

## The partygoers

# Making it in the social scene

By SHELLEY EICHENHORN

Ever wonder how some partygoers manage to wear the right clothes, say the right things and appear at all the right social and cultural galas in the Oakland County social whirl?

Well, it doesn't just happen. It takes a lot of planning to appear natural, charming, sophisticated, poised and as one active in this circuit put it, "to make yourself pleasant."

"Some people even manage to have a good time once in a while," she says.

Yet having a good time is just one of the reasons more than 300 regulars, comprised of automotive hierarchy and listers from the Michigan Social Register and Social Secretary, frequent this scene.

According to one active Birmingham hostess, at a benefit, some may be interested in helping a worthy cause—along with their own at times.

Often these partygoers are trying to better a husband or wife in business by building social status and the right nucleus of friends.

"In our town, where your husband is in business is as important, or maybe more important, than a listing in the social register, of course depending on the hostess' mind."

Each year, the average couple in this whirl might attend eight to 10 large, prestige benefits like the Cranbrook Art Academy gala, Knights of Charity, or Cinderella balls, costing at least \$125 an evening.

When organizing a benefit, getting the right couple to be chairpersons is a key to success.

They should have a wide sphere of friends who can be called upon to be committee heads.

The wife of a corporate executive works very well because there is an organization behind her.

Also, if the wife of a powerful corporate head is chairing the benefit, that may mean all underlings better show up.

Along with helping the executive couple's social image, participation in charitable events can help brighten the corporate public image.

When NOT attending or chairing a large benefit, members of this social group can be found at an average of four private parties a month, often held at country clubs or Meadow Brook Hall, which is considered more elegant than the Ritz-Carlton.

The opening of the opera and symphony are other occasions when it's desirable to be included in the right pre and post parties.

Who's included in these and other events is up to the hostess who sends invitations. In many cases, to those she figures will do her husband some good.

With the popularity of tennis parties, a hostess must also consider a guest's athletic ability. Then, it's not

so much who you are, but how well you play that determines whether an invitation will be extended.

One invitation is out to the usual gala, a scurry of undercover intelligence begins, aimed at scoring a social success.

Telephone start buzzing as wives try to find out what "everyone" is wearing.

BUT, IT'S not enough to know what's being worn (long or short dresses this year). It's important to find out who's invited so one doesn't wear a dress most of the guests have already seen.

Once the clothing question is settled, party intelligence gathering serves to arrange rides—which can be a problem if the couple you're going with isn't invited to the same party.

In that case, you either get them invited or just meet at the main event. What most couples must gather this and other information bit or must there are some who manage more easily.

Some husbands come home from work with the guest list, especially when the wife is business related.

The list makes the usual husband-wife briefing much easier. Pronouncements are worked out and a backlog of data collected on each couple is refreshed so it can be used at the party.

The idea is to make light, sophisticated, seemingly personal conversation, a put above the usual hackneyed small-talk about the weather.

"My husband and I remind each other where a person went to college, which party we first met at, making it all seem more natural," explains an experienced Rochester partygoer.

WHILE THE guest list may be an advantage for some, it's a necessity for others. One very prominent Rochester couple gives about six official events a month and they find themselves guests at six more.

When they give a party, the guest list is a policy decision to determine which group should be entertained.

Whether hosts or guests, this couple still has to remember who everyone is.

Their pre-party briefing often continues on the way to the party and goes on right into the cocktail hour.

They may be reminding each other who someone is as he walks up to say hello.

The cocktail hour is a very crucial time which may determine the outcome of the evening. Especially when there is no seating arrangement, another covert activity is going on.

"We try to talk to people we want to end up sitting with, people who are important for us to get to know," explained another Birmingham partygoer. "A real scramble goes on."

Having a seating arrangement doesn't make things easier though. In fact, the seating chairperson may

have a bigger job than the general chairperson.

"If a couple is seated with strangers or doesn't feel they are seated close enough to the head table with guests high enough for their social position, there can be real trouble," she says.

Couples too close to the kitchen or band have been known to leave a party. Seating chairpersons have found unhappy partygoers even sneak up, change place cards and sit at another table.

This might result in 12 people huddled around a table set for 10.

"Seating is a real production," says this Birmingham partygoer.

BUT ONCE everyone is seated, the production isn't over. During dinner, each gentleman is supposed to dance with his wife first and then ask each of the women at the table.

In strict society etiquette, the husband's permission must be received before a lady can be escorted to the dance floor.

"This dancing is a real chore for some husbands," says a Southfield partygoer. "Some are just dead on their feet from working all day and really don't want to dance at all."

But if they don't dance, then they have to talk. And only about certain subjects.

Although many are usually at the party to better themselves in business, promoting a business interest is taboo.

Executives have been known to leave a party when approached about a business deal or appointment.

In most circles, politics is OK, although a bit risky depending on which political hopefuls are at the gathering.

Religion is largely taboo just about everywhere. And it seems that in the suburban social circuit, religious groups still stick pretty much to themselves.

"The men could work together all day, but after five o'clock, forget it," explained one prominent member of predominantly Jewish Franklin Hills Country Club.

"This is what we call the five o'clock shadow. We don't keep to our own clubs because we want to be started our own clubs because we had to."

YET THERE are some exceptions. One Jewish Birmingham businessman says about 20 per cent of his social life is spent with gentle friends.

Often he is a guest at Oakland Hills Country Club and they are his guests at Franklin Hills.

But he says it takes extra effort to "prove to the rest of the world that you don't have horns."

Whether religious groups keep to

themselves because they want to or not, now gentle and Jewish social circles are keeping to themselves. Not at clubs, benefits and large parties, but at home.

"I think the nicest party in the world," says a Bloomfield resident, "is four couples who have no reason

to get together other than they're just people you really like being with, not anybody who will do you any good, just a simple, delicious dinner at home with exciting conversation."

And strangely enough, this trend isn't new. It's what a small number of people have done for years.

This quiet group hardly ever attend the right social events. They keep to themselves and see just who they want to see.

"This is what we enjoy most," says one Grosse Pointe member of that group. "There is no pushing to get anywhere."



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## Catching up on art trends

By LESLIE MASTERS

Did you intend to go to New York this fall to catch up on the art scene and find out what is going on in that ultimate center of American art?

I did, and hesitated because of others who had gone recently and come back with stories of purse snatchings, muggings and that atmosphere of fear that seems to be pervasive now in New York.

So I was delighted to discover I could stay home and get a glimpse of current art trends just by going to the current show in the Meadow Brook Art Gallery at Oakland University.

This show, "Contemporary Reflections 1975," was organized by the Aldrich Museum in Ridgefield, Conn.

IT IS FOURTH in a series of annual shows all organized by the museum with the express purpose of showing contemporary trends in art, as seen by works by young artists or emerging artists of any age making a fresh statement.

The artists represented were chosen from the New York and Connecticut area. Any artist within this area was invited to send slides of his work.

From these slides, a group of artists was selected to be reviewed in their own studies. After this visit, the work for the exhibition was selected.

For the exhibition at Meadow Brook, curator Kilchi Usui worked with the Aldrich Museum director to select 22 works from the 60 some exhibited in the latest "Contemporary Reflections" show at the museum. Seven artists were added from previous shows.

The resulting exhibition on view at Meadow Brook Gallery benefits from this careful selection. Each

painting and sculpture is unique. The diversity of styles is exciting, and a large percentage of the work in the show presents fresh, new creative ideas.

AND THERE are many ideas.

First to be noticed is a huge, sixty-foot painting by David Stephens that is pointillist in its dotlike effect. Upon closer view, the painting is made up of fluffy blobs and squiggles of frostinglike paint that look as if they had been squirted out of a pastry tube.

These thick gobs of paint blend visually into a rich carpet of green, blue, and purple; the combination of the faintly disgusting texture and the handsome color makes a strong impact on the viewer.

A new direction for abstract expressionism is David Hill's painting on paper. Huge, seven feet square, the black surface has been scratched and torn to show thin white lines of paper underneath. Here and there the artist has applied colored glitter for enriching detail.

Another trend represented is what I term "idea painting": an intellectual thought seems to have been the beginning of the work rather than a visual idea. "Book Collection" by Marty Greenbaum is just such a work. It consists of a group of sketchbooks, each page of which is encrusted with paint, drawings and metallic textures. Some pages are scratched on the edges, others crumpled and folded.

The exhibition will be on view through Dec. 20, at the Meadow Brook Art Gallery, Oakland University, Rochester. Hours are 1-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday; Saturday and Sunday, 2-6:30 p.m.