Flashback to 150 years ago, and the Financial District in lower Manhattan was a crime-riddled slum known as Five Points, recognized today as the setting for the 2002 film Gangs of New York. The Down Town Association, a members-only club founded in 1859, graced the southernmost edge of the neighborhood and stood as a beacon for refinement amid the chaos.

Last night, the Art Production Fund held their annual spring gala at the iconic venue, keeping in mind the building's history while embracing its Gilded Age elegance. Inscribed on the invitation was the theme "Gangs of New York," with instructions to dress "on the fringe." No one was quite sure what that meant, and they were not really supposed to. "We like to leave some room for interpretation," said APF co-founder Yvonne Force Villareal. Many took it to mean on the fringes of society—one straight-laced businessman donned an eye patch, and a self-described Upper East Side socialite wore marijuana leaf earrings—but it also paid homage to Proenza Schouler's Jack McCollough and Lazaro Hernandez, the night's fashion honorees, who's last collection relied heavily on fringe.
"It was a launch point for the party's design, meant to highlight the Romanesque revival interiors," explained Kara Mann, the creative director behind the evening's affair.

The art world honoree was Israeli-born, New York-based artist Haim Steinbach. For the gala, he created a sculpture that filled an entire room, taking the form of a ceiling-height shelf, displaying a single pair of Proenza Schouler leather fringe shoes. "I engage objects, I respond to objects, I make stories with them," Steinbach explained. The artist has long used shelves as a symbol in his practice. "This structure is reflective of the space," he added.

The evening began with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres served by Charlie Bird, and some guests got temporary tattoos designed by the artist Sean Landers. Soon, everyone was ushered upstairs for dinner, where the mix of fashion, social, and art world luminaries spoke to the esteem of the honorees and APF: Richard Phillips descended the stairs arm-in-arm with Bettina Prentice; Lauren Santo-Domingo, Arden Wohl, Athena Calderone, and Genevieve Jones mingled with artists Cindy Sherman, Lisa Yuskavage, and Elizabeth Peyton, as well as gallerists Lucy Chadwick, Andrea Rosen, and Dominique Levy. Liv Tyler made an appearance. When it came time for speeches, APF's director Casey Fremont Crowe, co-founder Doreen Remen, and Villareal stood on a platform in matching Proenza fringe heels, singing the honorees' praises, and forced to pause for cheers more times than we could count.