

Circling the room, which was already radiant with off-season tans, I clocked a diminutive Dr. Ruth Westheimer weaving between her fellow attendees. (A quick Google search reveals that the beloved sex therapist's four-foot-seven stature led her, while still a teenager, to train as a scout and sniper with the Haganah in Jerusalem.) Suddenly, there was a resounding clang, and the crowd wheeled in unison seconds too late to watch Sarah Ortmeyer's *SAD EIS (4, SAD EIS SERIES)*, 2012, hit the floor. A giant cone of gray ice cream made from painted resin, it appeared undamaged, but those nearby couldn't help but look sheepish. Someone hurriedly righted the work but the next time I looked it was once again recumbent, and Westheimer had again disappeared.



Left: Chalet Society director Marc-Olivier Wahler, Swiss Institute director Simon Castets, Swiss Institute curator Clement Delepine, and artist Valentin Carron. Right: Auctioneer Simon de Pury and Swiss Institute board chair Fabienne Abrecht.

Does Simone de Pury ham it up this relentlessly when his audience is sober? I don't have sufficient auction experience to know for sure, but on the evidence of the pinstriped Baron's showing here, there's surely some carnival barking in his past. Regularly extending his calls to splurge into a disquieting roar, de Pury also squandered no opportunity for an antique "my wife will kill me" gag. Predictably (but productively), the crowd lapped it up. A contributing factor to the prevailing knockabout spirit may have been the fact that we were surrounded at our dinner tables by wraparound projections of vintage Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin flicks—actually an artwork by Swiss Institute Special Tribute recipient, cineaste Matthias Brunner.

# SI

## ARTFORUM

Arftorum  
THE SI 2014 BENEFIT DINNER & AUCTION  
December 12, 2014

### Swiss Mix NEW YORK 12.12.14



Left: The scene at the dinner. Right: Sandra Garger, dealer Ursula Hauser, artist Rashid Johnson, and Manuela Wirth. (All photos: Zach Hyman/BFAnyc.com)

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**JUST BEFORE** the moneyed and/or aspirational art world decamped for Miami Beach, members of that self-same crew made their way through the blustery night to the Swiss Institute for their annual benefit. Arriving unaccompanied at the institution's silvered Wooster Street digs—formerly Jeffrey Deitch's HQ, as if any reminder were needed—I was immediately buttonholed by intense art historian Lorena Morales Aparicio, who filled me in on the subject of her doctoral thesis-in-progress, contemporary Swiss touchstone Pipilotti Rist. This developed with unnerving rapidity into a discussion of the finer points of "Swissness"—there are, it turns out, a great many—and a work-by-work deconstruction of the auction lots filling the front gallery. Just as I was beginning to suspect that Ms. Morales Aparicio was in the stylish not-for-profit's employ, AIG private collection specialist Katja Zigerlig rolled up and changed the subject to . . . chairs, specifically their historical role in bolstering male power. (Andreas Angelidakis's boisterous "Fin de Siècle," an exhibition inspired by Ionesco's *The Chairs* and featuring an eclectic array of said furniture, had just come down.) We were still an hour from being asked to take our seats.