

TRIBECA BALL 2017

PRESS COVERAGE



TRIBECA BALL 2017

PREVIEW COVERAGE

ARTSY
GUEST OF A GUEST
THE NEW YORK TIMES



I Baked a Cake in Will Cotton's Candyland Studio

By Casey Lesser

Mar 29, 2017 6:10 pm

"Let's look at some recipes!" Will Cotton offers, his face alight, as we head to the kitchen of his Tribeca loft. The New York artist is known for elegant paintings of female subjects like Katy Perry and Elle Fanning lounging in candyland-scapes or donning cupcake crowns. But he also skillfully creates the confections he paints, from scratch. So, on a sunny March afternoon, rather than a traditional studio visit, Cotton's game for baking a cake.

In the kitchen, which faces a studio space, he produces a copy of Martha Stewart's Baking Handbook and opens it to a yellow butter cake recipe he's been eyeing; he then flips to a brown sugar buttercream frosting. "I love Martha," he tells me as he scans the list of ingredients. "Her recipes are the best." The affection is mutual: Cotton was commissioned to paint the legendary businesswoman's portrait in 2015 for the cover of the 25th anniversary edition of her magazine—she even let him adorn her Valentino dress with faux frosting.

For the past two decades, cakes, candies, macarons, and other

desserts have been omnipresent in Cotton's work. In realistic portrayals of beautiful women, he's employed sweets for their seductive allure and symbolic associations, whether to embellish a fantastical candy queen or to emphasize the advertising industry's keen ability to provoke desire.

Next week, he will be honored at the New York Academy of Art's annual Tribeca Ball, an event that will dole out "Will Cotton Cotton Candy" to salute the sweet-toothed artist.

Cotton's own desire for sweets extends well beyond his studio practice. As he procures a crimson red apron for me and a black-and-white gingham print for himself, Cotton admits that he abstains from excess sugar in his daily diet, in order to indulge in cookies, pies, and pear frangipane tart—his favorite dessert.

The artist has also been known to host annual bake-offs at his home, where friends, including artists and amateur bakers, present their finest baked goods. Cotton always judges alongside a guest; one year, Stewart

held the position. This year it was art critic Andrew Russeth.

As he lines two round cake pans with parchment, butter, and flour, he describes a timely cake from this year's contest, which was shaped like a rock, with "Resist" scrawled graffiti-style in icing. "That took the prize this year—and it was very tasty."

He disappears into a nearby closet, which is filled to the brim with equal parts art and baking supplies, and procures a large KitchenAid mixer. As we measure and sift together the dry ingredients, Cotton explains that he began baking in earnest in the mid-'90s, around the time that he started painting cakes.

Keen to create paintings of tall, whimsical stacks of cakes, he'd bought out two bakeries. The experience, both expensive and messy, spurred him to perfect his own baking skills. Though he's taken a few classes at the Institute of Culinary Education (ICE) since then, "you can learn so much on YouTube now," he says, "you almost don't have to take a class."

After adding eggs, butter, and vanilla extract (Cotton calls for an extra half teaspoon of vanilla), he revs up the KitchenAid and stops it every so often to methodically scrape the side of the bowl. "That's probably amazing already," he says while pouring the mixture into the pans. Moments later he's licking the excess batter from the bowl. "My god, I just love this."

With the cakes in the oven and a half hour to kill, we retreat to the front of the loft to sit in the sunlight streaming through large southern-facing windows that look out onto the street. The New York Academy of Art, where Cotton attended as a student in 1987–88 and today is a senior critic, is just a few blocks away. Cotton taught a master class there last weekend, he tells me. "I do a painting demonstration and teach the kids whatever I can think of," he says with a laugh.

Next week, the Academy's Tribeca Ball, presented by Van Cleef & Arpels, will be chaired by three of Cotton's collectors: Naomi Watts, Christina Di Donna, and Brooke Shields, who describes his work as



“luscious and ethereal while staying grounded.” President of the Academy David Kratz calls Cotton a “hero” for his ongoing contributions to the school. “The fact that he once was a student here inspires everybody,” he says.

Cotton first enrolled in classes at the Academy during his last year at Cooper Union, eager to gain more experience with figure drawing. “It was definitely hugely formative for me,” he says of his time at the school.

Figure drawing is still an integral part of Cotton’s work, evidenced through his paintings filled with deftly rendered women, but also through his studio practice. Since 2002 he has hired models to pose at his studio—first weekly and now once a month—inviting artist friends to join him to draw. “We run it like an art school thing, except there’s no teacher,” he says.

Cotton’s most recent work, which will debut in a September show at Mary Boone’s uptown gallery, features paintings of women wearing dresses he fashions by hand. He has been creating these dresses (with fashion tips from his girlfriend Rose Dergan) over the past two years, sewing together custom fabric printed with branding like that of Domino

sugar bags or Hostess donuts, and adorning bodices with plastic replicas of lollipops and gumdrops, which he casts and creates with silicone molds in the studio.

Cotton first started thinking about creating costumes during his work on the now-famous portrait he painted of popstar Katy Perry for the cover of her 2010 album *Teenage Dream*, as well as the backdrops that featured in the candy-filled music video for “California Girls.” “I wasn’t the costume person on [the video] and seeing the costumes put into all the things I was painting made me think, ‘Well, what would I do?’”

Several of these costume pieces, which Cotton is beginning to see as sculptural works in their own right, were shown in an exhibition last spring at the Orlando Museum of Art, and many are currently propped up across the studio space. Amid a cluster of easels and tables, and a smattering of brushes, palettes, and paints, he’s in the process of painting a model wearing a dress made from white Kit Kat Mini fabric with ribbons of button candy as a belt.

Elsewhere, a mannequin sports an Almond Joy wrapper skirt next to a cupcake-covered hat—which was worn by Elle Fanning in a 2013

New York Magazine spread. Another headpiece resembles a tower of macarons in pastel hues. His painting of a woman wearing the hat hangs nearby.

“With macarons, I’ve baked literally thousands of batches,” he tells me. “I’m always tweaking the recipe and trying new things.” He perfected the recipe after a 2013 collaboration with French bakery Ladurée, when one of the Parisian pastry chefs let him in on a recipe secret (it begins with an Italian meringue, rather than a French one). His phone alarm sounds—the cake is ready.

Cotton tests that the cakes are baked through with a skewer, and removes them from the oven; he then places them in the freezer to cool. We return to the mixer to make the buttercream.

He tells me that he first began using sweets as a metaphor for his own experience with substance abuse. In the ’90s, he made a series of paintings of advertising icons like the Nestle Quik Bunny, Twinkie the Kid, and Hamburglar. Looking back on the art-historical canon, largely populated by paintings filled with religious and mythological iconography, Cotton sought to develop symbolic archetypes that were relatable.

He saw the Nestle Quik Bunny, always slurping large quantities of chocolate milk with a seeming lack of control, as the ultimate drug addict. “It was a time in my life when I was intentionally living a super-hedonistic life. I’d gotten curious with how far I could push it in terms of pursuing pleasure as my daily pursuit, which wound up meaning a lot of drugs and drinking and going out.”

“I thought, ‘How else can I get at this idea of just painting about desire temptation and indulgence?’” He found a Candyland board game that he played as a child. “It just took me right back, as though it was a place I’d gone to visit.” He began to make his own table-top maquettes inspired by the game, including many gingerbread houses, which he then painted.

He’s been sober since 2002. “I feel enough time has passed that I can talk about it a little bit,” he says. “It really did have a lot to do with how I got into painting sweets as a metaphor.” With time, Cotton’s paintings have become more joyful, and though similar subjects prevail, he’s given them new meaning.

In a certain sense, he’s come full circle with the dresses he’s painting now, which are covered with the logos of sugary consumer products. “It gets back into branding and that cycle of desire in which the advertising industry models itself in such a way as to incite desire within us.”

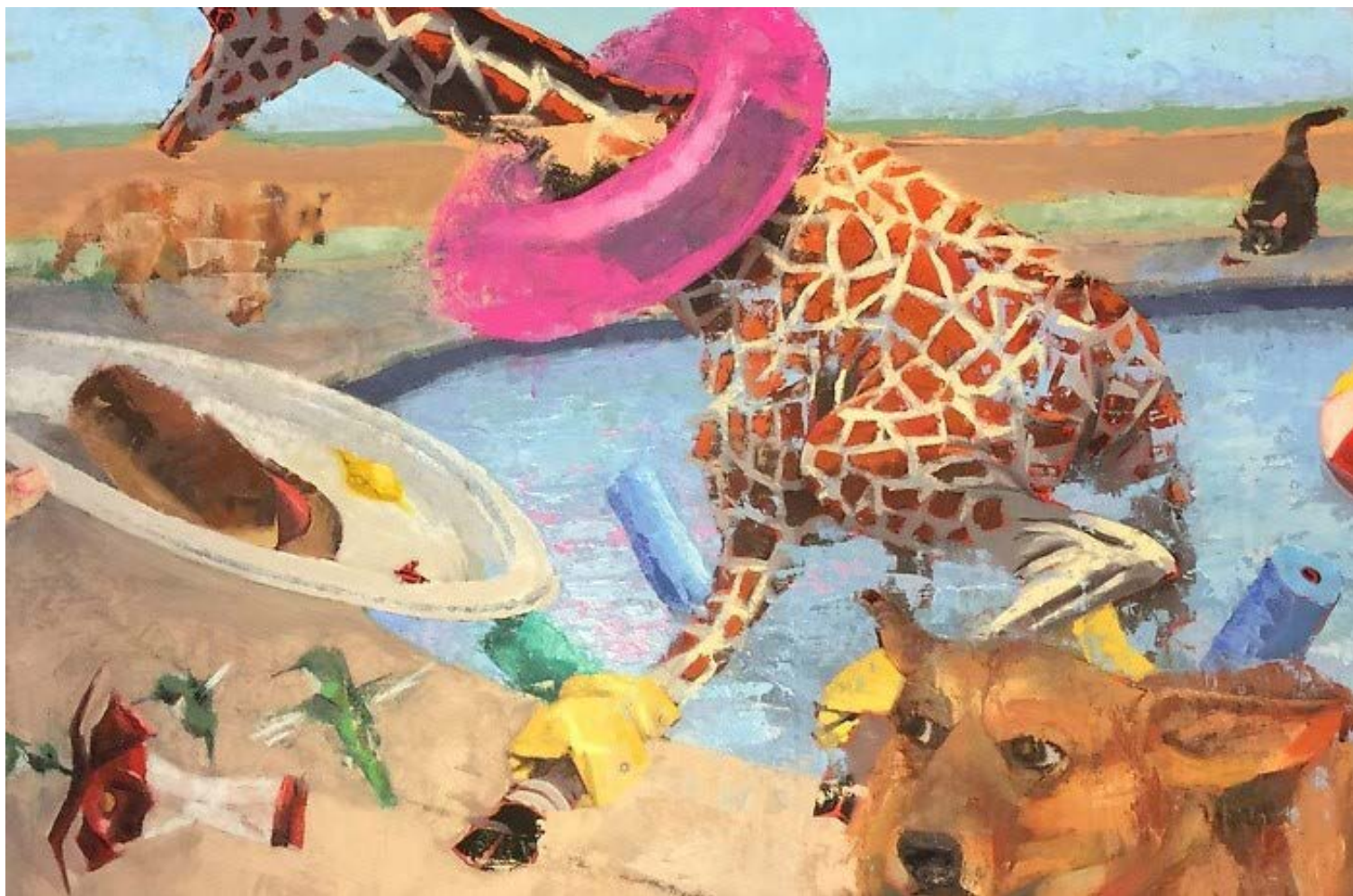
Finished with the frosting, Cotton fetches the cakes from the freezer and sets them up on a stand, slicing off the tops to make two even cylinders, before swiftly applying the buttercream. I thank him for his time—hours longer than a traditional studio visit—before he sends me home with half a cake. (It was delicious.)

“This is the only thing I would do really, to take that much time away from painting,” Cotton says with a grin: “baking a cake.”



TRIBECA BALL 2017

GUEST *of a* GUEST

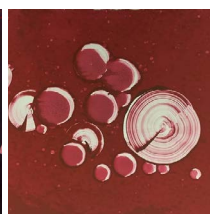
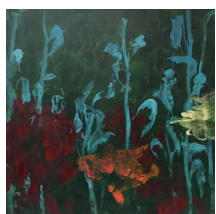


8 Pieces You Need To Buy Before The 2017 Tribeca Ball

by Christie Grimm · March 31, 2017

Each April, on the heels of spring, New York's finest step out in well dressed droves for the New York Academy of Art's Tribeca Ball. With event chairs like Naomi Watts, Brooke Shields, and Christina Di Donna, needless to say it's kind of a thing. A luxurious evening set to benefit the school with scholarships and programming, each year's fete outdoes itself with spectacle as guests wander through over 100 student artists' studios pieces, stopping along the way to indulge in musical performances, interactive installations, stilt walkers, oyster shuckers - too many happy surprises to even imagine!

Can't snag an invite to the exclusive soiree? Alas, you're still free to join the art party. Flip through a catalogue of selected drawings and paintings that will be up for auction on Paddle8 ahead of the big night. Click through for an inside look at our favorites!





Brooke Shields in her Manhattan townhouse, with a Keith Haring heart above her fireplace and images of her daughters by Will Cotton on either side.

SHOW US YOUR WALL

Brooke Shields, Amid the Harings, Learns the Art of Collecting

By **Robin Pogrebin**
March 30, 2017

To walk with the actress Brooke Shields through her West Village townhouse is to spend time with someone in the nascent stages of becoming a collector. She does not go to art fairs, and the only live auctions she has attended have been at her daughters' school. In a global art market that one estimate recently valued at \$45 billion, the most Ms. Shields has spent on a painting is about \$7,000.

The Keith Harings and Andy Warhols hanging on her walls were not purchases, but gifts from the artists, who were her friends when she was growing up and a high-profile model. Ms. Shields, 51, has come to realize that those pieces have significantly more than sentimental value. And through her increasing involvement with the New York Academy of Art, where she joined the board last year, Ms. Shields has begun to take collecting more seriously.

"I want stuff," Ms. Shields said, sitting on a couch in her home recently, "and I really have to not make rash decisions."

Ms. Shields's Harings include a heart over her bed, inscribed, "For Brooke Merry Christmas 1984," and a Buddha in the study of her husband, Chris Henchy, inscribed, "For Brooke ... one of the sweetest (honestly) people I've met, with lots of love and respect." A Warhol is in the laundry room.

As a model, Ms. Shields spent time around prominent photographers like Richard Avedon, who shot her Calvin Klein Jeans ads. She and her mother spent Thanksgivings with the fashion photographer Bruce Weber.

The celebrity photographer Ron Galella gave Ms. Shields his "Windblown Jackie" image of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.



But Ms. Shields started becoming a more conscious collector through the Academy, as a chairwoman of its benefit, the Tribeca Ball, which takes place on Monday and this year honors the artist Will Cotton. Mr. Henchy commissioned portraits of their two daughters by Mr. Cotton as a birthday gift for Ms. Shields.

Here are edited excerpts from the conversation.

How did you become interested in art?

My mom introduced me to art, not from a scholastic standpoint — she never went to college, she didn't study art — she just had an eye for people, artists, fashion. We were like little kids in a playground.

You would pass Haring's "Crack Is Wack" mural on the East Harlem handball court on the way to school in New Jersey.

My mom said, "Notice, Brooke, there is no graffiti over it." She said, "There's a respect for him and he deserves it."

Haring and Warhol were an integral part of your life?

They never said no to coming to a birthday party and bringing presents. I was so lucky that these artists were my family.

You've recently been evaluating purchases with the help of your friend, an art adviser. How did you buy before?

I would talk to my husband about it. I had a period when I wanted a Peter Beard and they were so expensive and I thought: "Why am I doing this? Do I want it because I think it's cool or do I want it because everybody's telling me it's the thing to have?" I really wanted to get a Damian Loeb piece — who has an amazing show uptown at Acquavella — one of his big bright suns. It was just a little bit prohibitive in zeros.

Do you think about art as an investment?

I have thought — at times when I haven't been working or when things are a little thinner — "Thank God my mom kept that Haring, because if it got rough and I needed to, you know ..." In fact, except for those pieces that happen to be gifts from the artists, I don't think there's any resale value in the stuff I enjoy. And, to be honest, it's O.K.



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W MAGAZINE



The Week in Art: Swizz Beatz at the Brooklyn Museum and the Wild Tribeca Ball

Gala season heats up.

Caroline Goldstein & Sarah Cascone, April 8, 2017

Here's a rundown of some of this week's art-scene highlights.

Tribeca Ball at the New York Academy of Art

The New York Academy of Art always knows how to throw a party, and they certainly did not disappoint with this year's Tribeca Ball, held April 3. In a tribute to honoree Will Cotton, an outlandishly dressed model in ruffled pink greeted guests at the door with sugary-sweet cotton candy.

Martha Stewart was there to support Cotton, a longtime friend, but she also spotted some art that she

enjoyed, telling artnet News that she particularly enjoyed the "Animalia" exhibit on the top floor. There, alumni artwork was exhibited alongside live avian models including a spirited African pied crow, posing in their nests for former students ready with sketchbook and easel.

Other celebrity guests in attendance included Brooke Shields and Naomi Watts, both big-time supporters of the academy; Alan Cumming; Donna Karan; and Countess Luann de Lesseps, of *The Real Housewives* of New York fame, who told artnet News that it was her first time attending the annual affair.

Following the cocktail hour spent roaming the artist studios, VIPs enjoyed a dinner from chef Daniel Boulud. During the meal, the school announced a new Will Cotton Scholarship fund, for which attendees dutifully donated \$55,000. All told, the evening, which welcomed 900 guests, raised \$860,000.





A Howling Success: New York Academy of Art Hosts 22nd Annual Tribeca Ball

April 5, 2017 by Katita Miller

The night of Monday, April 3, a host of notable movers and shakers from the art, fashion, media and business worlds descended upon the New York Academy of Art's historic building at 111 Franklin Street like a herd of wild animals. Before you become offended by our comparing such lovely people as Alan Cumming, Princess Alexandra of Greece, Donna Karan, AnnaSophia Robb and Martha Stewart to wild animals, allow us to explain: the 22nd annual Tribeca Ball had a whimsical Noah's Ark theme. Presented by French luxury brand Van Cleef & Arpels, by no means did this event resemble a zoo (unless you count Martha Stewart's animal-print jacket or the many feathered ensembles worn by other guests).

This year's Ball consisted of a sit-down dinner by chef Daniel Boulud peppered with fundraising efforts and a walk-through of 6 floors of open studios filled with work by the Academy's talented students.

Special entertainment included musical performances, interactive installations, a sketching of live birds and—oh, yeah—event chairs Alain Bernard, Christina Di Donna, Brooke Shields and Naomi Watts galaventing around the room in cupcake tiaras designed by artist and New York Academy faculty member Will Cotton.

Overall, the Tribeca Ball raised over \$860,000 that will go towards the Academy's scholarships and public programming. \$55,000 of that sum was raised specifically for the Will Cotton Scholarship, the creation of which was announced for the first time during dinner at the event.



TRIBECA BALL 2017



FASHION UNFILTERED



Live Birds, Will Cotton, and Male Models at the Tribeca Ball and Jeffrey Fashion Cares

The fetes raked in money for art students and the LGBT community

Written by **Ashley W. Simpson**

Last night, Will Cotton, Brooke Shields, Naomi Watts, Alan Cumming, Donna Karan and more sipped on champagne, snacked on cotton candy, and took in aerial acrobatics amidst the work of some 100 New York Academy of Art students. The occasion? The annual Tribeca Ball to benefit the university, which was honoring Cotton and drawing attention to the work of its current class of artists.

"We're going upstairs to explore!" exclaimed Canadian artist Chloe Wise just as Martha Stewart arrived at the affair.

Upstairs, Academy artists sketched live birds while guests tried their hands at screen-printing. Cocktails were served as artists opened up their studios to attendees.



TRIBECA BALL 2017

The **Daily**
front row



Naomi Watts, Brooke Shields, Nicole Miller & More Fete Will Cotton at the Academy of Art Tribeca Ball

By Kristen Heinzinger | April 4, 2017

The New York Academy of Art hosted the 22nd Tribeca Ball last eve, this year honoring Will Cotton and hosted by Van Cleef & Arpels. Naomi Watts, Donna Karan, Brooke Shields, Misha Nonoo, Alan Cumming, Gabby Karan de Felice, Tali Lennox, John Demsey, Gina Gershon, Princess Alexandra of Greece, Zani Gugelmann, Eileen Guggenheim, Jessica Hart, Brett Heyman, Jay McInerney, AnnaSophia Robb, and Martha Stewart were just a few of the notables who perused the six floors of 100 open art studios by Academy students before heading to a sit-down dinner followed by an after-party at de Felice's Tutto il Giorno in Tribeca. Cotton—whose projects have included art directing Katy Perry's "California Gurls" music video and who famously paints landscapes of sweets inhabited by human subjects—earned top honors this year for his support of the Academy, which announced it has created a scholarship in his name. Guests (including Watts) wore cupcake tiaras designed by Cotton as they canvassed the room for donations for the new fund, ultimately ringing in \$55K in under two minutes...not too shabby!

The theme this year took a cue from Van Cleef & Arpel's new collection, L'Arche de Noé (Noah's Ark); the space was decorated with whimsical animal-themed exhibitions, while many guests showed up in animalia-inspired attire, from leopard prints to feather trimmed numbers. Check out a few photos from the soirée, below.



2017 Tribeca Ball Honors Will Cotton, Raises \$860,000

Bettina Zilkha , Contributor

The New York Academy of Art held its annual Tribeca Ball Monday night. The evening honored internationally acclaimed artist and Academy graduate Will Cotton. Presented by Van Cleef & Arpels, and chaired by Christina Di Donna, Brooke Shields and Naomi Watts, the gala raised over \$860,000 to go towards scholarships and programming at the school.

900 guests were greeted outside the entrance tent by an ethereally painted beauty offering cotton candy, an homage to Cotton and his fondness for incorporating all manner of sweets in his work. The dress code was “Animal Instinct” in honor of Van Cleef & Arpels’ newest jewelry collection, L’Arche de Noe. Though there were plenty of elegant snakeskin, leopard and feather prints to go around, they were nothing compared to the live owl and birds of

prey on display on the top floor - all rescue animals, of course, who were very comfortable around people. Martha Stewart, Alan Cumming, Gina Gershon, Gretchen Mol, Damian Loeb, Nicole Miller, Jay McInerney, John Demsey, Alina Cho, Donna Karan, Becca Cason Thrash and Academy board chair Eileen Guggenheim were mesmerized.

Five floors were packed with artwork by talented students, all for sale, a feast for any art lover or collector. Many addressed deep, serious subjects, though Anastasiya Tarasenko’s paintings were filled with wonderfully twisted whimsy, and Alexandra Mirzayantz showed a painting of the Dalai Lama having a cozy chat with Trump while the president knits a pink hat.

Cotton remains heavily involved in the Academy, teaching Master Classes, serving as a Senior Critic, and hosting his Artists’ Drawing Party as a yearly fundraiser.

“Being honored makes me feel happy for the young me, who decided to go to the academy and really learn how to draw,” said Cotton. “When I was a student at Cooper Union in the eighties, I felt like an oddball for being interested in learning to actually paint and draw from life. Finding the New York Academy at that time really changed my life.”

“The art world is currently bound by a general belief that skill and craftsmanship are the bane of the serious artist,” continued Cotton. “I love knowing that there is a place for art students who know that’s not true, where they can learn anatomy, drawing, and contemporary art theory all in the same place.”

Cotton will be showing a collection of new paintings at Mary Boone in September.

“I’ve gotten really interested in costume and the marketing of desire,” said the artist. “I’ve been making elaborate dresses out of materials associated with sweets and the companies that manufacture them.”





TRIBECA BALL 2017

The New York Times



Downtown Art School that Warhol Started Raises its Celebrity Profile

By JACOB BERNSTEIN APRIL 26, 2017

At the New York Academy of Art's annual Tribeca Ball this month, it was hard to move without smacking into someone famous and thin.

Naomi Watts was decked out in a sleeveless blue sateen dress from Stella McCartney. Gina Gershon had on a black goat-hair bolero and made a beeline for Brooke Shields. Real Housewives hovered, students sketched live falcons, and an accordionist in a top hat serenaded the guests.

A little more than a decade ago, this 100-student, two-year graduate program founded in part by Andy Warhol in 1982 seemed as timeworn as the creaky five-floor loft building on Franklin Street in which it has its headquarters.

Thanks to tuition fees (now hovering at around \$38,000 a year), the academy muddled along, but its expertise was figurative art, which had fallen out of

fashion. And it had run into a bit of trouble, including the chief financial officer who turned out to be a career con artist who in 2004 was arrested after reportedly stealing \$50,000 from its coffers.

Art-world figures were unimpressed with the curriculum. "Lots of students painting people in togas, and they weren't ironic about it," the artist Eric Fischl said last week. Laurie Simmons, the photographer and filmmaker, added, "A friend of mine who's a big artist calls it technical masturbation."

So when people like Ms. Shields, Martha Stewart and Jay McInerney arrived on April 3 for its annual spring gala and raised a near-record \$860,000, it seemed like a victory tour for the academy's industrious and socially adept president, David Kratz.

For more than an hour, Mr. Kratz, 59, who is silvered-haired and blue-eyed, barely

moved from a red carpet on the ground floor. Board members such as Eileen Guggenheim, the academy's chairwoman, and Alexander Gilkes, a founder of Paddle8, the online auction house, sang his praises. Celebrities ambled up to take photos.

Donna Karan cupped his face in her hands. "He's so cute; how could you not love him?" she said, as Mr. Kratz's husband, Greg Unis, smiled brightly. "We see each other every weekend, because he rides horses in the Hamptons. So I'm used to seeing him at the stable. In full gear."

Alan Cumming told him a ribald story about doing Molly before a chance encounter with Jane Fonda: Just before he met her, he began to get "all tingly." Then he accidentally called her "Joan." "And do you know what she said?" Mr. Cumming asked. "She said, 'And what do you do?'"



Still, a fundamental question remained: How did a former public relations executive known primarily for working with blue-chip financial companies become such a well-connected art-world player? And if Mr. Kratz, the academy's president since 2009, has given the place a "new currency," as Mr. Fischl asserted, may something bigger be in store for him and the board chairwoman, Ms. Guggenheim?

Running a successful arts nonprofit is difficult, even in a boom economy.

Public arts funding has been declining. Faculty members and administrators are averse to change. Celebrities rarely give serious money, but benefits get little media coverage without them.

For these reasons, it helps to have a guy at the top of a 501(c)(3) who both knows business and has the chutzpah to march up to an Oscar-winning actress at the dog run to ask if she'll come to a benefit. Which is exactly what Mr. Kratz did with Jennifer Connelly in Brooklyn in 2010, after which she became a fixture at his events.

The son of a retail executive, Mr. Kratz grew up on Long Island, attended Dartmouth, received a law degree from Boston University, and did a brief stint at the Wall Street law firm Gould & Wilkie before realizing "this isn't for me."

Though Mr. Kratz loved to paint and write, he lacked the confidence to pursue a career in the creative arts, so he chose public relations. One of Mr. Kratz's first jobs was in the London office of the entertainment

public relations firm Rogers & Cowan, where he served as the trans-Atlantic tour guide for Jane Seymour and Zsa Zsa Gabor.

At the time, Ms. Gabor was leaving marriage No. 7. "She said: 'My last husband was my divorce lawyer. Now we're getting divorced. What will I do?'" Mr. Kratz said in a pre-party interview.

In 1983, Mr. Kratz founded his own firm, Kratz & Company; big-name clients included Starbucks, Mercedes and IBM. In the mid-1990s, he represented Stolichnaya at an event at the academy. There he met Ms. Guggenheim, then a board member. The two became pals, and she recruited him to the board, where he served for a year.

In 2000, Mr. Kratz sold his company to Havas in a deal estimated to be worth around \$10 million. In 2004, he quit his job.

With time on his hands and the luxury of not having to worry about the immediate future, he enrolled at the art academy as a student. "I loved it from the minute I walked in," he said.

By then, figurative art was resurgent, thanks to painters such as John Currin, Lisa Yuskavage and Kehinde Wiley. After Mr. Kratz graduated, the board was looking for a new president, and Ms. Guggenheim turned to him.

As she saw it, Mr. Kratz knew the place from every angle. Also, she added, "He's highly creative, yet he's fully comfortable with the business end of the job."

Whether there were a ton of prominent philanthropists eager to take over an institution with a \$3 million annual budget, Mr. Kratz proved himself, partly by being smart enough to know what he didn't know.

One thing he did was enroll in a course for new presidents of educational institutions at Harvard. Another was reach out to the former Warhol compatriots Jane Holzer and Bob Colacello.

Given the academy's loosey-goosey-where-did-the-money-go history, Mr. Colacello was wary at first. But he came away from lunch with Mr. Kratz impressed.

"David's a diplomat, said Mr. Colacello, who was honored by the art academy in 2013. "He has an ability to move among different worlds and bring them together. He's as comfortable and supportive of the art students as he is of the professors and teachers and donors. And he has a way of raising funds without being aggressive."

In 2014, charitable contributions surpassed \$2 million for the second year in a row, according to the academy's annual tax filings. (Before Mr. Kratz arrived, the figure was about \$300,000 a year.)

That year Ms. Simmons was honored at a Tribeca Ball, and gave a speech praising the academy for giving students a technical foundation. "It's not like you walk through the studios and see a hundred bowls of fruit, or a thousand vases of flowers and cityscapes," she said last week. "There's really interesting stuff there."

Recently, some have begun to wonder if the ambitious president will soon become restless. Mr. Kratz is not, according to Mr. Fischl "the best paid person" in nonprofits. And a slew of arts organizations are currently in flux. But Mr. Kratz said he's not really looking for a museum gig.

"There's only one thing I want more time for, and that's painting," said Mr. Kratz, whose greatest skill as a salesman is appearing mostly to be unlike a salesman.

"At the moment, I'm very happy," he added. "If something amazing came up, of course I'd consider it, but it's hard to imagine something more tailored to what I love doing than this."



TRIBECA BALL 2017

TOWN&COUNTRY

Inside the New York Academy of Art's Star-Studded Tribeca Ball

By Leena Kim Apr 5, 2017

Naomi Watts and Brooke Shields chaired the animal-themed event.





TRIBECA BALL 2017

UNTITLED



NEW YORK ACADEMY OF ART'S TRIBECA BALL 'MAGICAL MENAGERIE' BRINGS AN ART SAFARI TO NYC

April 5, 2017 by The Untitled Magazine

On the night of April 3rd, Naomi Watts, Brooke Shields, Alain Bernard and Christina Di Donna hosted an enchanted evening for the annual Tribeca Ball. Presented by Van Cleef & Arpels, the event featured the theme "Magical Menagerie" and honored artist Will Cotton. Proceeds benefitted the New York Academy of Art. Check out The Untitled Magazine's slideshow of highlights of the artwork featured at Tribeca Ball's "Magical Menagerie".

Along with Shields, Watts and Cotton the art world faces attending the event included NYAA president David Kratz, Tali Lennox, Alan Cumming, Martha Stewart, Gretchen Mol, Donna Karan, AnnaSophia Robb, Indira Cesarine and artist Meredith Ostrom, among many others. Guests donned "animal attire" paired with zoological accessories to fit the theme of the night and the setting which included Cotton's giant paintings and a plethora of circus performers.





At the Tribeca Ball's Magical Menagerie, Naomi Watts, Martha Stewart, Tali Lennox, and More Embrace Their Inner Animals

by Katherine Cusumano
April 4, 2017 1:13 pm

On a recent Monday evening in Tribeca, an eclectic assortment of partygoers gathered outside the New York Academy of Art, queuing around the block as young women in pinafores and cartoonish platform heels doled out cotton candy. Inside, stilt walkers and acrobats flanked the entryway, part of the elaborate scenery decking out the 22nd annual Tribeca Ball. A blowout fundraiser for the NYAA, this year's gala honored artist Will Cotton — thus all the cotton candy and characters seemingly straight out of one of Cotton's own works.

But for all the sugary-sweet details, the patrons of the arts who attended demonstrated an admirable adherence to the night's theme — “A Magical Menagerie” — in their finest animal prints. Feather collars and leopard prints abounded; one woman pranced up the steps in a swallow-print wrap dress, another in a mouse-embroidered shift. (“Thumbelina,” a man murmured appreciatively as she swept past.)

Actress Naomi Watts, one of four co-chairs of the event, wasn't quite sure how best to costume herself according to theme: “I don't really do animal dressing,” she mused, pausing outside a second-floor gallery where she and a friend — her date for the night — were taking in some recent student works. “I thought, ‘How am I going to pull this off?’” (She managed, it seemed, with a periwinkle silk Stella McCartney dress adorned with delicate silver embroidery.) Watts joined the board just under a year ago, cultivating a friendship with artist and honoree Will Cotton over that time — in addition to obtaining one of his drawings. “It's not an original,” she confessed, “but it's a good thing. It's beautiful.”

Cotton, clad in a candy-pink suit and his trademark glasses, was leading studio tours around the upper three floors of the NYAA. An alumnus and lecturer at the art school, Cotton took his first class there in 1987; he started teaching in the early '00s and now offers a semesterly master class in drawing and painting from models.



"This is my place," he said appreciatively, pausing in front of the bar on the third floor. Surrounded by this elaborate menagerie in both art — most of the student work focused on animal representations — and real life — local animal sanctuaries loaned birds who perched in elaborate nests on the fifth floor, to be drawn by artists patiently observing nearby — which animal did Cotton most identify with? "I'm going to say a unicorn," he said, laughing. "They're just nothing but happiness. I like that."

Artist Tali Lennox already had ample time to consider her spirit animal, having just undertaken her first "shamanic drumming spirit animal vision quest" the previous week.

"You don't drink anything or taken anything, and you close your eyes and you have visions," Lennox explained, describing the quest. "You don't necessarily have one animal, but different animals will come to you." Lennox's main animal-guide? A bear. "At the time, the bear felt right," she said. It was comforting. Still, "I don't know if I'm a bear," she added. A steel pan played in the background; in addition to the myriad animals populating the Academy, various instruments, including a theremin, a tiny handheld xylophone, and steel drums, soundtracked the night. Actor Alan Cumming particularly delighted in the theremin — "I love that," he said, imitating its extraterrestrial wail: "Woo-ooo-oo," he sang. (Alan Cumming will also have you know he is his own spirit animal.) Accompanied by his artist husband Grant Shaffer, Cumming emerged from the studio of student artist Eleni Giannopoulou; he had also admired Maya Mason's oversized canvas depicting "all these naked women running at you."

After more than two hours of mingling, cocktails, and art appreciation, dinner finally drew near, and lifestyle guru Martha

Stewart was eager to take her seat. She had just returned from a safari in Botswana with her two grandchildren; the Tribeca Ball's menagerie didn't quite hold up to the African wildlife — "They were much more plentiful," she said, laughing, "but just as beautiful." It was her third safari — previous expeditions brought her to South Africa, Kenya, and Tanzania — and "I wanted to take my grandchildren to see the wild before it disappears." Stewart's inner animal? "Definitely a leopard," she said unhesitatingly. She had seen two on her Botswanan safari.

A man playing a buoyant melody on a handheld xylophone led a short parade of partygoers down the corridor past us. "Oh, is that dinner?" Stewart asked. "Dinner bell, okay!" And with that, she swept down the stairs to take her seat alongside Will Cotton. For the cover of Stewart's magazine's 25th anniversary, Cotton had painted Stewart "all crusted with sugah," she said. Then, seeming to enjoy the sound, she repeated it: "With sugah!"

Sugar certainly abounded at dinner, where NYAA president David Kratz introduced Cotton — "Dr. Cotton," Kratz said (Cotton received an honorary doctorate from the Academy in 2012), "or, as I like to call him, Dr. Cotton Candy." Co-chairs Naomi Watts, Brooke Shields, Christina Di Donna, and Alain Bernard all donned hats and crowns adorned with cupcakes and frosting in celebration of their honoree; across the street at the bar Tutto il Giorno, where the afterparty kicked off as soon as dinner was finished, cannoli and tiny raspberry tarts occupied coffee tables while guests nestled in snug booths. But for some jungle animals, time for hibernation had already come — fed and watered and art-filled, they filed out the door into the cool early April air.



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