

ART | **DIARY OF A SIMONEY**

Rebecca Hossack - Day 5

The gallerist has a full-on and fun-packed weekend at the fair

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REBECCA HOSSACK

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Friday morning: off to the gym at 7.30am to see my personal trainer Tom. He is a quietly brilliant - and very patient - man, not like those pumped-up sergeant-major types, barking at their poor charges as they drive them remorselessly through the "pain barrier". He carefully explains each exercise, and the benefits - to my fitness and general wellbeing - are readily apparent.

I have breakfast at Honey Co and check some emails. There's a lovely one from Edward Barker, the gallery post laureate (he sources the weeks for the "poem of the day" page on our website), that includes a verse about "a storm in a teacup", which puts some of the day's challenges in perspective. Today, besides Lapada, we are opening at an art fair in New York (handled by the girls at my Mott Street gallery) and a shipment of works is leaving for a Singapore art fair that we are doing next month. But - with delegation and by taking one thing at a time - it all becomes possible.

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ORIGINALLY

On the way to Lapoda, I stop off at Fickett in Burlington Arcade. My friend Trevor Pickett has been having my mother's old mink coat (which I had inherited and never worn) transformed into a "throw" so that can I wrap myself up in it while watching box sets. It looks sumptuous – bring on the autumnal chill.

At Lapoda I can't help but pause at Ted Few's extraordinary stand. It's a veritable cabinet of rarities. Perhaps the most curious item is a thin grey object, rather like a silver-birch twig. Ted informs me it is a walrus penis bone. He has several interested potential buyers.

It's a relatively quiet day. My beautiful Dolce & Gabbana shoes – exquisitely fashioned from orange-red raffia – get almost more attention than our artworks. They are very beautiful things, and the most comfortable shoes I have ever owned.

The day ends with a party to celebrate 40 years of Lapoda. It has grown from small beginnings in the 1970s to become the largest arts trade organisation in the UK. It provides excellent support services to its members – and certainly knows how to lay on a good party.

Afterwards I take all the gallery team for dinner at the EventCradle pop-up restaurant. Gorgeous Tom – the maitre d' – magics us a beautiful table overlooking the square and a beautiful waitress to bring us succulent pigeon breasts (for once I'm glad to hear they haven't been "locally sourced"). It is almost midnight when we break up and head home. I leave my shoes behind in the fair's special overnight safe where they store all the jewellery and gold.

First thing on Saturday morning I go to the Margaret Dabbs foot spa off Marylebone High Street. Standing all day at an art fair requires happy feet – and Margaret (whom I have known since she began her business some 15 years ago) can spend joy to any pedal extremity. I leave feeling as though I am treading on air.

It's a busy day at Lapoda: lots of young couples looking for pictures for their new homes. It is always exciting to see people excited by art and life in almost equal amounts. There is much measuring up of pictures to see whether they would fit "above the sofa" or "over the table", and even

some discussion about whether the soft furnishings might need to be changed so as not to clash with the colours in a painting. If only I were more technically minded – I would develop an app so that people could take a photo of an artwork and insert it, at the correct scale, into an image of their living room.

After the fair closes, we all go off to dinner at one of my favourite restaurants – Piza Express by Great Portland Street station. There are few pleasures to compare with a pizza on a Saturday night. I resist the temptation to have a gluten-free beer and instead order an (equally gluten-free) Aperol spritz. It has been my drink of the summer. I remember when I worked at the Guggenheim in Venice in the early 1980s, I would see the curious orange Aperol bottle lined up behind the bar among all the other aperitifs and digestifs. I am not sure that I ever saw anyone order it. Now it's ubiquitous. Mixed with prosecco it has the perfect revivifying zing to it, and it's a wonderful electric-orange colour.

On Sunday my husband Matthew comes to help me at the fair. We have a brilliant day, with people almost queuing up to buy pictures. A cat-loving couple buy textile-artist Karen Nicol's bravura tiger, stitched from fox fur and antique jet beads. A Mexican hotelier buys a large aboriginal painting. At one moment I see Matthew talking to a young couple about Phil Shaw's large book print: the girl is super-prettty with short, dark hair and a plaid shirt. She turns out to be Anne Hathaway.

The fair closes at 5pm and we stroll (or crawl) off the stand. There is a happy buzz about the fair, with almost all the dealers well pleased with the week.

We go for a "acoo-late supper" with our friends Allan and Deborah in their beautiful art-filled house overlooking Regent's Park. If pizza is the perfect dish for a Saturday night, there is nothing quite like roast chicken on a Sunday evening, and Allan has cooked a delicious bird for us (it came from France, via the Ginger Pig off Marylebone High Street). It is a lovely evening. I studied law at university with Allan in Canberra in the late 1970s, and there is always that particular pleasure in being with old friends.

I am delighted, though, to find myself at home and in bed by 10.30pm.

Rebecca Hissack studied at Christie's and worked at the Guggenheim in Venice before opening her first gallery on Charlotte Street in 1988. She now has two further galleries – on London's Conroy Street and on Mott Street in New York. Born in Melbourne and serving at the Australian cultural attaché in London between 1993 and 1997, here was the first gallery in Europe to exhibit aboriginal art. www.rebeccahissack.com. @RebeccaHissack.

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