives to do an exhibition. Without any... you know, they just gave me a room and said: "You have access. Come up with what you come up with." That was a fascinating experience to me because I love Warhol's work but it was a chance to dive into, not only into the art works that were in the collection, but also into the ephemera. There were boxes and boxes of things that we basically just walked through and pulled out things. What was interesting about the archive is that the registrar said that when his family first came to the museum to see it, they freaked out a bit, because the archive smelled like him, which I found was fascinating. I was working with the registrar, I would have never just got there sitting in the library, and that is a really interesting way for an artist to work. When Georges was talking about his interventions in museums, I thought that this could be a very fascinating kind of way to get artists sort of get engaged with collections.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: I want to ask you a question which has to do with... you mentioned David Hammons. I remember a conversation I had with David Hammons five or six years ago. He told me that he really felt urgency that artists do their own museums. I don't know if he thinks that today, but at that time he felt a great urgency. And there are many different ways how artists can relate to museums. The museum can be a muse, the museum can be an inspiration, there can be a critique of the museum... all kinds of ways how to infiltrate the museum or use the museum. One can leave the museum. But this idea of artists doing their own museum... I was wondering if you had any projects ever of doing your own museum.

Glenn Ligon: I am certainly interested in doing more public projects. This is not something I have done. A number of people have approached me with projects they are doing. Eungie Joo for example is doing a project where she is collecting a library for a space in SoHo. And I thought, oh, that's really it: collecting a library, giving people access to catalogues and magazines that they wouldn't normally have access to. And leaving that there, donating it to an institution. I think that's really an interesting way to think outside of what we imagine we do. I have never really thought about making my own museum. I am interested in sort of diving into archives of spaces but not necessarily art museum spaces. I think there are interesting kinds of archives in very out-of-the-way-places. For instance in Chicago: The Johnson Publication headquarter, they publish the Ebony and Jet Magazine. There is a fantastic show to be done there. They have amazing archives not only of things they have been published, and also the building itself is an amazing space. I would love to do something there.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: So that is an unrealized project.

Glenn Ligon: Yes.

Thelma Golden: Can I ask you a question? When you speak about your experience in New Orleans and the "black room" it is really about the necessity of creating spaces. But what are they needed for? When are they needed? Is there a particular time in history when we need to create these specific spaces to open up a dialogue? Was that the time when the Studio Museum was founded? Could that be the moment now, as Raphael was speaking of, especially on the continent? How do you understand, when you think about the way that you have reacted to these situations and scenarios, the necessity of these spaces?

Glenn Ligon: I don't want to be too harsh on the New Orleans Art Museum. But what troubled me, was the fact that the room was unmarked.

Thelma Golden: So you are saying if a sign had been up there "This is an African American gallery"...

Glenn Ligon: ... I would maybe still dislike it but at least the museum would take clear stand about their curatorial practice. The fact that it was unmarked and that the room was kind of something here, something there, without regards to any kind of sense made that it felt uncurated. I just thought that this was disservice to the artists in that room. It is about how the institution stakes its territory. If they are going to do that, they need to say that they are going to do that. And then taking heed of that, you know. It just needs to be marked.

The founding of the Studio Museum is a very complicated kind of history and it is fascinating to me that MoMA trustees were part of the founding. And you know, the Studio Museum was founded as a way to address a lack. I think that was a particular moment and how you have internationalized the museum now has changed its mandate. That's certainly an interesting thing to talk about.

Thelma Golden: Raphael, can I ask you what the necessities in this moment are? If you were going to create the ideal museum in any country of the continent, what would it be right now? You can speak about Zimbabwe, but also anywhere – what would the ideal be?

Raphael Chikukwa: It would be a museum that would give a voice to the Africans who haven't had a voice for a number of years to be able to reveal their histories. The traditional museums we have in Africa today are still in the hands of the guards and old policies. So I would like to remove it from the old guards and have a people run museum. They should be able to tell their own stories and take African Museums in another direction.

Thelma Golden: Self-definition...

Raphael Chikukwa: Yes, self-definition and I am sure that there is a need for Africa to define itself from its own parameters. If you go to South Africa today, the museums are, as I said, are still in the hands of the old guards who want to talk about the "Rainbow Nation" which doesn't exist. And in other countries in Africa as well museums are still operating in a traditional way and the people have not been able to tell their own stories. We need to move away from that. So if I had to create a museum, I would redefine it from there.

But I want to ask Glenn a question: You mentioned the African American artists. I have been to the "30 Americans"-exhibition, which is just "30 Americans", not "30 African Americans". What do you think about the exhibition?

Glenn Ligon: Well, what is interesting about the exhibition is that it is not a museum space. It is someone's collection. And so the mandate around that show is very different than the mandate if an art museum did that. Basically the Rubells are showing their collection. In a way they have done a number of shows like this. But this show generated much more discussion, because "30 Americans" is a very provocative title. It is thirty African American artists and that collection of work together has generated a lot of discussion about that. But again, I think it is different in a museum context than in a private collection context.

Raphael Chikukwa: But do you think there is a need to move away from the African American context to just operate as Americans?

Glenn Ligon: I think there is a necessity for both things at the same time.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: Maybe it is interesting to pose this question to Georges that Thelma was addressing to the other panelists. Do you agree with the other panelists? What do you feel would be necessary for a museum in Benin?

Georges Adéagbo (translated by Stephan Köhler): For me a museum has a collection. There are Americans and there are white Americans, there are African Americans – there are many kinds of Americans. And the white Americans accept living together with the African Americans. I am amazed that there is quite little friction. Differences are the heart of a museum. The visitors come to the museum, they see and they ask themselves questions. A museum is like a movie theater in the sense that you go there to get instructions through the images. The museum is a place where you see the history. History is absence. In a museum you can reconstruct things you did not witness yourself. So everybody has the chance to make his own judgment, self-created judgment. You find yourself in the museum or you can define or redefine yourself in the museum triggered by many things you see and impulses you have. For example today I bring a lot of African sculptures in my installations to Europe and also ritual costumes from Egun dance, which is a dance to call the spirits of the ancestors. Occidentals usually cannot see these costumes I bring from Africa. I bring them from Benin in the context of a museum. The costumes and masks can't go by themselves from Benin all over the world. When confronted with my collection, the visitors ask themselves certain questions, for example: Why is it difficult to get access to this information when you travel to Africa? – Many of these costumes and objects are taboo or holy and you can't access them. So I bring them into a context which is in the museum that creates a dialogue and makes things accessible which were out of reach for many people before. The museum can be a school where one can go and have an opportunity to instruct yourself.

Thelma Golden: That brings something up you mentioned before: repatriation. Can there be a new context for museums on the continent without repatriating cultural artifacts back from the West? Or can a new context for museums start at this moment, in the contemporary moment? I am asking your opinion.

Raphael Chikukwa: I am sure that it is very difficult. There is a need for repatriation of objects from Africa, because those objects belong to the continent of Africa. Denying people their own heritage is an abuse of human rights. So it would be important for museums in the west to rethink and bring them back to the continent as I have said earlier. That is where they belong; here they are out of context! But I am sure it is also for economic reasons – they also make money out of it. If they could actually pay back that money or at least a percentage to the African continent so that we can start building museums – this could be also beneficial to the younger generation in Africa today.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: Maybe I am following up on Thelma's question about this necessary and maybe urgent topic. In previous panels, when we spoke about the future of the museum in India, there was a lot of critique here in this very room of the government. In India aren't any public institutions because – Peter Nagy was very outspoken – the government is rather making things impossible than possible. And that's why in India all current museum projects are private.

We spoke this morning about the difficult situation for example not only in terms of museums but also exhibitions. You pointed out the catastrophe with the biennial. There were two and now there is only one because Johannesburg, which was so important in the nineties, for political reasons did not continue. So Dak'Art remains the only biennial. I was actually involved in Dak'Art, curating there about four, five years ago and observed as one of the biggest difficulties there the problem of transport between African countries. A very important percentage of works did not come to Dakar – whole spaces, whole alleys were empty because works were stuck at customs. These are just a few observations. And I want to question if you think this is urgent and how one could address that.

Raphael Chikukwa: I am sure this is an urgent question, especially in Dakar. A number of artists send their work to Dakar and sometimes the work does never arrive, sometimes you never get your work back. Unlike in India there is a political will in Senegal but there is too much bureaucracy. So the idea is to break down the boundaries of bureaucracy within the continent. It is also not easy for artists to travel from one country in Africa to another. A good example: If I want to go to Senegal today, I have to go to the French embassy to get a visa. If I want to go to South Africa I have to declare my parents, relatives, cats and dogs! So that is still complicated and there is need for African governments to rethink and for African politicians to readdress those issues. They have to make sure that there is a flexibility and that artists can move from one place to another. As much as they want to talk about reclaiming ourselves as Africans... it needs to start from us, as Africans. Then the rest of the world can also come in. That's what I think.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: Let's open it up for questions. Are there any questions or comments?

Audience: I thought that Mr. Ligon's comments about the African American were quite telling. I remember a few years ago at an American Association of Museums meeting there was a panel on ethnic artists. It was primarily looking at artists of Hispanic descent. They would have been considered as folk artists, but they are academically trained artists. This was just infuriating.

Thelma Golden: Thank you. Is there a second question?

Audience: You mentioned the biennial in Dakar. I'm curious where you can go in Africa today to see African contemporary art? Which cities? Where are galleries, where are museums that concentrate on contemporary art?

Raphael Chikukwa: Dakar is one of those biennials, which have survived after the death of the Johannesburg biennial 1997 curated by O Emwezor. So Dakar is a place to see African contemporary art in the continent. Then there is Bamako biennial in Mali, which is a photographic encounter curated by Simon Njami and next year it is going to be curated by somebody else. South Africa is a place to go, and Nairobi in Kenya – that's another place where things are really happening within the continent. I am sure that there are a number of African countries where one could go and feast on contemporary African art.

Stephan Köhler: Can I add something? About two years ago Foundation Zinsu opened in Cotonou. It is a private foundation and they have a space about 1500 square meters in the center of Cotonou. They regularly host exhibitions of contemporary African artists. Now they have a theme, "Benin 2059", an utopian vision of six Benin artists. But they also have shown international artists, they had a big Basquiat exhibition for example. They are very active and well-funded. But they are private.

Thelma Golden: I think we have to acknowledge that there are lots of things happening on the continent. There are individual curators who are doing things in a more interventionist manner and a lot of foundations, but the information is very scattered. We talked about those lines of communication just as Raphael has talked about traveling. All of us might know about things happening in one place but don't know about others, or we speak to our colleagues in one country who don't know about a project happening in another country. That is one of the things that the Studio Museum has been trying to address: how to form these lines of communication? It remains incredibly difficult at this moment.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: This is actually something we discussed also very strongly in the panel on the Middle East, where you find a similar situation. There is a polyphony of centers, many amazing microscopic scenes, smaller scenes, art centers, artist-run-spaces and residencies. And there are very big difficulties to travel among the cities as Raphael was describing.

Audience: Raphael, you talked about your disenchantment with the African pavilion at the Venice Biennale. How would you make it different, what would you do?

Raphael Chikukwa: The way I would like to see it happen would be to have pavilions like a Zimbabwean pavilion, a Senegalese pavilion... You know, because Africa is a huge continent. You can't put Africa in one box. I mean if you have small countries like Ireland having a pavilion, what is the point of having an African pavilion? I don't see any point of having an African pavilion in that context. So it is important for the African countries to take part. It is up to Venice now to open up to the continent and to see how they can accommodate individual countries that can apply and participate as countries not as a continent.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: Georges, what do you think about this question?

Georges Adéagbo: When you talk about an African pavilion in Venice, I think of Senghor, who has already done a lot for contemporary art in Africa. That gave the spirit to the Dak'Art biennial. The key figure is Senghor. Think about the history of gaining independence of African states: if the Africans have had taken seriously the messages of Senghor, if they had worked on their independence in the cultural sense, Africa could have a pavilion. So that occidentals could see African art. A pavilion could mediate some aspects of African culture. But I have to criticize that we Africans always see only ourselves and have difficulties to recognize and understand the cultures of others. I expect more acceptance and openness of the Africans themselves towards other cultures.

Raphael Chikukwa: I don't agree with Georges. We have accepted other cultures. And this is why today there are so many cultures in Africa. A good example is that in Zimbabwe today – I am sure that a lot of people think that the white Zimbabweans have left – we still have a big number of white Zimbabweans! There are still a big number of white South Africans, who came as the Dutch to Africa during colonialism. And we still accept them as part of us! And I still feel that there is a point for us to take part at Venice with country pavilions, not as a continent. Because we have accepted other cultures – a lot of other cultures which have been imposed on us. The reconstruction of an African image always came from the west and continues to come from the west. The Venice Biennale issue came from the west, the African pavilion. I am sure that Robert Storr, who has actually initiated the African pavilion, maybe had good intentions. There are a number of people who think that it was good for Africa to have a presence at Venice. Yes, it was good and it has opened this discussion we are discussing today. But hopefully they rethink and see how we can get accommodated to take part as country pavilions. I am sure that I have seen publicity information that Gabun and South Africa are willing to take part, which I think is important.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: And of course that leads also to all the other countries and there is a wonderful research actually, done by the young Italian urbanist Alessandro Petti, he made a visualization of what would happen to the Giardini in Venice if every country would have a pavilion. And it would lead to the fact that the Giardini would become one of the densest urban conditions on the planet. Are there other questions?

Audience: I have question: What is Africa? We are sitting here to communicate together. Who chose who is sitting up here? Why is there no Egyptian, no Algerian, what is the choice of that? I think this is a microcosm of the problem of Africa. I, myself am an artist who is working in Africa, I worked in Algeria, in Egypt, I worked in Cameroon. So I would like you to talk a little bit about that.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: I could make a beginning. It is certainly important to say that Thelma and I have been thinking a lot about this panel marking a beginning. And I mean one of the things which has always been very interesting with these panels, for example when we did the panel on the future of the museum in India, the whole category was completely questioned because how can one talk about the museum in India without talking about the sub-continent? I mean that there is no point to think about India without thinking about Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. When we discussed the future of the museum in the Middle East, a huge debate broke out that this is maybe completely wrong category, maybe one should have called it completely else and this happened basically to many other panels. So what is interesting about these panels is that they are not a kind of end-point, they are a beginning. And Thelma and I see today as a beginning and we hope that there will be many more and bigger panels, with twenty, thirty, maybe hundred participants – our dream would have been to bring actually a hundred speakers here. That for many reasons was not possible, but that's an unrealized project which we hopefully can do soon.

Thelma Golden: We acknowledge that it is too big of a topic to encompass under the general terminology of Africa. Raphael eloquently spoke about that problem as a way to think about these ideas as they relate to art. We are talking about a diverse continent. There are many points of collision and there are also points which we have to talk about separately. I think for us, perhaps, the most important thing was to create a space to open the dialogue within a context where it has not been before. We acknowledge everything you are saying, even this idea of definition. I am the director of a museum of artists of African descent and even what that means is changing and constantly being redefined as it relates to talking about American culture, black American culture and African American culture, both in the past and in the present. I think that there is something fertile in that shifting space. Next question?

Audience: Why don't the two Africans say something to that question?

Raphael Chikukwa: Who are the two Africans? Georges and I? Aren't we four Africans here? Today we are speaking here in the colonial language. This is also problematic as well with the African leaders when they address each other in the African Union Conferences. I have never heard one single African leader speaking in our native language, which is very problematic. As much as they want to talk about us reclaiming ourselves there is a need for them to rethink the use of French, English and Portuguese. It is problematic, for us as artists as well. We provoke that discussion to our politicians. But they don't listen sometimes. We are where we are today because they failed us. They really failed us. There is so much happening in Africa... The former South African president Thabo Mbeki – when he came into power he started talking about the so-called African Renaissance. But the African Renaissance dream has come and gone. He has never addressed it. And the issue of museums in Africa has never been addressed though it was one of the things on of the top of the agenda of Mbeki.

So I mean these are challenges and it is to us, as artists and curators, to provoke those discussions to the politicians. You can only express yourself in your mother language. And I remember some time, I am sure it was a French culture minister, who held a speech in English and I am sure that Jacques Chirac fumed at that minister. There is need for us to think about that.

Georges Adéagbo (translated by Stephan Köhler): For me Africa is a man who has several wives. When a man has several wives there is a certain unity of the family as long as the man is living. But when the man dies, the misunderstandings and the frictions come up in the family. The obvious problem we have is that Africa has two faces. Mainly the English face and the French face. When the occidentals or the colonizers were still living in Africa, there was more understanding and solidarity amongst Africans. When independence came and Africans decided to send the colonizers home, frictions appeared between African states. When Africans desire the unity of Africa, it is only Africans themselves that can sit together and decide how the understanding and complementarities could really appear in Africa. It cannot be induced from outside. If you see museums in Europe, how comes that you see African sculptures in same building with European paintings? If there had been more like a reciprocal acceptance of various cultures in Africa then they could also have a higher level of tolerance and negotiability between each other's countries and cultures. As I said in the beginning: Africans are looking too much at themselves and are not open enough to other cultures.

Glenn Ligon: I would like to pick up something that Raphael said about the role of biennials in Africa. I am just writing about the New Orleans biennial and I think a lot about biennials as platforms for presentations of art. I am thinking that they are quite problematic at this point. But when you were talking about Dak'Art I realized that this is a space where a biennial can be reinvented. It could be very interesting that biennials are platforms for artists from all over the world to show in Africa. This is quite different than biennials that are simply about tourism, about economic development in certain regions. I am just thinking of biennials like Dak'Art, where this kind of dialogue can happen in a format that is somehow manageable. Maybe I have to rethink my stuff.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: There could not be a better conclusion. As we know it has only just begun and there will be hopefully many more panels on this topic – also actually here, this week. I would like to announce that there will be a book launch on Sunday of Georges Adéagbo's book in the Art Lobby. If you all could be back for that it would be wonderful. And today, at 4 pm at the Rubell's, Glenn will do a talk.

Thelma Golden: Hans and I would like to thank our panelists because this is a dialogue that we feel has to happen. We are just beginning to understand the possibility of how we can imagine a contemporary art world that truly has room, on various levels, to engage artists of African descent, artists working on the continent and elsewhere in the contemporary art world. I want to thank all of our panelists for being with us today and sharing your thoughts. Thank you also to Hans Ulrich, who has initiated these dialogues.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: And thanks Thelma so much – thanks to you all very much!

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Art | Basel | Conversations

Saturday | Dec 6 | Public/Private | The Artist as Philanthropist

What are the increasingly important roles that artist-endowed foundations are playing in the today's artworld?

Which are the risks, opportunities and challenges of funding such a foundation?

How do artist-endowed foundations vary in their activities?

What are the aims and focus of these foundations?

Charles C. Bergman | Chairman and CEO, The Pollock-Krasner Foundation, New York

Jack Cowart | Executive Director, Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, New York

Jack Flam | President and CEO, The Dedalus Foundation, New York

Christine J. Vincent | Director, National Study of Artist-Endowed Foundations, The Aspen Institute, Washington D.C.

Nicholas Fox Weber | Executive Director, Josef & Anni Albers Foundation, Bethany, Connecticut

Moderator | **Andras Szanto** | Author, consultant to arts and philanthropic organizations, New York

Welcome | **Aurelia Kreienbühl**

Good morning everybody, welcome to the panel “The Artist as Philanthropist”. Please let me just quickly introduce the moderator of this panel, Andras Szanto. Andras Szanto is a writer and researcher based in New York and he works as an advisor to arts and philanthropic organizations. Make sure that you get a copy of the today’s Art Newspaper; there is an article about this panel. Take one with you when you leave the convention center. I give the word now to Andras. Thank you all for coming, we are very happy and very proud to having all of you here.

Andras Szanto: Thank you very much Aurelia, it is very kind of you. Well, if you ever wondered, who would give up a beautiful sunny Florida morning to sit inside in an extremely cold air-conditioning to debate very serious matters of art and philanthropy, look to your right, look to your left: these are people who made that decision. I want to thank our esteemed panelists for joining us this morning – I hope this will be a lively conversation which will last about ninety minutes and will include the possibility of questions and answers from you and I look forward to those as well.

We are here today to talk about art and philanthropy. Usually when you talk about art and philanthropy, you think about philanthropy to support artists. But today we are going to talk about a different kind of philanthropy, which is philanthropy made possible and done by artists. This is an aspect of philanthropy that is very little known.

I believe that philanthropy is America’s greatest cultural export. It is one of those things that the rest of the world looks at with great admiration and increasingly with a great interest in copying as well. The statistics of American philanthropy are truly staggering. There are 70,000 foundations in the United States; they have about 500 billion dollars in assets. Those numbers may be decreasing currently, but it is still a staggering number. They give away about 40 billion dollars per year to various causes. The arts are a small part of that. Nevertheless this is an enormous field. There is one tiny little corner of a vast universe which we will be exploring to today, and this is philanthropic activity by artists. It is a very little understood area. We all know that artists are often very generous during their lifetimes. They donate works to charity auctions – we all heard the news about the Red Auction last year, which raised more than 40 million dollars. They sometimes sit on boards. They sometimes help their less lucratively earning peers. But the way that artists are truly generous is through foundations. It may surprise you to know that there are 300 so-called artist-endowed foundations existing and operating today. Together, they have about one billion dollars in assets, so this is not an insignificant part of the philanthropic world. And as you can imagine, with arguably the largest generation of wealthy artists looking at old age in history, the number of these foundations is set to explode dramatically over the next few years. And they are particularly important in the visual arts because, being endowed by artists, these foundations very often tend to be much more focused on the real, actual life of the visual arts than very large foundations, such as the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, all of which, I should note, do pay attention to the arts. Nevertheless artists tend to be deeply concerned with their legacy, their own legacy and any grant-making activity on behalf of other artists.

Joining us this morning are four chief executives of foundations that were created by artists, as well as the director of a new study that will be released next year, a study by the Aspen Institute that will document the true scale and complexity of this field.

I will now very briefly try to introduce them in an alphabetical order. I apologize in advance that I will do injustice to their extremely lengthy résumés. A friend of mine described a dinner party in New York. There were a lot of very accomplished people, she turned to me and said: “This is résumé hell!” Well, this is a little corner of résumé hell here! So I am just going to say just a few words about my esteemed colleagues.

To my left is Charlie Bergman, Chairman and CEO of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation. The Pollock-Krasner Foundation was created 1986 by Lee Krasner, a prominent abstraction expressionist painter and the widow of Jackson Pollock. The foundation is noted for its great support for individual artists. It has given more than 3000 grants and 50 million dollars to individual artists in over 70 countries. Charlie is a veteran of the cultural and philanthropic world. He is everywhere to be found in New York, sits on more boards and committees than I can count. He has served on the New York State Council on the Arts and Mayor Bloomberg’s commission for cultural affairs. Jack Cowart is founding executive director of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation. This is, I think, the newest foundation on our panel. It is an operating foundation with extensive research and publication activity. One of the things that you see already, is that artist’s foundations vary in great deal in terms of being grant-making foundations and operating foundations. We will get into that. In addition to their research and publication activities the foundation has also acquired the artistic legacy of another artist, the photographer Harry Shunk. Jack Cowart was the chief curator of the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, head of the

20th century department at the National Gallery of Art. He is a widely published historian and an authority on 20th century art.

Jack Flam is the president and, since 2002, the CEO of the Dedalus Foundation. The Dedalus Foundation was established by Robert Motherwell and their mission is – I quote the mission statement – “to foster public understanding of modern art and modernism by facilitating research, education, publications, and exhibitions.” Jack is an art historian, the author of numerous books and articles. He publishes in magazines and was for a number of years in the late eighties and early nineties the art critic of the Wall Street Journal.

Christine Vincent is the director of the Aspen Institute's National Study of Artist-Endowed Foundations. She is a former deputy director of the Ford Foundation's Media, Arts and Culture Program. She has overseen many research and advisory projects in the arts and while at Ford, she supported work that led to the launch of an important new program which is called “United States Artists”, a major philanthropic initiative to support individual artists.

Nick Weber is the executive director of the Josef & Anni Albers Foundation, established in 1971. Their mission statement: “To further the revelation and evocation of vision through art.” This foundation also functions as a center for the appreciation of art and visual experience. Nick is a Yale- and Columbia-educated art historian, extremely widely published. He has – I told you, this is résumé hell, but I have to get through this – curated a number of retrospectives of the Albers, published in numerous books and catalogues on their works, and so on.

I am hoping we can shepherd the sum of knowledge here today to explore this field and give you a sense of its diversity and complexity, its opportunities and its challenges. Perhaps it is a good start – I want now to recede and hand the stage over – to ask each of you to reflect for a moment on what you see as your particular mandate in your respective foundations. I thought that we could go roughly in art historical order, so maybe Nick, we start with you. Where you sit, how do you interpret your mandate?

Nicholas Fox Weber: I am very aware of our beginnings in a certain way. Anni and Josef always made very clear to me that money was an important reality in their lives and of which they had very little some of the time. I was recently reading letters between Klee and Kandinsky from 1923 when they met at the Weimar Bauhaus, went to a café, looked at the price of coffee, realized that they could not afford a single cup of coffee and went home to be together.

In 1987 I was with Anni Albers when she got an extraordinary phone call from Tut Schlemmer. Anni was an artist in her own right, but they were both what one would call at that point “Bauhaus-widows”. Tut had called to say that Nina Kandinsky had been murdered. And this was the subject of an extraordinary phone call and later during the call I heard Anni say to Tut Schlemmer: “We have something called a foundation. This is very helpful. It has to do with taxes and other things.” And that was how she saw it. The Albers Foundation was created during Josef's lifetime in 1971 by the splendid lawyer Lee Eastman. The first gift that the Albers made through the foundation was to endow a fellowship at Yale for researchers in the field on Latin American art and archeology. Both Albers distinctively were not interested in the trends of the contemporary art world. They were interested in what they considered the more eternal and lasting values of art. They supported a lot of travel research. There are about 25 students a year that go to Mexico and Peru to do research. We work on exhibitions and publications largely devoted to the Albers' art, but we also have helped for example to support an exhibition of Eva Hesse's work; she had been an important Albers-student. Now we are going into a different direction but in keeping the Albers' passions: We set up a second non-profit which supports medical centers and kindergartens in rural Senegal as part of a project where we hope to create another arts foundation with studios in a very different part of the world.

Andras Szanto: So in your case, if you had to put it in percentage terms, how much of your work is legacy-stewardship and how much of your work is furthering causes beyond immediate artistic legacy-stewardship?

Nicholas Fox Weber: To me they are the same thing. The Albers' legacy is a very substantial part of what we do. Projects that are directly related to their work will always be our main passion.

Andras Szanto: We will go on, and I think Jack, we go to you.

Jack Flam: Motherwell was alive at the time the foundation was started. He chose the core of the board of directors and actually everyone who is still on the grants committee was named by Motherwell himself. And he, as Andras has mentioned, wanted his foundation to have a very particular purpose which was to support modern art and modernism. You have to have some sense of how he conceived

of these two words. Because as most of you know, modernism itself was very much contested during his lifetime, the so-called “Greenbergian modernism”, which was a kind of straw man I think, but in any case a straw man that had enormous ideological implication. Motherwell saw modernism, as he discusses in his own writings, as a kind of quasi-religious enterprise. It was something that had to do with subjectivity, with the permission to act as an individual, to act outside the constraints of organized religion, but at the same time to aspire to a certain level of spirituality. He saw modernism as a kind of freedom: Artistic freedom, human freedom, and political freedom. So, this being the context, we are given the job of making grants. And we began by discussing what we thought Motherwell really meant in terms of specific works: that is which kind of art really would be modernist in that sense. We decided basically, that anything from the year 1850 on, and that is what we would call progressive, is modernist.

We have a number of ongoing projects that we fund every year; we have PhD dissertations in art history on modern subjects. The subjects of these have ranged so far from Manet to contemporary artists. We have a senior fellowship that is given to people who are advanced in their careers, and there again is a broad spectrum – these are all listed on our website by the way. We give money to MFA students at the end of their MFA program to carry them to the future. So we are dealing with scholars, we are dealing with artists and we also give a fair amount of money to what I call less-glamorous aspects of institutional activities, for example to The Museum of Modern Art’s archives. This is something that most patrons of museums do not support in a sustained way, because it is not glamorous. We have set up an ongoing fellowship at The Museum of Modern Art archives. We like not so much to support institutions directly, as much as the people who work and develop within those institutions. For example, with this Museum of Modern Art archival fellow program we have actually played a big role in developing a new art related profession in the United States, that of the art archivist, someone dealing with the archives of artists and related activities.

Andras Szanto: I ask you as well: What percentage of your work is beyond perpetuating the legacy?

Jack Flam: We are one of the few foundations that do not have the artist’s name in the title of the foundation. It is “Dedalus Foundation”.

Andras Szanto: Was it his decision?

Jack Flam: It was absolutely his decision. Dedalus of course is not only Daedalus, the prototype for the artist, but also Dedalus without the first “a”. Motherwell was a great Joycean and his Stephen Dedalus is the archetypal young artist. The only thing that we do with Motherwell’s name, and there was a lot of discussion whether or not we should do so, is to give an annual book prize. Our jury considers the best book on modern art and modernism for a year and it is called the “Robert Motherwell Book Prize”. But our grant program does not evoke the artist’s name at all. And I think that he wanted it like that.

Andras Szanto: Maybe we should talk about this later again: To what extent the artist chooses to remain behind the scenes.

Jack Flam: Right now we are working on a catalogue raisonnée of Motherwell’s paintings and collages, and this is a very big project. But most of our projects deal with other artists.

Andras Szanto: Let’s go to Charlie: Pollock-Krasner Foundation.

Charles Bergman: How I envy Jack for having a foundation as Dedalus, without having the name of the artist involved in it! I would like to assure you that the Pollock-Krasner Foundation categorically has nothing to do with Jackson Pollock; it has to do with Lee Krasner, his talented wife-widow who was persuaded with some reluctance on her part to set up the foundation to aid worthy and needy artists internationally. And if you had entitled this symposium today “The artist not as a philanthropist” I would have been pleased to accept your invitation.

Andras Szanto: Next year we come back with “The artist not as philanthropist”.

Charles Bergman: Lee Krasner died in 1984, Pollock died in ’56. And in the interim between his death and her death, her affairs – her legal affairs and her artistic needs – were handled skillfully by two remarkable men, Jerry Dickler, a famous lawyer in New York who advised Lee that it was critically

important that she would have a will and she reluctantly agreed that it might be nice to do something with that money instead of giving it to New York State. Jerry persuaded her to create a foundation to aid worthy and needy artists internationally. Then he brought in Eugene Victor Thaw, a celebrated art dealer, connoisseur and scholar to help guide Lee and Jackson's art matters. The foundation was to be activated on her death and it was at that time that the trustees approached me to ask if I would set up the foundation with the understanding, that if I did a good job, I would be made the chief operating officer of the foundation.

We have given over \$50 million in seventy countries to painters, sculptors, and artists who work on paper. We have a particular appreciation for older artists and we have created the Lee Krasner Awards, given over a three-year period to artists of distinction in recognition of a lifetime of artistic achievement and talent. From time to time we also give grants to institutions and organizations that in turn directly support the needs and well-being of individual artists.

Andras Szanto: Do you think that Lee Krasner might be surprised about the range of activities the foundation is undertaking today?

Charles Bergman: I think that she would be pleased. She would also wonder why we live in a world where people present fake Pollocks for sale and distribution.

Andras Szanto: Alright thank you, Charlie. Jack, yours is the most recent foundation. Tell us where you are coming from.

Jack Cowart: Yes, we are the new kids on the block and that has given us good opportunity to learn from what everybody else has been doing. And we certainly have stepped in into a robust atmosphere, especially in New York, of artist-endowed foundations.

Roy Lichtenstein died in 1997. He and Dorothy Lichtenstein had made provision for a foundation. Dorothy has mentioned that Roy's first idea for the foundation was to call it "Standard Oil". That's Roy! And we do things today which would probably surprise him. It is a private operating foundation, basically family operating foundation, though driven by hired staff like myself and my managing director. The family participates in various levels of engagement in the rare board-meetings that we have and they are perfectly happy to let us go and do our own thing. We operate in the spirit of Roy. He was very particular about how he would like things have to be done. But Dorothy Lichtenstein is extremely generous to us. So we get involved in some things you mentioned before, like the Shunk-Kender archive and other things. But we are basically a service operation that is working with the art of Lichtenstein. For every museum or curator who needs information, we provide it. I think that all artist foundations have founding paper work. So they have a charter and our charter was to facilitate the public access to the work of Roy Lichtenstein. We are doing a catalogue raisonné in which we all are involved in. We try to encourage new generations of scholars, critics and researchers to come to the work not only of Roy Lichtenstein but the art and artists of his time. So we wish to make all of our databases available. The other reason the foundation was founded – this is another tax implication – is that Roy had two sons and a widow. It is more tax efficient for them to have received Roy's benefactions in his own will, so all went to his family and the family can give art over the course of time to the foundation. In effect the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation is the estate planning mechanism for Dorothy Lichtenstein.

Andras Szanto: Roy Lichtenstein being the most recently deceased of these artists, perhaps you can talk just very briefly – he was alive when artist's philanthropy was very developed in New York and in America – about his philanthropic activities during his lifetime?

Jack Cowart: Roy and Dorothy during his lifetime did a lot through auctions and donations to environmental studies, to things about freedom of expression and democracy; they were very democratic-leaning... The family still is philanthropic and if they would want to go save an archipelago they would establish their own private foundations themselves. But for the Lichtenstein Foundation, we do not have a requirement to pay out like non-operating foundations. First we give money to ourselves, for our work, to support passively and actively exhibitions in museums and to find ways to get works to them at greatly diminished prices. There are only 44 objects of Roy Lichtenstein in the Foundation at this moment. And most of it is esoteric, early works that we are buying back to protect and to give away to museums in the future. So we have a long, kind of 10-15-20-year-program. We are not perpetual; we can close at any time. But Roy and Dorothy were very generous and Dorothy continues to be generous not only to the Lichtenstein Foundation.

Andras Szanto: As you can see already, it is a really stunning range of things that these foundations do. There are common themes but also great diversity, a lot of it depending on the donor's wishes, when the foundation was created, who is running the show, what kind of things they get involved in. Christine has had the hardest job of trying to make sense to all this over the last year. You have your report to come out in spring, so what can you tell us in terms of the big picture here? Are there any kinds of headlines you can reveal from the report?

Christine Vincent: We are still in process, with preliminary findings. So maybe what I can do is give a little context to all these fascinating individual cases that have been presented and then step back and give you some figures about the scale of all of this and some interesting sort of personal stories. This is a very interesting taxonomy: If you think about a spectrum and at one end of the spectrum you have a foundation that is exclusively grant-making in its activities, such as the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, and at the other end of the spectrum there is a foundation that is primarily a study center focused on exhibition and research activities, that would be the Lichtenstein Foundation. In the center of the spectrum you have the Dedalus and the Albers Foundations which are – I use the term “comprehensive”. They actually undertake all of these activities: They do scholarly research, exhibitions, publications, grant-making activity; they have a little bit of artist's residency activity going on – they do a lot of things.

The point is that foundations do move around. They are doing one thing during an artist's lifetime – if they have been created during the lifetime of an artist – and then they evolve other activities. In many ways there is a parallel development during the foundation's lifetime to the lifetime of a donor, which would be Lichtenstein's case as well. One of our points is that artist-endowed foundations may be created by artists themselves, but they may also be created by the heirs of the artists. That would be surviving spouses, children, and even some foundations that have been created by heirs not related to the artist, but indeed have received the artist's estates. So that is to add to the complexity of the taxonomy.

The idea seems to be a very modern idea. But I have discovered that the very first artist-endowed foundation we can identify – it is still in existence – is a foundation in Rome that was created in late 1880s by the painter Franz Ludwig Catel who became very prosperous, painting very pastoral scenes of the Roman countryside and selling them to wealthy Europeans who came through when the Grand Tour resumed after the Napoleonic Wars. He was very philanthropic; he helped to organize artist support organizations. His is a very modern story: Upon his death he made provisions for the creation of a foundation which would come into existence after his wife's death. So she received the lifetime use of his estate. Following her death there took place three days of sales to liquidate the estate and the foundation was set up with these proceeds and other aspects of the bequest. The foundation did keep the house and the studio and a collection of his art and they make grants to assist artists, primarily Italian. And they have been doing that since 1888 which is absolutely fascinating to think about, the survival of that kind of institution over that time. The earliest foundation we have identified in the United States is the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation in 1918. Also early on, in terms of big names in art, the family of the painter William Glackens created the Sansom Foundation in the 1950s. So that gives you a sense of the early history from that point.

I want to assure everyone that even though 70% of the foundations we have identified are associated with male artists, 20% are associated with female artists, the other 10% are male and female in combination. A few of them are associated with two males, there is none yet which is associated with two females. So there are woman artists in addition to Lee Krasner, and I'll mention a few: Joan Mitchell, Niki de Saint Phalle, Jay DeFeo, Nancy Graves and also living artists, such as Helen Frankenthaler. I want to assure you that women are part of the scene but they are not fully represented and that's I think very consistent with the representation of women artists in the art field generally...And on a related point, philanthropy is extremely personal and often autobiographical. So for example the activities of the LeRoy Neiman Foundation, and he is a very generous artist, reflect his personal experiences. He talks about being a latchkey kid growing up in Minneapolis and feeling that his life was saved by an art program at a settlement house that he was able to attend.

Andras Szanto: By the way, that happens to be true for philanthropy in general. There are surveys on people who feel especially philanthropic, and when asked about their philanthropic motivations they typically answer that they had been subject to support by others, they have been helped. That's why the generation that has had the Holocaust experience, Second World War experience, Great Depression experience, has been the great generation of philanthropists. They know how it feels to be helped.

Christine Vincent: That's right. You have a fascinating character like LeRoy Neiman who has given \$3 million dollars in the last ten years to projects that are all about opportunities for disadvantaged kids to experience art in urban environments and in educational settings. You have Peter Laird, the animation artist who is one of the two creators of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles phenomenon who has created a foundation that directs half of its support to the impoverished Western Massachusetts region where he lives and the other half funds internationally direct grants to self-publishing comic book artists who also receive technical assistance from his staff. Somebody you do not know, because his name has long faded but he was pertinent in his lifetime, is the painter Leslie Powell, who grew up in a small town, Lawton, Oklahoma. He felt there were no opportunities for artists in Lawton, so he left and became prominent in New York. And then he bequeathed his entire estate to create a foundation in Lawton that is dedicated to running a gallery with professional exhibitions by the area's artists and also makes grants to organizations that support artists.

So there is this sense of very personal experience for many of these folks and I would like to say that there are indeed very active artists currently in terms of their philanthropy. I mentioned the LeRoy Neiman Foundation and the other two very active foundations I would put right there with it are the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation and the Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Foundation for American Art. They both are active at the same level as LeRoy Neiman and they do reflect those artists' distinctive personal interests in several ways.

Andras Szanto: Before you continue, just give us a quick sort of financial snapshot in terms of the size of artist endowed foundations. We are wondering: How big are these foundations? None of the gentlemen so far has used any numbers but perhaps you, Christine, could give us a sense of the biggest, the smallest, the typical artist-endowed foundation...

Christine Vincent: The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts is the largest, not surprisingly. Our figures are focused on 2005, the most recent year in which we have consistent data for a large group of artist-endowed foundations. About \$230 million in total assets were reported by the Warhol Foundation that year and this would be a greater figure today, of course. Of the roughly 300 foundations that we have identified, not all are in existence at this time because some of these things go in and out of existence. Half of those 300 have been created after 1996, so this means that this is a very young field. This is preliminary data, but for 239 foundations for which we could assemble consistent data; there was in 2005 about \$2 billion in assets, about \$1 billion of that in art works and art-related assets. Interestingly enough only half of those foundations hold art assets – the others are purely financially endowed, which is, I think, rather interesting. There is a tendency towards smaller foundations right now. So 70% are under \$5 million in assets. As context, of all foundations in the US only 57% are under \$5 million. However, of all family foundations 86% are under \$5 million and only 20% are \$10 million and above in assets. As preliminary figures, over the last fifteen years, this evolving field of artist-endowed foundations reported \$955 million dollars in charitable disbursements which includes both grants and expenditures for direct charitable activities, such as research and exhibition programs.

Andras Szanto: Which is why you can see that as philanthropic individual artists may be in their lifetimes, if they set up the quest in the right way and if it is stewarded right, then the aggregate giving that is made possible by artists after their lifetime is often a quite colossal figure. And what is unique about these foundations, as already mentioned, unlike your typical foundation which basically presides over a large amount of financial assets, these foundations have a very odd mix of assets. Although you did just say that a number of them are simply financially endowed, great many have artworks, real estate, various letters and ephemera and a combination of financial assets. One of the reasons why it is interesting for us to do this conversation at an art fair, where next door commercial art activities are taking place, is because these foundations, unlike other foundations, are often active on the art market, which is a great thing and also a complicated thing. So what I would like to do is to quickly talk about how you think about transforming the assets, or using the particular kind of assets, of your respective foundations to either steer them towards grant-making philanthropy or operating philanthropy. To what extent are your hands tied because of the nature of the assets that you have, and what are your individual experiences in that?

Charles Bergman: We are very fortunate that for a number of years we have had the pleasure of having two exceptionally fine galleries dealing with our art inventory and all matters associated with that endeavor. The Robert Miller Gallery, for our Krasners – Betsy Miller has a wonderful presence in Chelsea – and Joan Washburn's gallery for our Pollocks uptown. So the disposition of the remaining Pollocks and Krasners is taken care of...

Andras Szanto: How many are there presently?

Charles Bergman: Betsy, are you in the audience? What answer would you give to that question?

Betsy Miller (in the audience): 300.

Charles Bergman: 300 Krasners. As for the Pollocks we have a few early paintings left and some drawings and prints.

Andras Szanto: So these are actively on the market, available right now, benefiting the foundation to be used for grant-making activities?

Charles Bergman: Exactly!

Andras Szanto: Is this also the case for the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation? You mentioned that you do not have very many Lichtensteins?

Jack Cowart: Dorothy Lichtenstein is about six years older than I am, so I hope that she will be around for a very long time as a contemporary. The general family plan from the Lichtenstein side is that we have no representing gallery. We have played the field a little bit and we have been in contract and out of contract, but it basically is to reserve as much as possible for museums and institutions and to help place work that comes from the family into the museums. So it is basically not on the market and as museums do not have any money anymore it will be really not on the market until they get more robust.

Andras Szanto: Nick, Jack?

Nicholas Fox Weber: In our case, when Josef Albers died in 1976 Anni Albers and I essentially worked through the estate and divided it into three categories: One was the substantial body of work to be given away. An Albers museum was created; we gave them to the Yale Art Gallery and other museums. The second collection was our core collection never to be given from the foundation and to be lent to exhibitions as needed. And the third is what we called the “distribution collection”. And there we are absolutely blessed in having Leslie Waddington in London as our international representative, responsible for all of our dealings. He is a great support and advisor and very much part of what we do, for example concerning the catalogue raisonnée and our work in Africa.

Andras Szanto: So in your case, as in Charlie’s case, the state of the art market can have a great impact on the given year’s proceeds for the foundation?

Nicholas Fox Weber: Yes, it can, but we are not in a situation where we are desperately counting on cash for one particular purpose. But of course it does and one tries to build up the legacy of an artist to support various causes.

Christine Vincent: So in some cases sales have helped to create permanently endowed funds. That’s important to say, it is a big part of this picture.

Jack Cowart: I was actually selling some works that Dorothy gave us to set up the endowment.

Andras Szanto: What is the situation at Dedalus?

Jack Flam: We inherited almost all of Motherwell’s art. He settled with his family separately.

Andras Szanto: How many works do you have?

Jack Flam: Quite a few. Paintings, collages, prints and we have all the moral rights, the copyrights, etc. So we basically were his heirs, the foundation. This is very clear and clean. We don’t have any family members involved; we own all the art outright. At the beginning we were going to simply give away a lot works to museums. But I talked a lot to museum curators, because I have done a lot of curating, and they all made clear that if we just gave things away we would be in trouble, because people won’t necessarily treat the things they get for free with the same respect they treat things that they have to put some money into. So we decided to start a project which is called “Gift Purchase”: We gave works to museums for a fraction, a really small fraction, for less than 50% percent of their

fair value. That worked very well, and it worked well in part because we didn't have a single dealer. Motherwell had dealers in his lifetime and some of these are people we still do business with, but we do not have one single dealer. As a result of that, we did not have constraints in the early phase especially, that were determined by the dealer's interests, which are very legitimate ones, regarding commissions etc., but which were not always the same as the interest of the artist. It allowed us to sell to museums at steep discounts.

Andras Szanto: But you do this directly; you do not have an intermediary usually.

Jack Flam: With museums we do it directly. We do use galleries, but we don't have an exclusive gallery for sales on the market.

Andras Szanto: Christine, I do not want get too technical – these very kind people have really abandoned the sunshine and the pool for this conversation. But without getting too deep into this, walk us a little bit through the logistics of the so-called “charitable use”-question. To what extent, if you have these types of assets, may you decide to structure a foundation in some way or another?

Christine Vincent: Well, you can find every formula that is possible and the folks up here represent the variety of these formulas. The Pollock-Krasner Foundation conceptualized its art-assets as a resource ultimately to support its grant-making program. So those were not categorized as charitable use assets, meaning assets that are used in a kind of program that Jack runs for example. But they are viewed as assets to be properly optimized in value – that's the responsibility of the foundation – optimized in value through scholarship, exhibitions, proper development of the artist's legacy, all of those things. But their role ultimately was to be sold as Charlie has described to endow and support the foundation's grantmaking program. And then you have other instances which have been described here, in which groups of art assets are identified for different types of uses and are categorized in different ways. The art which is to be used as the resource for scholarship, research, exhibition, publication and that sort of thing is classified as charitable a use asset. Even assets that are ultimately going to be sold in the long-run are classified as charitable use assets based on current usage.

Andras Szanto: Going to the tax laws, you have to demonstrate that these are not just sitting around, but that they are being used in a charitable way?

Christine Vincent: Yes. And at the end of the day the reason is important. Because these are extremely complicated organizations in terms of issues of liquidity but also in terms of issues of required pay-out – either direct pay-outs for grants or expenditure pay-outs for the charitable use activities. And the way that you classify your assets has a lot to do with what drives those requirements for pay-out and for charitable expenditure. Artist-endowed foundations are not something that people do rolling out of bed. They are very carefully designed for the assets and the charitable purpose and intent of the donor. They have to be carefully structured, developed and maintained.

Andras Szanto: That's the number one priority: If you are in the audience and if you are ready to endow a foundation: you have to get a good lawyer. While we are on this: One of the ways these foundations often extract capacity from their holdings is through licensing. Unfortunately we could not have Joel Wachs join us, the head of the Andy Warhol Foundation. He regrets that he couldn't be here today (they had a board meeting yesterday so he had to fly back). The Andy Warhol Foundation is probably the most aggressive among foundations in using Warhol imagery in various commercial products and has transformed that into a very active grant-making program. How do you gentlemen feel about licensing as a resource, are there any pros and cons doing that?

Charles Bergman: We have a relationship with the Artist's Rights Society and from time to time we do license – appropriate things like jigsaw-puzzles or children books...

Andras Szanto: Does that represent a significant resource for you?

Charles Bergman: No.

Jack Cowart: Roy, whose work seems to be beloved by every graphic designer in the 20th century, was actually the kind of person who said: “Isn't one t-shirt enough? Or one mug?” On the other hand he would, if there was an exhibition of his work at a museum, go in partnership with that museum shop. Because they had taken the risk, he would say that they could do the usual run of related exhibition

material and that it would go to their shop. That was kind of payback in some ways. Roy set up a rights and reproductions manager where the royalties were estimated to basically cover the costs of that rights and reproduction manager plus a little bit for lunch. It was more institution-based, rather than commercially-based and is still in the estate. It may eventually be moved over to the foundation; we advise what are appropriate uses and what not. Less is better in the Lichtensteinian case, because everybody has already ripped off all of the imagery of Roy. So we see plenty of Roy on the rebound.

Nicholas Fox Weber: It is a very important point for us – for both, Anni and Josef Albers' work. Anni was a textile designer, we are interested in new editions of her textiles, there are some being made by Knoll International at the moment and by other people. At the same time she made fascinating jewelry out of hardware and stationery store components and we have had kits made. The income from the kits goes to our projects in Africa. And we are delighted with our very, very carefully produced Hermès scarves, an edition based on Josef Albers' work...

Andras Szanto: By the way we will give these away after the panel – if you stay all through...

Christine Vincent: And don't forget the furniture...

Nicholas Fox Weber: Furniture is a big deal for us, too. Vitra design makes some of Albers' tables and this is a way, not just of generating income, but of having their work out in the world. This is essential to us: Having it enjoyed by more people in more situations. And royalties from Albers' great book "Interaction of Color" can be substantial.

Andras Szanto: So for you it is actually a significant resource. And it is a way of actually advancing your mandate.

Nicholas Fox Weber: That is correct. And that is something we hope to build up.

Andras Szanto: So here too you can see this extraordinary diversity that you have among artist endowed foundations.

Jack Cowart: That is very good missionary work, too.

Jack Flam: In our situation... Well, I should say "my" situation, because I was personally named in Motherwell's will as given control of rights and reproductions, aside from my functions at the foundation – though I always worked with other board members on these decisions. We don't do ashtrays, and we don't do t-shirts. On the whole we are rather austere about how we allow the imagery to be used.

Christine Vincent: It is fascinating that very often – not always, but very often – artists have carefully thought out the question of how their foundation will be supported. They may not have thought about it in MBA terminology, in terms of having a business plan, but they have thought about these issues. For example very consistent with what Nick has described, is Isamu Noguchi's Foundation, which received the rights to his designs – furniture, lights, a whole range of things. And that is an art form and it has to be stewarded with care. But in addition, there are artists whose artwork absolutely takes place within the context of licensing. Ezra Jack Keats, the wonderful children's book author and illustrator who is famous for having written and illustrated "The Snowy Day," set-up a foundation which is funded by his copyrights. And it is that foundation that stewards the reissuing of all of his books and publications and develops those assets in various ways in order to support its grants for children's literacy and creativity. There are other examples of that. So there are artists whose aesthetic realization takes place within this context of licensing, almost exclusively as well.

Jack Cowart: I want to jump in again. It is a kind of a new learning curve that we are on because in August we have acquired the almost to be auctioned to the four winds estate of a photographer, Harry Shunk. This is Shunk-Kender, who was in the 1960s doing all the photos of Nouveau Réalistes, then Christo and all of these things like happenings, environments and performances in the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s. He died intestate and his estate was about to be dumped or just thrown out. So we stepped in to rescue the 60,000 photographs, the 35,000 negatives and the 35,000 contacts, because it was a cause to preserve it in context so that it could be studied. But I have been becoming aware that photographers lived by their reproduction rights, by their fee charges. So we took over that estate and the copyright, not the full estate but the photographic collection, and the idea was first to be able to restore the name of Harry Shunk or Shunk-Kender to the photographs.

Andras Szanto: As we look at the next generation of artists that are going to be endowing their foundation, many of them are photographers.

Jack Cowart: It looks like we are profiteering from this. But it was basically set up, again, to facilitate the public's access to the photographs which were never accessible, because Harry was a recluse and very difficult to work with. We are a kind of photo-house now for this sort of work. In recognition of his contribution and also of his partner John Kender, who still has family, we want to indicate that we are doing a good job in keeping their names and their legacies available. You can't do that if you are starting to set up a \$2 thousand reproduction fee for every repro.

Andras Szanto: Since you raised this issue, and mindful of the time, I want to jump ahead to this topic in general. One of the things that are pretty obvious is that not everybody is a Roy Lichtenstein, not everybody is a Jackson Pollock or Lee Krasner, not every artist leaves behind a legacy that is enormously valuable at that present time on the market, or has very substantial estate, that would allow people to steward that legacy. So I would like to talk a little bit about how resources can be maximized in this field. You know, there are hundreds of artists, presumably, who are leaving behind legacies that are not particularly well taken care of. How can existing foundations expand their activities perhaps to do what you are doing? Is this a sign of things to come? Is there a tension between being set-up as a steward of a particular artist legacy versus being focused on other artists?

Jack Cowart: This is actually why we supported Christine and the Aspen Institute study, to show all of the various recombination potential. The Artist's Legacy Foundation in San Francisco is a group of three or four artists and there are more artists who gathered together to pool the resources because you need only one administration. You do not have to have a million dollar budget for building up the foundation.

Andras Szanto: This would also be the hope for reproductions. So if you can put together a lot of artists you could achieve a lot of efficiency and skill.

Jack Cowart: This model is being developed and if you can come to a kind of a philosophical accord or if you are able to work with the diversity, this is, I think, a very interesting way. Because otherwise a lot of redundant administration is being established.

Christine Vincent: This is the moment of great experimentation and it is really very fascinating for that reason. So you do have things like the Artist's Legacy Foundation, you have other experiments in which artists' art estates for example have gone to community foundations. And community foundations are experimenting to learn what it means to handle that type of asset, often in partnership with another organization or some entity that knows how to manage the legacy aspect of an artist. And then there are other experiments going on in which the heirs, often the surviving spouse, has in effect said "There is one part I would be good at and in other parts I wouldn't." For example Gordon Parks' estate is structured very interestingly—his archive has gone to Wichita State University in Kansas, the state in which Parks was born, while all of his photographs and related materials have been placed in the Meserve-Kunhardt Foundation in New York, which is expert at managing licensing and publishing and developing educational materials pertaining to photographers' works. So people slice and dice, or assemble, or aggregate, or structure in different ways and that's all going on.

Andras Szanto: It is a general problem with foundations, of which, as you have heard, we have 70,000, that they are greatly splintered. There is an enormous replication of effort, as there is in the arts field in general. Everybody has a person doing roughly the same as everybody else's staff is doing. And in this case, in the artist foundation case, the mission is overlapping significantly. If you read the mission statements, you realize that they are often very connected. Do you see in the future these relatively small foundations banding together to take on big needs in the field? Because artists have tremendous problems, are there ways to aggregate resources or to collaborate between foundations to address these needs?

Nicholas Fox Weber: Being an existing foundation, if you are lucky enough to have a good physical facility with proper art storage and proper archival management, you can be hospitable to smaller foundations or the estates of single artists. For example Josef Albers had a beloved student, Ruth Asawa, a Japanese American artist, who gave us recently seventy of her works from the forties and fifties. Knowing that we would be able to take care of them and offer them for exhibitions in the future. Her family won't have the funding to do that. We received incredible archives from one of the

founders of Black Mountain College where both Albers taught. They knew that we had the proper sort of archival files, that we would make the material available for researchers and definitely they were not equipped to do so. You can simply help out in ways like that.

Andras Szanto: In some minutes I want to start taking questions from the audience. Before, I want to go to a sticky area of these foundations. There is a sticky point here which has to do with the fact that a lot of the people in these foundations, around these foundations, on the boards of these foundations, on the advisory committees, in the staff, are people who may own a substantial number of works by these artists. Obviously that changes over time as the staff professionalizes, but there is a bit of an issue here. Is there a conflict of interest that could happen at times? Are there special concerns that need to be addressed in terms of making sure that the foundation exists really for the purpose that it exists for, namely stewarding the legacy and making grants? Or is there a concern that through its activities in on the art market it may also benefit those who are involved?

Jack Cowart: Our lawyers have spent the first two years of our existence being the ethicists for converting family behavior to institutional behavior. Mine too. And who was the “we” when we said “we”? Or who is the “I”? But the conflict of interests is becoming very clear and increasingly clear in the new, here is the technical term, 990 PFs. These are reporting forms the IRS requires non-profits to fill out with detailed information on their activities – and they are asking the kinds of questions exactly like this, which they have never asked before: Is the artwork in your private office? Is it in your home? This is making sure that you affirm that you are working for the public benefit. We went through that study early on. And most of the mature foundations have for a long time and so...but the newest ones on the block sometimes get confused. We talk about this a lot with other artist foundations to remind ourselves that we are tax-privileged and to maintain that benefit to give back to the public in any way possible. And if there is any doubt to go as far away as possible from any perception of benefit or even the whiff of benefit. But it is very clear that families are tending to be the largest private holders of the work of the artist. They are going to get some kind of benefit from a well-run foundation where you have a properly done catalogues raisonné, the art market is happy with it, they understand what they have and where they are going, they have authentications, support, and correct information. You can also say that this is great because it benefits the history of art.

Nicholas Fox Weber: It is my experience that you can be subject to an order whether it is warranted or not. In the case of our foundation we have three trustees where there is no conflict of interest, no major holdings that overlap, we are not family members and so on. But we have had a fairly unpleasant order – maybe they are all unpleasant. We are governed by New York State even though we exist in Connecticut, because we were created in New York State. And when Elliot Spitzer was in charge of things we were subjected to an order. We were accused of having violated certain laws because we had made a gift to a Josef Albers Museum in his hometown Bottrop, Germany, and we had made gifts to the Louisiana Museum in Copenhagen and to the Pompidou Center. And the people ordering us threatened us with major fines because we had not done preliminary research assuring that these were non-profit institutions. And not only was the foundation threatened with a fine, but I was personally threatened with a fine as director: 10% of the amount of the other fine with the stipulation that no one could cover it on my behalf if we were found guilty! This was pretty terrifying for a while and I will never forget the tax-person who was called in looking at the documents and saying to me about the gift to the Pompidou Center “Who is this guy Georges Pompidou? Is he a friend of yours, Nick?” And we had to get proofs from embassies to say that all of these gifts were permissible. The ultimate insult for me was when they challenged the gift to Albers’ hometown – we had actually made the gift to the city. And they said “Can you get someone from Yale to say that that is okay?” And I have this image of going into the Yale Art Gallery and getting a very nice custodian there to sign the document. We were finally okay but it was nasty going.

Andras Szanto: So all of which is to say: Before you jump into this field, get a good lawyer!

Jack Flam: Most of these organizations in Europe now have an American presence. So there are the American Friends of the Tate, the American Friends of the Centre Pompidou to avoid precisely that sort of thing.

Andras Szanto: I have one last question. Very quickly, 30-second-answers: How can we get today’s wealthy artists to become more philanthropic?

Charles Bergman: Expose them to role models that have worked well, that have been satisfactory, and that have been rewarding to other artists. That's how you do it in my opinion.

Nicholas Fox Weber: I am sorry to sound cynical but: Convince them that it is to everyone's tax advantage.

Christine Vincent: It is!

Jack Cowart: It is a change to their tax status. Artists can be incredibly illiquid. They cannot claim the fair market value of a donated work. If an artist donates a self-created work, the artist can only deduct the cost of materials.

Andras Szanto: Jack?

Jack Flam: All of the above.

Christine Vincent: The attorneys and accountants who work with artists are very influential. And I think there needs to be some education in terms of the tax benefit. Here are two great quotes – I really can't say who the authors are, but they come from some of the folks I have described and they are living artists who have foundations. Both of these artists were commenting on the same phenomenon, which was the extent to which their personal income taxes went down when they put money into their foundations, lower income tax, alright? One of them, who is wonderfully enthusiastic, said: "It's magic! It's magic! I put money into my foundation, I get to do these extraordinary things and my taxes go down!" And the other one said: "Is this legal?"

Andras Szanto: On that note, we go to our questions...

Audience: I am Herman Mulligan from Minneapolis and I do a lot of non-profit board work. I follow up on the license things because this is a really big issue. I was wondering how much effort you make in tracking down violations of your licensing, in other words, rip-offs.

Nicholas Fox Weber: We track down violations. And we had some nasty encounters. I am perfectly willing to say that the Museum of Modern Art was selling an illegal reproduction and was fairly arrogant in its approach to the problem. One has to go after these things. I am also very aware, that for example the Le Corbusier Foundation in Paris, which is a superb foundation with a wonderful research and exhibition facility is funded completely by the sale of his furniture rights, but there is a great problem that they are always fighting, because two other designers are claiming, perhaps with justification, a role in making those designs. So this is a very complex area.

Jack Cowart: Most of us belong in a global rights management group. We, in the case of Lichtenstein will expect the rights agencies to first pick up something. Or somebody will be traveling in Italy and buy a Roy Lichtenstein bathing suite by a designer and send it to us "Did you know this was going on?" There are occasions that Lichtenstein rights will signal their lack of interest in this product then there are some damages. But if we would try to search out every appropriate and inappropriate use we would be cops 24/7 and we have better things to do with our time.

Andras Szanto: And of course, sometimes an image is just an image. There is a wonderful work at this fair, a drawing based on a Google Search on the name of Roy Lichtenstein. And you see all the little thumbnails, little tiny Roy Lichtenstein drawings, they are absolutely wonderful. I don't think that you are going to sue them.

Jack Cowart: Well, we believe in sampling and re-use. Why not? But if it is a Lichtenstein image of a painting and it is completely distorted, we will try to educate the offender.

Audience: Sue Stoffel, I am a trustee in New York and I have a question that has been raised now about "philanthrocapitalism" and accountability. I am wondering, other than to your boards, to whom are you inevitably accountable? I mean I know that there is the IRS, but do you produce annual reports as well?

Christine Vincent: To say it broadly: Foundations are extremely regulated. Of the entire non-profit world foundations are probably the most regulated entity. They have the greatest number of rules and

they are regulated by the IRS and by the state in which they exist. As you know there are some states that are better at that than others, and those tend to be the ones with the largest concentrations of foundations. But I would say as somebody who has worked for a long time in the foundation field that the field overall has an ongoing conversation with itself about issues of accountability and matters of transparency, the kinds of information that are provided, all of which is now publicly accessible through the 990 PF reports which can be viewed at www.Guidestar.org. And foundations themselves are now producing websites. I hope you all look at the websites for these four institutions which each do a terrific job of sharing information about the range of activities in which they are involved. My observation is that, as this sector has emerged, it has shifted away from an initial inclination to be very low profile to a greater willingness to be more visible and have greater visibility for the foundations and their activities. But there will remain an ongoing conversation about the foundation world as a whole in terms of accountability. It is accountable to the general public and that has to do a lot with the environment in which there is now much greater scrutiny. The IRS has in the last five years heightened the regulatory role that it has taken. It is involved in things that it has not been involved in before, in terms of examining governance and those kinds of issues.

Andras Szanto: On the note of visibility, I would like to encourage you to be on the look-out for the Aspen Institute report which will contain a great deal of information on this! Also in today's Art Newspaper there is an article on this. But most of all – if you are dealers, family members, artists – be mindful that a tremendous amount of work has been created to create models for artist's philanthropy, and at no time it has been more needed than now. So with that, I would like to thank all the panelists – and enjoy the fair!

Art | Basel | Miami Beach | 4-7 | 12 | 2008

Art | Basel | Conversations

Sunday | Dec 7 | Artistic Production | Los Angeles, an Alternate Artworld Model?

What are the main drivers for the art scene in Los Angeles?
How does the interaction between the artists' generations come into play?
How do the different art sectors influence each other?
What role do art schools play?
And what impact do galleries have?

Billy AI Bengston | Artist, Venice, California

Sterling Ruby | Artist, Los Angeles

Paul Schimmel | Chief Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

Moderator | **Russell Ferguson** | Chair, UCLA Department of Art, Los Angeles

Welcome | **Sylvia Chivaranond**

Good morning everyone to today's Art Basel Conversation "Artistic Production – Los Angeles, an Alternate Artworld Model?" Today we have four esteemed speakers. To my right, moderating today's panel is Russell Ferguson. He is the chair of the department of art at UCLA. To his right is the artist Sterling Ruby, to his right is Billy Al Bengston and to his right is Paul Schimmel, the chief curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. So please help me welcome our four speakers!

Russell Ferguson: Hi everyone and thanks for coming out this Sunday morning. It is my pleasure to be here with this distinguished panel, two artists, one curator.

I should probably begin by saying... because we are from LA and we have Paul Schimmel from MOCA with us, a lot of people were asking us, walking around at the fair, about the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. MOCA is for me personally – I worked there for ten years myself – and I think to everybody in the artworld, a crucial and important institution. But that is not what this panel is about – we are really here to talk about art making in Los Angeles and I don't want to get too sidetracked by that. We will take questions towards the end of the panel. Having said that I want to move on to the real subject of the panel, which is the model of art making that has developed in Los Angeles over the past decades and whether it is really an alternative or not. I mean, it's interesting to ask the question that way. "Alternative to what?" is the question. When you are living and working in a place you don't think that your way of working is any particular alternative to anything. It is where you live and the way you work. But I suppose from the outside there is a question what is different to other art centers and I suppose to New York in particular. I thought one way we could get into that is by starting with the artists – two artists from two different generations. I thought in discussing this with Paul, that an interesting way to begin the discussion would be if you would tell us: How did you start when you became a professional artist in Los Angeles? What was the context like? How did you enter into the art scene in Los Angeles and become an artist? Billy, maybe we could start with you?

Billy Al Bengston: I just declared that I was an artist 57 years ago. And at that time being an artist was tantamount to being a real asshole. I don't know what happened in this world. We were supposed to wear berets and drink cheap wine, which we did. There weren't any artists. Everybody was either a painter, or a potter, a sculptor, so on and so forth. Fortunately Ed Kienholz and I had a good relationship and worked into that. But I started as a ceramist. I really had no ability to do anything else. Stupid luck.

Russell Ferguson: What was your education? Formally.

Billy Al Bengston: Sketchy.

Russell Ferguson: Sketchy, not sketching.

Billy Al Bengston: Right. Everybody in my era went to go to school to teach. And I couldn't make it the first year and I quit and went to work and then the second and third year I decided to go back. After that I said "I'm not going to be a teacher". I did Arts and Crafts for a year, I always liked ceramics. Ever since I have met Peter Voukos who was *the* ceramic artist of Los Angeles, he took me under his wing. I stayed there at the art school which is now called Otis, in the ceramics department and watched Pete make things. And I realized that I was never going to be as good as him but I could still paint better than him – that's why I am a painter more or less.

Russell Ferguson: What happened to you?

Sterling Ruby: I grew up on the East Coast, in Baltimore, Maryland and York, Pennsylvania. I have always had a fascination with Los Angeles, especially since the early 90's when I first started thinking of myself as an artist. Prior to coming to LA I had already gone to school for seven years, both in Pennsylvania and in Chicago. I was a working artist in Pennsylvania, although nothing had ever happened during my time there. Very little happened in Chicago either. LA seemed to have a very strange psychology to it. It also had the entertainment industry and a couple of amazing masters programs where people actually taught. It also had the entertainment industry and a couple of amazing schools, where influential artists actually taught within the graduate programs. I went to Art Center College of Design and had the best time ever. I studied under Diana Thater, Liz Larner, Patti Podesta, Bruce Hainley, Chris Williams, Ann Goldstein, Richard Hawkins and Mike Kelley.

It was like a big dysfunctional family who were always home. They fought with me, pushed me and really challenged a lot of my pre-determined thinking. But in some strange way my experience really did have a lot to do with Los Angeles. I just loved it, it was the most transient environment ever and I decided to stay. And as soon as I decided to stay, things started happening for me.

Russell Ferguson: In your generation Los Angeles seemed like a place to go for a fairly ambitious young artist...

Sterling Ruby: Absolutely! Although it still seemed like an alternative to me. I had no desire to go to New York. My decisions to move there were really about the place as well as the kind of ideas and curriculums these Los Angeles artists had developed. I mean, having Billy here at the talk today, it really is a scenario of a progression that has happened in Los Angeles over the past thirty to forty years. Everybody is a student of everybody else. Like Billy said, when I was on the East Coast and also in Chicago you never went to school for a career. You always went to school to get a degree so that you could teach. And I went to Los Angeles thinking that. I remember having a meeting with Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe and he asked me: "Why did you come to school here?" and I said "I feel that I need a degree to teach." And he said something like...you are the dumbest fucker ever...160,000 dollars...to teach?! That's ridiculous! And everything changed in my mind-set at that point; he just kicked it out of me right then and there.

Russell Ferguson: Billy, when you were a young artist, did you consider to go to New York? I mean the feeling was sort of the norm in a way. If you were ambitious there was this "Should I move to New York?" Sterling said that he was specifically not interested in going to New York. Did you think about it?

Billy Al Bengston: Everybody in the right mind would be in New York today. That's the way it goes. You are pretty stupid if you go somewhere else. It is the center. It has the communication, it has the support, it has everything you need. The weather is better in California for sure. And in my day... I never really trusted the artworld, I still don't and I figured out that I could support myself in California doing other things. Which I could. The only thing you could do in New York to support yourself is by doing things that artists do there. This was not my cup of tea. I don't like drugs, don't drink that much, I don't care about parties, so...

Sterling Ruby: I think that is a huge difference between LA and New York. Whenever I go to New York for an extended period of time I feel socially exhausted. LA is such a hermetic city – you get bigger space for less money and there are more circumstances where you can become reclusive, which I actually find quite productive. Whereas a lot of my friends in New York feel obligated to go out, socialize; they spend less time in the studio.

Billy Al Bengston: But this is show business, man. And you can have all the show business you want in LA, it doesn't make a damn of a difference. You delineated what it is. You have a gang, when I was a young artist, I had a gang, and it was sort of gang warfare. And we didn't understand anything else. "Get in our way we kick your ass!" You know? This is how it works.

Russell Ferguson: Paul, you have been a close observer of the scene in LA for more than twenty years. What do you think about what Billy and Sterling have said?

Paul Schimmel: I moved to Los Angeles from New York in 1981 and I would say that in the eighties really a kind of scene change took place clearly because of the schools you both mentioned. The importance of schools was a defining institutional foundation that really separated Los Angeles from other creative centers. To this day New York is to a large degree dominated by the gallery world, the gallery market, and in fact the relationships that artists develop in and around those galleries are sort of related to that commercial world. In Los Angeles it seemed to me from the first time I got there, that you had really very different sensibilities by artists. And coming from outside of Los Angeles it wouldn't seem like you would have an artist who...in New York you would think they wouldn't really communicate with each other but somehow, because of the schools, because they kind of had grown up together in these various art departments was a lot more interchange between artists that did not have to do in a sense with the commercial world. My first observations in Los Angeles were from having worked in Houston in the seventies and at that time you thought: "Well, in New York everybody talks about who is showing with whom? And in Los Angeles they talk about who is teaching where? And in Houston actually they are only talking about who is fucking whom."

Billy AI Bengston: That was also Los Angeles!

Paul Schimmel: Yet, what seemed to be the case in the early eighties, was that wave after wave artists who had come of age in Los Angeles were leaving. They were still going to New York and Europe. And I think that changed dramatically during the eighties. I think not only because the development of the schools so much, although this is a wonderful sort of joking about who is first at UCLA, Calarts, Art Center – this kind of competitiveness –, but in fact because of the development of much broader infrastructure of museums like MOCA, devoted to contemporary art, and other museums doing increasingly more work in Newport, Santa Monica, LACMA, you had, even more importantly for the artist community, a lot of alternative “centers”. Non-museum, but exhibition spaces, that allowed artists opportunities that were in the essence outside of the commercial arena, outside of the academic and outside of the large sort of institutions. I think the eighties were an extraordinary changing period. The world began to recognize in the early nineties that a change had really taken place during the eighties. And that for me was an immensely sort of satisfying generation to have kind of grown up with.

Russell Ferguson: I think the emergence of a better, more professional infrastructure in the eighties certainly made it seem more valuable to a lot of artists coming out of art school to stay in Los Angeles. But I mean everybody mentions the proliferation of so many very good art schools in LA as one of the defining features of LA and it does make it quite different than New York. And there are a large number of artists in LA who are very revered as teachers. In many cases for many years they did not have very glamorous commercially active careers but they have always been extraordinary influential within the LA art community. I mean, you can think of Paul McCarthy at the UCLA for many years, that is of course a very well-known artist not commercially successful for many years. Or Larry Johnson at Otis, Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe at Art Center or Christopher Williams at Art Center, too. These are people who have been always highly respected within Los Angeles as artists and were able to maintain an identity and a high visibility in large parts through their activity as teachers of younger artists as well and I think you could follow that pattern back. That’s a model that I don’t see quite as much in other cities, especially in New York perhaps.

Paul Schimmel: If there had not been the art schools, I think a great number of the artists we admire, and I really think of the essential Los Angeles artists, would not have stayed. That includes John Baldessari and Chris Burden. You know, Chris gave a job to Paul McCarthy. Paul said that he was going back to Utah! You know, back to Salt Lake City if there had not been the fact that he was given a part-time job at UCLA and this was not a tenure-track position, this was 8000 dollars a year! And that was not so long ago. I mean, literally throughout the eighties somebody like Paul had no gallery shows, no sales and if there hadn’t been this relatively modest support, the opportunity to do what he does today, wouldn’t be there.

Russell Ferguson: I think also the example that various senior artists like Baldessari and Burden were teaching for so long, legitimized it in a way. Not as an activity that you had if you weren’t making any money from your art, but as something that is really integral to what an artist does in that community. The number of artists who don’t teach or have never taught is really quite small in LA. Billy, have you done much teaching yourself?

Billy AI Bengston: I am a poor teacher. Not good at all. These guys here are talking about things I don’t know anything about. Diebenkorn was what these guys are talking about, he was that type of artist. He was crushed when UCLA canned in.

Paul Schimmel: It is amazing. Here is Dick Diebenkorn, one of the great painters in America, and he said: “I do not want to have to be an administrator, I just want to teach and I am in a stage in my life where I don’t need the income, let me just teach a couple of courses a year.” And they said: “No we can’t treat you differently than everyone else. You have to go.” And he said “Okay.” But if UCLA hadn’t collapsed in the seventies in that decision, the whole new generation with Charlie Ray, Chris Burden and Paul McCarthy wouldn’t have happened. So it was a kind of opening up.

Billy AI Bengston: There is probably one major distinction between the 1980s art that came in and my gang. My crowd was always interested in making a product that was tight, beautiful and something that would live.

Sterling Ruby: That was also an important thing for me, especially since I have gotten to know Paul [Schimmel]. It has been ten years or more...prior to moving to Los Angeles since I first picked up the "Helter Skelter" catalogue. This was a defining moment for me. In relation to art, it was a very dichotomous situation compared to elements and phenomena of beauty and form. This was about psychology; it was about very, very deep-rooted pathological situations within an artist's behavior, which manifested itself in their work. LA seemed to be the best place to develop upon that. And that was my beacon. I mean, I knew of no other center in the world that was harnessing that kind of stuff.

Billy AI Bengston: It is show business. LA is a one-industry town. This is the reason why we have problems keeping museums going and everything. They only want one industry. I don't know if you would agree with that...

Paul Schimmel: I actually think that it is oddly deliberating to be a third class citizen. I mean yes, the entertainment industry dominates but it actually has no real significant impact on the contemporary artworld and that's fantastically important to the success that Los Angeles has. If you look at the London art scene, which has, in some ways a preponderance of art schools, it has some similarities in terms of a generation that emerged in the late eighties and in the early nineties. But the artists are sort of movie stars in London and that business of being in the tabloid, being on the front page, makes them living different lives than us maybe, in some cases, in the best interest of their art. In Los Angeles there is no delusion that artists have, that they are competing with the movie stars. The movie stars are the movie stars and the artists are the artists. And in fact there seems to be far more interest in a sense, in exploring the "iconography" of the popular media outside of Los Angeles, by artists that are in London and in New York and in Berlin, than in Los Angeles. We kind of ignore them and they kind of ignore us – that doesn't exactly pay the bills however. If it's that what your point was.

Billy AI Bengston: I don't know. Actually it is a pain in the ass not being a star. But you aren't. And as you learn to live with it gives you a little humility if you are in that city. We don't have any gravity.

Paul Schimmel: But there was also a moment in your career, when you and Ruscha and Kienholz and the Ferus became very famous. Actually it looked like for a moment there was truly an intersection between the movie world, the entertainment world and the artworld. You are still friends with people like Lauren Hutton...

Billy AI Bengston: That's Ruscha! Ruscha was as star. And he is still, by the way. And he is still great. And he still makes beautiful things and...

Sterling Ruby: But this interest from Hollywood in the artworld has been reinvigorated, perhaps even corrupted over the recent past by many new executives, actors and agents; it's as if art and artists have become untouchable symbols of desire for these industry people...who knows who, who owns what. I have to admit that it is unusual to have somebody like Keanu Reeves or the creator of Sex and the City coming to the studio for a visit. I mean, it is odd, but if the interest is genuinely there then why not.

Russell Ferguson: Yes, it is always a little shocking when there is a crossover...Let me broaden that out a little bit. Billy, you talked about a sort of change in the eighties, from the predominance of the schools and then a maybe more academically driven environment. But one thing that I think has been true in LA for a long time, is that the economics of being an artist, especially a young artist, are a little bit easier to handle in Los Angeles in terms of space to work. If you want to make objects or sculpture it is extraordinary difficult if real estate is very expensive. And it is still possible, relatively speaking, to find a space to work in Los Angeles. And your choice of day-jobs maybe has a little bit more flexibility here, too. That is something that I think has been true through the decades in Los Angeles. Maybe we could talk a little bit about that, just the actual logistics of making work in Los Angeles.

Sterling Ruby: It is cheaper.

Billy AI Bengston: Yes, but you sell for less. So it is a trade-off. Or you don't sell at all which is a really trade-off. In New York a studio that would cost, when I was a young artist, 200 dollars, would cost 20 dollars in Los Angeles. And this is sort of what the prizes were at that time. A painting from Los Angeles would cost 20 dollars, a painting from New York 200 dollars. But you had to live in that shitty climate. So that was a trade-off.

Sterling Ruby: But this is true. About six years ago I had a very large body of friends and we weren't making money. This group included people like Amanda Ross-Ho, Aaron Curry, Stephen Rhodes, Kirsten Stoltmann, David Ratcliff, Sarah Conaway. We actually got the opportunity to rent a 14,000 square foot building altogether for forty cents a square foot. You cannot do that in New York. It is just an absolute impossibility. This allowed us to make whatever work we wanted to make within a time frame where we didn't have any money or income from sales. We were all paying back our student loans. We were all living on an extremely tight shoestring budget. Having that kind of opportunity of forty cents a square foot was brilliant. It allowed us all to flourish.

Billy AI Bengston: You know, there were no student loans when I was a kid...But I also worked in a lot of trades. That's another thing you can do in California. You can pick up a lot of trades and to this day it is really important for me to be able to cook, to build, to drive, so on and so forth. All those things you can do, so that you do not have to rely on other people. I can wire, I can draft, I can do all that crap. But you have to learn how to do these things, I think, to be an artist. In many respects. It is a working man's or working woman's job. I guess, it wasn't a woman's job at that time.

Paul Schimmel: You know, another aspect of Los Angeles has to do with a non-traditional industrial base, which artists have been able to use. Billy says that he didn't go to New York for any number of reasons. But he wasn't as forthright as he could be. I mean, there were dealers in New York who wanted to set him up and wanted to give him a beautiful studio in which to work. But if you look not only at the surf culture and the motorcycle racing...what would your work have been without in a sense the precedent outside of the artworld in terms of industrial techniques. You started as a ceramist, Billy. You wouldn't do that in New York. You make ceramics, Sterling. You are casting resins today. That is a material that goes back to California in the sixties. I mean, these are really materials and processes that come from outside of the "traditional" artworld. Los Angeles in terms of performance art, in terms of video, in terms of new media, has been absolutely open in a way. There is not any other city in the United States that has an equivalent.

Billy AI Bengston: Also there are good builders that work with the younger artists, which we didn't have at our time either. People, who are fantastic manufacturers who make the work that we don't want to do.

Russell Ferguson: We have been to this already several times, but the influence of the ceramics tradition in Southern California is something that is really important. I don't think that there is any comparable thing like that elsewhere.

Billy AI Bengston: The thing that California had, that was different than the East Coast, is that we came out of an Asian tradition, not an European tradition. And the Asian touch...we are more sensitive in a way, a little more feminine...

Russell Ferguson: You know, one of the criticisms that are made of Los Angeles art scene, and I hear it from artists who live in LA, maybe more than from outside, is that among the collectors and other people, and maybe it is related to the constant production of new young artists out of the art schools, is an emphasis on young artists and new artists sometimes. I think there is a feeling that this is at the expense of interesting mid-career and older artists, who have been working. Is there a kind of overemphasis on the new and the emerging talent? What is your experience?

Sterling Ruby: I think that you are absolutely right. But perhaps it is starting to taper off a bit. I mean, during the late nineties there was the massive influx of what was happening at UCLA. Worldwide, everybody knew about it and everybody clambered onto it. And it became a scenario where youth represented a type of credential. Maybe this is changing. It is amazing to see a Los Angeles artist like Richard Hawkins, who has been doing brilliant work for the past fifteen years and has gotten very little recognition until recently. In my opinion this is partially because of his conjunction with the art schools and the students. He is now becoming a kind of legacy artist, particularly for Los Angeles. Not only because of his ever changing work, but also because he fostered so many unique thinking students who speak very highly of him and respect his work. The same is true for other mid-career artists like Larry Johnson, who didn't necessarily receive the kind of recognition he should have had at an early stage.

Paul Schimmel: I was surprised from the beginning about the multigenerational interaction in Los Angeles. I remember driving up from Newport Beach to a party that David Askevold was having at his studio, it was like 1982. It was really interesting, it was the first time I met Mike Kelley – that would make sense, since he was the same generation. But Michael Asher was there, John Baldessari was there, and younger artists like Raymond Pettibon. There was this kind of collision of different ideologies and different generations that you wouldn't see in another place. I actually think that this is rather interesting. It is not so hierarchical; it is a funny kind of loop that keeps coming back. And it is why younger artists like Sterling can admire Billy AI. There is this wonderful sort of looping around through the generations.

Billy AI Bengston: You have mentioned Orange County. Orange County is the asshole of Southern California.

Paul Schimmel: Thank you.

Billy AI Bengston: But it is very, very clean. And if you want to get something done correctly you go get yourself an Orange County builder or something like that. This whole place is painted the same color, lit the same way...

Paul Schimmel: It was a little bit like living on Mars, but I had nine years at the Newport Harbor Art Museum, I did a Chris Burden retrospective. I started at Newport and I love the time there. They kind of leave you alone, too.

Billy AI Bengston: What kind of beige was your house? I mean, in Orange County most of the things I was able to do I couldn't have done. And nobody talks about Orange County. It is really strange you go into this conservative, really right wing place and this is where the weirdos are really hanging out.

Paul Schimmel: And they buy art! Including yours!

Russell Ferguson: I think we could open up and take some questions from the audience now...

Audience: I am really curious what it is like living in Los Angeles. How do you deal with the geography of the different groups of artists in Venice, Bergamot, Santa Monica, Chinatown...Can you talk about that, being an artist in Los Angeles?

Paul Schimmel: You know, New York is so real-estate-orientated. When I was a kid, growing up, it was 57th street, and then it was SoHo and then Chelsea for a long time. In the thirty years I have been in Los Angeles I have literally seen it almost every two or three years just float, to Downtown, to Chinatown, to Santa Monica, to Venice, to Bergamot...It is not one thing and it is not nearly a substantial building of infrastructure as in other cities.

Billy AI Bengston: We were lucky. When I was a kid there were two choices of where you could live, because there were two places that were cheap: Pasadena or Venice – the two most expensive places now. But being a surfer I had not any choice, it was simple. My first studio was ten dollar a month. That was 2,000 square foot, to give you a picture. And when I moved to my place in Venice it was two cents a square foot. I am still renting in Venice. I don't own a place. Because of building codes there are a lot of things you can't do in California, most of which are good. I mean, those things which are good you can't do. So you get stuck in these ghettos because they can't do anything else with the property. Great for artists, they always create something.

Sterling Ruby: New York has a great infrastructure of galleries, so you can take an afternoon and see an abundance of shows. It's not that way in Los Angeles. I mean the geography of Los Angeles is so diverse. You have downtown, you have the mountains, you have the desert, you have the beach. All of these things are relatively close in proximity as long as you are willing to drive. It is the same thing with the galleries and the museums. It takes a bit of an effort. And you are never going to see everything in one day. But that actually has an emphasis on importance. You go to see somebody's show because it is important.

Billy AI Bengston: Let me ask you something, Sterling. Does the parking question at MOCA influence the fact that you don't go?

Sterling Ruby: I have a pass.

Billy Al Bengston: Yes but really! You are going to see a show and it costs you twenty dollars to park your wheels! It is stupid!

Russell Ferguson: Everyone talks about driving as an issue in LA. Driving is not an issue. Driving is very easy in LA. Parking is an issue...

Billy Al Bengston: You know, I bought a SMART car, thinking that this will work in LA. But they still give you a ticket all the time. It is a really dumb place.

Russell Ferguson: Are there more questions?

Audience: I wonder if you could speak a little bit more about the ceramics being a part of the LA aesthetic. Because I thought that it was very interesting when you, Billy Al, mentioned Peter Voulkos. And then Sterling Ruby, you are a contemporary artist so we all can see that ceramics is being more accepted in the mainstream artworld...

Billy Al Bengston: How many people here know who Peter Voulkos is? – Oh, this is a smart crowd! Without Pete coming to Los Angeles there wouldn't have been any new art. This has nothing to do with anything other than the fact, that he had this energy and he was better than anybody else. Hadn't he had the problems he had, he would be a national treasure in everybody's nation. He was in Japan – he was more revered in Japan than he was in California. Ceramics is for the art of California really crucial, I feel. And we had all the ceramics manufacturing that went on there, Glady McBean etc – things that are greatly collected now and they all have influenced our lives in California. The Californian color came out of that.

It is like Miami – you look out and you just think "God it's beautiful out there!". When you look out in New York, all you see is structures. So, people who are usually involved in the arts, are not really looking at anything. Because to go to these cities they don't see a damn thing. They come up for a couple of weeks and look to Miami and say "Oh this is fascinating, what are we doing with it?" California, in my day it was always open and clear and it still is.

Russell Ferguson: I think that it is important to acknowledge, that the leading ceramic-oriented people in LA have really made a point of not separating that work from the artworld. I could point to Ken Price who was always extremely connected with...

Billy Al Bengston: Wrong! Ken will not show in any ceramics show.

Paul Schimmel: You are saying the same thing...

Russell Ferguson: Well, he doesn't want to be put in that box of "ceramics artist" in the sense that he is different than everyone else. He is an artist. And the same could be said of Adrian Saxe, a great artist and a great teacher who teaches his students at UCLA not ceramics as something special. All of this forth and back crossover it is completely not kept in a box over here somewhere, it is integrated with what everyone is doing.

Billy Al Bengston: It is about technique, too. It's a Californian thing. We are techno-nuts.

Paul Schimmel: And I don't think that Californian artists are afraid to both, participate in and play with the idea of craft in general. That is not just ceramics, that can be knitting, that can be stuff dolls. I was talking of the industrial and it's important, but the idea of the other extreme, the handmade, has gone from a generation of conceptual artists to a generation of feminists to more traditional object makers.

Sterling Ruby: I think there is a catalyst particularly within the Los Angeles area, which has been happening since the thirties. I mean all the Austrian ceramicists who were coming to LA and developing new styles as well as glazes would ultimately inform artists like Peter Voulkos, Ken Price and John Mason. This is a legitimacy that has run the gamut of introducing more earth type works into the system of Los Angeles. And for me it is not so much about the material, it is more about the kind of necessity of the material meaning something. That it has a tactility to it, that's automatically equated to experimentation or therapy.

Paul Schimmel: Think of somebody as talented, as original, as singular, as Kenny Price is – he is absolutely one of the outstanding artists emerged from California, he is revered and understandably so – frankly his work has never received the kind of attention, support and value within the international art market that it has clearly achieved in terms of its impact and influence in the creative communities. So ceramics, although incredibly influential, is also still in the broader international art market a second or third class citizen.

Billy Al Bengston: Don't forget it breaks!

Paul Schimmel: It does do that.

Billy Al Bengston: And it shivers and it dents, and it does all kinds of funny things.

Paul Schimmel: But so do Irwin discs and Kauffman bubbles.

Billy Al Bengston: They were a mistake, they were not made right. Irwin and Kauffman were not very good craftsmen, but they were fabulous artists. And everybody from California can tell you what the problems with them are.

Paul Schimmel: Actually they had Jack Brogan, a good fabricator.

Billy Al Bengston: Yes, Jack Brogan! That is the thing: We have great fabricators in California. Was Brogan originally out of Orange County?

Russell Ferguson: Do you have other questions?

Audience: What opportunities are there for exchange of ideas amongst artists outside of exhibition openings, educational situations and informal associations? Are there any formal or semi-formal opportunities for exchange of ideas on a regular basis?

Russell Ferguson: When I got to LA I used to go all the time, when I was relatively new there, to a certain bar. There were so many artists in that bar every night...

Billy Al Bengston: Jesus, when was this?

Russell Ferguson: In the early nineties.

Billy Al Bengston: Ruscha and I quit go there in the seventies!

Russell Ferguson: I know, that is the history of this place. The story of this bar is one of the great underground narratives in LA. That bar was demolished and then turned into a parking lot. And I think people still mourn it. I think this geography question is also a question about where you get informal exchange of ideas and where is the community, physically, of artists in LA.

Billy Al Bengston: Did you go for lunch or for dinner?

Russell Ferguson: Dinner.

Billy Al Bengston: You see, we always went to lunch. We got a couple of Martinis for lunch and then went back to work. That's when everything got fucked up.

Russell Ferguson: Sterling, what do you think about that? Where is that place where ideas are exchanged?

Sterling Ruby: I think, as Billy has said, there are certain gangs. That's very influential. I have a very good set of friends and we used to work in the same building together. That was an extension of what we had already done prior to having that building. Since then we have all moved into our own spaces but it is not necessarily infrequent for us to get together. It is one of these really odd bonding scenarios; because of the location and geography people really do crowd around in packs.

Billy Al Bengston: It is a ghetto situation. It is all about transportation. You would visit other ghettos but it is too hard to do it. It really is.

Sterling Ruby: In terms of drinking there are still numerous bars for my generation. More and more bars are opening up. You know, Culver City has the “Mandrake”, Chinatown has “Hop Louie”, my crowd of friends tend to go to this place called “Mister T’s” in Highland Park, which is run by an amazing transvestite.

Paul Schimmel: I think actually there has always been a strong scene of alternative meeting spaces. In the seventies you had institutions or non-institutions like LACE, you had bars owned by artists, Allen Rupperberg’s “Al’s Café”, you had everything – and that continues to this day. I am amazed how inexpensively and how quickly visible these underground schools have emerged in Chinatown or in Culver City. All of a sudden they have a kind of following to the degree that institutions like MOCA and LACMA are trying to bring them into our larger institutions to have that kind of vitality that comes out of them.

Russell Ferguson: There was Dave Miller’s “3-day-weekend”, every holiday weekend he would have a huge event with art and get-togethers. I mean I have to say that I was surprised when I got to LA, because it is very casual. But in fact the concentration in New York which also makes it expensive and urban and difficult to make work and so on, also does mean that you are constantly, without planning, running into people you know informally. In Los Angeles the geographic spread of it does mean, that you maybe need a little more effort to get people together because you don’t happen just bump into them on the street.

Audience: What sort of culture do you have regarding communication or exchange of ideas between or amongst people in the different categories of individuals in the artworld: curators, critics, artists, collectors and so forth? Are there many situations where people in all these categories can be found together, talking?

Russell Ferguson: I don’t think these groups are limited to just artists. They are pretty tolerant about letting curators show up if you feel like it.

Billy Al Bengston: Curators are not a problem because they don’t exist, except for Paul. And I mean most of my friends are in other professions – my close friends. We were all together when we were young, but a lot of them have gone on accelerated careers or moved to another location. And then people like your collectors stay with you. My friends are old surfers and motorcycle racers and surfboard builders and things like that. That’s my frame of reference. And my wife’s family. I got Asia at home. That’s a good thing.

Audience: This question is also about material, you talked about ceramics. For me one of the central things is resin. It started in the late sixties and then it kind of died for a while. We know Peter Alexander for example stopped working with resin because it was making him sick. Now I hear that Sterling is using resin. And Peter is going back to resin...

Billy Al Bengston: And Brogan is going to making it!

Audience: Oh, Brogan! In a world where you have a fabricator who is absolutely essential to the whole art scene no one knows what will happen, when Jack dies, because he hasn’t really passed his knowledge, as far as I know, to an apprentice.

Billy Al Bengston: What he does is not rocket science. It is just dangerous. I was knocked down by lacquer. It took me twenty years to recover from it. And Kenny Price had to have his blood completely changed from the glazes that he was using in the early sixties. But resins are not bad anymore because we learned how to deal with it and how to ventilate. That is one thing about California: That we are really interested in getting in and finding out something new and paying attention.

Sterling Ruby: I think it is also because of the industry, the Hollywood industry. I mean artists don’t really know anything about these materials. But the case and point is, that you get to go to these people who are working with it on a daily basis within the movie industry, which is primarily a much bigger production than anything an art studio would ever take on. And so you can tap into this kind of technical knowledge from all of these people and get their expertise, which is phenomenal. But I also think that these materials have become safer. Resin for example made by the Los Angeles company Silpak is cleaner than any other resin available, although it is still horrible.

Audience: I have two questions and maybe they are connected. The first one is if the art fairs have an important role in LA at all? I know that you have two art fairs in January but they are on different dates, and that you have another gathering as we have here or in New York for the Armory Show. And the second question: Do you think that you need a bridge or a tool that could connect the market between the movie stars as buyers and the artists? Do you think that you need that?

Paul Schimmel: It is interesting. Los Angeles is like “I don’t need that. Screw that. It is not important to me.” So you had this big art fair, in the first year it was at its best, in the second year it was half as good, in the third year it was ready to be shut down.

The conduit between the artists and the so-called entertainment community is to a large degree the same conduit that is between artists and the tycoons of industry in New York. And that’s galleries. You do have an increasingly diverse and strong gallery base in Los Angeles because there are so many more artists to represent. That said, maybe less today than in the nineties a lot of Los Angeles artists primary dealers are not in Los Angeles. But they are in New York, in London or Berlin. And that does create a very strange imbalance: You have production here and distribution over there. And I think it is a little bit disheartening for dealers who are often there early and in a very substantial way.

Sterling Ruby: I mean, in the end I can do whatever I want. And I think that’s the way it should be. But I have to agree, that the LA dealers get an abundance of pressure from the other dealers to stage things that they wouldn’t necessarily like to do. That’s quite sad, because in terms of location my LA dealer is the one whom I speak with the most. He is also the dealer who comes to the studio the most. But there is a dichotomy between what LA represents and what New York or London represent. LA is not as high in the hierarchy of the art market chain.

Billy Al Bengston: The market is not the art business. The market is the market. And it is depressing. You make your babies and you send them away.

Sterling Ruby: If I can add one thing though, I think that one of the possibilities with Los Angeles is that young artists have big opportunities. I mean, Paul gave me a show! I had a solo show at MOCA! I didn’t have a solo show at MoMA. I was actually really, really happy to do a very extensive solo museum exhibition in the town that I live in. That made a lot of sense to me, to actually do a large body of work that I loved, for the people that I live with.

Russell Ferguson: One last question?

Audience: Is the economy effecting Los Angeles directly now? This is for Sterling Ruby: How does it affect your practice and your production right now?

Sterling Ruby: I have saved a lot of money over the past couple of years. Everybody was telling me that this would not last. And I believed them. And so I actually feel as if I am not going to change my production at all over the next five, six years. I look at it as a kind of investment, I respect icons such as Paul McCarthy in this regard, artists who have done the same: placing the money that you make over a certain period of time back into the production and the studio. I don’t know what will happen over the next couple of years. But for the most part I am not going to change my production based on sales. I mean if everything falls apart and I have to move back into a one-bedroom apartment and work that way, so be it. But I think I have three more years covered for the exact work that I want to do. We will see...

Billy Al Bengston: This is a smart way. Of course the rents will go down.

Audience: I guess this is for Russell and Paul. You touched a little bit the issue, that LA is maybe not so civic-minded. I noticed that at the opening of the LA art fair this year, that people didn’t really come back that much, locally, to support it. For me, being from New York, we were always jealous of the LA museums because they were always the epicenter and the first ones to show contemporary art. I think I had to wait 15 years in New York for our museums to actually become fairly interested in contemporary art. You guys were so ahead of the game in the eighties. So do you think it is because it is a one-industry town that you don’t get the support that you need for the museums and the fairs? You have the whole scenario, you have some of the best curatorial talents in the world there, you have some of the best artists, so the thing that is missing is the community support. I kind of wondered if they are traumatized by driving a lot, so they don’t really leave their neighborhoods and that’s why they didn’t go back to the fair because it was raining and it was in Santa Monica and too far away? What is it?

Paul Schimmel: Do you remember that great Janis Joplin song “freedom is nothing left to lose”? I think part of the greatness of MOCA and it has been extraordinary gratifying in the last months to see so many artists really supporting the institution, is that we are not top-down. We don’t have such quite big hierarchies of an infrastructure and the wealth behind us that some of the major institutions in New York have. That makes you much more vulnerable and you have greater freedom. For thirty years we have done extraordinary shows in MOCA, we have built a great collection but we have never really worked that hard at building a kind of massive infrastructure of individuals who would to a large degree dominate the program. And that is a crossroad we have reached today.

Russell Ferguson: One of the great things of LA is that the art community is still an artist-driven art community. That’s absolutely one of the best things about it. When you get to a financial crunch that can make the situation look a little bit different. But if you don’t have an artist community you don’t have anything. And that is something that is still very strong in LA.

Paul Schimmel: I think what distinguishes some of the Los Angeles institutions from other major cities, London or New York, is that my colleagues and I think first and foremost that we are working for artists. That’s our number-one-client. And that expresses itself sometimes in the support the institution receives, which comes more often from the creative community of the artists than from other communities. It is a choice we made.

Russell Ferguson: And I think nobody regrets that choice. That’s maybe a good note to end on. Thank you all for coming and thanks to the panelists for the discussion!