

SEARCH

Gallerist Crush: James Bacchi and Annette Schutz of ArtHaus

When James Bacchi and Annette Schutz opened **ArtHaus** in San Francisco's historic Nob Hill in 1996, they couldn't have known their gallery would become one of the city's most iconic contemporary art venues. Since relocating to a more intimate space in SF's SOMA district, Bacchi and Schutz have curated a diverse array of museum-quality works from noteworthy New York and Bay Area artists. In addition to the services they provide for collectors, curators, corporate art advisors, designers, and merchandisers, Bacchi and Schutz are also devoted philanthropists, contributing to causes including ArtforAIDS, Nourish the Children, and Breast Cancer Action. Learn more about the gallerists in our Q&A below.

By **Michelle Konstantinovsky** on 01/09/17 at 8:57 am



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"We love ArtHaus for their friendly and collaborative partnership; we can always count on them to provide us with a plethora of options whether it be for a traditional craftsman like this home or a contemporary high-rise in the city. Here we used works by New York artists Deborah Brown and Marc Lambrechts. ArtHaus has the 'it-factor' when it comes to latest art trends and hot new artists - always leaving us and our clients wanting more." - Jaclyn Christensen, CID, Senior Designer IDF Studio.



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1. How did you and Annette start ArtHaus and what was the motivation behind it?

JB: Picture it; San Francisco, 1996. We were co-directing Martin Lawrence Gallery's flag ship location in Union Square. It was my day off. I phoned Annette and asked her to meet me at the

Red Room. Over cocktails, and a promise that she would not say no, I proposed we open a gallery in my then apartment, located between Lower Nob Hill and Tenderloin Heights. Two martinis later, we set a date to give our notice. Having the opportunity to work together for nearly two years, we knew we were ideal partners. Equally important, I knew it would work. We were extremely successful directing both Regal Gallery and Martin Lawrence. It was time to realize and present our own vision in an atmosphere that felt inviting and inspired. ArtHaus, a by-appointment-only salon styled gallery, began conducting business on September 16, 1996.

AS: James and I co-directed Regal Art Gallery and later Martin Lawrence Gallery's Flag ship location in Union Square I knew I had met my future business partner. The question was not if we would open a gallery together but when and how? That's when James called and asked me to meet him for a drink at the red room. (James' description of what happened next is perfect)

2. When did you make the move from Nob Hill to SOMA and did that impact the atmosphere of the gallery?

JB: We relocated in 2005, and opened with a Group Exhibition, titled ON THE MOVE. I remember the invitation featured Fred, our then gallery mascot, sitting in front of a large wrapped box addressed to our new location at 411 Brannan Street. The move had a major impact on the atmosphere of the gallery. After setting appointments, and meeting collectors, designers, art advisors and curators at the front door of a tenement building for nine years – we were suddenly visible from the street, open to the public and were able to host large-scale exhibitions and openings. For me, it was all about no longer tripping over paintings when going to bed at night.

AS: We relocated in 2005 to 411 Brannan Street. The atmosphere of ArtHaus changed from a by- appointment-only, intimate salon style gallery to a 2,000 square foot, street level public gallery in SOMA. The new location changed our business. We hosted quarterly art openings that created excitement around featured shows. Art enthusiasts, clients, designers and art consultants were now welcome to walk in without the constraints of an appointment. The atmosphere at ArtHaus is ideal for hosting charitable events, allowing for us to give back to the community. Breast Cancer Action, Art for AIDS, Philanthropy By Design, ASID Northern California Chapter and Women's Council of Realtors are just a few of the organizations we've hosted. Most recently, we co-hosted a launch for Gilded Decay, an exquisite line of new candles by Lizette Marie Interior Design.

3. What are some of the most memorable exhibitions that stand out in your memory from the last 20 years?

JB: "No Contest," a sculpted installation by Adam Kurtzman, in black and white, ArtHaus @ artMRKT, 2015, "THE BACKYARD" photographs by Chris Schiavo and landscape installation by Deanna Glory, "Metropolis" by Carolyn Meyer, "Girl Group's 1st Annual Mobile Photo Awards Exhibition, "Think Before You Pink," an Invitational benefit exhibition for Breast Cancer Action, and The Fine Art Designers. This particular show brought to light the work of so many successful San Francisco designers who started out as visual artists. The Exhibition included works by Katherine Bloodworth, design director at Kendall Wilkinson, Kevin Hackett, principal at Siol Studios, Candace Barnes, Bonnie McGreggor, Frank Van Duerm, Steve Henry, principal at BAMO, Lawanna Cathleen Turner, Avelino Pombo, and Gioi Tran of Applegate Tran Interiors, whom we have been representing ever since that show.

AS: Our current show is always our stand out show. The gallery has two spaces the main gallery and a more intimate space, the project gallery. One of my most memorable project gallery exhibitions was in 2010 a show titled "THE BACKYARD" featuring photographs by New York photographer Chris Schiavo with Deanna Glory Landscape Design. The gallery walls and ceiling were high gloss red. Schiavo's color saturated photographs, spanning 12 years of manipulating backyards in Queens, New York, were created by applying vegetable paints to leaves and shadows while incorporating people and props to create over 30 tableaux images. Works from this series are in the permanent collections of New York's MOMA and Metropolitan museums. Glory created an extraordinary, sculptural landscape installation that worked harmoniously with Schiavo's Backyard Series. This show was featured in *California Home + Design Magazine*, *7x7*, *Dwell*, *SFGate*, *The Culture Trip* and *the San Francisco Chronicle*.



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4. What did it mean to you to have Supervisor Jane Kim nominate ArtHaus for Legacy Business status?

2016 proved to be a banner year of recognition for ArtHaus. The Gallery received the Culture Trip 2016 TEN BEST GALLERIES IN SAN FRANCISCO Award, and the 2016 HOUZZ AWARD for outstanding Customer Service...Supervisor Jane Kim's nomination was more than the icing. I met, and had the honor to work with Jane when she attended meetings and became involved with the Washburn Grace Streets Alliance – a group I co-founded to address drug, homeless and vandalism issues. Supervisor Kim has done so much for SOMA. We are thrilled, and so appreciate her nominating ArtHaus for the Legacy Business Program.

5. How do you decide which artists to feature in the gallery and is there a process for getting to know their personal or professional styles before bringing their work into the space?

JB: All of the New York artists we represent date back to my first gallery in New York's East Village back in the mid-1980s. These artists include Andrea Arroyo, Adam Kurtzman, Deborah Brown, Joanne Landis, Chris Schiavo, Serena Bocchino, Suzanne Benton, Marc Lambrechts, Greg Drasler, and Carol Massa. With the exception of Bay Area artists Brian Blood and Carolyn Meyer, whom I began working with shortly after relocating to San Francisco in 1993, Annette and I have assembled the remainder of the artists we represent. Since opening in SOMA, we have been extremely selective in choosing artists to represent. The process involves following an artist's work over a period of time to get a true sense of their progression. Attending their openings and watching how they interact with guests and collectors is also important. For me, it's very much about wanting to collect their work.

And, oh yes, you never want to get in the middle of an existing relationship between an artist and another gallery. I remember being a major fan of Jhina Alvarado's work for years, and would go to every one of her open studios and shows. I knew she was represented by another San Francisco gallery. When I learned this gallery was closing, I investigated the possibility. A similar situation happen for me in New York with artist Serena Bocchino. I was in love with her work from the moment I saw it, but she was represented by a friend's gallery on the same block. One week before Annette and I opened ArtHaus, I phoned Serena. She was thrilled with the opportunity to have San Francisco representation. Her next solo show at ArtHaus opens April, 2017. There is a rare bond between artists and gallerists. These relationships become intimate and personal – at least for us. Together, we endure it all; financial, emotional, and everything in between – all of which must work. Trust, integrity, and reputation are everything in the gallery business, and I am proud to say that Annette Schutz and I have enjoyed quite the reputation over the past twenty years. Our latest discoveries and additions to the ArtHaus roster of artists are; Patter Hellstrom, Thea Schrack, Michael Beckler, and Lucky Rapp. One of the few downsides to longevity in this business are the voids left by artists who are no longer with us. Here's to late, greats Jeffery Ketcham, Jess Johnston, and Rex Ray.

6. How do you completely unwind?

JB: I don't.

AS: Laughing with friends.

7. If you hadn't become a gallerist, which career would you have pursued?

JB: It was a toss up between automobile interior design and the A&R Division at a Record Company. Mind you, still not ruling either of these out.

AS: University professor teaching fine art.

8. What's the worst pre-gallery job you've ever had and why?

JB: Prior to getting into the gallery business at age 29, I had more jobs than I could possibly count. At age 12, I started a neighborhood car wash business, and even hired my older brother who was 14. He didn't last very long. As one neighbor pointed out years later, I had everyone sign a contract. That so made me laugh. Amidst them all, I believe the worst was being a paperboy. Let's just say I didn't have a pitcher's arm – so it usually took double time to

complete my route.

AS: I was a curator of collections at a historical museum. I so appreciated the opportunity and worked very hard at my job. It was just painfully uneventful.

9. What's your favorite recipe?

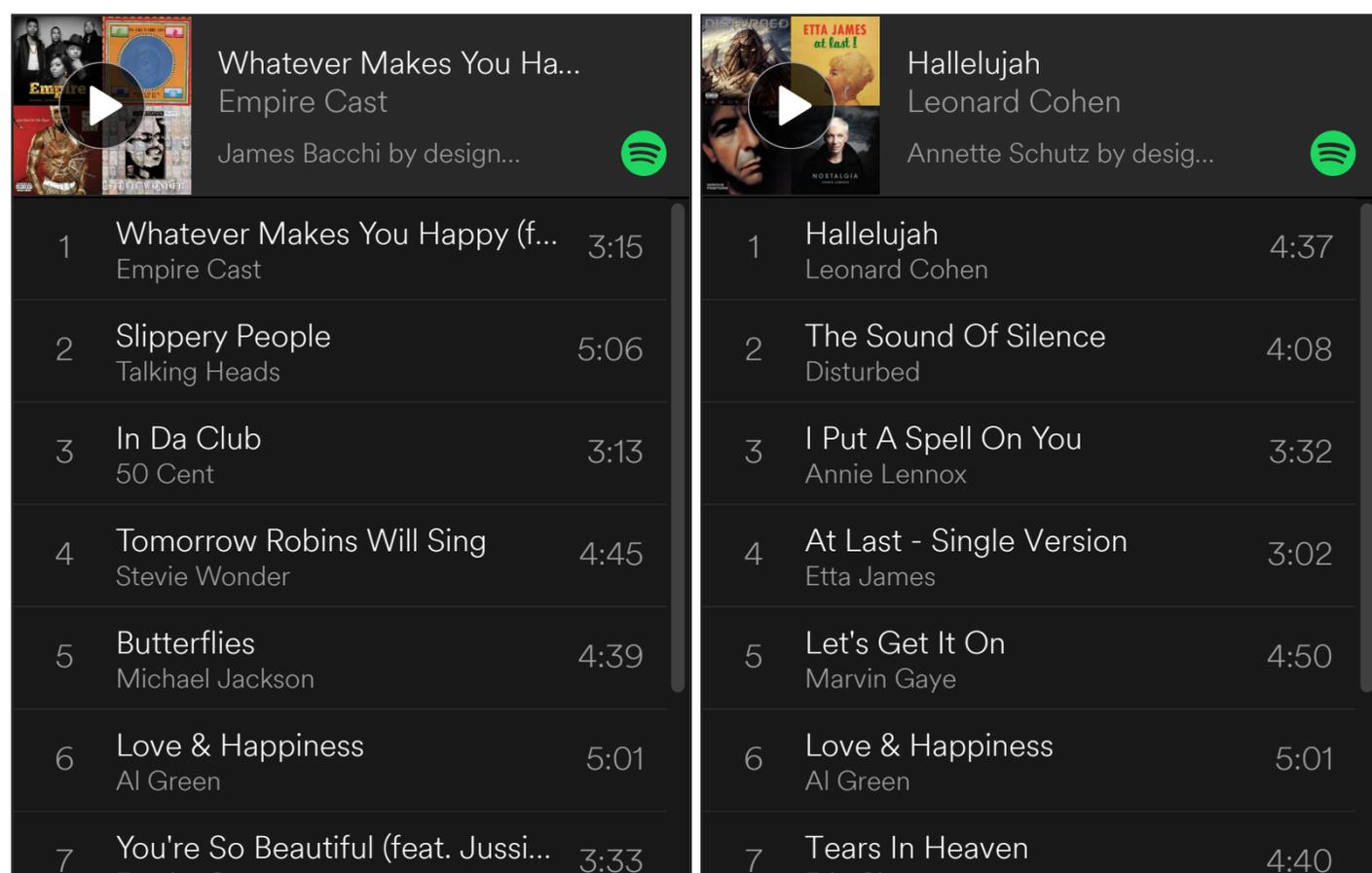
JB: A recreation of my grandmother's meatball recipe. And yes, her meatballs were the best in the universe. My secret is replacing the parmesan with gorgonzola. You haven't lived 'til you've tried my spinach fettuccini with gorgonzola meatballs.

AS: Manhattan:

- 2 Shots High West Whiskey ~ Double Rye
- 1 Shot Antica Formula Vermouth
- 4 Dashes Angostura aromatic bitters
- Girolamo Luxardo Maraschino Cherries

I prefer shaken.

10. Create your perfect playlist for us.



Lightning round!

11. First celebrity crush?

JB: Mary Wilson, The Supremes.

AS: 8 years old - William Shatner. Star Trek.

12. What's your hidden talent?

JB: Getting what I want.

AS: I am highly intuitive.

13. Best restaurant in your area? Where is it?

JB: City View – dim sum to die for. 662 Commercial Street, SF.

AS: La Ciccia. Noe Valley - 291 30th Street, SF.

14. SF or LA?

JB: SF, hands down; I don't do freeways!

AS: SF - Love our city!

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I'm currently in SF for a 7 month assignment with my company and stopped into ArtHaus recently. The artwork was wonderful, but the best part was meeting James. Even tough I stepped in close to closing time, he took me around the gallery discussing the different artists and answering all of my questions. I had a blast and hope to buy something from them before I head back to New Orleans! What a fantastic gem of a gallery! Great artists and even better owners!

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