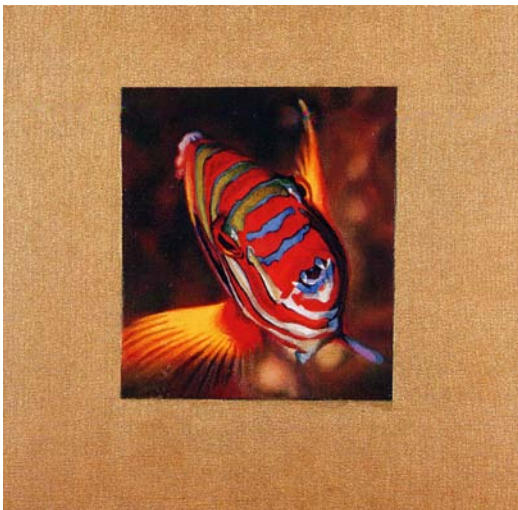


“What a long, strange trip it’s been” -from Truckin’ by The Grateful Dead

Jane Hart

Friends and colleagues who really know me can tell you that for many years my principle *mantra* has been a single word, “collaboration.” It is in this spirit that nearly all aspects of my activities within contemporary arts have been driven.

I began seriously studying art at the age of 12. It has always been my life’s passion. I credit this largely to the nurturing of my parents, (who embraced the “Beat” culture). My mother was an artist, my step-mother was a school teacher who owned an own art gallery, and my father took my younger sister and me on excursions to Manhattan and Upstate New York, exposing us to exciting “Happenings” and the like. I vividly remember going into an abandoned church that a group of artists had transformed into a world of psychedelic wonderment. It was an intense experience that has been a prevailing influence, fueling my zeal for art and its limitless array of possibilities. For as long as I can remember, I knew I would be an artist. Then I could not possibly foresee what path this passion would lead me on.



Jane Hart *Untitled (Harlequin Tusk Wrasse)* Acrylic and gold enamel on canvas 12 x 12”

Fast forward to Miami in the early 80’s, coming back to South Florida after attending New York’s free-wheeling, yet influential School of Visual Arts. I was invited to join a group of artists who started a collaborative, going by the moniker “Artifacts.” Our mission was simple. Each week (in the spirit of the then hugely influential NYC club AREA), we would transform the Design District disco “Fire and Ice” into a themed installation - different each time. This was a lot of work - rummaging through junk yards, finding live chickens and tracking down a vintage Citroën (among other activities) all towards the

creation of an energized environment where people could come together and enjoy a singular night during the week. A transcendence from the banal. It was a success, and a number of artists from the group remain in contact, Kevin Arrow among them. Many young artists today have told me they are familiar with what we achieved.

Simultaneously I had my first job in the arts, as assistant director of a Miami gallery. These were fun, creative, and fulfilling times. While working there, I undertook co-curating my first gallery exhibition; “Focus New York” a survey of artists comprising the then flourishing East Village scene (a phenomenon unto itself), which provided fertile ground for much of what we now see in Chelsea and previously in Soho. That project precipitated a move to the “Big City”....and I was on my way!

Once in New York, I began to pursue making my own work, painting non-stop until the early morning hours, after long days fielding the demanding responsibilities in a gallery. First, I was at Piezo Electric in the East Village and then at Marlborough on 57th Street, each occupying the extreme poles of the New York arts spectrum. I also went to London for a year and worked as Assistant Director of Flowers Gallery. I recall Damien Hirst’s very first show which took place while I was living there. I pronounced then that his work was something truly inspired! As an artist, I fervently made the rounds to see as much as I could, the good, the bad and the ugly (as well as the beautiful). In the process, I developed what some would say is a “good eye” for outstanding art and artists.

The past thirty years has been an incredible journey! - the highlight of which has been having close association and interaction with some of the most important artists of our time. Even luckier, I had the opportunity to team up with many of them on a wide array of diverse projects, too numerous to list here.

Back to collaboration..... After nearly 10 years living and working in New York City’s elite art bubble, I was ready for a change. I yearned for a new situation that would insert me into an atmosphere of greater creative interaction with other artists. I headed west to Los Angeles. Some of my most inspired and rewarding experiences unfolded there.

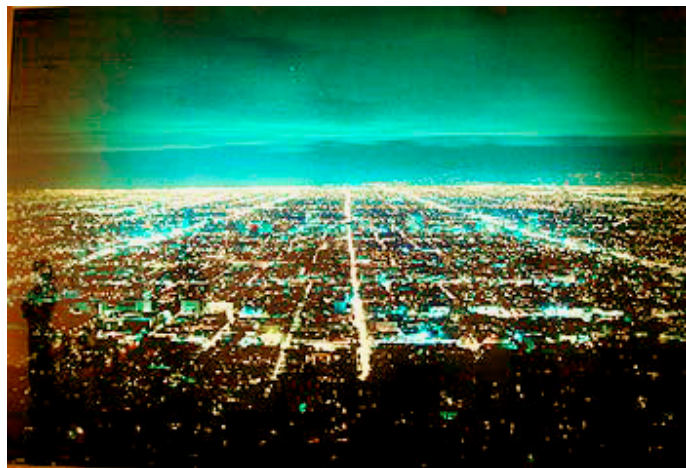
During my voyage of discovery and through encounters and projects of all kinds, I was no longer an artist working alone in a studio (which was, in NYC, the fireplace of my miniscule apartment!). The Los Angeles art scene was beginning to explode at this time. The early 90’s found in this sprawling city, a convergence point for artists of all backgrounds and aesthetic positions. The art scene in LA continues to flourish to this day. Now it has arrived,

considered one of the undeniable art capitals of the world. The openness of the art community was refreshing and lent itself to all kinds of collaborative projects, infused with innovation.

I curated exhibitions, published catalogues, contributed to publications such as the then fledgling magazines "ArtNet"(online) and "Zing, A Curatorial Crossing". I produced limited fine art editions utilizing groundbreaking new digital processes, and I worked with artists John Baldessari, Cindy Bernard, Gregory Crewdson, Mike Kelley, Pae White and others. Both emerging and internationally acclaimed artists came to me and the company I ran, Muse [X] Editions, to realize projects that they were unable to create elsewhere. I often worked side-by-side with artists like Doug Aitken, in front of a monitor, figuring out solutions to creative challenges. Simultaneously I converted my Hollywood Hills home into an alternative gallery venue, lemon sky: a project space, founded on encouraging experimentation. The first exhibition there was impressive - Alyson Shotz works in various media.



Alyson Shotz Installation of exhibition at lemon sky: projects + editions, Los Angeles 2002
Indoor Gardening mixed media 105 x 174 x 120"



Doug Aitken *Rise* 1998 cibachrome mounted to Plexiglas 30 x 35"

Then, after six years and twenty-four exhibits, I opened lemon sky: projects + editions, thus launching my first storefront gallery fused with an edition publishing endeavor. Engaging dialogues took place between me and young artists, as well as with more established artists whose work I revered.

I nurtured budding talent and marveled at the mastery of those who had already "made it". In the midst of all of this, however, one thing had managed to fall away.....the creation of my own work. Still, I felt that the creative process of collaborating was extremely fulfilling, and I thoroughly enjoyed working with others (many of whom are included in "Under the Influence") to help them realize their own artistic visions.



Installation of a group show at lemon sky: a project space, Hollywood Hills, CA 1996. L to R: David Shafer, Charles LaBelle, James Welling and Laura London



Installation shot of "a scattering matrix" curated by Jane Hart at Richard Heller Gallery, Santa Monica, CA 1996. R to L: Spencer Finch, Pauline Stella Sanchez, Terrie Friedman and Marie Lafia

On a visit, I attended Art Basel Miami Beach in its first year. Desiring to be closer to my family in Miami, I envisioned a renewed cultural potential for this city. So, I departed LA, the city I had adored and embraced, with more than a tinge of sadness, and I returned "home" to Miami in 2003 at a time during which the world had dramatically changed, post 9/11.

Collaboration still reigned. I got involved with Locust Projects, first as a very active board member, then succeeding Dennis Scholl as Board Chair. During this period, Locust was transformed and brought to a new level of acclaim, mainly as a result of Gean Moreno's incisive curating. Locust Projects' viability became further solidified when it was awarded an Andy Warhol Foundation Initiative grant during my tenure there.



Installation shot of *A Toffee Armistice* at lemon sky: projects + editions, Miami 2006 co-curated by Jane Hart and Martin Sexton. L to R: Martin Sexton, Dick Jewel, Banksy, Jeremy Deller.

Still, my own art remained on the back burner. Its absence from my life was beginning to ignite my imagination. In 2004, I rekindled my practice, but decided for a variety of reasons, to make my new work under an assumed name, TJ Ahearn, an anagram of my real name. Instead of my formerly labor intensive process of painting in a style of photo realism...I opted for the more subliminal and immediate medium of collage. Well over 100 collages later, I feel that I have reclaimed the fundamentals of my own creative impulse. Pop culture, Rock music, self examination, and art history have all been intrinsic conduits to what fuels my vision. It is a pursuit that is uniquely rewarding in every way. I also see my co-creation with the persona I formed in TJ, as a collaboration of sorts. This separation of identities allows me the freedom to pursue artistic concepts without them interfering with my ongoing activities as an art professional.



TJ Ahearn *Shade And Honey* 2007 collage on panel 12 x 12"

Most recently I have had the good fortune to become Curator of Exhibitions at the Art and Culture Center of Hollywood. It is a position that allows me to persevere daily in pursuing my unwavering *mantra*, collaboration. There, I've created a new program "Focus South Florida," a series of exhibits which affords me the chance to work with a number of artists from our region, some of whom are included in "Under the Influence", including Julie Davidow, Vickie Pierre, Michelle Weinberg and others. The exhibitions I curate for the Art and Culture Center present me with wonderful opportunities to engage with a whole new array of artists. Organizing dynamic shows extends the dialogue that is inherent to understanding and appreciating the importance of art of our time. It is because of all my interactions with art and artists that I was invited to be a participant in "Under the Influence". I'm so pleased to bring a portion of the exhibit to the Art and Culture Center - and to share with you, the reader and viewer, a glimpse into one individual's pathway to artistic realization!