

Welcome everyone to our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary party.

First, let's thank Becca for doing another amazing job organizing the fair. Also, Jackson Koffman, who is my Tom Hagen for those of you who know your "Godfather." Rozenn Welsh and the rest of our staff, Taryn for handling "The Barack Obama Readings." And Phillip March Jones, who is our gallery director, still pitches in to help the fair all the time. Our publicists, Evan Lenox and Nadine Johnson and Associates, and her whole team have done a great job. I mean, could we have possibly gotten more or better press?

And validation feels good. But it also brings up some curious questions. Because the people in this room have always known how strong this material is and have banked their careers on proving it. So we get a rush when the work is in Venice or MoMA or the Met, but at the same time we know that none of these artists gave a damn about any of that. With all his ranting about terminology I think one of my favorite descriptions came from Randall Morris when he called this genre of work "the art that doesn't give a fuck." I think the point is that this group of dealers has been doing this thing we do with or without the accolades

Another point I would like to make is that since I bought the fair, I have in my own way tried to build community. When you compete against the same people for decades there are bound to be some bumps and bruises along the way. After I cut my deal with Sandy it slowly dawned on me that to be successful I had to basically introduce all the collectors I had earned over the years to all my competitors, and go out of my way to do so. I don't exactly recall that being the case when I broke into the business about 15 years ago. But the truth is, that when a new dealer comes into the field, they don't take a piece of our pie, they grow it for everyone. That's not always an easy thought to absorb, but in my view it's a fact. So when one of us does well, in the big picture we all do well. Now I'm not trying to start a big Kumbaya kind of hugfest here, but to the extent that we can all be generous to each other and work together, we are going to get further faster.

Not so easy drawing a crowd for a bunch of art dealers. For some reason, as a class, our reputations are not always the best. Which is very unfair because some of the nicest people I know are art dealers. Why one that I'm close to, I can remember a few years ago when I was sick in the hospital – he called all my artists to see how I was feeling!

Seriously, our dealers are some of the most passionate people in the art world. I'm talking evangelical zealots. Their dedication and commitment to this field has really, for the most part, made it what it is. And in the art world they have always done it with underdog status. But people are catching on – because the art is just so great.

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Tonite we are paying homage to 9 of our dealers who were also in the first fair in 1993 when we started. At the time I was in the family food business and had never heard of Outsider Art. I doubt Eric Gilley was much out of high school. And nobody had ever heard of James Brett.

Some things were probably the same as now – Randall was probably out on the corner of Broadway and Prince street ranting about the term Outsider Art. Now we have facebook which makes it much easier for him.

1) The first dealer we are going to toast is Aarne Anton and his American Primitive Gallery. Aarne you are universally loved and admired – you are basically impossible not to like. How many of us can say that? Not only does the alphabet dictate we start with you, but for me personally it is fitting because without you I might never have gotten into this racket in the first place – truly sorry if that puts a dent in your reputation. As some of you know, Aarne took on my late uncle Paul and showed his work for the first time with great success. This was how I discovered Outsider Art. Aarne was showing incredible work then as he is now - I recall being fascinated by Ray Materson, Charles Benefiel and Anthony Dominguez, Ionel Talpazan - some of the first work in the field I was ever exposed to. So let's raise a glass to Aarne, and Tina too. Thanks so much for your amazing contribution to the fair and the field.

2) Henry Boxer – I have to confess that I love Henry Boxer! He is an absolute sweetheart of a man and we have enjoyed countless laughs over the years. He has assured me that it's only a matter of time before I meet Pete Townshend, do some jamming with him, and ultimately join The Who full time. Henry has a phenomenal eye – discovering George Widener alone is enough for him to go down in art dealing history – but he keeps coming up with these incredible finds – now William Hall, from LA. How does he get to these American artists before us?! We are going to have to get Trump on this right away!! Henry, you are a gentleman and your contribution to the fair has been immeasurable.

3) I think when it comes to unadulterated passion for self-taught art, it's hard to top Randall Morris. I picture him being up in the wee hours writing away, pounding away on the computer, in kind of fevered delirium, like Mozart writing his last symphony in Amadeus. You and Shari have always been a dynamic team, and your dedication to the artists you handle is evident. Some of my earliest recollections of the field was going to your openings at 560 Broadway in the 90s and making new discoveries there. You have always both displayed a generous spirit with your knowledge and your immediate support of the fair after I took it over was important to our success. And all these years later you are still making important new discoveries, like M'onma.

4) I have had the singular experience of having a booth at the Outsider Art Fair directly across from John Ollman. Imagine cash is raining down from the sky but a breeze just strong enough is pushing it away from your booth and directly into John's. I am in deep admiration for the curatorial expertise that John puts into his shows at fairs and his

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gallery. And with Alex and Claire they are a formidable team. John has such an extensive knowledge of our field, but also of contemporary art and interweaves the material from both domains together beautifully. Your work with James Castle and Consalvos has made a huge contribution. And you still continue to introduce the public to dynamic work like from the Arts of Australia, in recent years. Thank you very much for doing the fair John.

5) When I struck my deal with Sandy at the end of the summer of 2012, I had about 4 months to get dealers to do the next fair. My biggest task was to lure back many of the most respected players who had stopped participating. It was delicate. But as I was going around making my impassioned pleas, many of them wanted to know one thing. Was Carl Hammer going to be there. I knew Carl well and had enjoyed seeing him in Chicago and New York over the years. But what I didn't realize was just how deep the respect from his peers was. His eye is fantastic and his association with Darger, Traylor, EVB, and virtually all the biggest names in the field has earned him the reputation of a heavyweight. And he cares very deeply about the quality of the fair, and the authenticity of the artists shown there. Carl's voice helped guide us in raising our standards our first years. And as if Carl isn't a force enough on his own, Yolanda has been kicking people's asses for years! Oh my God, there is a gal you do not want to cross! She's smiling away with those big pearly whites, and then boom, the bolts of lightning shoot out at you. Yolanda, your dedication and loyalty to Carl has been a constant ever since I've been around and it's a beautiful thing to see. Thanks for looking out for him!

6) I did not really have the pleasure of knowing Shelby Gilley well. I met him a few times at the fair in the late 90s and remember being impressed, striking me as consummate Southern gentleman, unlike anyone I ran into growing up in the Bronx. And the apple doesn't fall far from tree if you know Eric. But I have gotten to know his family over the last several years and they are lovely people, just as nice as they come. Eric, Robin and Marie have been bringing great art from the South to the fair, continuing in the family tradition. Clementine Hunter, David Butler, Sister Gertrude and so many others. The work from the Deep South is such an important part of the tapestry of our fair and the entire field. Thank y'all so much for being here.

7) I can only imagine how gratifying it was for Marion Harris to see the huge image by Morton Bartlett on the cover of yesterday's NY Times art section, confirmation that over the last 25 years her work with that artist was appreciated the world over. Congratulations! I think I bought my first work of art at the fair from Marion in 1996, an Albert Loudon. Her booth is always so inventively put together and her gracious, sincere manner has always been so inviting. You have always added a dynamic edge to the fair and we are grateful to have you come back year after year.

8) Ricco Maresca has been a force in the Outsider Art World for as long as I can remember. One of my earliest memories was being on a tour of the Winter Antiques Show with a Folk Art Museum group led by Frank. He was explaining how some duck decoys that were being shown were every bit as compelling as anything that Picasso

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had ever done. Sounds like a stretch but I was pretty convinced. He was that good. Frank and Roger have been evangelists for this work forever. Traylor, Hawkins, Dellschau, Judith Scott and of course Ramirez, are just some of the names you think of. Their booths at the fair are always hung with great care and precision. Again, when I bought the fair their coming back into the fold was very important for us. I want to say again how appreciative I am for that support.

9) Luise Ross is a great art dealer with a terrific eye. I recall a great show at her gallery in Soho of an artist named Pierre Carbonel. While Luise is known for her expertise in Traylor and Minnie Evans, she has always introduced new work to her audience that is fresh and original like Tynne Esko. Luise may have a steely stare with those ice blue eyes but for those of us who are lucky to know her, she is a kind, empathetic woman. We are fortunate to have had her in the fair for all these years.

OK- lots of other people to thank – mainly the collectors who keep coming back year after year, and especially those of you who have come to Paris. We urge all of you to come this October. I want to thank Sandy Smith for coming – wouldn't be here without him. I have tremendous affection and respect for Sandy, but I'm not giving him the microphone. And Edward Gomez for curating such an elegant booth this year. Thanks to the American Folk Art Museum for being such a focal point for all these years with their great shows and events - Anne Radice, Elizabeth Kingman and they have a fantastic curator there too. I want to thank my wife Valérie Rousseau for her support. It's incredible to have her ear, with her deep knowledge of this field. Also John Maizels and Raw Vision Magazine, and the folks at Intuit. And to all the dealers new and old, thanks for being here, and hope you do well this weekend. Becca and I, and our entire team are trying our best to help you be successful. And please consider Paris, we're gaining a foothold there and getting more traction there every year.

So enjoy the rest of the weekend everybody and thanks again for everything.

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