


Art Agency, Partners

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Part IV: Peak LA



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Blum talks about artists and spirituality, and discusses running galleries in New York and Los Angeles. He and Burns visit the Schindler House, a small oasis in the middle of the city, characteristic of the best of Californian Modernist architecture.

Transcript

Scene 1

[Scene begins with Tim and Charlotte sitting at a table on the patio of a charming restaurant on Melrose Place. They have just ended lunch with a delicious cookie.]

Charlotte Burns: And that was the best cookie I've ever had in my life. Can you tell me where we are other than Heaven?

Tim Blum: The we're at a place called Croft Alley, which is just a little nook in a back alley in West Hollywood. It's a local joint I go to all the time.

Charlotte Burns: Delicious. So, what are we going to do next?

Tim Blum: I think maybe we'll go to the Schindler house, which is also part of the MAK Center.

Charlotte Burns: Sounds brilliant.

Tim Blum: Let's do it.

Charlotte Burns: Let's do it.

Scene 2

[Tim Blum and Charlotte Burns drive through West Hollywood.]

Charlotte Burns: So, before we got out for lunch, were talking to me about your plans for this agnostic spirituality show.

Tim Blum: [laughs] Right.

Charlotte Burns: And I wanted to talk to you a little bit about that, but also about exhibitions in general.

Tim Blum: I have actually been working on a plan for an exhibition. I recently have come to the conclusion that I want to commission a composition—

Charlotte Burns: Oh really?

Tim Blum: —for the show. Yeah, to have that as an aural component to the exhibition. I'm calling it agnostic spiritualism because I'm seeing a thread in the art world, around the world, of artists that are very involved with spirituality, but not related to some sort of—

Charlotte Burns: Organized religion.

Tim Blum: —specific church or organized religion.

Charlotte Burns: Do you think that the art museum as temple, that sort of secular organizing force, then the one thing that's been missing from that—if you think of any really organized religion—the human voice is... singing or chanting in unison is a big part of what creates that sense of togetherness. So, it's really interesting to think of how underused that's actually been in creating the experience in the art world.

Tim Blum: Fully. It's kind of fascinating, huh?

Charlotte Burns: We've been speaking to a lot of dealers who say that they're not getting so much traffic in the gallery. How do you keep exhibition making at the kind of forefront of what you're doing?

Tim Blum: Yeah well, I mean it's just part and parcel of what we do, it's the main focus. I think that's what the bulk of our job is: to mount and host exhibitions. Both in the galleries and, of course, in museums and otherwise around the world. That's the meat of the matter.

Charlotte Burns: Do you get people coming to the gallery?

Tim Blum: Absolutely, more and more and more.

Charlotte Burns: Is there a difference between New York and LA?

Tim Blum: Well, LA gets more traffic because it's the flagship, it's museum scaled. It usually has two exhibitions going at any given time

Charlotte Burns: And which exhibitions have you staged that you're most proud of? Like Mono-ha?

Tim Blum: The Mono-ha is definitely, yeah, the top, if not one of the top, if not the top most memorable exhibition.

Charlotte Burns: Do you find that those shows lead the way for curators to... they interest other curators—

Tim Blum: I think so, maybe.

Charlotte Burns: —that in turn kind of builds a market? Or does it not work like that?

Tim Blum: Well, you know, maybe. I mean, the Mono-ha thing definitely... You know, it depends on what material you're looking for. It's all very specific. So, Mono-ha definitely created a market and an awareness for Mono-ha artists.

Charlotte Burns: Mhm.

Tim Blum: Although they are mostly all sculptors, and sculpture markets are much, much more difficult than painting markets.

Charlotte Burns: Yeah.

Tim Blum: Dansaekhwa was one of the most explosive market experience I think that I've ever seen.

Charlotte Burns: Really? why?

Tim Blum: Yeah, because it was literally a group of artists who had been working steadily in Korea for 50 years and had not really had any real attention outside of that region. So, you're having great painters that fit into a global history, and it's fresh art for the market, and it exploded.

Scene 3

[Tim and Charlotte arrive at the Schindler House.]

Tim Blum: We're in the heart of West Hollywood on Kings Road. We're heading to the Schindler House, which is sort of a very important, almost birthing ground for all the best that California architecture has brought. So, look at this. This is another in the middle of the city—

Charlotte Burns: It smells amazing.

Tim Blum: —just this idyllic compound. It sits here as quiet as we hear it now.

Charlotte Burns: I love it. There are these idyllic pockets around LA.

[Camera shows the grounds of the Schindler House.]

Tim Blum: Yeah, for sure. Again, like we said, this is one of those one of many, many examples of LA at its best, like a unique approach to art, architecture, engagement in the city.

Charlotte Burns: So, when was this house built?

Tim Blum: 1921, 22.

Charlotte Burns: Oh, really?

[Camera pans the interior of the house, showing the contemporary art pieces on display.]

Tim Blum: Rudolph Schindler, Austrian, immigrated to LA, and he along with Frank Lloyd Wright sort of simultaneously kicked off the great Los Angeles architectural renaissance, which continues to this day. But this is a really important pivotal site which has blessedly been kept, maintained, restored and is now operated by the MAK Center which keeps it alive by hosting exhibitions of contemporary art.

Charlotte Burns: And this is sort of a fusion of Japanese and European influences.

Tim Blum: Well yeah, this sort of kicked off the whole notion of indoor... these key components of LA. This is the script. This is it. It's crystal blue skies. *[laughs]* You're living indoor, you're living outdoor. It's fluidity. Schindler was also very inspired by Japanese architecture, so he brought in a hybrid of European modernism, Japanese aesthetics, and married it in the in the California landscape.

Charlotte Burns: Yeah. It's gorgeous. One other thing we were just talking about was LA fiction.

Tim Blum: Yeah. Oh God, yeah.

Charlotte Burns: It was Raymond Carver who wrote this thing that was super chilling about a housewife standing at a sink cleaning the cutlery, and then there was a kitchen knife and then she cleans it just a little bit too slowly—

Tim Blum: Sure, of course.

Charlotte Burns: —and this thing about the Santa Ana winds creeping up your spine. Is that a thing?

Tim Blum: Nathanael West. Yeah sure, that's *The Day of the Locust*, I think, that one comes from. Who ended up becoming

a screenwriter here. I mean, look, that's the thing is that it has this aura and mystic of exactly what we're experiencing right now, which is crystal blue sky, perfect sun, a there's this actually a slight breeze which is actually slight cool, oddly enough. *[laughs]* But there's creepy crazy shit that goes on. Just like anywhere else. It's that noir side of LA. And that Santa Ana winds is like an indication of that. It's like the hot wind that comes from the desert, goes up your spine, gets into your head and makes you fucking crazy.

[Laughter]

Charlotte Burns: Well, here we are.

Tim Blum: Let's not go crazy yet.

[End scene]