

NY CULTURE

Brooklyn Art Is Now Served

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Performance artists Jennifer Catron and Paul Outlaw DAVID X PRUTTING/BFA

Brooklynites of all stripes were in the house Wednesday night at Brooklyn Museum's annual Brooklyn Artists Ball. This year's benefit was emphatically homegrown, celebrating artists who live and work in the borough. Vik Muniz, Wangechi Mutu and Roxy Paine were the evening's artist honorees. They were recipients of the Asher B. Durand Award, named for the artist who in 1855 painted the first piece to join the museum's collection.

"Brooklyn has been my home-away-from-home for more than 15 years," said Ms. Mutu, who is set to have a show at the museum in September. "It's the biggest thrill. I'm so happy to be honored."

Dinner was set among long tables topped with artist-designed installations. Joey Frank's contribution featured disembodied fingers whizzing around a toy train track, over which Mr. Frank's sketches on wooden cutouts functioned as miniature covered bridges.

A row of glass window panes ran the length of Navin June Norling's table—a great conversation starter even if it made it impossible to see who was sitting across from you. On the glass, the artist had painted Brooklyn icons, including the Notorious B.I.G. and Barbra Streisand.

One table was topped with another, in the case of performance and installation artists Jennifer Catron and Paul Outlaw. Known for creating lavish, often food-driven environments, the couple—wearing oversized papier-mâché masks of their own heads—dined above the other guests at a cafe table on a track pulled back and forth by an assistant. The two tossed down treats like rubber ducks, T-shirts and McDonald's sauce packets. At floor level, at Ms. Catron's table setting, sat a Filet-O-Fish sandwich in its cardboard case, untouched. (Thankfully, the guests were served less processed fare: roast lamb with polenta, wild mushroom tarts, fava bean rillettes.)

While mounting exhibitions as varied as the work of John Singer Sargent and El Anatsui—the two shows currently on view—Brooklyn Museum has increasingly devoted its attention to work produced by local artists. This includes more established artists (Mickalene Thomas and Ms. Mutu) as well as emerging ones, such as the relatively-under-the-radar names who are part of the museum's "Raw/Cooked" series.

"We want everyone to feel like we are the home, the institutional home" for visual art in Brooklyn and beyond, said museum director Arnold Lehman. "You know, for a long time, Brooklyn was on the other side of the river

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and now everybody else is on the other side of the river. "

While the event celebrated Brooklyn artists, the hosts weren't ungenerous to visitors. "I know there are people here who don't live in Brooklyn," said borough President Marty Markowitz, who gave a speech with his usual borough-boosting bluster. "But you forgot to say 'yet'! Everyone will be living in Brooklyn. If not you, your kids will be living in Brooklyn. They all know Brooklyn is the place to be."