

NY CULTURE

Art World Anniversaries

Ten years of the Rubin Museum and More

By REBECCA BRATBURD

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Shelley Rubin, Nelly Furtado and Donald Rubin at the 10th anniversary gala for the Rubin Museum of Art. *WireImage/Getty Images*

Shelley and Donald Rubin had plenty of reason to celebrate. The Empire State Building glowed red in recognition of the Rubin Museum's 10th anniversary, and its glittering gala raised \$1.2 million at Cipriani 42nd Street on Thursday night.

As Ms. Rubin told us, the museum's journey dates back 39 years to when the couple impulsively bought their first piece of Himalayan art while strolling down Madison Avenue.

"We happened to see a painting in a gallery window, and went inside," Ms. Rubin said. "Neither one of us had money at the time, but we went in and we ended up buying this painting, which was a White Tara. She lived on our bedroom wall, and she materialized tonight."

Oddly enough, a private overnight experience called a Dream Over at the museum didn't sell at the gala's auction. Ms. Rubin said she slept in the Shrine Room at the museum's first Dream

Over years ago and that Mr. Rubin stayed home that night.

“In my memory, in my fantasy, in my biography that I’m writing, I was there,” Mr. Rubin joked.

The Dream Over event is one of many designed to engage visitors and happens regularly about once a year, said Patrick Sears, the museum’s executive director.

“We know the art is foreign to most people,” Mr. Sears said. “But the ideas, the values, the philosophies, those resonate. The art is a vehicle, but it isn’t an end.” (The White Tara is a Buddhist deity.)

He said the next decade of exhibitions will be dedicated to each of human senses, and the entire experience will span several years.

“The senses—sight, smell, touch, taste, sound—are so ubiquitous in the art and they have very complex, interesting and relevant meaning in the cultural tradition,” Mr. Sears said. “Tibetans believe in six senses, and the sixth sense is the mind, and the greatest of all the senses.”



Jonah Freeman, Justin Lowe, Michael Phalen and Pascal Spengemann at a fundraiser for Artadia
Billy Farrell Agency

Further uptown, Karen and Dennis Mehiel have shifted focused a bit more to art lately, and last week, transformed their Upper East Side abode into an auction house. Eager art supporters bought all 40 of the available works, bringing in \$250,000 for Artadia, the Fund for Art and Dialogue.

“I’m involved a lot in politics, and being involved in the arts is recent,” Ms. Mehiel, who’s hosted fundraisers for President [Barack Obama](#) in the past, said. “I’ve dabbled a little bit here and there and I’ve always loved the arts, but recently it’s become something I think is more important to



Kylie Cappelli and Karen Mehiel *Billy Farrell Agency*



Nessia Pope *Billy Farrell Agency*

do.”

Artadia supports artists with unrestricted cash awards ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000 in several major cities, and will open to New York City-based artists this coming January. The Mehiels collect art and serve on Artadia’s board, though most of their personal collection was hiding behind makeshift walls on Tuesday, with the auction items on display instead.

Highlights from the live auction included Dan Colen’s studded canvas piece entitled “260 Days” (which sold for \$51,000) and Theaster Gates’s “Coup Coop” made from wood, asphalt, tar, metal and fire hose (and sold for \$25,000).

In case auction-goers—including arts patrons Marilyn and Larry Fields, Artspace curator Nessia Pope, Whitney Museum’s associate curator Christopher Lew and artists Jonah Freeman and Justin Lowe—couldn’t get their hands on Artadia-endorsed artwork, the nonprofit’s 15th anniversary exhibition at Longhouse Projects in lower Manhattan will be on display for a few more weeks.

Mr. Fields bid on works to add to his contemporary art collection that includes previous Artadia award recipients Mr. Gates, Nick Cave and William O’Brien.

Artadia is “a minor league system for artists to get involved into the major league galleries,” Mr. Fields said. “It’s not so much the money. Artists become

involved with curators from major museums around the country.”

Corrections & Amplifications

An earlier version of this article misidentified Nessia Pope as a co-founder of Artspace. (Oct. 13, 2014)