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## GalleristNY

### *Celebrating Feminism (and Getting Drunk on Mead) at the Brooklyn Museum Gala*



That's me! With Nate Freeman, Liz Magic Laser, Cori Kresge and Michael Wiener. Courtesy PMC

Center's permanent installation *The Dinner Party*, wore bright green and pink and stuck out of the crowd.

When I introduced myself as a reporter to Toni Morrison, she responded with a simple and curt, "No." That should have been the end of that conversation, but I explained that I was reading the galley of her forthcoming novel, *Home*, and that I had 20 pages left to go.

"Oh!" she said, and her face lit up. "You're gonna *love* it. The last 20 pages are great." People were huddled around Ms. Morrison, who sat in a museum wheelchair and kept her gray dreadlocks tucked beneath a black fedora. They were snapping her picture with iPhones and looking a bit dumbfounded about being in the same room as her. She didn't exactly smile for the cameras.

Standing right next to her was Lucy Lippard, the art critic who curated the first show at the first gallery to open in Soho back in 1968. She's since decamped for New Mexico. She was crashing with her son, who lives in her old loft on Prince Street.

"It's very funny," she said of returning to New York (she makes it out here once a year). "It's all extremely familiar, like going back to the life I had for so many years, and at the same time everything's different. That and this closed and this is there now and so forth. I keep asking, 'What happened?'"

The Brooklyn Museum's annual Artists Ball gala was held on the fifth anniversary of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art on the museum's fourth floor. The lobby was filled with more than a few intimidating presences for the occasion. Gloria Steinem stood a bit hidden behind the press check-in and had a long line of admirers waiting to hold court with her; Marisa Tomei wore a gold chain that read BROOKLYN spelled out in cursive and said that feminist art "touches your soul"; Judy Chicago, the artist behind the Sackler

Across the room, the artist Liz Magic Laser was posing for photos. She was glamorous and wore a flowing dark blue dress. A gaggle of photographers had swarmed in on her and was snapping away.

“Can I have your name?” one of them asked and she told him, but he squinted in confusion.

She let out a small sigh. “Liz. Magic. Laser. My middle name is m-a-g-i-c. My last name is laser.”

“Oh, the acuity of it all,” said her friend, the actor Michael Wiener, watching with a smile.

“It’s my real name,” Ms. Laser said. “Elizabeth Magic Laser is on my birth certificate. Magic, my father put in there. He thought my birth was magical—slash—I might be a rock star. Or maybe it was the vestiges of the hippie days. But the last name was already Laser because my grandfather passed through Ellis Island in 1905. Lazarovich, a Lithuanian name.”

A loud hush sound could be heard coming from the other room. Arnold Lehman, director of the Brooklyn Museum, was at a podium and trying to introduce Elizabeth Sackler, for whom the Sackler Center is named.

“I really would appreciate a few more minutes of quiet,” he said. “This year’s ball coincides with the fifth anniversary of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center, and I truly encourage you to visit it tonight. *Shush*. A true story: when Elizabeth asked me if I wanted *The Dinner Party*, I thought she meant the book she had edited on *The Dinner Party*. I, of course, said yes. *Shush*.”

Everyone vaguely stopped chatting long enough for Ms. Sackler to announce that her family has created a large endowment for the museum to create a permanent position for a curator of feminist art at the Sackler Center. She had not even finished the sentence before the room burst into applause. No other American museum has such a position. Ms. Sackler thanked the audience for quieting down.

As part of the night’s dinner, the museum asked young female artists to create centerpieces for the tables in the banquet hall. The painter Natalie Frank had propped portraits of people up on metal poles; on the back of each one was a mirror. Kate Gilmore piled up photographs of peoples’ feet. Malia Jensen’s table had big white blocks of sugar with breasts carved into the top of them. Ms. Laser adorned her table with honeydew melon halves that had cow’s horns sticking out of them. She recruited her friend Mr. Wiener to play the role of a waiter. I went over to the table and he plucked out the horns from one of the melon halves. He poured liquid from a bottle of mead into each horn and gave a toast about the theoretical meaning of honey and wine.

“With this nectar,” Mr. Wiener began and everything after that was a little dim.