

# THE GLOBE AND MAIL

ENTERTAINING | STYLE · L7

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An elegant affair must have the right atmosphere. Drs. Lisa Airan and Trevor Born exchange secrets at Bruce Bailey's downtown loft to the tune of David Restivo's jazz classics.

**IT'S MY PARTY** Last weekend, Toronto art collector **BRUCE BAILEY** threw a cocktail party and invited more than 100 friends and celebrities. Herewith some very explicit tips from a veteran host

## The art of the cocktail party

Sometimes one cannot avoid having to entertain. Twenty-five-year-old American photographer Ryan McGinley is showing at your gallery and he wants to visit to see the exhibition. It calls for a celebration. A cocktail party is just the thing — it will enable the largest number of people to meet him in a relatively short time period.

But if something is worth doing, then it must be done well. The first order of business is to remember Grandma's admonitions to always strive to rise above. There is a lot of rising above to be done in Toronto, where books on manners must have been destroyed years ago in some insane *Fahrenheit 451* book-burning purge.

Some essentials that guests anywhere else seem to know but which continue to elude Torontonians include the following:

Always RSVP if asked to do so to assist your host in providing libations and nourishment for you.

Never ask your host if you can bring someone else to his party.

Never ask to be invited.

Never bring extra friends.

Never go on a house tour outside the principal public rooms and invade the privacy of your host by trying to reach his bedroom because you are obsessed with his reputation as a legendary lover.

Arrive exactly at the appointed

hour for a cocktail party and leave before the end stated on the invite.

Do not monopolize your host — if there are 120 guests and the cocktails are for two hours, that means he has precisely one minute per guest not counting the time required to oversee staff.

Hand-write a thank-you note within seven days of the party.

Guests should circulate and try to be scintillating, witty or charming or all three. People could learn a lot from University of Toronto art professor Elizabeth Legge, who always has a *bon mot* or two. Designer George Yabu is another model guest, animated and excited about his new hotel project in London. Jay Smith of CIBC Wood Gundy has some astute contrarian investment advice.

Take your host a small token of thanks, such as olives, mints, figs, marmalade or a magazine on his loves (such as horses or art) rolled up and tied with a blue ribbon.

This should be left on a side table with your calling card affixed. If you want to enter your host's family lore, then you do something over the top in the manner of extravagant prankster and art collector Lionel Newton. He arrives just home from Vienna with an authentic Sacher torte from the Hotel Sacher beribboned and in its own wooden box.

Flowers should never be taken, as that would distract your host to

instruct someone to obtain a vase. Rather, flowers are given after an event in thanks, or before in the European tradition to assist your host in creating a special environment for his party.

The key ingredient to the success of any party is the handpicked guest list. In the art world, this is a veritable minefield — my mistake could result in the loss of a leg or worse. The only group that could possibly be more difficult would be the Welsh Cob & Pony Society, where the members regularly cut one another off in the carriage class at the Royal Winter Fair.

The dilemma for the art party host is that the guest artist wants to be the centre of attention and yet every other artist will want to talk about themselves and their work. One solution would be to just have the guest artist. But you decide to include some local artists — they all look like they could use some good food and drink.

So you invite a group of younger photographers in the age range of the guest of honour as well as some mid-career artists such as Stephen Andrews and his partner filmmaker John Greyson and photographer and filmmaker Bruce LaBruce and some late-career artists to add in the mix. You include some collectors, a few museum people, a fashionista or two like Jeanne Becker, a 17-year-old or three to represent the future, like

photographer Alex Morley, a few old friends who have nothing whatsoever to do with the art world and a bond trader (as you have never met a bond trader that you did not like).

And you hope you have achieved balance. Nothing is more deadly than a party with people all from one background or group.

Then you move on to subsidiary matters. Success is in the details.

For food, you decide fresh Maritime oysters are a must, so you book a slucker (Rodney's Oysters) and two huge smoked salmon from Kristapsons. Next you book chef Steven Sainsbury as he is a friend of the guest of honour and does wonderful food. With his help, you decide on six savouries and one sweet — custard and berry tart that will be served to signal the end of the party (a trick I learned from an exquisite cocktail party given by the Aga Khan at his summer home in Sardinia).

For drink, you decide on a full bar staffed by two experienced bartenders. If you have never heard the words Negroni or Caipirinha, you are not qualified to be behind the bar!

Music is important and since nothing is more elegant than live music in this age of iPod and Muzak, you decide on pianist David Restivo to play jazz classics.

For flowers, you turn to Brad Currie at Fleur who starts to

chortle when you request gardenias floating in water bowls for your bathrooms. Ahem, Mr. Currie, and what additional thoughts do you have? Okay, orchids. It is just reflection in a hallway mirror. Just enough to add some special magic, but not too much — as Mrs. Dalloway taught us.

For wait staff, one need look no further than William Field & Associates, which has good looking, efficient professionals and can handle all manner of dinner and glassware rentals if required.

In the middle of the party, you look around and think that this is a group that could more than stand up among the best that New York or London has to offer. Vivacious Jeanne Parkin is an oracle of contemporary art history, perspicacious AGO trustee and MoMA photography council member Carol Appel knows her stuff, critic AGO chief curator Dennis Reid and curator Peggy Gale add depth to any gathering. Actor Albert Schmitz, television host Evan Solomon and his model-citizen wife, the food bank activist Tammy Quinn, are holding forth. Artists Geoffrey James, John Massey and Michael Snow seem to mesmerize our guest, Patricia MacKinnon Anderson, who was the It Girl at Queen's University in my salad days, is looking radiant. She solved the acoustical problem at Roy Thomson Hall and is now

on the board of the foundation for the Hospital for Sick Children. Her debonair husband Jamie Anderson, the investment banker and choice for Canada's corporate elite, is enjoying the oysters.

Toronto's Dr. Trevor Born and his glamorous New York girlfriend Dr. Lisa Airan, another It Girl if ever there was, and who is featured in a fashion spread in Vogue magazine, are both charming and easy on the eyes. Roz Ivey is looking sexy with a Barbarella hairdo on the arm of boyfriend Toronto Life's John MacFarlane. Beautiful actress Jennifer Holden exchanges Winnipeg tales with that lovely party girl Whitney Westwood. You observe that Krystyne Griffith knows how to circulate and do her bit as does her husband's cousin Dr. Virginia Griffin, the doyenne of any domain she inhabits.

In fact, this swell crowd would actually blow other art worlds out of the water with their pizzazz. The only problem with Canada and the arts is that there are too few of us wonderful Canadians to provide the support that our remarkable culture deserves.

Bruce Bailey is the owner of Bailey Fine Arts gallery in Toronto.

If you're planning a special party, or have been to one recently, let us know. Call 416-595-5631 or email style@globeandmail.ca

### ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS

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- > Toronto's Dr. Trevor Born and his glamorous New York girlfriend Dr. Lisa Airan, another It Girl if ever there was, and who is featured in a fashion spread in Vogue magazine, are both charming and easy on the eyes.
- > Photo caption: An elegant affair must have the right atmosphere. Drs. Lisa Airan and Trevor Born exchange secrets at Bruce Bailey's downtown loft to the tune of David Restivo's jazz classics