

National

Culture

Tate steals the show as art and money meet in Manhattan

Fundraising drive abroad challenges dominance of Paris and New York

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The guest list read like a rollcall of New York's power 100. From the world of fashion came Calvin Klein and several members of the Estée Lauder cosmetics empire. The old American dynasty of the Rothschilds was represented by Lady Lynn Forester; the new American Clinton dynasty by Chelsea. Big money came in the form of Carlos Slim Helú, the Mexican businessman just dubbed the world's second richest man. There was even a royal – Queen Noor of Jordan. (Ours was otherwise engaged in Washington.)

That so many illustrious names could be assembled under one roof in midtown Manhattan was impressive. That they should do so in honour of an interloper, a foreigner, all the more so.

The catch at the centre of the dinner was the Tate, which last night held its biggest and most high-profile fundraising event outside Britain. In a signal of the institution's supreme confidence, buoyed by the runaway success of Tate Modern, it had the audacity to sneak into the world capital of contemporary art, New York, and steal the show.

The Kleins, Lauders and Rothschilds were just the start of it. Several of the top names in North American art were present too, including Jeff Koons, Ellsworth Kelly, Bruce Naumann and Jeff Wall, with Sir Howard Hodgkin adding British colour. Louise Bourgeois and Jasper Johns sent their apologies.

Last night's dinner saw art and money meet, with the Tate as dating agent. Tickets for the dinner of ragout of morels with asparagus tips followed by poussin with lemon cornbread stuffing started at \$5,000 (£2,500) a person and rose to \$50,000 for a table. More than 30 American patrons of the Tate paid \$25,000 or more each to attend, with an audience with Tony Blair in Downing Street in June and a group photo by Annie Leibovitz added bonuses.

At its most reductionist, the value of the dinner for the Tate is the \$1.5m it has raised for the purchase of American artworks. That comes on top of \$81m in cash and \$39m in gifts of art that have been donated since an American endowment was set up for the Tate in 1988 by the British-born New York insurance mogul Edwin Manton.

The cash injection from last night's dinner is matched by a tranche of new works that the Tate has been given by some of its leading US donors. At the dinner the gallery announced six new promised gifts, including *Bird in Hand* by the black American artist Ellen Gallagher, Ellsworth Kelly's *Red White*, and Susan Rothenberg's *United States*.

The dinner was a statement that the Tate had expanded out of its Bankside powerhouse and landed on the international stage. The traditional art world



Birds in the hand
Promised gifts announced by the Tate at the dinner included Ellen Gallagher's *Bird in Hand*, above, John Currin's *The Cuddler*, far left, Ellsworth Kelly's *Red White*, and Susan Rothenberg's *United States* Illustrations: © Hauser & Wirth, © John Currin, © Ellsworth Kelly/Matthew Marks Gallery, © Susan Rothenberg/Artists Rights Society

dominance of Paris and New York had been challenged.

Sir Nicholas Serota, the Tate's director, said this was the third of the institution's goals: to build a collection, see through the extension of Tate Modern, and "grow the international profile of the Tate. That doesn't mean simply going and planting British flags ... we are looking for partnerships".

The Tate already has what is probably the largest single collection of American modern art outside the United States, with highlights including Roy Lichtenstein's pop art masterpiece *Whaam!*, the pulsating colours of its Rothko room, and the current monographic display of the work of Ellsworth Kelly. On the back of last night's successes the gallery will hope to cement that reputation, as well as replicating the model in other regions. It recently set up an Asian-Pacific committee of patrons and donors. The Latin American group has 60 patrons.

The white elephant in the dining room last night was New York's hallowed Museum of Modern Art, a body unaccustomed to playing second fiddle. While the Tate continues to soar, Moma has been accused of losing its way following its \$425m expansion and renovation three years ago. Sir Nicholas denied that the Tate was benefiting from Moma's troubles. "All great institutions go through difficult patches. Tate Modern did a few years ago. What we are doing is in addition to the work of the American galleries, not in competition."

Lisa Dennison, director of the Solomon Guggenheim museum, told a recent art forum in New York attended by Sir Nicholas that the lure of a trip to see Tony Blair and similar devices were a threatening trend for smaller US museums. They were an example "not of true philanthropy, but of 'give us some money, give us some art, and we are going to give you something back'," she said, adding: "What's a poor American museum director to do?"

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Bird in hand and cash in the bank ... US patrons donate money and new works at a fundraising for the Tate