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## The Miami Herald

### Rubell exhibit explores the West Coast scene

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Long called the nation's second art capital, Los Angeles is the focus of the largest show ever mounted at the Rubell Family Collection. *Red Eye: Los Angeles Artists from the Rubell Family Collection* features 200 works by 36 artists. It occupies the entire 45,000-square-foot space of the private museum's two-story Wynwood warehouse.

"I don't think we'll ever do anything like this again. It's such a big project," says collection director Mark Coetzee.

Even though the Rubell family has lived for years on the East Coast in New York and Miami, he notes that most of the collection's seminal pieces are by L.A. artists.

*Red Eye* — a reference to the popular overnight flights linking the left and right coasts — is intriguing and astonishing when it's not annoying and baffling. It takes the pulse of many, but not all, aspects of an art scene in a city percolating with strong museums and art schools.

The exhibit takes cues from two previous museum exhibits: the 1992 show at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art called *Helter Skelter: L.A. Art of the '90s* and *Los Angeles: 1955-1985*, mounted in 2006 in Paris at the Pompidou Centre. *Red Eye* is meant to be a sequel to the Pompidou show. It is heavily focused on recently produced art. Some 80 works here were created in 2005 or later.

Not surprisingly, much of the art reflects the passion and calculated skill for making movies. An elaborate work by Mike Kelley, *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #9 (Farm Girl)*, reinterprets an old TV clip of a singing farm girl with new, high-definition media. Amy Bessone's painting *German God* is a coolly painted operatic figure.

Says Coetzee: "I thought [*Red Eye*] would be like Ed Ruscha, really Pop. . . . In the end it was about something pretending to be something else. Hollywood's all about acting. There is this game of something trying to be what it's not."

The exhibit mixes new and classic works by well-known L.A. artists including Paul McCarthy, John Baldessari, Mike Kelley, Jason Rhoades and Charles Ray. It has an added edge by bringing together works by younger, emerging Los Angeles artists, such as Frank Benson, Evan Holloway, Amy Bessone, Nathan Mabry and Lara Schnitger.

There is a confrontational tone to the show, an obsession with flaunting the human body and sexuality in a way that defies the conventions of good taste while also pointing out alternate ways of forging a personal style and identity. In this context, the 1993 series of photographic portraits by Catherine Opie is compelling and beautiful. She shows men and women, including a male couple in the work *John and Scott*, ornamented with a dazzling array of tattoos and piercings. *Untitled Chandelier* by Jason Rhoades has the disorienting glow of a Western-themed disco. Neon signs, spelling out derogatory names for female genitalia, dangle from wagon wheels.

One of the most powerful works here combines the costly hi-tech wizardry associated with contemporary art with political consciousness and visually arresting imagery. This is the cinematic, multiscreen video installation *Diamond Sea* by Doug Aitken. It's set in a coastal region in southwest Africa controlled by corporate titans of the billion-dollar diamond industry. Coetzee explains that the region is rife with diamond mines and the remains of modest homes that families had to abandon to suit corporate imperatives.

Paul McCarthy's technologically complex installations are especially confrontational and challenging. They use wiggled, mannequin-like figures to exploit viewers' urge to look at the salacious and violent. In works like *MoCA Man* and *Cultural Gothic*, his tactics give an aggressive form in the language of visual arts to common sights in the daily life of pop culture. Those common sights are screaming, vulgar headlines in tabloids stacked in racks at checkout lines in grocery stores, or other sorts of feeding frenzies in the media.

*Cultural Gothic* shows a father helping his son have intercourse with a goat. Father and son look strangely distanced and robotic. The core of McCarthy's abrasive art is a deliberately ugly reflection of the base, dehumanizing and machismo instincts in popular culture. His art usually appears to be an indictment of those instincts.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE RUBELL FAMILY COLLECTION

'DIAMOND SEA': Doug Aitken's powerful installation focuses on the billion-dollar diamond industry in southwest Africa.

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