

Lehrer-Graiwer, Sarah, and Hassay, Jeff, "Ball of Confusion," *Artforum.com*, February 5, 2012

ARTFORUM

Ball of Confusion

LOS ANGELES 02.05.12



Left: [Performance of Kathryn Andrews's *Fork Hunt*](#). (Photo: Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer) Right: Artist David Lamelas, LAXART director Lauri Firstenberg, and Getty Research Institute curator Glenn Phillips. (Photo: Wire Images)

SEETHING WITH A SORDID HISTORY both on and off the silver screen to rival the wildest passages of Hollywood Babylon, Beverly Hills's Greystone Mansion oozes noir from every moribund pore of its cold slate walls. With its turrets, peaked roofs, grand vistas, and fifty-plus rooms covering 46,000 square feet, it is the stuff of Hollywood-style fairy tales (albeit one of those particularly nightmarish ones tainted from its start with the spilt blood of the mansion's owner, who was found murdered alongside his male secretary eighty-three years ago). Since then, the estate's scandals have multiplied on the big screen in tons of movies that have been set at Greystone: Jack Nicholson played the devil here, Daniel Day-Lewis psychotically ranted about milkshakes, Batman scolded the Boy Wonder, and the Dude procured a new rug.

And yet for all of the storied sundowns that have ushered nightfall over Greystone, we'd wager that none has embodied the make-believe magic and haunted-house drama of the place as extravagantly and exuberantly as the Ball of Artists last Saturday night, produced by Richard Massey and organized by LAXART as the epic, high-budget culmination to the Performance and Public Art Festival component of the Getty's "Pacific Standard Time." Despite its hokey title, the ball was a night to remember. If Caligula's ghost had materialized doing pirouettes on a brontosaurus, he would not have seemed out of place.

We arrived by shuttle bus at 6 PM, just before the hoity-toity crowds but after the ultra-exclusive VIP previewers. A pair of dolled-up, Alice in Wonderland—

Lehrer-Graiwer, Sarah, and Hassay, Jeff, "Ball of Confusion," *Artforum.com*, February 5, 2012



Left: Holy Shit band member and collector Jim Abrams. (Photo: Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer) Right: Artists Ming Wong and Piero Golia with REDCAT assistant curator Aram Moshayedi. (Photo: Wire Images)

type girls (appearing as silly and beautiful as a teenage dream) greeted wide-eyed guests who seemed confused and lost as soon as they stepped onto the driveway's cobblestones. Greystone's atmospheric, dimly lit halls quickly filled with countless black ties, gorgeous gowns, fancy pants, and, above all, deep pockets. It was a pleasure and relief to find the familiar friendly faces of so many hometown artists among the tuxes and plunging necklines: from Laura Owens and Edgar Bryan to Brendan Fowler, Piero Golia, Allen Ruppensberg, Stanya Kahn, Dawn Kasper, Ry Rocklen, Andrea Fraser, Liz Glynn, Ann Magnuson, and many more than were possible to keep track of. Was everyone here? Lets just say the entire event was totally disorienting—in the best possible way, like chugging cough syrup in a hot air balloon.

Everyone was there to experience the incredible surplus of art (some installed, some performed, and much of it responding specifically to Greystone's history) crammed into every niche and boudoir throughout the mansion and its surrounding grounds. An intergenerational range of twenty-two LA artists participated, from revered old hands like Morgan Fisher, Charles Gaines, and David Lamelas to established talents like Kerry Tribe and Jedediah Caesar to more recent art-school grads like Eamonn Fox and Alex Israel. Foldout maps indicated the location of each artist's contribution without revealing what to expect or, in some cases, even what to look for. Glenn Kaino's *The Nothing Happening*, for example, eluded us and everyone else we talked to; its supersecret location made it totally inaccessible, but then again, the two seconds of hushed intrigue and speculative rumors it stoked were undoubtedly more interesting than the poker game that purportedly took place behind its closed doors.

Eamon Ore-Giron's *Purple Haze* set a theatrical ambience by tinting clouds of fog violet around the mansion's entry. Kathryn Andrews had two misbehaving,

Lehrer-Graiwer, Sarah, and Hassay, Jeff, "Ball of Confusion," *Artforum.com*, February 5, 2012



Left: Los Master Plus performing cumbia as part of Eduardo Sarabia's installation. (Photo: Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer) Right: My Barbarian with artist Ann Magnuson. (Photo: Wire Images)

begoggled clowns nonchalantly spinning, dropping, breaking, and sweeping stacks and stacks of white plates in a jazz freak-out kind of rhythm. My Barbarian "activated" their video installation by performing a pointed song about "upward mobility." Shana Lutker's rapidly spinning light sculpture in the Solarium was like a hypnotic lighthouse beacon. Down the hall, Mungo Thomson staged an exquisite orchestral rendition of cricket field recordings. Scott Benzel accompanied operatic singers fronting a savagely loud rock band playing covers of Iggy and the Stooges. Patrick Ballard serviced a long line waiting to experience his extra charming, private, one-on-one puppet show complete with smoke bombs and a glove with tiny feet for fingers.

The performances bled into one another as hundreds of guests swirled around, buzzing about what had just blown their mind, what to avoid, what to check out next—all the while looking over each other's shoulders for the all-too-rare tray of hors d'oeuvres. Eduardo Sarabia's installation in the mansion's underground bowling alley was a highlight and crowd favorite: Guests sloshed on his potent trademark tequila could get their portraits taken in an old-timey photo studio or shake and grind to the irresistible cumbia pumped out by the amazing Los Master Plus, who had come from Guadalajara to light everyone's fire.

Out on the majestically oversize balcony, the whole ball came into focus as Julian Hoeber's enormous red klieg searchlight communicated in Morse code with a distant green pulse signaling back, Batman style, from the roof of Soho House a couple miles away. As we looked upon the glittering city below while partaking in the excessive quantities of every kind of top-shelf alcohol, the sight of a single green light blinking from afar recast the entire scene as a Great Gatsby affair, its collective energy swelling with an unusually joyful if noirish glow.

Lehrer-Graiwer, Sarah, and Hassay, Jeff, "Ball of Confusion," *Artforum.com*, February 5, 2012



Left: Dealer Honor Fraser with collector Stavros Niarchos. (Photo: Wire Image) Right: Artists Julian Hoeber and Mungo Thomson. (Photo: Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer)

A bit after ten the festivities started winding down and happily soused revelers stumbled back to the bus. As the blaring cacophony of frenetic, overlapping music decrescendoeed to eventual stillness, Wolfgang Puck was seen heading home and Justin Beal's sculptures of cucumbers frozen in ice began melting away into the puddle of yesterday's party. The night came to a fittingly absurd conclusion when a park ranger with a 1970s porn mustache and ill-fitting clothes walked past us announcing, in all seriousness, that the "party was over" and could "everyone please keep their clothes on." Something about that announcement ringing through the marbled halls of Greystone Mansion made it seem, for just an instant, like everything in the universe might make sense after all.

— Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer and Jeff Hassay



Left: Artist Alex Israel with Lauri Firstenberg. (Photo: Wire Image) Right: Artists Hans-Peter Thomas (aka Bara), Kathryn Andrews, and Mark A. Rodriguez. (Photo: Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer)