

ARTNET NEWS

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NYTIMES: WHAT'S WITH MUSEUM TAX PERK?

Metropolitan Museum director **Thomas Campbell** and **Museum of Modern Art** director **Glenn Lowry** both receive luxury housing as a perk of their jobs -- and don't pay tax on the benefit, according to a front-page story in the *New York Times*. Campbell lives in a \$4 million co-op across from the Met on Fifth Avenue, while Lowry inhabits a \$6 million condo in **Museum Tower**. The paper estimates that this boon could be worth more than \$130,000 per year for each man.

This unusual tax treatment, the *NYT* says, is akin to a home office deduction -- if your entire home doubles as your office. Under a special provision of the tax code, employees don't have to pay taxes on their employer-provided housing if living there is a requirement of their job. This loophole typically applies to both university presidents and motel owners.

Are the Met and MoMA taking what might be called, in tax parlance, an *aggressive* position? Experts contacted by the *NYT* seem to think so. Other museums, such as the **J. Paul Getty Museum**, the **Los Angeles County Museum of Art** and the **Morgan Library**, provide housing for their chief executives but report the perk as taxable income. What does the **I.R.S.** say? No comment on specific cases, but in general the housing must be provided for "a substantial business reason."

PICASSO SALE FUNDS PAPER MILL

George Steinbrenner famously kept his money-losing shipbuilding business afloat with proceeds from his profitable baseball team. Now, newspaper magnate and art collector **Peter Brant** has sold a painting by **Pablo Picasso** reportedly in an effort to save his **White Birch Paper Company** from bankruptcy. The claim was made during an Aug. 6 court hearing in Stamford, Conn., as part of Brant's high-profile divorce from model **Stephanie Seymour**.

The painting in question, a powerfully grotesque late Picasso titled *Le Baiser*, painted in 1969 when the artist was 88, sold at **Christie's London** on June 23, 2010, for £12.1 million, or about \$17.9 million. According to the provenance, the work was acquired at auction in 2003 and exhibited in "Picasso, Bacon & Basquiat" at **Tony Shafrazi Gallery** in New York in 2004. The price back then? £2.9 million, or \$4.8 million, for a nice profit of about \$13 million.

OLD-SCHOOL GRAFFITI ART IN THE HAMPTONS

It's just what those beach-sodden vacationers in the Hamptons need -- a goodly dose of urban culture. "Down by Law: New York's Underground Art Explosion, 1970s-1980s," Aug. 14-Sept. 26, 2010, opens at **Eric Firestone Gallery** at 4 Newtown Lane in East Hampton. The French graffiti writer **Blade** is set to tag a bus parked outside the gallery on Aug. 13. The line-up runs from **Charlie Ahearn**, **Jean-Michel Basquiat** and **Henry Chalfant** to **Sharp**, **Dondi White** and **Zephyr**, with **Coco 144**, **Martha Cooper**, **Jane Dickson**, **Keith Haring**, **L.A. 2** and **Lady Pink** in between.

CHELSEA ART MUSEUM IN TROUBLE

Thinking about visiting the **Chelsea Art Museum**? Better call ahead! The eight-year-old institution on West 22nd Street in New York became the latest symbol of the woes affecting the non-profit art world, with a *report* in the *Wall Street Journal* detailing the alarming deterioration of its financial position.

Specifically, according to the article, CAM founder and director **Dorothea Keeser** has pledged the museum's entire collection as collateral for a loan taken out in March. That \$350,000 infusion of cash -- made against art estimated at \$2.5 million -- was needed to help maintain interest payments on the mortgage. "Lenders of that loan are a group of individuals including a New York banker and a Hong Kong gallery owner," according to the *Journal*. CAM could face investigation by the attorney general over the move, or even lose its status as a non-profit.

But it gets worse: Collateralizing the art was simply to pay down *interest* on the mortgage. CAM's mortgage itself is held by **Hudson Realty Capital**, which refinanced Keeser's mortgage in 2008, allowing her to pay only partial interest for a grace period that is now over. Keeser missed a key payment deadline at the beginning of July, and with the accumulated unpaid interest, she now owes \$13 million to Hudson -- a full \$2 million more than the original \$11 million loan.

Last Friday, Aug. 6, 2010, the Keeser-owned company that owns CAM's building filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, forestalling any possible foreclosure by Hudson Realty. Contacted in Switzerland by the *Journal*, Keeser said that bankruptcy court proceedings would begin in September. In the meantime, the article says that "half-time furloughs" have been initiated for CAM staff -- though a representative of the museum said that CAM would be operating as usual. Keeser, for her part, wrote to *Artnet Magazine* to say that she was optimistic that a clearer answer about the future of the institution would be available on Friday. Stay tuned.

BRONZINO IN FLORENCE

A rare opportunity to see a survey of paintings by the Mannerist master **Bronzino** (1503-1572), court artist to **Cosimo I de' Medici**, requires a trip to Florence -- is that punishment or what? "Bronzino. Artist and Poet at the Court of the Medici," Sept. 24, 2010-Jan. 23, 2011, at Florence's **Palazzo Strozzi**, presents 54 of the 70 known paintings by the artist alongside works by his master, **Pontormo**, and other 16th-century artists, including **Benvenuto Cellini** and **Alessandro Allori**.

Four years in the making, the exhibition is organized by **Cristina Acidini**, **Carlo Falciani** and **Antonio Natali**. In addition to works from the **Uffizi**, the show includes loans from the **Metropolitan Museum of Art**, the **Musee du Louvre**, the **Kunsthistorisches Museum**, the **Getty Museum**, the **National Gallery of Art**, the **Szépművészeti Múzeum** in Budapest and the **Galleria di Palazzo Colonna** in Rome. The Met presented a show of "Drawings of Bronzino," Jan. 20-Apr. 18, 2010.

HIGH TIMES AT ASPEN ART MUSEUM

Could it be the thin air? The **Aspen Art Museum's** 2010 "artCRUSH" benefit on Aug. 6, 2010, raised a record \$1.5 million in a benefit featuring an art sale conducted by **Sotheby's** ace auctioneer **Tobias Meyer**. Top lots -- all donated -- included a work by **Marilyn Minter** -- she was the event's official honoree -- that went for \$120,000 and a drawing by **Damien Hirst** that brought \$78,000. Other interesting lots included a group-portrait commission by **Delia Brown** (\$48,000), **Mamma Andersson's** 2010 painting *Dying Dandy* (\$42,000), and works by **Richard Phillips** (\$50,000), **Kiki Smith** (\$34,000) and **Tom Sachs** (\$24,000), among others.

The Aspen Art Museum has now raised \$33.5 million in pledges and gifts towards its planned new facility in downtown Aspen, a 30,000-square-foot facility designed by **Shigeru Ban**. The building would be the architect's first museum structure in the U.S.

ALFRED STIEGLITZ AT SEAPORT MUSEUM

One of 20th-century photo pioneer **Alfred Stieglitz's** most famous pictures is *The Steerage*, so perhaps a show of his works at the New York seaport is long overdue. "Alfred Stieglitz New York," Sept. 15, 2010-Jan. 11, 2011, opens at the **Seaport Museum New York** at 12 Fulton Street with 39 vintage prints, including a facsimile of a lantern slide show, the first time Stieglitz's lantern slides have been exhibited. The show is organized by **Bonnie Yochelson**, former curator at the **Museum of the City of New York**, and author of the show's accompanying catalogue.

MURAL FELLOWSHIPS ANNOUNCED FOR 2010

A dozen artists have received the **Edwin Austin Abbey Mural Workshop Fellowship** for 2010, which consists of a \$1,200 stipend and an intensive, four-week-long mural workshop at the **National Academy Museum & School of Fine Art**. Participants are **Melanie Baker**, **Beth Clevenstine**, **Yvette Cohen**, **Daria Dorosh**, **Dave Eppley**, **Robert Franca**, **Sol Kjøk**, **Charles Kopelson**, **Deanna Lee**, **Alexander Mosley**, **Carol Salmanson** and **Julia Whitney Barnes**.

Led by artist **Grace Graupe-Pillard**, the workshop includes critiques and lectures by artists, architects and others, including **R.M. Fischer**, **Richard Haas**, **Joyce Kozloff** and **Dorothea Rockburne**. A display of the participating artists' maquettes and designs is currently on view at the National Academy School of Fine Arts, July 30-Sept. 1, 2010. The fellowships are made possible through the generosity of the late **Mary Gertrude Abbey**, widow of the U.S. illustrator and muralist **Edwin Austin Abbey**.

FAST TRACK FOR AOL GRANTS

Earlier this spring, **AOL** announced a promotional "Project on Creativity" that would award \$25,000 grants to 25 artists billed as "tomorrow's groundbreakers and visionaries, individuals with a creative spark." The internet portal has already received more than 5,000 registrations for the grant -- prospective applications must first *register* before submitting an application, due Sept. 1, 2010 -- and now AOL has set up a special email for the program: 25for25@aolartists.com. The insider word is that AOL plans to extend the deadline -- but why wait?

HIRST WHEEL COVERS

In what is already being *called* "one of the more bizarre link-ups in the automotive world this year," **Damien Hirst** has designed a set of custom-designed 4x4 wheel covers. The bespoke items are made of high-quality stainless steel, plus "a high impact plastic central dish wrapped with the artist's spin painting design." It claims to be covered with a UV laminate to prevent color-fading. The set is £900, and available for order from Hirst's multiples operation, **Other Criteria**.