

Hodge, Shelby, "With dancing nudes summoning aliens and tequila flowing, Ballroom Marfa benefit rocked,"
Culture Map Houston, June 2, 2012



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BY SHELBY HODGE

What happens in Marfa doesn't necessarily stay in Marfa and that's just the way supporters of Ballroom Marfa like it. Consider their recent fundraising romp with an international coterie of 165 art patrons, who gathered in this West Texas burg for "A Weekend with Aliens and Astronauts."

By the time the three days of dinners and entertainments concluded, the event had raised \$250,000 for the nine-year-old Ballroom Marfa, a center for the exploration of contemporary art and culture. As the name would suggest, the center is housed in a 1927 dance hall.

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Throughout Memorial Day weekend, guests were entertained at outer-space themed events hosted by Ballroom Marfa cofounders Fairfax Dorn and Virginia Lebermann of Austin as well as board members screenwriter Nancy Sanders, Austin's Suzanne Deal Booth, founder of The Friends of Heritage Preservation, and Houstonian Sabrina Franzheim, designer and founder of the Marfa International School. (Houstonians will be familiar with Booth for her funding of the James Turrell Skyspace at Rice University.)

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Astronauts delivering flowers were part of the inspired entertainments.

Courtesy of Ballroom Marfa

visit to Prada Marfa to a benefit concert featuring indie-rock band Cansei de Ser Sexy (CSS).

Centerpiece of the weekend was the other-worldly dinner piloted by Jens Hoffmann, director of the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco and co-curator of the 2011 Istanbul Biennial. The evening began at dusk with a performance choreographed by LA-based artist Kathryn Andrews in conjunction with composer Scott Benzel in which a handful of nude performers romped through an open field summoning alien beings from distant planets.

Then it was on to dinner, a feast created by San Francisco chef and founder of *Dinner Discussion*, Leif Hedendal. Each element in the dinner setting — everything from plates and glasses to table linens and table decor — was created by an artist in a nod to Ballroom Marfa's mission to promote emerging and under-recognized talent. Next stop was artist Julie Speed's studio for the Extraterrestrial After-Party where the unconventional art patrons danced late into the night to the sounds of Chris Avitabile and DJ Juan Capistran.

Guests came from as far away as Hong Kong and Rome for the weekend art romp including artists Matthew Day Jackson, Simone Leigh, Rashid Johnson, Charles Ruger and Leo Villareal; plus Art Basel Magazine editor in chief Sue Hostetler, Don Mullins, Tina Walls, Marianne Boesky and John Wotowicz.