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PEOPLE

Duke Riley, Olek, and FAILE Dream Up Glitter Explosions and Yarn Bombs at the Brooklyn Artists Ball

Sarah Cascone, Thursday, April 16, 2015



Hellbent Hooker.

Glitter party poppers unleashed at Duke Riley's table at the Brooklyn Artists Ball. Photo: Liz Ligon, courtesy the Brooklyn Museum.

What: The [Brooklyn Museum](#)'s Fifth Annual [Brooklyn Artists Ball: Honoring Arnold Lehman](#) (see [The One Event You Must Do in New York This Week: Brooklyn Artists Ball](#)).

Where: The Beaux-Arts Court on the Brooklyn Museum's third floor, with a dance party held afterward in the main lobby.

When: April 15, 2015.

Why: The evening served as a send-off for the museum's director of 18 years, Arnold Lehman, who will retire in June (see [Brooklyn Museum's Longtime Director Arnold Lehman Retires](#)). If there was one takeaway from the evening, it was that Lehman seems to inspire genuine delights in his colleagues, based on a video featuring giddy testimonials from everyone from Jeffrey Deitch to museum security guards. Artists [Takashi Murakami](#), [Kiki Smith](#), and the late [Jean-Michel Basquiat](#) were also honored.

Who: Among the boldfaced named in attendance were Chirlane McCray and Mayor Bill de Blasio, kind of. "He's here in spirit," insisted the first lady in the evening's opening remarks, about her husband. "If you're an artist in Brooklyn, you know the museum's got your back," she added—a claim that was supported by the very room itself, lavishly decorated by eight Brooklyn artists/artist collectives, including [FAILE](#), [Duke Riley](#), [Dustin Yellin](#), and [Jen Catron and Paul Outlaw](#).

[Olek](#) yarn-bombed her tables (plus a number of obliging actors, who were circulating throughout the evening) with crocheted woolen tablecloths and an array of yarn-covered skeletons, chairs, and stuffed rats, while [Swoon](#) recreated in miniature her massive exhibition held in the Beaux-Arts Court space last year (see [Garbage Bouquets and Beautiful Shipwrecks at Brooklyn Museum Swoon Exhibition](#)).

[Kehinde Wiley](#), [Cindy Sherman](#), [Mickalene Thomas](#), and honorees [Murakami](#) and [Smith](#) were also on hand, as well as [Creative Time](#)'s Anne Pasternak, gallerist Marianne Boesky, and former Metropolitan Museum director Philippe de Montebello (artnet News happened to speak to the man himself last fall, about a book he wrote—see the story about [That Time Philippe de Montebello Was in a Florence Flood](#)).

The Moment: A standing ovation for Lehman came following remarks from arts benefactor and Brooklyn Museum chairwoman Elizabeth Sackler (see [Elizabeth Sackler Named Brooklyn Museum's First Chairwoman](#)), who thanked Lehman for opening the museum's [Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art](#). ("Our motto is equal pay, equal wall space!") She also called him "the perfect man" and encouraged guests to take home one of the many Lehman cardboard cut-outs in the room. The extended applause was punctuated by explosions, courtesy of Riley, who had stocked his table with glitter-filled party poppers that went off

periodically throughout the night. It seemed wonderfully festive, until artnet News spotted glitter-coated guests in line for the bathroom.

Hovering above it all were Catron and Outlaw, perched atop a cherry picker in the center of the room that spun throughout the evening as the duo dangled, in succession, a giant block of cheese, a roasted pig, a fish, and a chicken leg. Their vision, Catron told artnet news, was the [Land of Cockaigne](#), a medieval myth about a land of plenty and excess depicted by [Pieter Brueghel the Elder](#) in his painting of the same name.

"It's a parody pointing out the culture of excess when people are suffering," she added. Though it may seem like pointed commentary in a rapidly gentrifying borough—at a \$1,000-a-plate dinner, no less—the artists insist the piece is all in good fun. "We make fun of it, but we live within it," admitted Outlaw.

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