

Exchange (Miami), 2009

Documentation

Wun Ting Wendy Tai



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Performance

“The artist will be conducting exchanges with participants at Camper Contemporary, December 3 - 5.

Feel free to barter with the artist to obtain a copy of this limited edition notebook. Only objects that the artist deems fit can be exchanged. Monetary compensation will not be considered.”

November 24



Notebook 1 < > Assistance in silk-screening + 1 large coffee

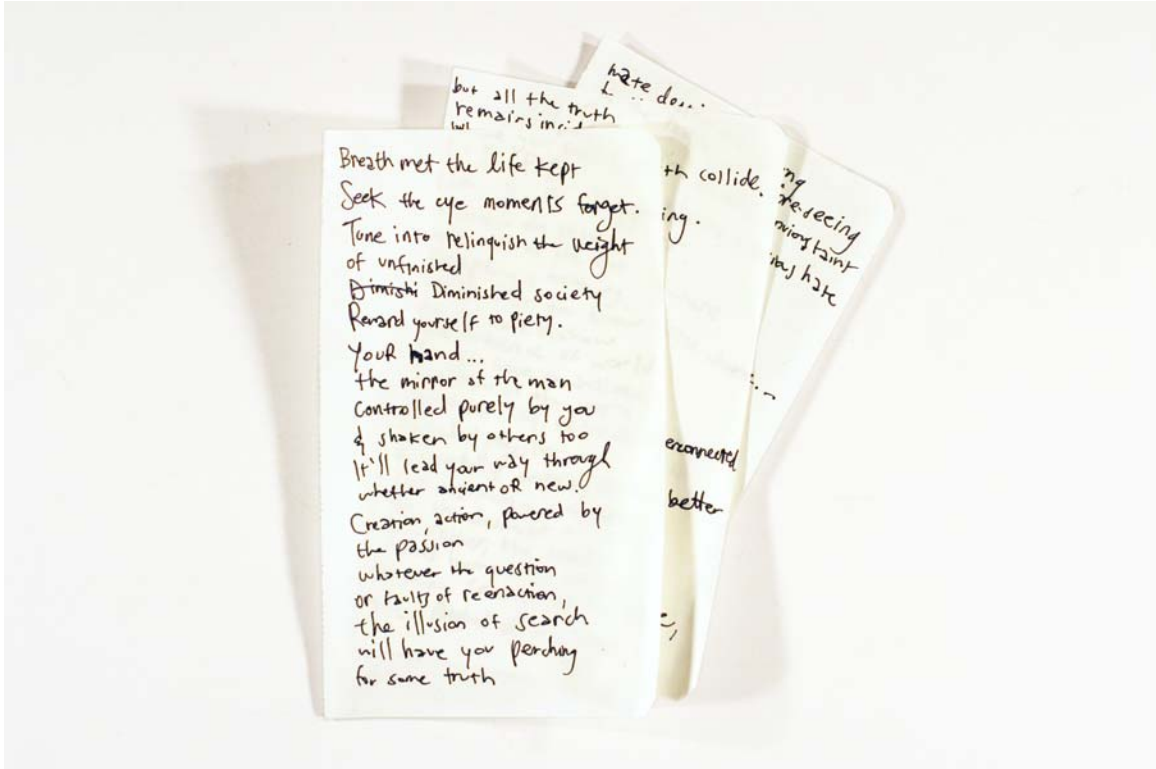
Many thanks to Maryland Institute College of Art's print shop technician, Kyle van Horn, for helping me silk-screen the notebooks.

December 3



Notebook 2 < > Sephora handcream

The well-dressed woman had to rummage through her handbag before she found this to offer. She sounded a little hesitant, thinking that it wasn't enough, but I was happy to accept the item.



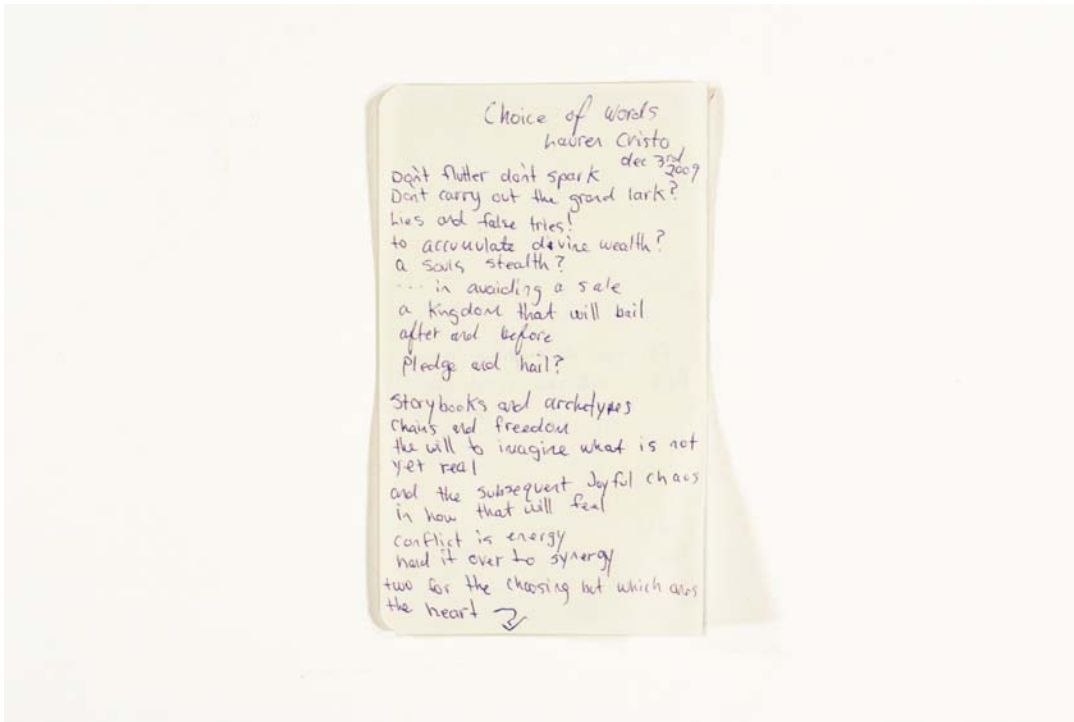
Notebook 3 < > Poetry written from memory

The girl came into the trailer with a group of her friends. She was Asian, wore black Dr. Martens and had dreadlocks. "I only have my words to offer", and wrote it all down from memory.

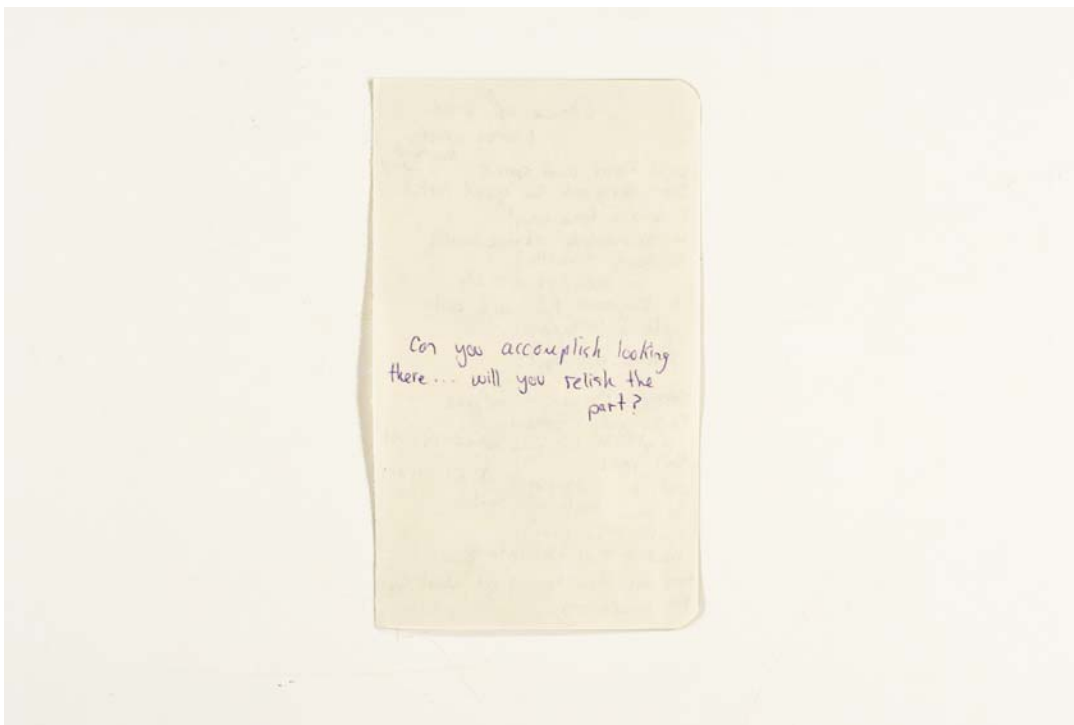


Notebook 4 < > Button

This girl was friends with the girl who wrote the poem. She took this button off her purse. It's not much, but it was a slow first night and I was almost desperate for trades. If the same thing was offered to me later in the week, I would have asked for more.



Choice of words
haeren Cristo
dec 3rd 2009
Don't flutter don't spark
Don't carry out the grand lark?
lies and false tries!
to accumulate divine wealth?
a soul's stealth?
... in avoiding a sale
a kingdom that will bail
after and before
pledge and hail?
Storybooks and archetypes
chaos and freedom
the will to imagine what is not
yet real
and the subsequent joyful chaos
is how that will feel
conflict is energy
hand it over to synergy
two for the choosing but which wins
the heart ↴



Can you accomplish looking
there... will you relish the
part?

Notebook 5 < > Poetry copied from iPhone

This girl, unlike her friend, was not able to write her poem from memory, but had to look it up on her iPhone. For a while, I thought maybe she's cheating, and that she is copying someone else's poem. Then I thought I should have more faith, and be less suspicious.



Notebook 6 < > Two “Free Admission” cards to the Wing Luke Asian Museum

At first I was offered brochures from Art Basel, but I didn't want them. Then she pulled out her business cards, which doubled as free admission passes. Turns out that she is the curator of the Wing Luke Asian Museum in Seattle. Initially I didn't want them as I'd probably never visit Seattle, but then I thought I could send them to a friend who lives in San Francisco, so I accepted the trade in the end.

Later on in the week, someone from Vulcan saw the passes and said that the museum is a little 'strange' but that it is worth seeing the collection.

December 4



Notebook 7 < > A sketch torn out of an artist's sketchbook

The artist was from Provincetown. She was happy to give me something from her sketchbook for another sketchbook. I asked her to sign and date the sketch.



Notebook 8 < > The Colombian 'last cigarette'

A Colombian couple came into the trailer and were interested in making trades. The only thing they had to offer was the man's last cigarette. I thought that was a reasonable offer as smokers are usually very attached to their last smoke. The man pulled out the cigarette, handed it to me, and put the pack back into his pocket. I asked him if I could keep the packaging too, since it was Colombian and that he was going to throw it away anyway. He hesitated a bit, and then rather reluctantly started pulling out all the other cigarettes that he still had in there! I immediately felt cheated, but to maintain the overall genial atmosphere of the trailer, I kept my mouth shut and took the packaging from him after he put his remaining smokes into his camera bag. I should have rejected the offer, but at least I now have a good story.

Later on in the week, a woman saw the Colombian cigarettes on display and said that that was what her grandfather smoked. She didn't know they were still around, and asked where I got them.



Notebook 9 < > Two 'Sexy' Obama posters by a graffiti artist based in NYC

Notebook 10 < > Promised copies of footage of transaction on DVD

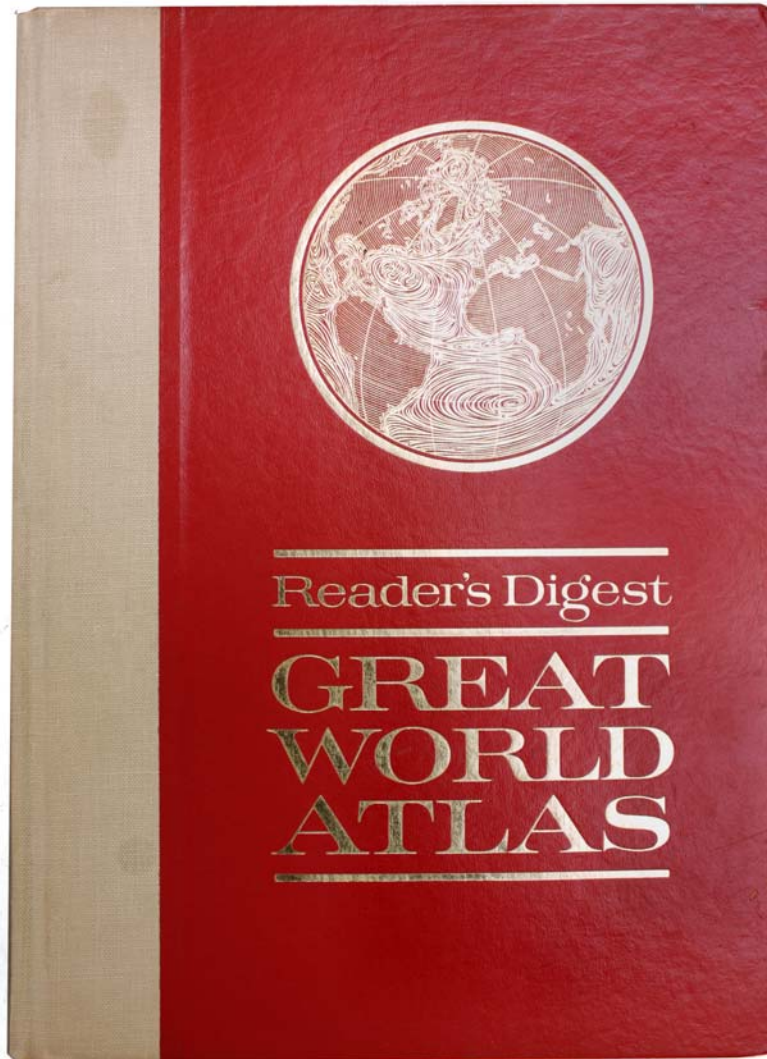
A filmmaker and his friend came up to our trailer – the cameraman was recording his companion speak animatedly. They showed great enthusiasm, and the guy speaking reminded me a great deal of Sasha Baron Cohen's 'Bruno' persona. He initially spoke in Spanish, but seeing that I understood nothing he switched fluidly to English, and asked me what I was doing. After some explanation, he offered two Obama posters to trade for a notebook. As for the camera man, he was from Barcelona, and promised to send me two copies of the footage he took of the transaction once he has returned to Spain.

Notebook 11 < > Something from warehouse in Chicago

He came up to me when I was walking around the Zone Art Fair away from the trailer but still in my blue jumpsuit. He asked me if I was the one doing the trades, and started bartering with me. Asking what I wanted, he offered a Louis Vuitton handbag (which he left in his hotel room), a Prada raincoat (that “would look better on you than on me, but I just bought it so maybe not”), and his belt (“but I don’t like the idea of it being on your boyfriend’s waist”). In the end he gave me his card; he will pick something from his warehouse and send it to me in exchange for a notebook in return. Apparently he has a lot of little glass trinkets.

The email has been sent, and I am now waiting for him to get back to me with his offer. Until then, I’ll be hanging on to the notebook.

Update (January 2010):



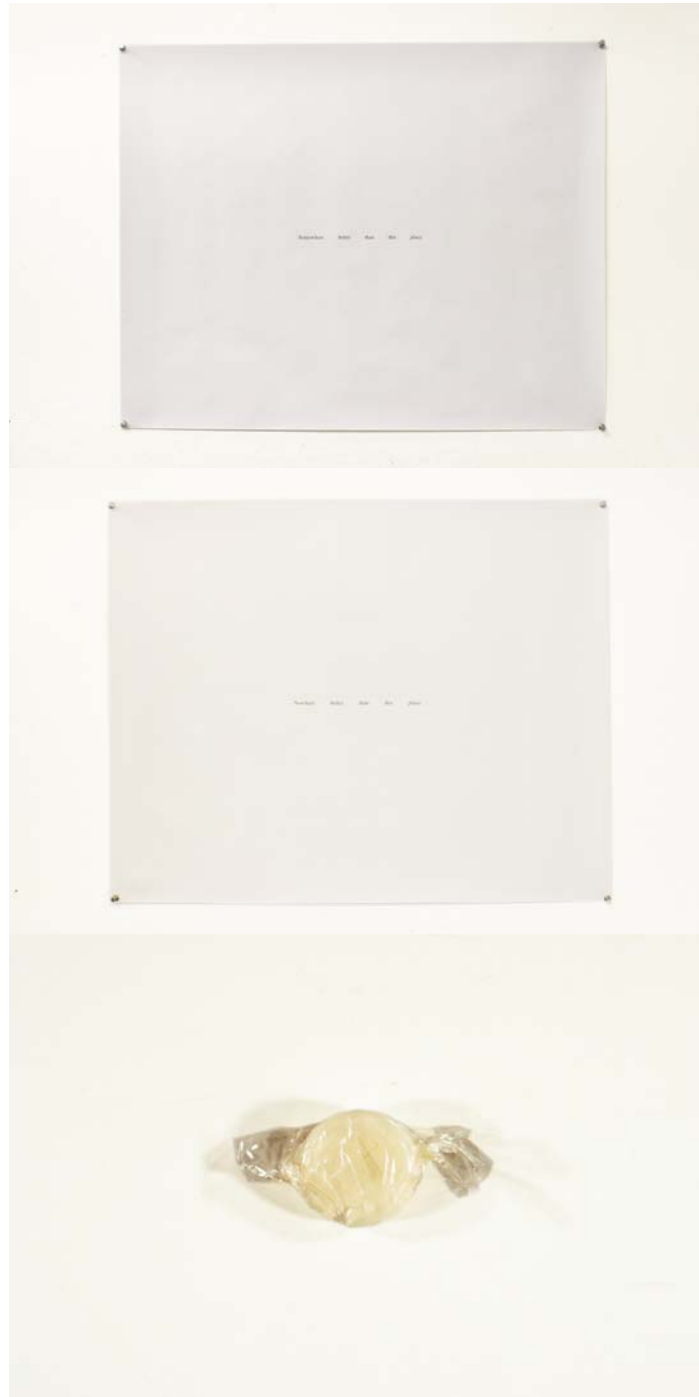
Object received.



Notebook 12 < > homemade Jenny Wilson CD

The curator of the Miami airport gallery came in with her friend to do a trade. The former offered an exhibition catalogue but I wasn't too keen. Her friend, however, offered to trade a Jenny Wilson CD that she had made for their car trip. She warned me that it wasn't working on her car's CD player, but I asked my colleague to test it out in his car and it worked fine. She emphasized that it's by a Swedish musician. They asked me what my standard was for the trades – I told them that I didn't really have one, and it was just whatever that caught my fancy.

December 5



Notebook 14 < > Two posters and a candy from Félix González-Torres oeuvre

Tom and Greg apparently had to come back for a third time before they were able to catch me conducting my trades – I was flattered by their dedication! Tom offered two posters and a piece of candy, all taken from artwork by Félix González-Torres – a cheeky trade of art objects. He had asked if they could get a notebook each for the three objects, but I refused.



Notebook 15 < > Business card of the curator of Vulcan's art collection.

After I had refused to offer them each a notebook for the previous trade, Tom said to Greg, “seems like you’re going to have to take it out”. I didn’t know what to expect, or how to react when the latter pulled out his business card. I was not familiar with the name Vulcan, but Tom said mysteriously, “that’s something you’ll want to keep – it’s a private art collection. Look up Vulcan when you have the chance”. I accepted at the urging of my colleagues. When I returned to Baltimore, I googled Vulcan and learned that it has a vast and impressive art collection that is not open to the public. The curators of the collection never talk about its contents. I also learned that Vulcan Inc. is an investment company founded by Paul Allen, co-founder of Microsoft.



Notebook 16 < > Two Pulse Art Fair VIP passes

I agreed to these right away! Unfortunately, I was busy doing trades the whole day so I never got the chance to see Pulse myself, though I did let my colleagues use them and they were given the real VIP treatment: shrimp cocktails, roses and bottles of Perrier water.

Declined: A copy of *Artillery* magazine

A woman who publishes an arts magazine called *Artillery* offered me a copy; I wasn't too keen since I saw she had several copies of it in her purse so she must have been meaning to give those out to people anyway. When I apologized and suggested she come back again with something else, she said half-jokingly, "I think it's enough that you've insulted me once already!"

Declined: A lighter, then a keychain

A man offered his lighter, and then his silver keychain. I already accepted a lighter previously, and if he had come by earlier with the keychain I would have accepted it, but with fewer notebooks now the stakes are much higher.



Notebook 17 < > High school student's wallet

A group of high school students came in and wanted to do some trades. The boy didn't have anything on him but his wallet – he initially offered the stuff inside it, but then he gave me the wallet instead. He told me that it has great sentimental value to him, as he's had it since his freshman year of high school (he's a senior now). I asked him if he was sure he wanted to give it to me, and he said, "yeah, it's time for it to move on".



Notebook 18 < > Expired student ID card

A girl from the same group wanted to give me her Saratoga mailbox combination after desperately rummaging through her pockets; I told her that she shouldn't be giving that away, though I was tempted to take it as it would have been an interesting addition to my collection. In the end she gave me her old student ID card.

Another girl kept looking through her purse for stuff to trade, but in the end couldn't come up with anything I wanted – she offered a beaded bracelet and discount cards for Ritz Camera. I felt bad since she really wanted a notebook. Her Indian friend told us a story, though she didn't ask for an exchange: “A white Cadillac drove into my family home and tried to keep going. The driver made excuses, saying that a woman was driving the car and had run away - while he was scooting over to the passenger seat.”



Notebook 19 < > A promised print of my portrait

Photographer Chris came into the trailer and asked if he could take my photo – he was fascinated by my freckles. He asked me if I was of mixed race – I told him no, and he said with some surprise that there aren't many Chinese with freckles. He showed me his work on his iPhone – he takes portraits of strangers. He then asked to take my portrait, and offered to send me a print in exchange for a notebook. As I watched him take the photo, I noticed how fluidly he moved with his camera – it was as if the digital Polaroid he was wielding was a part of his body. He also took a photo of my colleague Calder, Director of Camper Contemporary.

Update (February 2010)



Seems like the print got lost in the mail, but at least I have a digital image.



Notebook 20 < > Sticker by artist 'Flying Toaster' and photograph of his work in New Orleans

Lusher Charter High School from New Orleans came to see the trailer. Chance, a student who goes by 'Flying Toaster guy' offered one of his stickers to trade – I asked him to send me documentation of his work on the streets of New Orleans as well. Photos were received by email on December 17.



Notebook 21 < > A stencil of me on the streets of New Orleans

Another student offered to take a photo of me, which he will then make into a stencil and spray on the streets of New Orleans. Their art teacher, Ms. Kelly Mueller, promised to make sure that her students carry out what they have promised. I told them that there will be a final exhibition in Baltimore where I'll be showing the objects I traded for the notebooks, and that it would be added incentive for the students to keep up their end of the barter.

Declined: Burts Bees handlotion

I already have Sephora handlotion.

Declined: a used pocket mirror from the Metropolitan Museum of Art shop

The mirror looked old and the paint was peeling off of it. By this point, my expectations were much higher.

Missed: a video featuring Camper Contemporary

Apparently he visited when I was away at Art Basel Miami Beach yesterday, and made a long video of the trailer. He really wanted to exchange the video for a notebook and said he would return today, but he never came back.



Notebook 22 < > A series of “Family Business” stickers by artist Scott Peehl

Scott is a video editor from NYC. He had come by the day before but I wasn't there so he came back with his series of “Family Business” stickers. He made these stickers and put them up all over the bathroom stall in Fountain Art Fair. When he was in Las Vegas, he saw many porn trading cards, and thought to himself that all the women depicted in the cards are real women, with mothers and families – this was his inspiration for the series. He let me in on a secret: the “mother” sticker is actually him dressed up as a drag queen – all the others are snapshots of porn.



Notebook 23 < > Pawn stickers + business card

The guy came in with his girlfriend to exchange stickers that he designed based on Chicago's city flag. He is an art consultant / writer, owns pawnwrk.com, and is inspired by the game of chess. Since there is the possibility of me exhibiting at a restaurant called 'The Pawn' in Hong Kong next year, I asked for his business card in case I wanted to contact him regarding his work.



Notebook 24 < > Custom-made KRELwear dress

While I was walking around Scope Art Fair, I came across fashion designer Karelle Levy's booth, where she was giving 'quickies' – making custom dresses on the spot out of fabric that she weaves herself. After telling me what she was doing, she tried to persuade me to purchase one of her creations at \$75 a piece. As I obviously could not afford one, I made excuses, saying that I didn't have time to wait, etc., but she was really very insistent. In the end, I offered to exchange a notebook for a dress - she accepted immediately. Once agreed, she gave me the full treatment: I chose the fabric I wanted, and she took my measurements. When asked what style I wanted, I told her to decide everything for me.

An hour later I returned with the notebook, though she was constantly being distracted by her clients and hadn't started making the dress yet. She sat down at her sewing machine right away, and was done in 15 minutes. I put on the dress and she took a Polaroid shot of me as documentation.

That evening, I spontaneously put on the dress to try to get into the Scope after-party on Miami Beach after being refused entry in the blue jumpsuit. It worked.



Notebook 25 < > DILEMMA

At the beginning of the show and business was slow, I agreed with several of my colleagues to exchange their artwork for a notebook. Due to poor planning and a great response the next two days, I ended up giving away more notebooks than anticipated and have only one left. I actually had to ask Jen to return hers to me so as to make it fair for the others. I feel very unprofessional and I apologize sincerely for this mess up.

Two possible solutions: either I give the notebook to the first colleague who agreed to swap with me, or I make another edition of them to compensate for the broken agreements. While I would very much enjoy creating another set, I am also a little hesitant:

I chose specifically to use Moleskine notebooks as they are cultural products embodying the themes of 'portability' and 'travel' that was prevalent throughout the show (in an accompanying pamphlet, it claims that the notebook is a "trusty, pocket-sized travel companion"). At the same time, Moleskine is a highly visible company selling consumerist 'objects of desire' to many of those within the realm of arts and culture – precisely the same people who would attend Art Basel. And it is with these two aspects in mind that I feel makes 'Exchange (Miami)' particularly relevant to the hyper-glossy art fair context in which it took place, posing as an alternative to the notion of exchange within a market economy. Therefore, if I were to make another batch, it would detract from its original intention.

However, at the same time, I truly take pleasure in interacting with people while bartering. Concepts aside, it was simply a rich experience, and more notebooks would mean more interaction...