

Meet the Dandies of Avenue C

The Museum of Arts and Design honors a pair of climate change provocateurs

Todd Plummer | May 20, 2014



Atmosphere



Peter McGough

"Bring Back the Ball," pronounced the invitation to the Museum of Arts and Design's Young Patrons event, and in a smaller font: "a 1920s Immersion Experience Gala." Hard to resist a pitch like that, and the period-correct James Burden Mansion on East 91st Street, where the party was held last night, was packed. The guests of honor: the time-traveling performance artists David McDermott and Peter McGough, aka the "Dandies of Avenue C," whose MO includes the wearing of coattails, living without electricity, and traveling by horse and buggy.

McDermott and McGough take time-travel immersion seriously. The only authentic period silverware up to their specifications had to be hand-carried on a plane from Los Angeles, along with some 120 individual Limoges porcelain place settings. A Ford Model A was parked outside on the street. Of course, dressing up was half the fun. Sofia Sanchez Barrenechea was nearly unrecognizable in a platinum blond bobbed wig. "You know, I think I really like this," she said, as her fiancé, Alexandre de Betak, gave an unsure eye roll over her shoulder. Taylor Tomasi Hill, wearing a top hat with a shawl she sewed herself from fresh flowers ("Honey, I don't touch a fake flower"), people-watched from the corner with Maggie Betts.

After the beef stroganoff was served and the champagne poured, McGough expressed a subversive side to the evening's 1920s theme. "This party is sensational. And it's all about our time theory. McDermott and I believe that we're all marching off a cliff, especially with climate change. The scientists say that everything will be either desert or flooded, but nobody wants to get rid of their cars, their plastic cups. Time is a trap. Onward, onward, onward." The artist raised his glass and held up a folding fan he was carrying, and sang lyrics from the Jazz Age: "If we only meet your fate, dear, it will be the great event of 1928!"



L to R: Peter McGough; Hayley Blomfield and Lauren Santo Domingo; Max Snow and Vanessa Traina Snow



L to R: Indre Rockefeller and Taylor Tomasi Hill; Vito Schnabel; Gilles Mendel and Kylie Case



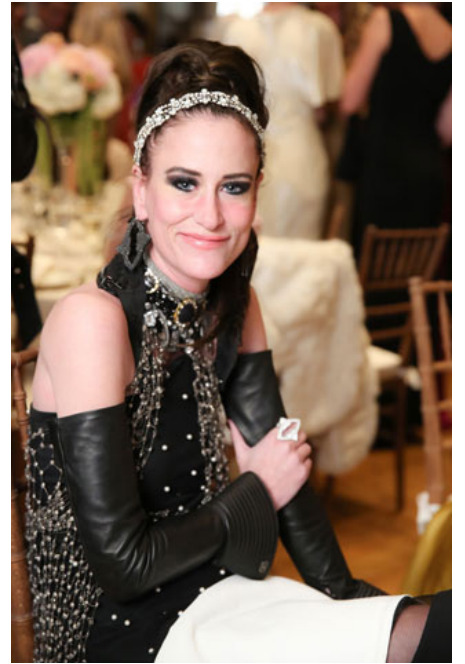
L to R: Sara Deckard, performing; Nicola Vassell; Alexandre de Betak and Sofia Sanchez Barrenechea



L to R: Doreen Remen; Bill Cunningham and Bettina Prentice



L to R: Jack Pierson and Sarah Gavlak; Bob Colacello and Rachel Small; Scott Campbell and Lake Bell



L to R: Peter Smith and Zani Gugelmann; Maggie Betts and Topaz Page-Green; Stacy Engman.

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