

## Bettina Prentice Hosts Experiences, Not Parties

By Emilia Petrarca | July 30, 2018



Bettina Prentice; photo by SeoHyun Sarah Bae

These days, you need more than a strong bowl of punch to throw a party. Guests need an *experience* — the word *du jour* for an event that transports you to another time and place, and, in most cases, inspires you to pick up your camera phone.

Bettina Prentice is a professional experience-creator, among other things. Since starting her own consulting company, Prentice Cultural Communications in 2008, she's hosted a "time travel experiment" to the year 1928 for the Museum of Arts & Design; re-created the famed Stork Club for a private party; hosted a "glitter grunge disco" honoring artist Derrick Adams; and curated a deep-space immersive experience for Pioneer Works.

Prentice got her start in 2002 at the front desk of Sotheby's, eventually working her way up in the gallery world. Today, in addition to hosting a select number of curated events, she also uses her background in art to broker partnerships between fashion, luxury, and cultural communities.

Below, a glimpse at what makes the Bettina Prentice Experience.

### How do you thank people for a gift?

I don't do thank-you letters. I would write them, but they'd gather dust in the corner of my desk. After several years of guilt and anxiety, I just started picking up the phone. My children write fill-in-the-blank "Thank-you" notes from Cheree Berry Paper, which I found on Maisonette. That helps.

### What's your dream vacation?

Traveling by boat up the Nile. I hope my husband is reading this ...

### **What's a good book on your coffee table right now?**

*Are You Experienced? How Psychedelic Consciousness Transformed Modern Art* by Ken Johnson.

### **Favorite piece of furniture in your apartment/office?**

A Glashutte Limburg glass ball pendant with polished brass hardware that hangs over my bed. It has gold leaf flakes embedded inside the glass and they create the most extraordinary play of light. I imagine it is akin to sleeping beneath a disco ball.

### **What's the last show you binge-watched?**

My husband is from London, so we watch a lot of British drama on Netflix. The first season of *Marcella*, which is shot in the style of Nordic Noir and stars Anna Friel, is absolutely call-in-sick-to-work good.

### **What would you never wear?**

Shorts.

### **What's your go-to dinner-party meal?**

Whatever my husband graces us with! My favorite meal he makes is a burrata and grilled peach salad with arugula and an aged balsamic vinegar followed by spaghetti aglio e olio.

### **What's your secret to hosting a successful event?**

Place. I am a native New Yorker, so I like places with a sense of history. Once we convince a non-venue to trust us, then I try to give people an experience in which they suspend their disbelief — a time travel experiment to 1928; a Roman bacchanal; a glitter grunge disco; a deep space dive ... Bill Cunningham came to almost all our parties over the years and we'd sneak up stairways and he'd tell me about the building's history.

### **Who's an up-and-comer you've got your eyes on?**

Katie Schecter, the singer/songwriter.

### **What's the first piece of art you bought and why?**

I was working at the front desk of Sotheby's and stumbled upon this group show of work made by British artists who were working in Iraq during the invasion. One painting by Henry Hemming of a bull done on Iraqi newspaper cut me to my core. I couldn't afford it so offered to pay in installments over the course of a year. I got to know the gallerists so well that they eventually offered me a director position there — so it changed the course of my life.

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## **What's your favorite ...**

### **Florist?**

Putnam & Putnam.

### **Lipstick?**

Clinique Chubby Stick in Grandest Grape.

### **Candle?**

Jo Malone anything.

### **Scent?**

Fresh jasmine.

### **Sheets/bedding?**

Hill House Home.

### **Museum/gallery?**

The New Museum of Contemporary Art.

### **Restaurant?**

Dinner in the garden at Antica Pesa in Rome.

### **Suitcase?**

Paravel.

### **Children's store?**

Books of Wonder.

### **Summer escape?**

Upstate New York in Tivoli.