

ARTFORUM

Over the Edge

By Linda Yablonsky, June 28, 2016

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Left: Dealer Bob van Orsouw. Right: Artist Jill Magid with Lorenza Barragán.

Next stop was the Sitterwerk Foundation, the foundry that produces work by such artists as Urs Fischer, Isa Genzken, and Ugo Rondinone. It's also a museum of sculpture by the late Hans Josephson—founder Felix Lehner represents the estate—a substantial art library with a unique cross-referencing system, and the home of the Josephson archive. The Hauser & Wirth-sponsored lunch there served the best grilled sausage anywhere, yet I taxied away with collectors Alain Servais and Eva Ruiz, Art 21 director Tina Kukielski, and curatorial advisor Molly Epstein to the Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen and “The Proposal,” a thunderclap of an exhibition by Jill Magid.

It's complicated. Basically, the show revolves around the intricacies of conflicting copyright laws in different countries, in this case Switzerland and Mexico. Magid is determined to repatriate the professional archive of Pritzker Prize-winning architect Luis Barragán, whose current owner is Federica Zanco, wife of Vitracchairman Rolf Fehlbaum. (Barragán's personal archives are in Mexico City.)



Left: Artist Mark Handforth with curator Abaseh Mirvali and artist Dara Friedman. Right: Kunsthalle Zurich director Daniel Baumann.

So far, Zanco, an architectural historian, has permitted very few people to see the archive and no one to reproduce any images related to it. (The irony is that Vitra became rich by reproducing furniture designed by the Eameses and the like.) After listening to Magid describe the stonewalling that met her two-year effort to research the professional archive, I understood why Barragán isn't as well known to the world as Le Corbusier. He should be.

Meanwhile, Magid persuaded the Barragán family to dig up the architect's ashes and let her have five hundred grams of it. That was enough to produce a diamond for a ring that is the exhibition's pièce de résistance. If Zanco opens the archives, Magid will give her the ring. That's her proposal.

It left us thinking about legacies and how to protect them while keeping them vital—and braced us for the social, commercial, and intellectual rigors of Art Basel, if not for the full force of the news from Orlando. Could the fair raise questions as knotty as Magid's? Offer any frame for the unreason of mass murder? Heading for the train, I grabbed an umbrella—my only protection against the elements—just in case.

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