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## Count Panza's 'classic art' earns raves at gala MoCA reception

By Hunter Drohojowska

I think it's very interesting to see the classics of 20 years ago next to art that will be classic in another 20 years." That observation came from Doug Cramer, TV producer and trustee of the Museum of Contemporary Art, as he circulated through gallery after gallery at the Temporary Contemporary Saturday night. On one side of the museum, there was masterpiece-quality art from the 1950s and 1960s from the collection of Italian trustee Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo. One year ago, MoCA bought these 80 works of art by such famous artists as Robert Rauschenberg, Mark Rothko, Franz Kline, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, James Rosenquist, George Segal, Antoni Tapies and Jean Fautrier. This collection has been in storage for the past 10 years, so the reception offered a much anticipated viewing. (The exhibition opens to the public tomorrow.)

The invitation brought out nearly 1,000 aficionados, artists, mavens, collectors, writers and dealers — members of the critical crowd, but most were mouthing nothing but praise. Those compliments extended to the other side of the museum, where galleries were devoted to L.A. artists Allen Ruppersberg and Mark Lere, the "classics in another 20 years."

Visiting from his hideaway in Las Vegas — where he is busy reading Descartes and Hume and analyzing the history of modern thought — was the reclusive artist Robert Irwin, a founding trustee of MoCA, with screenwriter Joan Tewkesbury and his biographer, New Yorker writer Lawrence Weschler. Asked about the show, Irwin enthused, "The Mark Lere was a knockout. Dynamite. But you can't see it with people in it."

Also in town from New York were Artforum publisher Anthony Korner with editor Ingrid Sischy. She, too, had run into Irwin who apologetically confessed, "They don't have your magazine where I live now." To which Sischy quipped, "That's why you moved there."



Standing in front of this James Rosenquist painting from the Panza Collection at MoCA are Fritz and Chris Frauschiger, left, Richard Kuhlenschmidt, center, Dagny Corcoran and artist Roger Herman, far right.



Eli Broad, founding chairman of MoCA, left, joined Countess Giovanna and Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo at Saturday's party. Broad had every reason to smile: He negotiated the museum's purchase of the Panza Collection.

Other New Yorkers included artists Antonio Muntadas, Richard Prince and Barbara Kruger, all of whom currently have shows here; gallery owner Irving Blum; and former L.A. resident Diane Keaton. Fritz Frauschiger, former director of the Arco Center for the Visual Arts, was there with wife Chris, and said he is busy organizing a major group show of L.A. artists in the 35,000 square foot space, formerly a print shop, that is adjacent to MoCA. Newlyweds Harry Kipper and Bette Midler were looking happy, as were supercouple Al Nodal (director of Otis Parsons) and Joy Silverman (director of L.A.

Contemporary Exhibitions). Collectors Joe Austin, Merry Norris and Dagny Corcoran were there, as well as Libby Keck and Eleanor Phillips. Newport Harbor Art Museum curator Paul Schimmel looked around the Ruppersberg show and said, "It's about time. They (the MoCA folk) need to do the same thing for John Baldessari." Conceptual artist Doug Huebler embraced Count Panza as an old friend, who beamed and said, "I bought his first work in 1969." Another guest, Francois Moutand, counsel general of France, said, "It's fantastic. I'm full of admiration for the discovering

eye of Panza. To have started such a collection 40 years ago really meant having a very disarming eye." Countess Giovanna Panza came over with eyes shining and cooed in an Italian accent, "It's a big emotion, a big happiness. It's like the birth of children, a start and finish at the same time." Count Panza added, "It is the most important day of my life as a collector. My dream was just to have my collection in a museum and tonight this dream came true. If art is private, it is not yet art. When everybody can see and enjoy, then it becomes true art."