

THE KNOCKTURNAL

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On The Scene: 2016 Chashama Gala

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By Benjamin Schmidt

Hosted at the former Conde Nast headquarters in Times Square, we spent time at the transformed space for the 2016 Chashama Arts Gala. Check out our notes below!

On June 8th, 2016, on the 4th floor of 4 Times Square, the entire floor was transformed into an adventurous and seemingly endless art-driven utopia, all proceeds benefiting the Chashama organization, which is designed to give artists space to live, show, and create. Guests included Anita Durst, Allison Green, Suzanne Sunshine, and many more. While deep in the circuit that was the Chashama annual Gala, we started chatting with a guest who told us they loved attending Chashama events because they were a space they could be “completely free”. It was a concise one-liner

THE KNOCKTURNAL

that captured the pleasure of entering a Chashama event, be it a simple gallery opening or a full floor bash at the former Conde Nast building in Times Square like this one, it transports you to a devoted, cheeky, almost utopian space of acceptance and community. With over 200 artists joining industry icons, patrons of business, patrons of the arts, and more, the lines are completely blurred between what it means to be a guest or be an artist. With many performance artists making their way through the crowd, Chashama's approach reveals the great comedy of life, as the unusual becomes the normal, curiosity takes over. Done right (and in good quantity) it has the power to make one reconsider their own perception of art.

Chashama has stayed true to its duty for a long time, it's aim unwavering: provide space for artists to live, show work, and create new work at a rate that is competitive and economical. In fact, at the gala, Durst Organization in collaboration with X revealed the concept for a Gowanus Canal project that will for-purpose provide space for artists. Chashama's special attention to conceptual art and performance art is unique in a field of providers of subsidized space. These less examined mediums still deserve space to practice, and allow them to flourish. A physical example: the interactive floral creation, in which guests made contributions to three different floral arrangements: one for yourself, one for a love, and one for a stranger. We found

THE KNOCKTURNAL

ourselves revisiting this particular work several times to see its dynamic nature. It's hard to contain the event, every room was loaded with art, from a serving kitchen arranged to celebrate life, to a back room with a very dramatic photoshoot taking place, various bars tucked in libraries, live bands playing all around, dark tunnels, massive music-making machines, and so much more. Artists included Cannon Hersey, Takashio Hisayasu, Aaron Taylor Kuffner, Lit Lagreze, Tanya Minhas, Muffinhead, Caleb Nussear, SeeMe, Sir Shadow, Yana Schnitzler, Sam Silbiger, Monica Rose Song, Steinway & Sons, Debbie Stamos, and many more.

Chashama's lead woman, Anita Durst, was found near the entrance of the gala, in a dress made of wax, illuminated by lit candles around the dress (by Flambeaux Fire). She was all smiles, thrilled to be involved, thrilled to see everyone. The evening was arranged to celebrate Dustin Yellin, a visual artist living and working in Brooklyn, New York. In the past year, Yellin's seminal Psychogeographies have been commissioned for public exhibition at Kennedy Center in Washington DC and Lincoln Center in New York City for the New York City Ballet Art Series. Beyond this, Yellin has his own arts collective based in Brooklyn, Pioneer Works. Live music, a large spread of foods, and plenty of art to see, Chashama's effort is already the stuff of legend, and the potential remains unbound.