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11/20/2005

Patricia Frischer: London Art Newsletter - October and November, 2005

My dear friend, **Fred Van Ormer** passed away in San Diego this month and I am dedicating these newsletters to his memory. Fred idolized Matisse and lived his life according to this Matisse quote: *I have always tried to hide my own efforts and wished my works to have the lightness and joyousness of a springtime, which never lets anyone suspect the labors it cost.* He was much loved and will be greatly missed.

Saturday, Sept 25 – My art newsletter from London started even before the plane landed at Gatwick. I was offered a Financial Times on board only to discover that this stalwart old newspaper now has a Saturday supplement called FT Collecting. Eight glorious pages every week tracking the art and antique market. I got low downs on what my next month of activities will be including the [Frieze](#) art fair October 21-24. Listen to this: “When a gallery can sell a work ten times over- and some can – they are in a position to choose. ...the majority of stands are sold out in the first two days” There are two satellite fairs now because of the fairs great drawing power – Zoo for emerging galleries and their artists and Scope which is hotel based. Watch this space for a report later in the trip.

A fascinating article about the new role of the auction houses and how they may have priced themselves out of the market with the new 20% commission for buyers. Sellers are getting more canny and sometimes even negotiating for a cut of this percentage as well as an elimination of their own fees. But the auction houses are competing with dealers and galleries and brokering deals for works that never make it to the auction at all. News also about the continuing emerging markets in Russia and India and China. I loved the splashy ad for the Opera Gallery that has turned the stock market pink page into a Pollack spatter painting. It opens Sept 29 on Bond Street and already has branches in NY, Paris, Miami, Hong Kong and Singapore. The full-page ad had to run five thousand pounds minimum I was told. Hot areas of under priced goods are early century silver and mid century furniture. But we knew that, didn't we!

All my artwork made it safely through customs and baggage handling. What a relief! Not even a chipped glass.

Sunday, Sept 26 – I opened my Daily Mail this morning to see: “Guess which stars created these masterpieces”. They have a TV show here where stars went back to art school and produced a work of art! This country is ART CRAZED right now. Amazing! They are fighting over who gets to buy first. It is like an artist's fantasy of what society should be like. But a walk about of our neighborhood shows no new galleries and even one old frame shop that I was counting on to cut mounts has disappeared. Just because the high end sold £26 million pound sterling at Frieze last year in a tent in Regent's Park, does not mean there is a trickling down affect to the whole art market.

Thursday, Sept 29 –Jetlag means that we are up all night and sleeping late. But I have still managed to get the contract sorted for the Oxford show and send out over 75 press releases and all the hard copy and email invites for the show. Tomorrow I will begin work in earnest on the framing. I am actually looking forward to this part, as it is creative. We collected all my art materials from the flat and I have set up in the dining room with pads on the table to protect it. I have plans for an art movie and an exhibition so should have some art in put soon. But for now the most surprising thing I have seen is all the young men in the neighborhood wearing suits and ties which is so strange after only seeing men in bathing trunks and shorts for so long!

Before I start writing about my London experience this week, I would like to thank Ally Bling Bling and Phillip Swendoza for producing their program [ArtRock!](#) Because of this wonderful live broadcast, which is archived, I have been able to hear interviews with some my favorite visual art people and feel I am staying in touch with the San Diego Art scene even though I may be thousands of miles away.

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Saturday, Oct 1 - Sometimes the world sends you signals that are so strong that you have to listen. On the plane to England I read a New Yorker article about the Oscar winning animator Hayao Miyazaki and his [Ghibli Museum](#) in Tokyo. On our arrival we stroll by our local Picture House and Howl's Moving Castle was playing. This is a children's film but later in the week, a friend asked me to go to the cinema and when I suggested this film, she didn't say no. (I found out that she was not terribly interested in seeing it at first glance.) Cut to the chase. We adored it. It was glorious to look at and seemed to be such an original story but with references to all sorts of myths and magic. Although there are some computer graphics used, all the characters and backgrounds are drawn by hand.

Sunday, Oct 2: [The Big Draw](#): Drawing Together is the featured push all the major museums here. The National Gallery, The Portrait Gallery, The Victoria and Albert Museum, The Science Museum and Natural History Museum. It all ends with a carnival parade and a Video Taxi to record the results. The school where I was head of art has covered the entire art room in paper a la Christo and has a video link with the junior school, which has done the same thing. They are covering every surface with drawings. How much fun it that!

Wednesday, Oct 5 - Both Tates were visited this week. The Tate Britain was showing [Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec and Sickert](#) in an attempt to explain how the French and English shared markets in the late 19th century. There were stunning paintings but the premise of the show was thin and not enough to attract an audience of young people who had never seen these works before. There was lashing of Perrier Jouet champagne and Pam Kent (New York Times Cultural Correspondent and my hostess) and I visited old favorites and wonder if there is a lesson form the past. San Diego Artists should show in other cities, but not move out of SD. And we should never be afraid of the influence of artist from out of our region. Bring them on.

Thursday, Oct 6 - Watching a program called the [Culture Show](#) on BBC Two was an intimidating experience. A whole hour of cutting edge art, music, books with really intriguing reports. But the scene is not all rosy. Attendance is dropping at museum here even though they dropped admission charges, free for 18 and under.... and they are not getting the virgin museums goers they wanted but simple the rich and middle class going more often. They throw money at the arts here and now they are going to have to justify the expense. It appears that they will have to take art to the people, as the people are not coming to the arts. Only 40% visited a museum this year. A fabulous program that we could learn from called Streetwise Opera used 20 homeless people in an opera performance. These people lives were changed by the experience where they became part of the performing family. It may have only been 20, but what a great grass roots start. .

Friday, Oct 7 - Tate Modern is always an experience but to see [Frida Kahlo](#) with mobs and mobs of people drooling over her work was a real thrill. This mix of surrealism, naiveté, fantasy, and good old Mexican mural painting was so well composed and rendered that I was right there drooling with the rest of them. [Peter Logan](#), one of our best friends whose kinetic sculptures are stunning went with us and suggested the [TAS Pide](#) for lunch after. Take a look at this link to see the next generation of fillings for pizza. P.S. On a lessons learned note: the congestion charge extends south of the river so don't even think about taking a car to the Tate Modern.

Saturday, Oct 8 – My friend Alison is a whole book and not just a mention in a newsletter. She was intending to take a break from her philosophy professorship at St. Anne's and go to New Orleans. Although it is cloudy more often in Oxford than almost anywhere else in England, she decided against flood waters and relocated to Paris until the end of the year. But she came over this weekend to see us at the Dowager Cottage at Whytham Abbey where she resides when in the UK.. We ate at the White Hart after attending the Joan Muir show at Mary Ogilvie Gallery, [St. Anne's](#). Joan Muir is a mosaic artist and a fellow of St. Anne's but we saw her watercolour sketches that were dreamy and terribly English as were most of the guest at the opening. The terribly good Spanish rioja at dinner contributed to the buzz and my sleep on the way back at midnight .

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Am I way out of the loop. I just heard about pocket films and there is a pocket film festival here. These are films that have been shot entirely on cell phone cameras. Let me know if anyone has seen one or knows where to download them?

Sunday, Oct 9 – We were in the city by 11 AM on Sunday morning so parking was not a problem. You feel you have won a war here if you get a place to park that is free. And the weather was glorious, clear sunny skies and just a slight coolness in the air. The [Royal Academy Edvard Munch By Himself](#) show took no more than an hour to see even though it was several rooms on two floors. This was a good show to learn about this famous artist's private life. Unfortunately not full of his strongest work but with one or two haunting oils and some very intimate pencil sketches especially the one of him receiving shock treatment in 1908. The Dim Sum at [Yauatcha](#) soon cheered us all up. The restaurant was below ground level but had a ceiling of stars. Service a bit too abundant and rushed, but food meltingly good and so fresh you could practically see it wiggle. One of the top in the world right now and it won the [design award](#) for restaurants as well. Take a virtual tour and make sure to go to all of the floors!

Wednesday, Oct 12 – [Time Out Magazine](#) – Not only did I get a free tickets in the Magazine for the show at the [Hayward Gallery Universal Experience: Art, Life and The Tourist Eye](#) worth \$17, The whole issue this week is about ART. But we pipped them at the post on [SDVAN](#). They list 10 ways to start collecting and five expert tips. We especially like the government scheme, which gives interest [free loans](#) for art purchases from \$180 to \$2700. The loan is repayable in ten monthly installments. Another scheme lets you [switch your art](#) until you find something you want to buy. They choose the next four artists to watch and answer those all-important questions: Who is she? Why does she matter? and What can I buy? I also found out that besides [Frieze](#), [Zoo](#), [Scope](#), and [Pilot](#), there is also the [Affordable Art Fair](#) on again (twice in one year) All art fairs and all in October. I might not make them all, but watch this space. A fabulous article about the collecting couple Judith and Richard Greer (this could be Larry and Debra Poteet – they are so similar!) Her final line in the article was, “He's getting more and more eccentric. I am so lucky!” Finally, you are not going to believe this. There is now a site where everyone is an artist. You select theme, color and size to match your couch and it gets printed out on a canvas and sent to you! If you have to, check it out at [This Is Perfect](#)

News flash – A work by Congo the painting chimpanzee made in 1957 sold at auction in June for \$20,000. Its estimate was a mere \$1500. Now you can see a show of [Ape Artists of the 50's at Mayor Gallery](#) on Cork Street one of the most important galleries in town. Owner of Congo's work included Picasso, Miro and the Duke of Edinburgh.

Thursday, Oct 13 – The most famous and most highly respected [Craft Fair at the Chelsea Town Hall](#) had more new artists represented than ever before in an attempt to bring new life to this annual event. It is always fun to see the expert workmanship of all of the items...nothing ship shod. I liked [Anne Gericke's](#) tiny figures trapped in glass boxes and made into earrings and pendants. She is based in Munich. But perhaps all of the displays were a bit conservatively modern as opposed to cutting edge. The friends who I attended with both bought scarves for over \$100 each and also cuff links (yes, they still wear shirts with cuffs) and hand printed tea towels with recipes in a lovely smudged hand me down cookery style for Christmas cake and sorrel soup. I then walked the Kings road which was the usual excitement of goods until I came to Sloane Square and an entirely new and very chic district called Duke of York which is built up just southeast of the square. I also heard rumors that [Charles Saatchi](#) has had a falling out with the Japanese buyer of the County Hall who was his landlord. Evidently the oriental gentleman did not like some of the art and actually kicked a sculpture. Saatchi will be moving his collection to the Duke of York's headquarters building.

Friday, Oct 14 – We spent a whole day getting to and returning from the [De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex](#). It was worth it and I recommend this day trip to anyone wanting to see the state of the arts in England. We were given the VIP tour by the director (both general and artistic) Alan Haydon. The structure was built in the 30's commissioned by De La Warr (yes, pronounced Delaware and the same that named the state). This listed building had slumped into a state of tacky carpets and flocked wall papers and has finally reached it's

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original vision. Playhouse, gallery, restaurant, gift shop are all complete with spectacular ocean views in a city (Edwardian and Victorian) that needs the Bilbao effect to bring it some economic health. Jill Tyson was the local counselor who had what it took to rescue what now looks like a classic deco ocean liner (John Mc Aslan and Partners were the architects responsible for the refurbishment and redevelopment.) Richard Sykes is the chair of the De La Warr Pavilion Trust which raised more than \$15 million half from the Arts Council England, South East. Another big chunk came from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which is one of the biggest reasons for the health of the arts in Great Britain in the last 10 years. Gambling money gone good. They kick off the season with the theme Variety as in Variety Hall as in Vaudeville and even Burlesque. The gallery space was filled with a super selection of all that is hip and at the same time fun within the contemporary art world today. Cindy Sherman to Jonathan Allen's alter ego Tommy Angel, gospel magician. Even the video art was entertaining and well chosen to fit this theme, which was not over curated but a wonderful guide to the art of today. I couldn't help think of the La Jolla MOCA because the setting and the art were so similar. Well done Alan Haydon and the De La Warr Trust. You can get a train from Victoria Station to Bexhill on Sea for about \$35 round trip which takes about 1 ½ hours each way. Turn right out of the station and buy fish and chips. Can you think of anything nicer than eating that on the seafront with a nice bottle of champagne and then seeing this state of the art resource?

Monday, Oct 17 - Sleeping late is one of the delights of jet lag when traveling eastward and we have indulged this luxury to the full. This morning I woke up at 9:30, switched on BBC radio and was delighted to hear Tom Stoppard, the famous playwright and translator of the new play Heroes, singing the praises of [Tracy Emin](#), YBA known for her bed sculpture. Tracy has just written a book called [Strangeland](#), which covers the last 22 years of her life. Stoppard felt it gave him insight and a much greater appreciation of her artwork. Emin wrote the book as an extension of her art, which uses words frequently as part of the subject matter. It certainly made me want to read the book. This might be the only Tracy Emin I will ever be able to afford. I have also been asked to see the play so will report on that at a later date. There was something deeply reassuring about this famous playwright giving his stamp of approval to a quite controversial artist. I like the system where the well known help the lesser folks to step up. And you could tell that he felt genuinely about her work, even a bit surprised to be able to praise her.

Tuesday, Oct 18 - - I got a free tickets in the Time Out Magazine for the show at the [Hayward Gallery Universal Experience: Art, Life and The Tourist Eye](#) worth \$17 so I took myself off on the newly reopened northern line tube to see the show. I am seriously walking 10,000 steps everyday to try to counter all the wine I have been drinking. Wine is the only thing in this country that is cheaper than in America. Great selections and Darwin is trying to try most of them! You have to have stamina to look at art these days. There were 100 works by 50 artists in this show on three floors. No place to sit down unless you perch on the hard white rectangles they put in the spaces to watch the most boring and even insulting videos. I blame Andy Warhol for make that 80 hour film of the Empire State Building (which was by the way being shown here). But I am undemanding and this show had two works that I loved and that was enough to make it worth for me. Zhan Wang's Urban Landscape was a sublime cityscape made from hundreds of stainless steel cooking utensils. All set in a mirrored room so they thousands of everyday items appears like millions of reflective buildings, streams, mountains and bridges. Our own SD Antonia Davies makes the people who could populate this city. The Fischli and Weiss celebration of the beauty and variety of the Visible World was a forty foot long light table with 3000 images collated over a 15 year period and condensed in a one wonderful sculpture. It was like the most perfect happy holiday snaps you could imagine, each professional but with a sense that you could have taken the shot to record something you had seen. Every season, every type of scape was there.. Never a single shot but always in sequences of 5 to 15 and each one only 2 by 3 inches. You could look left to right or diagonally in endless combinations. The most important thing I came away with was that you had to see these things yourself to experience them. It was my physical presence that made the piece come to life. Merely hearing about it would have been good enough for the other 98 works but not these two.

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Photo by Bruce Tall

PART TWO

Friday, Oct 21 – The [Frieze Art Fair in Regents Park](#) is in its third year and it is hard not to see this are the most important art fair in the world right now. Strange, but true. I guess the wealthy collectors and galleries around the world just want to be in London and even in a tent in the park, they all seemed overjoyed to be here. We will have to wait for attendance figures and turn over amounts. The work (for someone who had not attended the first two events) did seem very inviting, almost light weight. You could imagine people having most of these painting and sculptures, photographs and DVD's in their homes. I tried to overhear some comments, but very little English was being spoken....Chinese, Italian, Japanese, French, Spanish. Surprisingly there were more Los Angeles galleries than you would think. I imagine this was due to a subliminal knowledge that one of the selection committee for the Tate purchase of \$280,000 which had to be spent on art at the Frieze was Paul Schimmel, chief curator of art for the MOCA Los Angeles. Before I mention a few works that grabbed my attention...grabbed being the operative word as you tried to see over 170 booths each showing anywhere from 1 to 10 artists, a quick word about the show business stars. A-List was Rob Lowe and Gwyneth Paltrow, Claudia Schiffer and Elle Macpherson and pop star George Michael. Ally you would have been in heaven.

Although I saw an artist touching up a scratched surface and a few power drills still being drawn to hang late displays, the giant rough cut hole in the Presenhuber Gallery in Zurich was purpose meant to convey a sense of place....imitation snow was gently falling and mounding up inside. No comment. Noero in Turin was filled up by the giant skip (dumpster, to you guys) which itself was filled with popcorn. PKM in Seoul display only one of the mildly erotic works on view. Gone are the rough, "it's naked but it's not pretty" days and we have now moved on to this hologram of a lovely bride. As you move past her, the image changes and you see that under her dress is a naked crouching man. The Young Gallery in Chicago was showing DVD's on flat screen monitors by Garry Hill. A repeating image of a man standing on a book with the pages turning designed by animation to go right though the leg. Very simple and a catchy image but \$100,000, I don't think so. They did give you all the equipment with the one DVD. I didn't notice any of the art in the French stands, but the elegant man in the very pale tweed suit with a repeated pattern of equally pale roses was glorious. Not art, or at least I don't think so. I was absolutely exhausted when I saw the Klosterfelde Gallery in Berlin. I walked by barely noticing the painting, four photographs, DVD playing in the corner and a book of Braille. Then I walked by the exact same thing again. Evidently there were even two identical gallery dealers (one an actor). Both installations were for sale, the copy for \$70,000 less that it's original. I was drawn in and playing on the DVD was a puppet art panel discussion. The moderator was Art Chat....yes, you guessed it, a stuffed cat. The only bowl of candy I saw on offer to passer-bys was one of M&Ms. I asked if I could have one and the director encouraged me, but she did mention that it was a limited edition and sure enough each one was numbered. I ate "3". Borch Jensen in Berlin, you made my day with that encounter. A small space that I almost missed was the Wrong Gallery. Paolo Pivi from Milan titled her piece "100 Chinese". They were lined up in four rows (actually only 50 of them), shoulder to shoulder, dress identically in grey and black and they looked back at you as you looked at them. Only a simple doorway was opened so you had to lean in to see the people who were staring at the blank wall. Evidently they stood there for two hours at a time. It did raise some interesting questions: like being able to tell them apart and how they might work as a single unit. I was most interested in the comments by the hired medium...they said they could look but most people would not make eye content with them. This may have been the British at their best. Finally, there were no name labels on any of the Gagosian walls. This gallery is now the largest in the world, seemingly prefers to think it's artists are icons already.

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My experience of the Fair was almost surreal as you can tell. I was not looking for good art or art to buy, I was just trying to get a feel for what this fair was about. There were lots of very inviting images, almost everything appeared to be very well crafted. But to give an opinion about the art itself, I would need to revisit maybe even a number of times. I do know that this kind of fair is must for anyone who wants to get an overview of the high end art market of today. It would take months to see this much art in that many cities if you tried to visit them all. My eyeballs felt raw with over stimulation when I finally left.

Monday, Oct 24 -A little relief from the visual arts and a small course about the art of food. We have had two wonderful meals here since we arrived and several above average ones which I have already mentioned. Our dinner last night in a tiny café in Kew , Ma Cuisine, was compensation for missing the Chilhuly ([Dale Chilhuly in Kew Gardens](#)) lit up at night...the weather was just too foul to venture out so we sat happily drinking sauvignon blanc and I dived into bouillabaisse soup with those wonderful croutons topped with remoulade sauce and gruyere cheese. I may be one of the few, but pheasants blood in the shape of boudin noir (black sausage) is heaven to me and these were en croute and light and rich as the same time and I shall dream about the next time I can have them. Darwin and Pam had monkfish which was so delicious in a herb orange sauce. A good risotto is nothing like the imitation we get nowadays and is a joy. The difference between good food and great food is so amazing and worth every penny. The other good meal this week was an extremely satisfying Sunday roast lunch at Grafton House in Clapham Common which is where our flat is located. Salmon in sorrel sauce and a spatchcock flattened baby poussin cooked on the open grill was served with wonderful bowls of perfect mixed vegetables, roasted parsnips and potatoes. Followed by a lemon tart and preceded with Caesar salad with those fresh anchovies and slices of parmesan and you again are carried to a higher level of dining. Just a note: all food here is double what it is in the US, so you expect to pay \$80 for two for lunch minimum.

Now back to the [Tate Turner Prize](#). You have four artists this year on the short list and the prize has gone up (£40,000) to keep pace with the times. This is a contest that catapults the artist into the lime light which is all I need to support it. The more art stars the better as the general public should by implication, know Art has Value. Plus when you see the show, you have the fun of trying to guess who will be the winner and the drama of the "Academy Award" type evening that they broadcast over here on TV. Simon Starling seems to be a front runner now with his shed that he made into a boat, which contains the left over pieces of the shed, brought to the Tate and then rebuilt into the shed. Two other similar conceptual works are documented but with very few images. This was interesting because there is nothing much to sell. This art for art's sake position is popular especially with the selection committees of today. You can no longer rely on recognizing an artist's style or subject matter. From now on artists are taking their own permission to do art in whatever medium and on what ever subject they choose at what ever time they want. Gillian Carnegie is the only painter and a prime example of this. Her work is sensitive and honest and the two bare bum images that she showed have hit press nirvana. Darren Almond tells a very subtle story on four different sized projections that make up a large installation. We are seeing more and more multiple screen video art. But after much thought I am backing Jim Lambie. Not that I think he will win, but I just loved his large scale tweetie birds (this may be the only safe bird on the continent) and the whole way he makes every room into a pop art experience. I went to see Bernard Jacobson Gallery's pop art show of masters and they still thrill me. And, Lambie is taking that experience and making it virtual.

Sunday, Oct 30 – Imagine a grey sky, spitting rain and a squally wind and you will know what we saw at 9 AM Sunday morning. But then envision golden rays of sunshine lighting up the faces of a happy group of diners in the upper common room of St. Anne's at Oxford University. A massive amount of food (8 main dishes including a stroganoff of wild mushroom, Cajon turkey, chicken Provencal with olives, beef in black bean sauce and 8 additional platters of salads plus chocolate cake, apple pie and lemon tart) made all 25 lunch guest feel well indulged. That was the scene 4 hours later (once we allowed for the day light savings time change which was of course, forgotten!) The show was on two floors and was comprised of 46 works by Patricia Frischer and Cheryl Tall. The exhibition was well hung and lighted by Bruce Tall and Darwin Slindee and the work glowed off the walls. The DVD made by SD Mesa Collage gave a wonderful overview of that show and almost all new works

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continued the theme "Borders of Intimacy". Photos of the opening of the exhibition coming soon. Several works will have new happy homes in the United Kingdom. Thanks go to Dr. Alison Denham, director of the Mary Ogilvie Gallery as well as the catering staff at St. Anne's which has won awards for the best food at the University maybe even at any University!

I again apologize for the length of these missives. We did go out every day and night this week. There is just so much to do.

Monday Oct 31 – Catherine Brooks-Baker is a friend of Pam Kent's and I am using some of her review of the Heroes at the Wyndham Theater in Leicester Square that gave us an opportunity to eat at Poon's Chinese again in Leicester Place with it's delicious wind dried meats and there were very current with an ostrich stir fry enjoyed by all. CB-B - "This is a wonderfully entertaining play which needs superb acting. In one hour and 20 minutes one is taken onto the terrace of an old veterans' home in 1959.... it is a play written by a Frenchman, Gerald Sibleyras (unusual name!) and with a witty translation by Sir Tom Stoppard.....Sometimes I didn't know whether to laugh or stay still and just be compassionate because Richard Griffiths played a soldier with obvious pains in his leg; he acted so consistently and so outstandingly that one was mesmerized by him but at the same time totally wrapped up and entertained also by Ken Stott (half comic, half tragic "turns") and John Hurt's charm and irascibility; should one laugh or cry? It was a truly great evening in the theatre; great ensemble playing and very well directed. The set is lovely too designed by Robert Jones whom I note designed the celebrated Handel opera "Julio Cesar" that went down with so much acclaim at Glyndebourne this summer. Also (the play was) even topical with the old boys watching the birds fly over the poplar trees; maybe avian flu will release them someday." I would like to add that one of my favorite parts of the play was how the cloud formations changed constantly with each scene giving you a sense of the weather and passing of time. Very subtle but very beautiful.

Tuesday Nov 1 – It appears that the stars were all aligned to present us with a fabulous gift. A dear friend called with gift ballet tickets at Covent Garden Opera House. What we did not know was that we were going to get the Royal Treatment. The Floral Halls of the Opera House are a stunning combination of glass and mirror. We ate before the ballet commenced on a suspended glass balcony mezzanine over looking the champagne bar. Our meal had been preordered for us and came with our favorite Cloudy Bay wine – smoked salmon and goose liver pate followed by fillet with a Bourgogne sauce and pheasant. A silent door behind us opened and we walked a short way to our boxed seats. Le Fete estrange was followed by a deluxe dessert of velvety chocolate. With Pierrot Lunaire (a more abstract battle between the white clown of innocence and the dark clown of experience) came the coffee and petit fours. But the finale was Marguerite and Armand choreographed by the famous Frederick Ashton for Nureyev and Fonteyn with sets by Cecil Beaton. The story is basically Camille and tears were streaming down my cheeks by the end of this perfect performance and more perfect evening.

Wednesday, Nov 2 – After over a month of glorious weather with leaves turning that autumn golden glow that we mainly miss in San Diego, the rain have come. Umbrella drawn we are undaunted. Cheryl and Bruce Tall and I set off to find the Craft Council in Islington and are rewarded with the excellent Jerwood Applied Arts Prize: Metal exhibition. This show was well staged with identical questions answered by each of the finalist and recorded for us to hear at small stationed next to the examples of their work. A large comment board was featured at this and many of the other public shows that I have attended. There is a real attempt here to involve the audience. I particularly like Hans Stofer's two spoon welding together to make a chocolate heart mold his oversized wire outline of a pitcher which held the tiniest ceramic pitcher in it's spout. Junko Mor outpouring of wrought iron designed gave proof to her self declared dilemma, "Where do I stop, I could cover the planet with these components." Although I like Frances Brennan tack covered natural wood forms, the winner this year was Simone ten Hompel whose brushed silver forms with odd precious looking stone protrusions were truly mysterious.

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The Gogosian Gallery has several branches and we have been to the one in Beverly Hills which is an intimidating as the overheads must demand it to be. The new space in London is billed as the biggest private gallery in the world. We saw the [Rachel Whiteread](#) show there in all its minimal glory. We thought to go here first before seeing the tons of white boxes that she has used to fill the Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern and I think it was a good choice. Casting of the inside of cardboard boxes made in very hard dental plaster replaced the grey concrete of her previous work. Staged on endearing bits of discarded furniture, even in this imposing white space, the works had a certain humanity. But I was most impressed with the small space showing her drawings. There is no doubt that this is a gallery designed for high art and anything placed in it would reverberate with the stamp of approval. But the guards on duty and the boys at the front desk were refreshingly friendly.

OK, we did stop for lunch at a tiny restaurant but one to watch. Konstam next to the Gogosian is run by potential star Oliver Rowe or I think that was his name on his mysterious card. They were making a commercial while we were there and the news seems to be that he is opening up a large restaurant soon and doing a cookery show as well. This neighborhood next to King's Cross Railway is obviously the next renovation to occur and it is probably already too late to buy low and sell high.

Friday, Nov 4 - We are going to skip quickly over the fabulous meal we had last night at the [Collection](#), a restaurant at Brompton Cross (Chelsea where it meets Knightsbridge for the uninformed). The place was teeming and at 9 after the kung fu dancing, there was an outrageous fashion show. We got on the right side of the velvet rope because of our dinner reservations and my version steak was the best I ever had with caramelized apples and an unusual walnut sauce. Our view was much loftier from the top floor of the Tate Modern. We had just seen the Rachel Whiteread, Embankment art work which fills the Turbine Hall with white translucent boxes which are molds from the inside of cardboard boxes. The irony does not pass us that the maquette for this piece could have been made from sugar cubes produced by Tate and Lyle. We passed rapidly on to the [Rousseau](#) exhibition. I adored this show, surprisingly. Rousseau was the butt of many jokes by Picasso and Apollinaire. His tropical landscapes with exotic animals contradict the fact that he was never left France. He may not have been respected for appropriating photographic compositions. But Picasso and Delaney both owned works and he was shown in this large retrospective to have transcended his own naiveté and produced a body of lasting images. In *War*, he uses repeated shapes of leaves and bird wings to make a pleasing and unexpected rhythm and his clouds are contained in the branches of his trees in a very satisfying way. The highly contrasted Snake charmer is a dark study in mystery and sex. Who would have thought?

The evening ended with the magnificent fire works displays celebrating by burning in effigy Guy Fawkes who tried to blow up not only parliament but the entire royal family. It is delicious to be cold and bundled up instead of hot and a bit too drunk which is my usual state for Fourth of July fireworks.

Wed. Nov 9 - I finally got to the Victoria and Albert Museum's [Between Past and Future](#) exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Photography and Video. I shouldn't make it sound like a struggle as I arrived by underground which seems to me this trip to be particularly fast. It took four changes to get there and back and for every change the train was either waiting for me or arrived in less than a minute. Perhaps there is an art transport god watching out for those of us who are making an effort. For those of you who saw the terrific selection that Betti-Sue Hertz made for us at the SDMA, this was more of the same and just as good. These artists are in such a flurry of output and they seem to be able to use their position hurling into the 21st century to create fresh and very creative images. The show was so well arranged with 1. A look at artists who referred to historical imagery 2. Artists who were trying to define themselves 3. Artists using their bodies to redefine themselves 4. A view of the future that contemporary artists were visioning for China. As at SDMA, Wang Qungson has a strong presence with works in two sections. His Past, Present and Future series which I also saw at the Frieze Art Fair, uses real people covered in gold, silver or bronze paint to imitate monumental sculptures. He often uses an image of himself to give scale to the works. Night Revels of Lao Li is a reproduction of a spy thriller from ancient history using again images of the artist and a local critic whose writing

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was banned as well as an entire cast of characters. His large scale works are always a visual treat. I like my conceptual art well illustrated with compelling imagery. Another large scale work by Miao Xiaochun shows tourists looking at the a monkey island in the zoo...again, this could have been an image from San Diego. However, look close a la Where's Waldo and you see a 12 C. Chinese scholar in full robes. Qui Zhijie painted a grid on his face which matched a grid background. In repose all the lines were static and perfect, but as he smiled, frowned, and even violently distorted his features the grid work came alive. The monitor for this work was installed in the floor and for some reason this seemed entirely appropriate. Cui Xiuwen hid a camera in the women's rest room of a dance hall. It was compulsive viewing as we watched these women arrange their faces, their dresses and their breast. Cui Xiewen (and all the video artists) used expert editing so we were never bored and the activities were arranged in groups so we noticed if they were counting their money or making arrangements for future "dates". I am highly critical of video art, but I found each one of the 39 artists in this show were fascinating and as a whole they gave a tantalizing view of China which I intend to continue to track. I could go on and on as I read each label which one needed to do often to understand the artist's concepts. The website for this show is excellent and you can read about each one of the works and see the photos yourself. Finally, I was delighted to see that the Smart Foundation out of Chicago was a sponsor of this exhibition. My mother's sister was a Smart and I was so happy to see them involved in this way.

[Hearware](#) was a show of the future of hearing aids, not just for deaf or hard of hearing. I know it sounds a bit bizarre but this show gave designer a chance to show what could happen in the near future as well as projections up to 2020 in this area of our lives. Imagine, hearing aids available at the local grocery store by 2007 as we decide that custom fitting them to disappear is no longer necessary. Hearing aids will be jewelry and will be multifunctional. You could in the future be able to hear your partner in a crowded bar with directional hearing aids and plug in your ipod and telephone at the same time I liked the glasses with hearing extensions

Nov 10 - We were treated to lunch at the home of Fionnuala Boyd & Les Evans our great friends and superb artists today. They are one of the few sets of couple artists who work exclusively together on all of their work. They have recently switched to digital photography but on a very grand scale. Their last show was at the [Milton Keynes Art Gallery](#) and one work was 16 meters long. It was an amazingly constructed landscape...completely believable. By the way, the museum was painted pink with a wonderful blue drawer by Michael Craig Martin. It was supposed to be temporary but looks so splendid it is there to stay. Their next show is in New York with the [Flowers Gallery](#)

There is a new vogue in British fashion this season for [black Christmas trees](#). They are flying off the shelves here as the new minimal décor is embraced. Has this fashion hit America yet....will you be first on your block? Remember you heard it here.

Nov 15 - It may be because they are the are the most recent shows I have seen but [China: The Three Emperors](#) when combined with the Between Past to Future show above has struck me as perhaps the most stimulating shows of the season especially when you compare and contrast them. This show was moved up in date to coincide with the Chinese government state visit to London. Fascinating to think about how politics and art are intertwined. The exhibition examines three generations but instead of looking at them in chronological order it combines them to show how these Chinese Emperors depicted themselves not only as statesmen, but as artists, poets, collectors, military commanders and even religious leaders. I found especially interesting the way they commissions contemporary artists (16 and 17 C) to make new version of ancient art works. They kept scrolls of images of their collections, which are art works themselves and there were great discussions about fakes and forgeries. (I am working on an article right now about that subject for the SmART Collector). You couldn't help thinking of the series of beautiful women portraits as being a precursor to the Playboy calendar and an exquisite set of chrysanthemum bowls in the brightest colors would be comfortable in a the Neiman Marcus Christmas catalogue this year. The rituals of Heaven (blue), Earth (green), Sun (red) and Moon (pale blue) made this a visually overwhelmingly rich show with fabrics, ceramics, woodworking, metals, painting and stone carving beautifully set in the Royal Academy rooms on Piccadilly.

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Nov 19 - The weather changed here dramatically this week and the lurgy got me and prevented my attendance of the [Rubens](#) exhibition at the National Gallery of Art. But I managed to finally get to the [Dale Chihuly in Kew Gardens](#) which was sheer delight. In the Princess of Wales Greenhouse you had to hunt to find the treasures of glass but as we walk towards the Palm House, we saw the glassware bobbing and shimmering in the sunlight on the lake and exploding from a small boat. The real delight was the Temperate House where the works build to a grand climax and seems to overtake the natural plants. As a one off experience, it was terrific, and I wouldn't mind owning one of the more subtle works to be hid away in our San Diego garden. We are off to even colder climes in Minnesota soon and then back to the warmth of San Diego. What a trip! I hope you enjoyed reading about it. I am sure you now know how much I get from these yearly trips back to my adopted country.

P.S. The following exhibitions are ones which we will miss but looked fascinating to me and what follows is some of the important dates for 2006 in case my journals have inspired your own trip.

[Art Unwrapped](#) – Open Studios, Nov 19-20 and 26-27

[Hidden Art Open Studios](#) Nov 26-27 and Nov, Dec 3-4, 2005

[Bloomberg Art Prize at the Barbican](#) – Nov 16 to Jan 10, 2000

[London Art Fair](#)

18 - 22 Jan 2006 (annual)
Business Design Centre

[The Affordable Art Fair](#)

Mar 2006 (various dates)
Battersea Park

[London Original Print Fair](#)

Apr 2006 (annual)

Royal Academy of Arts

[Chelsea Art Fair](#)

Apr 2006 (annual)
Chelsea Old Town Hall

[Beck's Futures](#)

Mar - May 2006 (annual)
ICA (Institute of Contemporary Arts)

[Bellini and the East](#)

12 Apr - 25 Jun 2006
National Gallery

[Royal Academy Summer Exhibition](#)

Jun - Aug 2006 (annual)
Royal Academy of Arts

[The Affordable Art Fair](#)

Oct 2006 (various dates)
Battersea Park

[Cézanne in Britain](#)

Oct 2006 - Jan 2007 (annual)
National Gallery

[The Turner Prize Exhibition](#)

Oct 2006 - Jan 2007 (various dates)
Tate Britain