

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

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Leila Heller Hosts Dinner at New Gallery Space

By ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

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NEW YORK — Dinner guests seated on the eighth floor of Leila Heller's new gallery on West 57th Street in Manhattan Monday laughed knowingly, when she told them, "This is my best friends' floor." The fact was 250 of her nearest and dearest were breaking bread in the sixth-floor, 18,000-square-foot space and even more had cruised through "Look at Me: Portraiture from Manet to the Present" during cocktails. Sigourney Weaver, "Girls" actress Jemima Kirke, Frédéric Fekkai, Jeffrey Deitch, Nir Hod, Firooz Zahedi, Jonathan Becker, Prince Dimitri of Yugoslavia, Bob Colacello, Ike Ude, Rachel Hovnanian, Kathy and Richard Hilton and Jean Shafiroff took in the sights. While Ude recalled clubbing with Basquiat in the Eighties and Weaver admired Zahedi's photography, Kirke and her husband, Michael Mosberg, took a stroll during dinner to check out Andy Warhol's 1964 silk-screen "Jackie." Curated by Beth Rudin DeWoody and Paul Morris, the show features 200 works in total. "It's like the size of a lot of small museums," Morris said.



Jemima Kirke and Mike Mosberg

Photo By Thomas Iannaccone

New Yorkers earned kudos from Deitch for their art know-how, as did Heller. “You should have seen this space,” he said. “Most people would have walked away, but Leila is a visionary.”

Colacello saw a vision of himself on view, thanks to Martin Saar’s portrait of him. “I’ve been lucky. A lot of artists have done my portrait — Francesco Clemente, Andy Warhol, Larry Rivers,” Colacello said. “I don’t know why. I’m not that great looking. I guess it’s from being friends with them.”

The gallery-set meal made perfect sense to Ude, who is repped by Heller. “Leila wants you to imagine living with the art in your house,” he said. “She wants you to picture eating, sleeping, having sex or whatever.”

At work on a “Perfect Baby” installation to be shown at Heller’s new space in September, Hovnanian was envisioning her own work though she wasn’t giving much away. “It’s about navigating the real and the unreal. We’re always on our [electronic] devices because we live in such a global world,” she said. “We can get hold of each other whenever we want to, which is fantastic. But you might be together and you are really somewhere else. In some ways our phones are more valuable than our wallets used to be.”

With two paintings of her own in the show, Kirke wasn’t just a guest. But having two young children and shooting the HBO series can make painting difficult. “It’s virtually impossible. You have to find your windows of time. But you also have to make time and force yourself to go when you’re exhausted and have errands to do,” the Rhode Island School of Design graduate said. “Usually I carve out the day like anyone with a job would. I just say, ‘It’s 10 a.m. I’ve gotta go to work and I’ll be back at 5.’”

