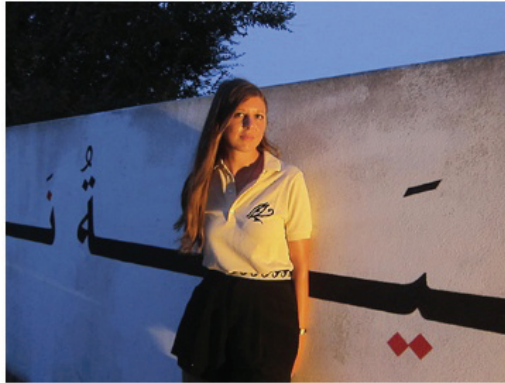


ARTFORUM



Linda Yablonsky at the 3rd Volcano Extravaganza in Stromboli

"Art never takes a vacation. It just goes to summer camp." [READ ON](#)

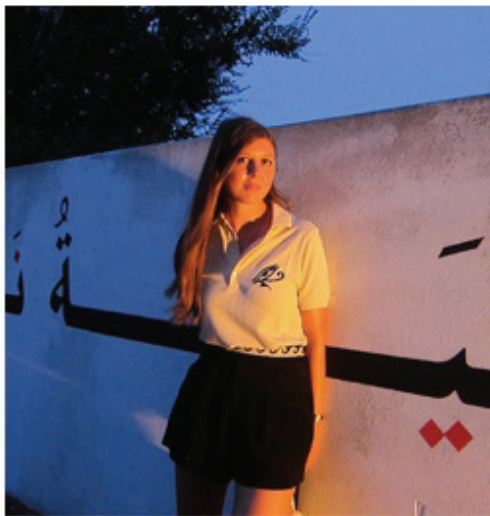
Mara Hoberman at the 7th Art-O-Rama in Marseilles

Gemma Tipton at the Kilkenny Arts Festival

SCENE & HERD

Volcano Lovers

STROMBOLI 09.05.13



Left: Artist Lucy McKenzie. (Except where noted, all photos: Linda Yablonsky) Right: Collector Nicoletta Fiorucci (in red dress) presenting her "Evil Under the Moon" scent. (Photo: Fiorucci Art Trust)

ART NEVER TAKES A VACATION. It just goes to summer camp. For the last three years, the London-based Fiorucci Art Trust has retreated to Stromboli, the Aeolian island off the coast of Sicily—the one with the active volcano. Every quarter-hour or so, it sends up plumes of fire and smoke. "You can almost set your watch by it," Trust director Milovan Farronato told me the night I arrived for the closing ceremonies of Volcano Extravaganza 2013, a series of presentations he organized with the Glaswegian, Brussels-based artist Lucy McKenzie.

Each weekend, from July 29 to August 24, rotating groups of invited artists and designers took up residence in a communal house on the Tyrrhenian Sea with the poetic name of La Lunatica. When the chosen ones weren't sunbathing on fashionably black beaches, swimming in jellyfish-infested waters, taking five-hour hikes up the volcano, or letting down their hair at one of two seaside discos, each dog-and-ponied up for evening show-and-tells involving art, fashion, film, music, and design—twenty projects, all told.

The volcano was steaming at dusk on August 21st, when I stepped off the same hydrofoil from Naples that brought the English installation artist Haroon Mirza, his wife Gaia Fugazzi, and their nine-month-old son Xiaano. Giulia Brivio, the Trust's resourceful project manager, got us into golf-cart taxis—there are no cars on Stromboli—and off we sped to a hypnotic land where time stops long enough to make the present seem eternal.

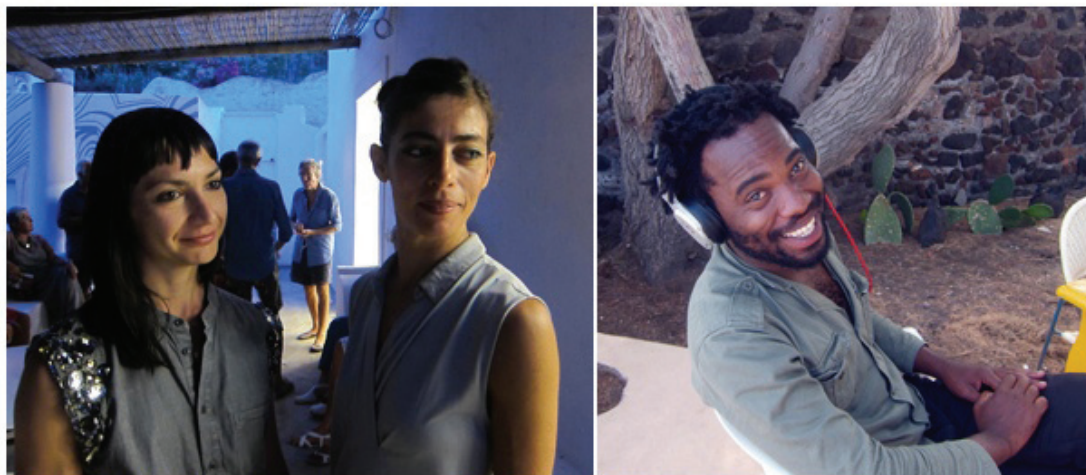


Left: Fiorucci Art Trust curator Milovan Farronato with Kunsthalle Basel director Martin Hatebur and collector Peter Handschin. Right: Artists Gaia Fugazzi and Haroon Mirza with their son Xiaano Mirza.

All I knew about the island up to this point was *Stromboli*, the bleak 1950 movie that director Roberto Rossellini shot there with his then-concubine, the young Ingrid Bergman. But this year's Extravaganza, as advertised on posters plastered all over town, was "Evil Under the Sun," a title that McKenzie borrowed from the 1982 movie of the Agatha Christie who-done-it about a bunch of spoiled eccentrics on holiday at an island resort. "I wanted to instigate another movie for the island," the plucky artist told me over a grilled fish dinner with Farronato at L'Osservatorio, an outdoor trattoria that gives diners a clear view of the fireworks that the volcano expels.

There was no evil under this sun, as far as I could tell, though if going to art camp on someone else's dime is a crime, there was plenty of guilt to go around. For her part, McKenzie joined forces with artist Alan Michael to write *Unlawful Assembly*, a credible mystery novella set on the island, which she had visited three times before. (This month, she'll be in New York to start night classes in detective-story writing.)

The book, a hot-pink parasol (part of a group by Peter Saville and Anna Blessmann), and "Evil Under the Moon," a perfume created by the Italian-born sausage heiress and art patron Nicoletta Fiorucci, were just three of the limited-edition items given to me in an Extravaganza tote bag designed by Atelier EB, the Scottish company founded by printmaker Beca Lipscombe and illustrator Bernie Reid. With McKenzie, a frequent collaborator, they had also produced a line of resort wear offered for sale at the House of Extravaganza, the former summer residence of Marina Abramović that is the Trust's base of operations on Stromboli.



Left: Dancer Hristoula Harakas with choreographer Maria Hassabi. Right: Artist Em'kai Eyongakpa.

Next afternoon, Farronato and McKenzie took the artists on hand—choreographer Maria Hassabi and her dance partner, Hristoula Harakas, performance artist Zhana Ivanova and the Mirzas—to lunch at Casa Falk, a minimalist, white compound fashioned from four, 150-year-old fishermen's houses and named for its previous resident, the late Swiss artist Hans Falk. Its current owners turned out to be—surprise!—Kunsthalle Basel president Martin Hatebur and collector Peter Handschin, a pair well-known for their dinner parties during Art Basel. They had other guests: Leonardo Bigazzi, producer of the Lo Schermo dell'Arte film festival in Florence, and collector Angelika Taschen, the independent German book publisher and author of a new design book from Abrams, *The Berlin Style*. ("I'm the first wife," she said, when asked if she was related to publisher Benedikt Taschen.)

On the patio, in view of Strombolicchio—the ancient plug of the volcano's original, pre-Bronze Age explosion—we were served a resplendent, family-style lunch prepared by Artur Silva Nascimento, the Hatebur/Handschin household's excellent cook from Paris. Before we were halfway through, Ivanova had persuaded Hatebur, Bigazzi, and Taschen to appear in the performance she would give the following night. "Don't worry," she said to the novice actors. "I'll do all the talking."

That evening, Michael Bracewell was to deliver a lecture on James Bond, only he never made it to the island. Instead, the Irish artist Bea McMahon, currently a Trust-supported fellow at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, took the House of Extravaganza floor. "I'm going to give a lecture on rocks," she began, and proceeded to give a deadpan, well-researched, and hilarious analysis of the lust-inducing properties of Celtic stones. Lie under a big rock long enough, it seems, and you too could become "inexplicably loved by other human beings." At least one study has shown that geologists have the most active sex lives of all academics. Who knew?



Left: Artist Bea McMahon. Right: Fiorucci Art Trust officer Giulio Brivio and Lo Schermo Dell'Arte Festival producer Leonardo Bigazzi.

Next up was a new arrival, Em'kal Eyongakpa, an artist from Cameroon, and another Rijksakademie resident, though he seems to travel to a different country every week, recording sounds. He played some of them, accompanied by a video of images so abstract they looked like volcano smoke. "I'm doing a video poem," he said, afterward, "based on what I feel around me." At that moment, he was surrounded by pizzas; the ricotta and eggplant pie was most delicious. The moon was a bright orange disc rising over the harbor below. The headlamps of hikers coming down from the volcano looked like fluorescent snakes in the dark. "I want to be the first to go to Mars," said Farronato, who favors red lipstick—perhaps in preparation for the trip.

After just one day in this soporific, one-percent environment, Stromboli felt as unreal as a boiled cloud. Next morning brought more of the same—coffee on the La Lunatica terrace, where Reid had painted colorful carpets, a slow amble around town in the morning heat, and a swim. That set us up for a lunch of fresh shrimp, mussels, and Sicilian fish ravioli at the hillside home of Gioacchino Letizia, a boutique owner whom Farronato dubbed "the boss of the island," for his deep knowledge of its history. "Gioacchino knows everything and everyone," Farronato said, but he didn't know English so we ate well but didn't learn much.

The evening brought Hassabi's performance with Harakas. The two started, unannounced, at sundown, slipping through an audience that included Silvia Davanza, the village gyrotonics expert, and leading everyone into the House of Extravaganza garden, which is unusual for its several varieties of trees—there aren't many on this island. In silence, the two women danced, mostly on a ground carpeted in dry leaves, holding difficult poses and casting a spell over the crowd until it grew too dark to make them out.



Left: Novara Jazz Festival founder and collector Corrado Beldi with journalist Ann Marlowe. Right: Volcano Extravaganza facilitator Francesco Lecci.

After a pause for drinks, the moment arrived for *Borrowed Splendor*, Ivanova's comic drama of power relations. With the artist giving spoken directions from a chair, the unrehearsed Hatebur, Taschen, and Bigazzi dutifully followed her commands, admirably playing out the tensions that accumulate in a love triangle. Grimacing, smiling, and sipping rum as if born to the task, they became flummoxed only when told to "think violent thoughts." When it was over, Handschin jumped up to say, "I enjoyed it!" So did everyone else. "It was funny," said Hatebur, clearly proud of his turn on the stage. "The first sip of rum I had was way too much!" exclaimed Bigazzi, who exited with his friends while the rest of us tumbled into taxis headed for the port, and the evening of calamari fishing that awaited us next.

Forgetting my duties as an observer, I jumped from our speedboat onto a small fishing vessel with Mirza and the diminutive Ivanova, who reeled in a dozen squid, each of which splattered us with a truly icky slime that spurted from their guts the moment they hit the air. "Ew!" cried Mirza. "This is disgusting." It was horrible, but it was also exhilarating, in a *Ghostbusters*-ish kind of way. After the boat captain fried up the (now tasty) squid for our dinner, we circumnavigated the massive volcano and stopped below the crater to wait for the next eruption. The moon was just past full, still too bright to let us see the explosion, but when the lava hit the water it sounded like machine-gun fire. Awesome.

Dancing with the drag queens at La Tartana disco followed. The music was awful but that didn't stop anyone. This was a holiday—wasn't it? A farewell lunch the next day was on the terrace at La Lunatica, though McKenzie spent the afternoon painting an exterior wall of the House of Extravaganza for Enrico David, another no-show. He had completed a painting of hers at the 2003 Venice Biennale. Now she was returning the favor, dressed in Atelier EB sportswear.



Left: "Boss of Stromboli" retailer Giocchino Letizia. Right: Artists Lucy McKenzie and Alan Michael.

To bring the 2013 Extravaganza to a close, another Rijksakademie resident artist, Jason Gomez of Los Angeles, arranged a kind of morose chorale that he wrote and sang a cappella, in candlelight, with Eyongakpa and two Milanese interns. "Exit from your body," they chanted. "Leave it behind. You are dying. You are dying. You are not really dying. You are dying."

Cheerful stuff! "I wanted to tap into darkness," Gomez told me later. "There was such an abundance of hope here."

It returned soon afterward, when Farronato, social director-in-chief, led the group back to the speedboat for a sail to the home of collector Corrado Beldi, founder of the Novara Jazz Festival. We took the day-glo parasols to shield us from the sun. They made quite an arresting sight as the group climbed a goat path to his house in Ginostra, a remote village under the volcano. From his rooftop, with the seven other Aeolian islands visible before us, conversation slowed as we watched the roiling sun fall slowly from the sky to the sea.

Fiorucci is a collector intent on creating unusual opportunities for artists—and, as a Trust press release put it—expanding her reach into the hunting and gathering of "emotional and intellectual experiences." Looking back, I'd say that bringing artists from all over to a surprisingly fertile, very hot Italian rock where capers run as wild as imaginations, was an extravagance that more than delivered on its promise. On our reluctant return to La Lunatica late that Sunday night, we spotted a glowing red balloon dancing over Strombolicchio. "It's Mars!" whooped Farronato. "I guess I'm really going." It can't be as far from home as Camp Stromboli. What can I say? It was a blast

— *Linda Yablonsky*



Left: [Leonardo Bigazzi](#), [Martin Hatebur](#), artist [Zhana Ivanova](#), and collector [Angelika Taschen](#). Right: Stromboli.