



Scene City

# Downtown At the Hoedown

By BOB MORRIS

AS in fashion, there are only so many themes for a party. So when the Art Production Fund, a nonprofit public art organization, gave an urban hoedown on Monday, guests had their outfits ready. While the setting sun blazed over New Jersey, art-loving supporters sauntered up to a warehouse on the West Side Highway near Houston Street. They were as excited as children going to a school square dance.

"Wide open spaces and new frontiers, that's what we're all about," said Yvonne Force Villareal, a founder of the art fund. She wore a black bandanna, black Dolce & Gabbana swing skirt and cowboy boots by Marc Jacobs, a chairman of the evening.

Just as at a rodeo or county fair (but without the children to justify all the silliness), there were booths for being tattooed and photographed. And a mechanical bull reminded guests brave enough to ride it that a bull market can always throw you.

Rachel Feinstein, the artist, wore a schoolmarm dress. "It's by Louis Vuitton, but it's very 'Little House on the Prairie,'" she said. Aby Rosen, another chairman, wore a red western shirt, and Samantha Boardman, his wife, wore a gingham dress. Tobias Meyer, the handsome, lean Sotheby's auctioneer, looked like a Marlboro Man via "Brokeback Mountain" as he hugged his spouse, Mark Fletcher, the art dealer. The couple, big guns in the world of art, not horse trading, were two of the honorees.

"Mark's from Tulsa and part Cherokee," Mr. Meyer said. "So he's perfect for me because in Germany, where I grew up, we really romanticize the American West."

So do some New Yorkers, of course, but only up to a point, as Joanne Casullo, a Whitney trustee who grew up in Dallas, explained: "New Yorkers love Texans, politics aside, of course. Everyone loves to put their boots on and let their hair down."

Indeed, as the night rolled on, the crowd grew rowdier.

After being forcefully herded past bales of hay to sit down for an organic barbecue dinner at long banquet tables, guests talked through speeches, including one by John Currin about Kiki Smith, another honoree. They grabbed daisies from jars and stuck them into their hair and lapels. They drank whiskey shots from cowboy-boot glasses and rushed the stage for a twangy performance by Ryan Bingham, the Oscar-winning singer. And they dug into apple crumble like ranch hands (but not pigs at a trough) before heading for the exits in the mass stampede that comes at a benefit's end.

As guests took their Marc Jacobs goody bags and swung them around like lariats, Lisa Yuskavage, the artist, clutched two potted plants she'd grabbed from a display. "I just love succulents," she said.

Other guests leered at a posse of sexy young men and women, scantily attired in vests, chaps and bordello-like mini dresses as they danced something that was definitely not a Texas two-step.

"Yee-haw!" one guest yelled on the street. "Taxi!" another yelled.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEIDRE SCHOOF FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



**HAT TIP** The Art Production Fund had an urban hoedown, honoring people like Tobias Meyer, right, a Sotheby's auctioneer, and his spouse, Mark Fletcher, far right, an art dealer. The performers known as the Bummys, above, judged the appearance of guests.



**DO-SI-DO** Kiki Smith, above far left, was also honored at the event, which Samantha Boardman, above center, and Aby Rosen, above right, helped organize. Mr. Meyer, left center, and Jeff Koons listened to speeches over a meal that included organic barbecue, whiskey shots and apple crumble.