

CULTURE CLUB

PARK HOUSE ACTIVATES AN ENGAGING ART PROGRAM AND INTRODUCES CHARLIE BILLINGHAM IN THE FIRST ROTATING EXHIBITION.



Entrance to Park House featuring Tony Oursler, *Cam-Camo-Crush*, 2014, film, video, aluminum, acrylic paint, one LCD screen, 42.5 x 43 x 2 in.

It's early February last year when I first visit with Deborah Scott regarding the buzzed-about Park House, a private social membership club that just opened in Highland Park Village in December. Deborah, a globetrotting New Zealand native living in Dallas, is one of four admired founders among a group which also includes her husband John, the much-loved former President and CEO of Rosewood Hotels, Megan Wood, an orthopedic hand surgeon, and her husband Brady Wood, who is one-half of the genius behind WoodHouse, an entertainment, hospitality, and advisory firm he helms with his brother Brandt—the creators of José on Lovers Lane.



Top row, from left: Matt Kleberg, *Soapbox*, 2017, oil stick on canvas, 20 x 16 in.; Allison V. Smith, *Giant. McCamey, Texas*, 2016, chromogenic color photograph, 30 x 30 in.; Samantha McCurdy, *Turmeric and Double Nude*, 2018, wood, spandex, and latex, 24 x 9 x 8 in.; John Pomara, *Divorce Court*, 2007, oil on enamel on aluminum. Bottom row, from left: Kristen Skees, *Radiant II*, 2016, archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle photo rag paper; Maximilian Schubert, *Untitled*, 2018, resin, fiberglass, and oil paint; Danielle Kimzey, *Grouping Pairs*, 2016, gouache on panel; Nan Coulter, *August 21*, 2017, archival inkjet print; Paul Winker, *Untitled*, 2017, acrylic and enamel on canvas, 33 x 25.5 in.



Left to right: Hans-Jörg Mayer, *Why Not*, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 40 in.; Bruce Nauman, *Soft Ground Etchings - Yellow, Coral, Lavender*, 2007, three color etchings, 29.5 x 39 in. each, collection of John and Lisa Runyon.



Allison V. Smith, *Giant. McCamey, Texas*, 2016, Chromogenic color photograph, 30 x 30 in.



Top, above dining table: Fernando and Humberto Campana, *Sushi Mirror* (*T Grand Green*), 2012, pictures, wallpapers, mirrors, frames, silver mirror, carpet, rubber, EVA and fabrics, structured aluminum and stainless steel. Below: David Korty, *Commission*, 2018, paper, flashe, and ink on canvas.

“The seed of Park House was planted when long-time biking buddies, John and Brady, were mountain biking the hills of Aspen one summer eight years ago,” Deborah shares. The “need for a comfortable, dynamic venue to gather, work, and dine,” was the order. That seed became a reality when, scouting locations a few years later, Brady Wood glanced up at the top floor of Highland Park Village above Starbucks and Chanel at what would ultimately become the club’s future location. Meanwhile, while living in London, the Scotts were actively joining and researching successful private social club models such as 5 Hertford Street, Annabel’s, The Arts Club, and the seven London Soho Houses.

“The Arts Club in particular is a favorite of ours and has an amazing permanent collection in addition to many rotating exhibits each year, some solo and other grouped by gender, medium, or subject. We were also inspired by their interior design—comfortable, chic and elegant—a perfect background for their art to shine.” Which makes sense, as the founders are immersed in the arts. “[Art] was a strong driver in the overall decor of the club and ensuring that the spaces felt personal.”

Four people can be three people too many in decision making, so the couples tapped John Runyon of Runyon Arts to curate the permanent collection as well as design and implement a multi-layered art program. “We’ve been working with John since the 90s when we owned the Green Room and he had his gallery in Deep Ellum next door,” says Megan Wood. “Working with someone we knew and trusted was a no brainer,” she notes.

Occupying the entire top floor, with three private dining rooms and event spaces, four bars and lounge areas, an outdoor patio (with a developing artist-inspired water feature by Sarah Crowner), and fresh views of Dallas, the club is vast and needed a lot of art. Knowing both couples for many years, Runyon combined their “collective energy” in his edits: “It was clear to me that an austere or minimal art presentation was not going to work for this group or this setting. Their opinions and input were integral to the development of this collection.”

Park House’s art program is essentially three-pronged. The permanent collection boasts commissioned works by Dallas-based artists Nic Nicosia, hanging in the main dining room, and Francisco Moreno, who painted the ceiling in the Peacock Parlour along with a salon-style wall that includes works from local artists and gallerists. “We definitely wanted to have something that represented Dallas and a connection to the local art community. Danielle Kimzey was my neighbor and I used to babysit her. Allison V. Smith took the photograph *Giant*, 2016, which had been the Coyote Drive-In that Brady owned,” says Megan. Other local artists include John Pomara, Paul Winker, and Nan Coulter, whose *August 21, 2017*, a portrait of Margaret McDermott watching the eclipse, is bound to spur recollections of the late grande dame of the arts.

The second part of the program includes loaned work from club members and galleries, of which Runyon says he is particularly proud. “We requested specific works that fit the curated program and they all graciously accepted. Now the lenders and club members can share and enjoy the artwork in this special environment, while providing visibility to these works. This adds another element of camaraderie and intimacy to the club.” The loans include Yasumasa Morimura’s *Self Portrait (Actress) After Marlene Dietrich 1* from The Rachofsky Collection; a suite of six screen prints by Ed Ruscha, *News, Mens, Pens, Brems, Stews & Dues* from the collection of Christen and Derek Wilson, produced by the artist in the early 70s during an extended stay in London; and Lisa and John Runyon’s *Soft Ground Etchings: Lavender, Coral, Yellow* by Bruce Nauman. On loan from the Baldwin Gallery in Aspen, Tony Oursler’s *Cam-Camo-Crush* is the observing eye that greets you when you step off the elevators.

The third part of the arts program is the rotating exhibition space in the hallway leading to the club’s offerings. It’s here amid the dust and progress of pre-opening that I meet London’s Charlie Billingham—the inaugural featured artist. At first glance, Billingham is someone who one might imagine shyly observes the wry humor in life. Quiet, and at once kind, his



Left to right: Nic Nicosia, *AM PM II*, 2018, graphite on Arches cold press; Nic Nicosia, *24 Hours (Second by Second)*, 5.29–6.27.2018, graphite on paper.



Top, from left: Charlie Billingham, *Mrs. Pepys*, 2018, oil on linen; Charlie Billingham, *A Well Deserved Break*, 2018, oil on linen; Charlie Billingham, *Blockbuster*, 2018, oil on linen; Charlie Billingham, *Untitled*, 2018, oil on linen. Courtesy of the artist and Travesía Cuatro. Bottom, from left: Charlie Billingham, *Royal Rumble*, 2018, oil on linen; Charlie Billingham, *No Offence*, 2018, oil on linen; Charlie Billingham, *Strawberry Split*, 2018, oil on linen. Courtesy of the artist and Travesía Cuatro.



Charlie Billingham, *Tight Rope*, 2018, oil on linen. Courtesy of the artist and Travesía Cuatro.

practice is inspired by Regency-era satirical prints.

Choosing this artist for the inaugural exhibition, Runyon reveals, “I saw reproductions of Charlie’s work in digital and print publications, but the real impact came from a first-hand interaction with the works at an art fair I attended in New York last year. Charlie block-stamped the walls and installed his work directly on top of his repeating imagery.” Shown by Travesía Cuatro in Madrid, “I had never seen anything like it. The English connection and the playfulness seemed just perfect for the inaugural Park House exhibit and our Park House art committee agreed.” Deborah Scott concurs, “I loved that he was from London, the inspiration for much of the Park House experience, and that he works in such a dramatic, colorful way.”

Billingham’s early stimulus took the form of eight George Cruikshank prints, “from his *Monstrosities* series, which show groups of people in London in the early 19th century in exaggerated fashionable clothes. They were hung around the house and from a young age they had a great impression on me.” Though, “It wasn’t until later in my life when I studied at the Royal Academy Schools that I started to research and look into them and other prints from that period in more detail, and to use sections in my art.”

For Park House, Billingham block-printed the corridor with painted bows reminiscent of a formal living room atop which the paintings are mounted. “There is a long history of using bows and ribbons as motifs in wall decorations and I believe it works well with paintings.”

Not at all akin to the outsized personalities cropped and distorted in his works, he illuminates, “Most of the paintings

in Park House are from sections of drawings and prints by Thomas Rowlandson—I was looking at crowds and scenes of fighting and brawling.” In evidence, fists in *Royal Rumble*, and what appears to be a boxing match in *No Offence*, display such fracas, as does the scuffle in *Tight Rope* where an arm thrusts into one side of the canvas to pull the braid of a man who runs out the other side. Sagging britches beneath big bellies and other exaggerations in *A Well Deserved Break*, *Strawberry Split*, and *Untitled*, are equally lively. “Paintings, especially ones made out of oil paint, are made of fat, so the more corpulent parts of the body lend themselves as good subjects,” expands the artist.

“We see Park House as a place to nurture art talent through our rotating exhibitions,” Deborah Scott says. “Charlie is a humble, sweet guy who came into the middle of a construction zone with dust flying, went to Home Depot to buy his supplies, and got to work over a three-day period to stamp the walls and position his art. We then put his works back in storage, covered the walls in foam wrap, he returned to London, and construction started again. When we were ready to reveal his art, it was a quick transformation from a dusty hall into the beautiful space you see now with the marble floors and his stunning, humorous works to welcome you into Park House.” The artist will “return to Dallas for a celebration of the space and the exhibit.”

Runyon concludes, “Park House is a place to socialize, work, and relax. In total, the collection provides a high energy, multimedia backdrop for all of these scenarios. There are discovery opportunities throughout the entire club. The artwork projects playful sexy sizzle in certain locations and quiet, non-objective respite in others.” **P**