

HOTTEST TICKET

Eli Broad with a piece from his collection—*Maginot*, 1977-93, by Anselm Kiefer, an acrylic and emulsion woodcut mounted on canvas.

the art of giving well

AS THE WORLD'S ART LOVERS PREPARE FOR ART BASEL MIAMI BEACH, LA'S MOST FAMOUS COLLECTOR, ELI BROAD, REVEALS WHAT HE'S MOST EXCITED ABOUT.

BY SUE HOSTETLER PHOTOGRAPHY BY PEDEN + MUNK

Much like the collection of paintings he has so carefully amassed, Eli Broad's passion for contemporary art and the city of Los Angeles has certainly not lost its luster. Talking with the larger-than-life, self-made entrepreneur and philanthropist is like being at a one-man TED conference titled, "The history of art since the 1970s, and why LA is the best." The collector has an encyclopedic knowledge of modern and contemporary art history and is a fascinating storyteller, recounting not only the inside dish on which artist almost went bankrupt (revealed only off the record) but also how Downtown's Grand Avenue continues to transform the cultural landscape of the entire West Coast.

Although Broad could be seen as just another wealthy trophy hunter, spend a little time with him and it's immediately clear his obsession is much more about culture than commerce. He has famously rescued local institutions LACMA and MOCA from the brink of financial ruin and is currently in the midst of building his own museum, The Broad (on—you guessed it—Grand Avenue). As the fall art season of annual events heats up, we sat down and talked to Broad about losing his innocence with MOCA, why Los Angeles is currently white-hot, and the excitement surrounding the highly anticipated 10th edition of Art Basel Miami Beach (ABMB) next month.

You and your wife, Edythe, made your first major art acquisition of an 1888 van Gogh at Sotheby's in 1972. Was this the catalyst for everything that was to come?

There was no catalyst—it was sort of a progression. If one looks at art and looks at various periods, you move from one period to the next for various reasons. [After the van Gogh], we also bought a 1933 Miró—a very large Miró that had belonged to Nelson Rockefeller—that we still have. So it was a great progression. In 1979 my innocence ended as a collector. Why? Because I became the founding chairman of The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA).

Why do you say your innocence ended then?

[Former New York Governor] Nelson Rockefeller once said, "I learned my politics at the Museum of Modern Art." When you're dealing with a diverse group of trustees from all kinds of backgrounds—some are very nice ladies who have never been engaged in an organization and never attended the meeting of a board—you try to keep everyone



The Broads' collection also includes Anselm Kiefer's *Laßt 1000 Blumen Blühen* (Let a Thousand Flowers Bloom), 1998, which uses mixed media on canvas.

"In 1979 my innocence ended as a collector. Why? Because I became the founding chairman of MOCA."

happy, and I find it to be quite a chore.

You, Maria Bell, and Jeffrey Deitch have done unbelievable things at MOCA. It's the darling of the art world right now.

If you go back and look, MOCA had lost its way. We weren't showing a permanent collection and so on. So three years ago, the attendance got down to 148,616. This year it will exceed 400,000—triple what it was. We've had balanced budgets in 2009 and 2010, with no debt. We've added about 25 new and returning trustees since December 2003

and raised some money. David Galligan was at the Walker Art Center for 17 years, and he is now here as executive vice president and COO, allowing Jeffrey to do all the things he's good at, which is being an impresario for visiting artists and collectors, doing what he does down at Art Basel Miami Beach, and all that stuff.

Can you expand more on the progression of your personal collecting?

After several years—this is going back now 27
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Anselm Kiefer's *Deutschlands Geisteshelden* (*Germany's Spiritual Heroes*), 1973, another of the Broads' works by the artist, is painted on burlap mounted on canvas.

“The Broad Art Foundation has made more than 8,000 loans to nearly 500 institutes worldwide.”

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years—our walls were filled at home. And we became art addicts and wanted to keep collecting. So I said, “You know what? We are going to create a foundation. And it’s going to be a lending library for museums and universities throughout the world.” And as you may know, we’ve made more than 8,000 loans to nearly 500 institutes worldwide. **And you’re building the new museum now to house your collection, correct?**

Yes. For years we said we’d rather find a place where we can have most of the storage and archives together in climate-controlled conditions. The building is 120,000 square feet with 50,000 square feet of galleries, which is more than the Whitney. And we had an architectural competition for it.

So why were Diller Scofidio + Renfro chosen to design the museum? I mean, why not, say, Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa/SANAA or Sir Norman Foster?

What was the challenge? We’re right next to Walt Disney Concert Hall. How do you do something that doesn’t clash but isn’t anonymous? [Diller Sco-



The Broads' collection also includes *Nürnberg* (*Nuremberg*), 1982, in which Anselm Kiefer introduces straw to add visual complexity to his piece.

fidio + Renfro] came up with a fascinating idea, this veil type of building. It’s an interesting answer—a complex answer.

Is starting your own museum rather than giving the collection to another art institution about having as many people see the collection as possible?

Absolutely. In fact, I talked to Glenn [Lowry, director of New York’s Museum of Modern Art] and I said, “Glenn, if I gave you our collection what would you do?” He said, “Don’t give it to me. I’d only show 20 or 30 things—the rest we’d put in storage.” The same thing would be true at any other

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