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11/3/2011

London Trip Sept 15 to Oct 31, 2011: Part Two

Sept 27, 2011

I had great fun today watching the first of four parts of the new [Sotheby's series](#) on artists, then collectors, and the auction business. **James Frey** says in the first one, "The best art changes you. You see and feel things differently. You are not the same after you see it." Maybe it is because I am in the home of Sotheby's but I think I would like these wherever I was watching them. Sotheby's seems to be very inventive in their marketing strategies and they have such a respect for their product. Speaking of changes, this month saw the passing of [Steve Jobs](#) and many artists are paying tribute to him with a collection of portrait on the Huffington Post website. It makes a fitting tribute as many of those same artists used his computers and software to make the images. Jobs didn't just invent the look of the Mac, the ipod, the iphone, and the ipad, he changed the way we behave because of these inventions. In that way he was a true artist himself.

Sept 29, 2011

Darwin and I spent time with **Peter Logan** who is such a lovely and lively man who makes master kinetic sculpture but is still excited about taking a class in etching. Every nuance of his life is a creative endeavor. Look at his website and see how you can change the backgrounds of his moving sculpture and make sure and watch the videos so you see the art in motion.



This just in from the [Telegraph](#), The **Duchess of Cambridge Kate Middleton** who just married the Prince is said to be considering supporting the **Tate**, the **National Gallery**, the **National Portrait Gallery**, and the **V&A**. Imagine a future queen who supports the arts!

Oct 4, 2011

[Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement](#) at Royal Academy of Arts Sept17, 2011 through Dec11, 2011.

This show was billed as an exploration of Degas painting active figures and so obviously ballet dancers were the subject. It was interesting to think of Degas not just as a voyeur of young girls but also keen to stay contemporary by incorporating the new technology of photography and film. He was aware of the work of Edweard Muybridge and the *Lumière* Brothers. He even took some photos himself, which are on view. Most of the works were studies and for the first time I noticed how often he seem to get it wrong. But we don't look at his works for the technical perfection when he is such a master of composition and color. The works below called to me for the sparseness of the line and off center placement and the strong black lines make them indeed modern even today. Just a wee side note: [Christie's](#) will auction off Edgar Degas' sculpture *Petite danseuse de quatorze ans*, with an estimated at \$25 – 35 million. It is one of an edition of 28 and only 10 of these are still in private collections including this one.

Pictures of dancer are eternally sought after and so make sure and mark your calendar for the show by [Raymond Elstad](#) opening Nov 4 at the Mandell Weiss Gallery presented by [Jean Isaacs San Diego Dance Theater](#) at Dance Place at the NTC.

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Edgar Degas, Dancer Adjusting Her Dress, 1885., Oregon Museum of Art

Edgar Degas, 'Dancer Adjusting her Shoulder Strap', c. 1895-6, Modern print from gelatin dry plate negative. 180 x 130 mm. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Image © Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Edgar Degas, Vier Tänzerinnen auf der Bühne um 1885-1890 - Museu de Arte de São Paulo - © Luiz Hossaka

Edgar Degas, Petite Danseur

Raymond Elstad

[Raqib Shaw: Paradise Lost](#) at White Cube, Mason's Yard Sept 28, 2011 through Nov 12, 2011

You walk into the White Cube located in a prestigious neighborhood near Christie's auction rooms and find the modern box taking up the center courtyard off a small side entry of Duke Street. On the ground floor in much darkened room you see two mirror image sculptures of a man with a monster head being savaged by a swan surrounded by copulating turtles, fish and small insects. The work is compelling and scary. When you go downstairs you reach a smaller gallery and the paintings are rhinestone encrusted and reminiscent of cloisonné Chinese art pieces. Each highly lacquered spot of color is surrounded by a pale gold rim of paint that sits proud of the canvas. Other influences are Japanese kimonos, Kashmir shawls, Indian religious painting and Persian miniatures which is not too surprising as Raqib Shaw was born in Calcutta in 1974 but spent much of his youth in Kashmir, leaving India in 1998 for higher education in London. But the subject of hybrid animals eating and being eaten is rather like Hieronymus Bosch meets Henri Rousseau. When you go into the large gallery, the works are overwhelmingly huge detailed, weird, glitzy painting and the first impression is lovely sunset, flower petals and blue swallows. In this Paradise Lost you do have a feeling that the world has gone wrong.

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Raqib Shaw, The mild-eyed melancholy of the lotus eaters III, 2009-10 (detail). Courtesy White Cube, London. Copyright © the artist.

[Frank Stella](#) at Haunch of Venison

This exhibition was housed in the old Museum of Mankind which were very lovely rooms housing the British Museum collection of Oceanic, American and African art from pre-Columbia to contemporary. It is now a sales gallery and chopped up a bit so has lost some of its former elegance. But the show of Stella was museum quality however with a few missing eras in the artist's life. It progressed from geometric color field painting (none of the half circles which I believe were his best) to geometric wall sculptures to free form space illusion painting to free standing free form sculptures. The gaps occurred perhaps because none of these works were on the market and I remind myself that this is, after all a sales gallery.



Lettre sur les aveugles II, 1974, Organdie, 1997, K.37 (lattice variation) protogen RPT (full size), 2008. All photos by Peter Bodkin

Oct 7 and 8, 2011

Today I went to the Tate Modern to see the [Gerhard Richter: Panorama](#) (through Jan 8, 2012) Corinna Belz who spent three years as an observer in Richter's Cologne studio captures mesmerizing footage of the artist. You can see this on the [Nowness website](#) and this demonstration of his work certainly made the show much more potent. I think it was seeing his realistic works which he continues to paint, side by side with the abstract work that was the most impressive aspect of this show. It was as if they informed each other. Seeing a retrospective of an artist's work is the only way you can sometimes come to grips with his whole body of creations and start to understand the progress of his struggle to communicate. Richter is as much interested in the process of painting as he is in the subject matter and he chooses both personal (his

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wife and garden) and public (911 or [Baader-Meinhof](#)) stories. This show also featured a series of his glass sculptures (perhaps a nod to southern CA Pacific Standard Time) which was started in homage to Duchamp and his glass work with Richard Hamilton). A large mirror, a stack of very large plate glass sheets and an arrangement of 6 sheets which are free standing was on view. He has an enormous body of work and seems to have no fear of exploring any direction that takes his interest. I have always had a hard time getting a handle on this artist but I now feel much more of a fan.



Oct 9, 2011

[Grayson Perry: The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman](#) at the British Museum through Feb.19, 2012. Grayson Perry has chosen anonymously crafted objects from the museum's collection and then created sympathetic modern objects that live side by side with them in this fun show. The choice of the object from the national collection means it is rather like having Perry guiding you personally through a selection of his own favorites. His modern interpretations take the shape of his familiar pots, but there are also some amazing rusted iron cast pieces which are particularly compelling and some gold glazed ceramics which you would swear are metal. . When Perry was young his best friend was Alan and he had the measles and so his alter ego persona take the form of a Teddy Bear called Alan Measles, You can read the [AM blog](#) which is a hoot and imagine Grayson touring German on his custom bike, Measles in tow. By the way, Perry is the cross dressing, transvestite, winner of the Turner Prize in 2003 and this exhibition shows him to be talented but also immensely versatile.



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Oct 12, 2011

I attended the [The Pitman Painter](#) as a guest of Pam Kent at the Duchess Theater. In 1934, a group of Ashington miners hired a professor to teach an art appreciation evening class. It was soon apparent that practice over theory was the way for this group to learn about art and in this true story, these miners became well known for their outsider styles. They mainly painted their everyday experiences and made these ordinary happenings extraordinary. The play very cleverly adapted by Lee Hall (Billy Elliot) from a book by William Feaver the art critic, raises many interesting questions: Does everyone have talent? Does patronage corrupt artists? It is rather like hearing art criticism from the mouths of babes and very refreshing and not dated as one would expect.



Oct 13, 2011

I was invited by **Nurith Jaglom** to breakfast at the Tate Modern as guest of [Outset](#) which is a foundation that funds many projects in the UK, Israel, India, North America and Germany. I met the charming **Candida Gertler** who is Director and Trustee. Outset has donated funds to the Tate to purchase works from the Frieze Fair for the last nine years giving over £one million. The three acquisitions (£ 120,000) for this year are an ensemble of drawings from Portuguese artist **Helena Almeida** (see below), the film *Xilita* produced by Mexican artist who currently lives in UK, **Melanie Smith**, as well as the work, *Tumour*, by **Alina Szapocznikow** (1926 –1973), created in 1969. Both private and corporation like the hotel Le Meridien have contributed to the charity. Watch for them in New York through MOMA and at Documenta coming up in Germany.

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Since I had already seen the Gerhard Richter show I watched the new [Tacita Dean](#), 16 mm film installation which attempted to fill up the Turbine Hall. She is dedicated the preservation of film as a media. I was even less impressed with [Taryn Simon](#) who presented a series of photo portraits tracing ancestry and all based on a variety of hideous things that have happened in the world like the killing of Albino Aborigines or victims of genocide in Bosnia. Each was accompanied by a brief description and label and then some slight pictorial artifacts related to the event. They were presented in massive frames which I found a waste of wood and glass.



I did see the preview and you can watch the bidding at [Sotheby's](#) auction with one of the series of Gerhard Richter's *Candle* paintings which I saw in his show at the Tate Modern selling for a world record £10,457,250 (\$16,480,626). You can see the results from some of the lots in the **Christie's** auction from this [ArtInfo link](#). The consensus seems to be that Christie's had better work and therefore made more money but the huge amounts exchanged showed that the auction market is still strong even if not much sold at Frieze.

Postmodernism: Style and Subversion 1970-90 at the V&A introduced me to the word [bricolage](#) which is a term for adding three dimension bits together rather like a 3-d collage. I thought that was assemblage but evidently bricolage applied to music, architecture and even academic studies. In the 1960, at least in Europe, there was a rebellion against minimal architecture and design. Groups like Memphis in Italy started to decorate objects again but only with a reference to the old, not as copies. The exhibition shows the progress from the 60's through the fun colorful 70's to a point in the 80's and 90s when the artists and architecture matured were recognized and we able to use far more expensive materials. The early works seemed to have dated quite badly, but the elegant later style has become more or less

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permanent. Time will tell if there is a style for the new millennium. I shall be so interested on my return to SD to visit the [California Design, 1930–1965: "Living in a Modern Way"](#) mid-century exhibit in LA as part of PST. Read the very interesting article in the [New York Times](#) sent to us by Tom Sergott about [Pacific Standard Time](#) and its goals and effects.



[Power of Making](#) also at the V&A is a small but packed exhibition of items with an aim to stimulate and empower its audience. There is an educational component explaining many of the techniques that were used in this selection but it is simplified into adding, subtracting and transforming. I remember the dress made entirely of pins rather like a dressmaker's revenge and a bike complexly covered in crystals. The rabbit below is especially included here for Irene de Watteville and Beth Smith.



Oct 14, 2011

It is Sunday, I have a head cold and I just finished eating a mango which inspired me to write about my [Frieze Fair](#) expedition. This was a perfect looking mango which I cut, sliced and turned inside out so it made those wonderful little pinecone bits to eat. Each bite came away from the skin easily and slides onto my spoon and even more smoothly down my sore throat. But the flavor was not as intense as I had expected. That led me to think of all those mango flavored sorbets and sauces where they must heighten the taste of the real fruit but not make it in any way artificial. .Of course, I had forgotten I have a cold and that dulls the taste of food but it was that thought of artfully increasing the flavor, which leads me to Frieze.

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My first five minutes of the fair seemed to stimulate all my senses. I was in love with art and amazed that the world was filled with these huge creative talents balancing all the disgusting things to fear out there in the real world. Everything seems so fresh and bright and imaginative. But like the first flush of love, this passed as I looked harder and harder to try to decide what I was seeing, put it into some kind of context and truly find something worth having. After all, this is a sales fair and they are hoping to exchange these creations for cash. Just like the mango sorbet makers, it is the fair's job to heighten the experience and avoid artificiality.

So I became a happy snapper. The bad news is that my photos of the labels did not come out so I don't know who did what. You proceed at this point with my apologies for the lack of titles and names and galleries, but I hope you will enjoy the flow of images. I also declare myself as a sculptor and although in previous newsletters there have been plenty of paintings, my prejudice may have come through as you will only see sculptures below. But that is not just me, there did seem to be more sculptures than any other media this year, and very few video works or performance pieces.



Left: My fellow Frieze companion, Pam Kent (see her report on Frieze on [FutureSpace](#), with a large glass transparent sculpture. Middle: a bricolage work which is very much like some new work Darwin and I are doing in London. Right: great to see the twisted foil piece by Tara Donovan here in London.



Left: collapsed puppet sculpture lying on the floor Mid-Left: Thumbprints reminding me of our own [Cheryl Sorg](#) who was in New Contemporaries IV this year. Mid-Right and Right: Two variations in bronze and plaster of a Mickey Mouse Rodin work that harkens back to work by [Keikichi Honna](#) New Contemporaries II.

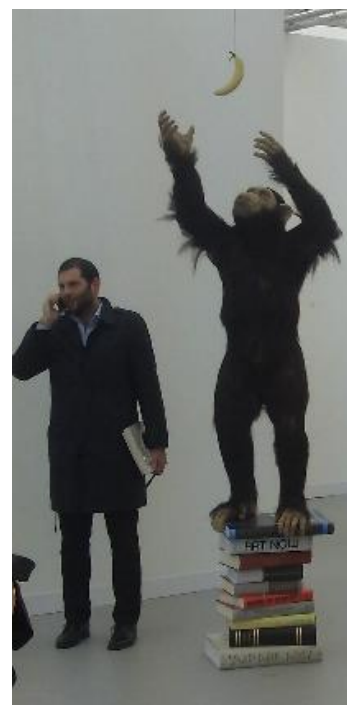
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There were lots of words in the art this year and I especially liked Left: "I love you with all my heart" and this huge series with was in the Frame part of the fair. These clever sayings were placed all over the fair and gave great pleasure. Frame is booth that were turned over completely to one artist or artist group who were in the emerging category.



Three more Frame examples Left: the umbrellas actually twirled around. Middle: a visual portrait. Left: a mud-like construction that looked to be molded in tires, like the Mexican recycled building we see in the south.



Left: an enormous credit card shredding machine. The faint pile on the floor is Visa, MasterCard etc. Middle: an astonishing complicated Plexiglas display for a string of cucumbers. Right: Standing on the accumulated learnings of art history, this apes reaches for his banana.

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This 6 inches plastic figures and sitting on the shoulders of their companions and the whole cascades to make a lovely chandelier. .Middle: Hand- drawing over the top of various eastern beauty queens (one of the few 2-D images that attracted me). Right: a simple but elegant cube escaping from its cage to become a sand pile.



Left: Pam was especially drawn to this simple set of shelves and the arrangement of one book and the stacked themed cassette tapes. There were a few instances when one felt, I could go home and make this and have an instant art work. Mid-right is another example of a wall of Oasis blocks (that stuff in flower arrangement which hold the water) but with thumb prints gouged into their otherwise pristine surface. Mid-left: This large picture of a pink melted wax figure reminded me how simple objects can look just great if blown up big enough and with the right background. Right: the last work and last laugh comes from this fair visitor who is dress to impress. .

Although the frantic buying to make sure you got what you wanted was not very evident and we saw few red dots reports have come in that the fair made significant sales in both the regular section and in Frame. At least 3 booths sold out completely. You can read more about that in the [Art Daily article](#).

One last work that made the news was the Riva super yacht worth £60m but which artist Christian Jankowski is selling as art for £75m. By adding his name and nothing else, he says the boat will escalate when sold instead of depreciating. We saw the little motor launch at the fair which was around ¼ million but is thrown in if you buy its mother.

I have regrets for not getting to see the following Frieze satellite fairs. [Sunday](#) with 20 young international galleries, no real booths, just taped lines on the floor and free (you can see a slide show on [Art Info](#)), [Moniker International Art Fair](#) which took the place of Zoo and was held at Village Underground – a vast Victorian warehouse in Shoreditch and the [Pavilion of Art & Design](#) in Berkeley Square.. Christie's presents the [Multiplied Art Fair](#) which will take place at their South

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Kensington venue. This is not an auction but a sales venue for the fair. Many of the shows that I have talked about are planned so as to be open during Frieze.

I will close this last long third missive with a report on the Swiss artist [Pipilotti Rist](#) at the Hayward gallery. I finally saw a video show that I liked and I believe that is because it was revealed on a variety of sculptural elements of display but also because of the sheer dazzling beauty of some of the colors, the quirky music and the occasional humor. Images changed constantly on the underwear chandelier, a tiny house was set in a vast landscape with a view through the windows of flaming pasta, sheep and fireworks exploded on floating waving silk panels, tiny screens set in the floor showed a nude victim trying to escape where other screen in purses and shells happily held visions of the sea and body parts. I lay down on comfortable cushion to enjoy the three screen video which was doubled in a reflecting mirror and watched fields of tulips being trampled and crushed. The artist explains that the world is slightly too clean for her and this is an attempt to dirty it up. The overall effect was a huge installation that was all of one piece and left you happy and satisfied. .



Also at the Hayward Gallery [George Condo: Mental States](#) was a little like seeing Kelly Hutchinson of Dark Vomit. This artist started in the 80's but the work is a take on styles from the masters and in evidence are the 50's works by Picasso, Ernst, and Gorky etc. The cartoon elements take over but I was not won over and actually like our home grown version better. In fact, I think San Diego Artists can stand up to the best of the shows that I saw and I am quite bullish on the work of our local geniuses.



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Just a short time left of this trip but I still have the Turner Prize to cover at the Baltic in Gateshead near Newcastle and the Tate Britain and some lovely social events before we wing our way back. The weather has now broken. No more Indian summer now we are in overcoats and sweaters. What bliss, I can finally dress in layers!

Turner Prize 2011 nominees — **Karla Black**, ethereal pastel sculptures which try hard to involve the viewer on a visceral level, **George Shaw**, hyperrealist paintings of council estates who succeeds to connect with most viewers, **Hilary Lloyd**, semi-abstract video installations which are confusing even to the artist herself and **Martin Boyce** modernist constructions inspired by a concrete sculptural tree from 1950 which are intellectually rigorous but obscure are all well served by the video interviews by the artists. I wish those were all online for you to see. This is the first time the Turner Prize is being launched at a non Turner site and we went to Gateshead, Newcastle to see the show at impressive **Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art**. The winner of the £25,000 (\$39,161) award will be announced on December 5 and thinking about who will win is one of the most fun parts of this annual show. You want to like Karla but her work just falls short, the popular choice without a doubt would be George, but the prize is usually not given to anyone so real, Hilary's works don't hold a candle to the Risti show at the Hayward right now and I think she doesn't have a chance. My guess will be Martin Boyce as he is a curator's artist giving them lots to write about the development of his ideas.



Black



Shaw



Lloyd



Boyce

Oct 27, 2011

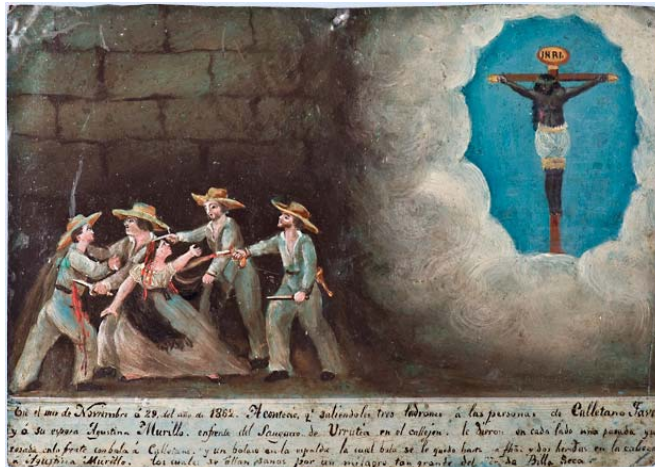
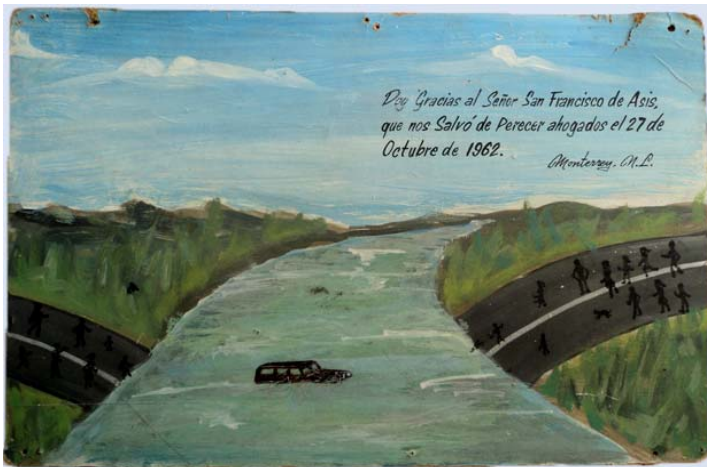
Wellcome Collection bills it self as a free destination for the incurably curious and it certainly lives up to that. The sculpture at the entrance and the wonderful chemical glass lighting over the café immediately impress on arrival.

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There were two special exhibitions on display. [Infinitas Gracias: Mexican miracle paintings](#) (Watch the video on [YouTube](#)), which is the first major display of Mexican votive paintings outside Mexico. This shows people's belief in the power of prayer to heal and it a sort of healing art as it allows them to give thanks for perceived miracles. It would be interesting to see what drawing could be compiled today with the same idea of giving thanks for a rescue of some sort. I had no idea of these pictures until seeing them so far away from our Mexican border.



Left: The text says, "I thank our Lord Saint Francis of Assisi for saving us from drowning on 27 October 1962. (Monterrey, Nuevo León). Oil on tin, 1962. Propiedad del Santuario de San Francisco de Asís de la Diócesis de Matehuala, SLP, México/INAH

Right: 29 November of the year 1862, Calletano Favera and his wife Agustina Murillo were accosted by three thieves at the entrance to the alley of Sangarro de Urrutia. Calletano was attacked and grazed in the forehead by a bullet, then shot in the back where the bullet still remains. And Agustina Murillo received two wounds in the head. Both are healthy by fortune of a great miracle of Señor de Billa Seca [sic] (Villaseca).

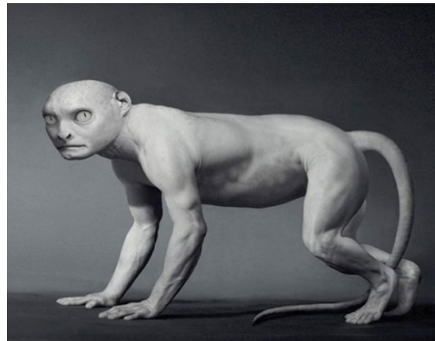
[Felicity Powell: Charmed Life](#) the solace of objects, an exhibition of unseen London amulets from Henry Wellcome's collection, selected and arranged by the artist. Make sure and view this charming and original film [Slight of Hand](#) where Powell uses wax and camera tricks to make charming images.

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Slight of Hand, Amulet to protect weaver from poverty, two ivory sculptures in the general collection

[Daniel Lee](#) has created an interesting morphing of man from fish and although I could not find a copy of the video you can see some more of the stages [at this link](#).



We took a break for lunch with Lesley and Stephen and ate at a restaurant off Shaftsbury Avenue I promised not to disclose as they feared it would be impossible to book if word spread. There is already a three week waiting list for lunch. But there was a charming exhibition of works by [Haidee Becker](#) of actors waiting to go on stage. This American that now lives in London usually does quite sweet little interiors and so this was a refreshing change. His son is the owner of the restaurant and these works are from all the actors waiting to go to play their part at the Apollo Theater that was near by.



[John Martin](#) at the Tate Britain was one of the highlights of the trip but not because of the paintings in this exhibition of his show of romantic landscapes of religious and poetic nature. No matter how wildly dramatic these are, they are eclipsed by the TV and movie special affects we see now. Martin was not accepted by the Royal Academy in Victorian times as his work was too distastefully popular but since that time he has had great influence even on web games. He was rather like the Walt Disney of his day, bringing fantasy to life in his works. So what the clever people at the Tate have

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done using theatre company [Uninvited Guests](#) is made a 10 minute video experience with three of his most famous works. With sounds and lighting affects the paintings are transformed in front of your very eyes to living moving images. Martin would have been a huge fan of this treatment which totally brings the experience of his vision to a 21st century audience. I can see this technique being used for a component of a contemporary art show. The video promo for this has an overlong intro but right at the end you get a little taste of the effects. The contemporary Artists Glenn Brown (right) has taken Martin's original image and turned it on its side and added various futuristic component to this final work in the show.



[Barry Flanagan](#), at Tate Britain was a bit of a let down after that, although it was interesting to see this artists early works. Flanagan spent between 1983 (when this show stopped) until his death in 2009 mainly working with the theme of the hare. This will be the first major exhibition of Flanagan's work in London since 1983 so it seems ironic not to focus on those last 40 years. I did love this last linear sculpture with a full funnel at the top but it was rather hard to make this rabbit leap from the work shown.



Oct 29, 2011

Our good friends [Boyd and Evans](#) (They are in the process of creating a new website, so watch that space). greeted us at the train station, then we went directly to the [Milton Keynes Gallery](#) to see **Anna Barriball** a British artist born 1972. I liked her very simple video of a fireplace breathing in and out and sucking a piece of brown paper into it's chimney. There were also graphic rubbings, which looks like an intaglio but the pencil has been pressed so hard in places that not only is the surface raises but it is torn in places. This conveys the fragility of not only the artist's efforts but the delicate nature of life. Our friends just finished showing with their new gallery [LewAllan Galleries](#) in Santa Fe, New Mexico and we previewed some of their stitched images from the latest trip. AMAZING!

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Oct 30, 2011

We visited the [Science Museum](#) the science museum out of a sense of completion for this visit to London. After all we are putting on a science and art project ([DNA of Creativity](#)) in San Diego and I imagined that this huge London facility would have something amazing to inspire me. But besides the usual displays, the numerous interactive ones were boring and often did not work. So it would have been a waste of time except for the gift shop and discovery of a few fabulous looking books; [Periodic Tales: The Curious Lives of the Elements.](#) Hugh Aldersey-Williams, (Penguin Viking) and [Art and Science Now.](#) Stephen Wilson, (Thames and Hudson).

Our final social occasion was a traditional English Sunday lunch with Tim and Nicholas where we met Stephen Dunn registrar from the **National Gallery**. This was the only major museum I did not go to this trip as they were between shows but they are launching a major [Leonardo da Vinci: Painter at the Court of Milan](#) exhibition. This is my recommendation for anyone traveling in the next 3-4 months. We saw an hour TV show on da Vinci but it is only available to those who can get iplayer from BBC. They are however broadcasting the opening night and special tour of the show on Sky TV and in selected movie theaters in the UK. This is a new kind of art presentation on a scale that the British public accepts and supports. That I think is the difference when traveling in the United Kingdom. The arts are revered but you also have to remember that Britain is a country [only roughly as large as the state of California.](#) If they can do it, we can too.