ART TALK
Welcome to a Big, Small, Strange World of Art
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Host: Edward Goldman

The art world is such a fascinating place: it's big and small, intimidating
but, on occasions, also surprisingly cozy. Just three weeks ago, I visited
the studio of Chris Burden, an internationally known Los Angeles artist, to
see his newly completed, monumental sculpture, *Metropolis II*, on which
he and a bunch of assistants had been working for several years.

You have to see it to believe it. It is a
poetic mess of L.A. freeways meshed together, with hundreds of
toy cars running crazily any which way. A small crowd of invited
guests -- collectors, museum curators and journalists -- roamed
the studio and one couldn't help but notice happy, slightly silly
smiles on their faces. Michael Govan, director of LACMA, looked
especially happy and he had a good reason for that.

This new, amazing work by Burden was acquired by a private collector, Nicolas
Berggruen, who happens to be a LACMA trustee. Berggruen is known for his
rather unconventional way of collecting. Whatever he buys ends up on display in
various public museums, and not as gifts but as long-term loans. For the next ten
years or so, LACMA will be displaying *Metropolis II*, most likely on the ground level
of the Broad Pavilion, where it will replace one of the two monumental sculptures
by Richard Serra currently on view there.

As a result we Angelenos will have the privilege to
see and enjoy two major works by this great artist displayed,
virtually, side by side. The other work by Burden, *Urban Lights*, has
been gracing the museum plaza since 2008. As coincidence would
have it, only four days after visiting the artist's studio in Malibu, I
found myself traveling to the ancient city of Antwerp to pay homage
to one of my favorites, Peter Paul Rubens. And what did I run into
while walking the grounds of the *Middleheim Museum*, with its vast collection of outdoor
sculpture? Yes, it was another phantasmagorical, unruly, gigantic sculpture by Chris Burden
called *Beam Drop* — a collection of steel I-beams dropped from a crane and stuck in the
ground, creating a strange, aggressive bouquet of aging metal.

If there is poetic justice in the world then, hopefully, another eccentric
billionaire-collector will step up to commission the artist to do a version
of this *Beam Drop* for LACMA, thus creating the perfect trifecta of
Burden's most seminal works for our City of Angels.