



On the House

THE NEW OBJET DU JOUR, REPORTS
CHRISTOPHER BOLLEN: YOUR OWN "ART" BAR.

In 2005, Barbara Jakobson, an enduring member of the New York art elite, shocked her friends and colleagues when she put a portion of her legendary art and furniture collection up for auction at Christie's. Gone were the sculptural Frank Stella collage painting, the Diane Arbus Christmas photograph, the sexy Carlo Mollino side chair and 38 other masterpieces, many of which had decorated the ground floor of her Upper East Side row house for nearly four decades. Then, in 2006, she made a different kind of news when she became quite possibly the art world's most celebrated barkeep. In place of her dining room, Jakobson, who posed for both Horst and Mapplethorpe, commissioned a bar by the downtown artist and rabble-rouser Tom Sachs.

"A friend of mine calls it 'urban driftwood,'" Jakobson says, perched on one of her wooden bar stools while sipping a vodka and soda and picking at a tin of peanuts. Resting her elbow on the counter, she stares back at the nearly empty living room, where a ghostly outline marks a wall where the Stella once hung. But Jakobson is not the kind of collector to be plagued by seller's remorse: "Call it a 'blink' moment — I just decided to sell it." And besides, she says: "I've always wanted a bar. When I entertain, it's usually for drinks."

Jakobson first met Sachs when she enlisted the architect Frank Gehry to design a line of plywood furniture for Knoll International, where she served as a consultant. Sachs was then working with Gehry on the project, and the collector has been a fan of the artist's ever since. "I don't generally do commissions," Sachs says, "because someone is always disappointed with the outcome. But B.J. is a special case. First off, she's so much smarter than I am."

Sachs is no stranger to productions that border on the offbeat and architectural. In the past he has built detailed models using foam core and hot glue of Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation

housing project and the space shuttle on its launching pad, as well as a miniature "Prada Death Camp" that looks like an edgy Monopoly board. Currently under way in his SoHo studio is a project for his cat — a three-story house that looks like the time machine on the British television show "Dr. Who."

"Whenever I try to make anything, I try to learn everything I can about the subject," says Sachs, whose research for the Corbusier piece included sleeping at Unité. "When I built my space shuttle, I contacted engineers at NASA. For B.J., I had to learn the ergonomics of what makes a good bar."

So how did Jakobson and Sachs, who spent much of last summer going over the plans, conduct their research? "We went out to have drinks," Jakobson says. "And we had a lot of fun doing it. There's a bar called J.G. Melon across the street. We brought a tape measure and tried to figure out the perfect proportions — the height, the length, even the placement of the footrest." The result, which took almost seven months to construct, is a sculpture that also functions as the ultimate nook for some serious spitting. The bar counters and side buffet are clad in orange-and-white-striped beams from Con Edison barricades, a material

Cheers! The bar that Tom Sachs created for Barbara Jakobson's living room makes entertaining an art form.



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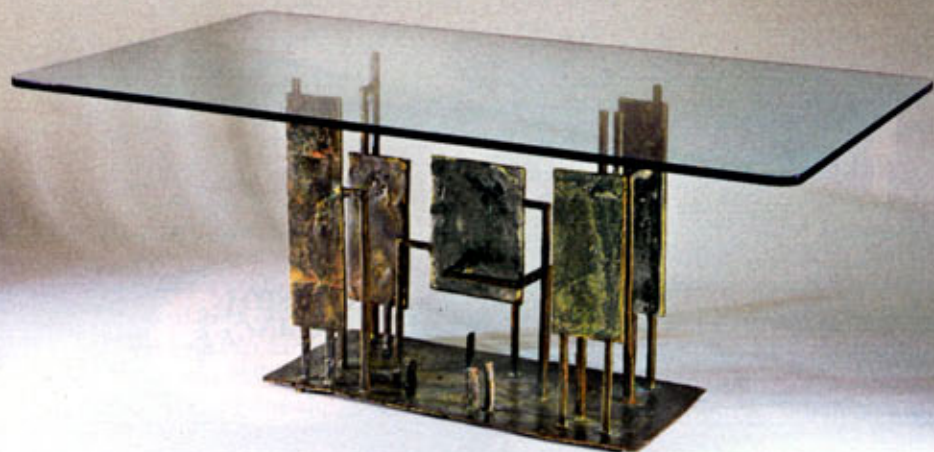


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Sachs hand-labels the booze.

that has become part of Sachs's gritty urban street idiom. His predilection for rough industrial materials can also be found in the bar's nylon countertop, the buffet drawer handles covered in white tape (which is more often used on hockey sticks) and the scrap wood coated in marine epoxy. "I use the same materials for everything I make," Sachs explains. Like his former boss, he also makes little attempt to conceal the nuts and bolts. "I want people to know how it's made," he says. "I'm not the kind of craftsman that likes to hide the joints."

Like any self-respecting bar, this one has rules. Jakobson agreed to maintain the exact bottles Sachs chose to stock the shelves. "I even agreed to buy Jägermeister, because he said every bar needs to have it," she says. Consistent with his mania for the generic, Sachs placed handwritten labels — "vodka," "grappa" — over each bottle to identify its contents while disguising its brand. A bottle of Campari now reads "red." He also supplied (and labeled) an ashtray, salt-and-pepper shakers and a funnel, and hung a signature shotgun (made from a Con Edison barricade) over the mirror. Finally Sachs went through Jakobson's CD collection and selected a Sidney Bechet jazz album to create just the right ambience. "From all the elaborate research I did on bars," Sachs says, "I realized that the only thing that really matters is good music."

The Sachs gin joint is now open for business. Jakobson recently gave a party to inaugurate the commission, with hired bartenders and a musician playing on the upright Steinway piano that sits in the corner among some of the remaining pieces of her collection — a William Eggleston photograph, a Matthew Barney photograph, a Hans Haacke advertisement in *The New York Times* titled "Are the rich a menace?" Interestingly, it was Haacke who used a quotation in one of his works that deemed art itself to be a kind of "social grease." But in the art world, it seems, alcohol is still the preferred lubricant. ■