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Every Social Season Has Its Vortex

A Night Out With Bob Colacello

By JACOB BERNSTEIN MAY 9, 2014



Bob Colacello with Lise Evans at the Whitney Museum's American art award dinner, one of several stops he made on one night. Credit Danny Kim for The New York Times

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Bob Colacello has a saying, whenever he is asked about his sexuality: "I believe in going out, not coming out." And that is just what the Vanity Fair special correspondent and one of the city's most photographed party animals did Wednesday night.

The first stop was a cocktail party at the Monkey Bar for the movie producer Jerry Bruckheimer and his new book, "When Lightning Strikes: Four Decades of Filmmaking." Up walked Peggy Siegal, the movie screenings queen, bringing along Gugu Mbatha-Raw, the star of the new movie "Belle."

Mr. Colacello admitted to the young actress that he had not seen it. Nor, for that matter, almost any of Mr. Bruckheimer's enormous action movies.

"Last year I went to the Vanity Fair Oscar party and Ed Ruscha said to me, 'Do you see any movies?' " Mr. Colacello recalled. "I said, 'I saw the Diana Vreeland documentary.' But I think the dialogue is better at New York dinner parties."

Soon after, Shelley Wanger, an editor at Knopf, walked down the stairs. Mr. Colacello gave her a kiss and thanked her for her help republishing his Warhol biography, "Holy Terror," earlier this year.

He ran into Princess Firyal of Jordan, who wanted to know what happened to her invitation to his annual birthday party. (Mr. Colacello turned 67 on Thursday.) He explained that she hadn't been snubbed, but that he and his usual co-hosts, Aby Rosen and Samantha Boardman, decided to cancel it. The reason? "There's too many events this week," he said. "It's been a bit much."

This social season has been particularly busy for Mr. Colacello, hosting no fewer than four benefits, including the Pioneer Works gala last Sunday, which raised \$750,000, and the Fabergé Big Egg Hunt auction at Sotheby's. And now, having his 1,164th photo taken for PatrickMcMullan.com, he was due downtown to yet another gala: the Whitney Museum's American Art Award dinner, for which he was an honorary co-chair.

Never mind that there's a book he should be writing (a follow-up to "Ronnie and Nancy," his 2004 biography of the Reagans) and an auction of his art and memorabilia (much of it from the Warhol era) he's planning for Paddle8. Mr. Colacello headed for the exit, climbed into a town car he borrowed from Ms. Siegal and zipped down to the Whitney gala at Highline Stages.

The walls were covered in tinfoil ("like at the Factory," he noted) and art-world luminaries were everywhere, including Jane Holzer, Lisa Yuskavage and Dorothy Lichtenstein. Mr. Colacello took his seat between Vito Schnabel and the Whitney trustee Lise Evans, but he didn't stay down for long.

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In between the better-than-rubber chicken and cheesecake, he made his way over to Larry Gagosian's table. "Thanks for having my book in your bookshop," Mr. Colacello said.

"It's selling, it's selling," Mr. Gagosian said.

Then he greeted Jeff Koons, who whispered something in his ear. At some point, Reinaldo Herrera waltzed over and chatted about their mutual friend Lee Radziwill.

"I had lunch with her Monday," Mr. Colacello said.

By 10:30 p.m., with his 1,172nd photo taken, Mr. Colacello hitched a ride with his friends Howard and Nancy Marks to Central Park South, where Blaine Trump was wrapping up a dinner party for Mr. Bruckheimer.

A few guests remained, and Mr. Colacello sat opposite the producer's wife, Linda Bruckheimer, and Ms. Siegal.

"Do you want something to drink, Bobala," Ms. Trump asked.

"Maybe a ginger ale," said Mr. Colacello, who has been sober for many years.

The conversation turned to politics and the Obamas. Mr. Colacello, who generally votes Republican, said that part of why he doesn't admire the first couple is that they go out too little.

"They're like the Bushes," said Mr. Colacello, who has long argued that with politicians, "what seems superficial often reveals deeper truths."

"They have dinner every night with each other, the daughters and the mother-in-law and Valerie Jarrett," he said. "People want to be invited to the White House. They want the president and the first lady to show up for their charities."

Moments later, he made his way to the elevator, headed down to Black Market restaurant on Avenue A to meet up with Vito Schnabel again and ring in his own birthday with more soft drinks and more conversation.