



# Was the Met Gala taking notes?

PARIS

BY VANESSA FRIEDMAN

Ever since Anna Wintour announced she would be handing over the day-to-day operations of American Vogue to a new head of editorial content (or HOEC?), the theories have run rampant about what it means. So even though Condé Nast has insisted nothing is really going to change when it comes to her power and her presence, she has shaped so many industries for so long that the mere suggestion she might loosen her iron grip has sent a tremor through fashion.

Is she getting ready to depart? Is this succession planning in public? What would the magazine world even look like after Anna? What about ... the Met Gala?

While the answers to some questions may have to wait until the actual HOEC is announced, a response of sorts to the Gala query appeared Sunday evening in Paris, where the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, the decorative arts institute housed in the Palais du Louvre, held its first Bal d'Été (Summer Ball) on the eve of the couture shows.

A black-tie affair nominally marking the centenary of the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, the exhibition that popularized Art Deco, the Bal d'Été was, like the Met Gala, a museum fund-raiser. One that was two years in the making.

Like the Met event (and the gala that the Louvre itself held earlier this year), the Bal d'Été coincided with a grand fashion exhibition, "Paul Poiret: Fashion is a Feast," at the museum. And it was art-directed by a famous name, Sofia Coppola, who filled the entry gallery where the dinner was held with ferns and palm fronds, the tables festooned with rose-colored tablecloths and overflowing with mini posies of dahlias, roses and strawberries, like a scene out of her 2006 film "Marie Antoinette."

Which was not a coincidence, since the same florist who worked on that movie also worked on the party — and Kirsten Dunst, the star of that film, attended. As did the actress's husband, Jesse Plemons.

But unlike the Met, the Bal d'Été was not underwritten by a fashion brand, or hosted by a celebrity.

No one was asked whom they were wearing as they walked in; instead they were asked to show their cellphones, and small floral stickers were placed over the camera lenses.

And while there were celebrities such as Ms. Dunst, Penélope Cruz and Diane Kruger, as well as designers including Pieter Mulier of Alaïa, scattered among the slightly more than 300 patrons of the museum, the vibe purposefully was "friends and family" rather than major marketing moment, said Lionel Sauvage, the president of the Arts Décoratifs.

Assuming your family was awfully glamorous, international and well-heeled, with some ornate jewels and a couture dress or two tucked away in the spare bedroom, that is. Ms. Coppola's husband, Thomas Mars, and his band Phoenix, did provide the after-dinner entertainment.

That was a few courses after the South African soprano Pretty Yende made a guest appearance, which was itself after the asparagus and roasted chicken had been passed on large platters borne by white-jacketed waiters, from which guests served themselves. After Marta Ortega of Zara had schmoozed with Zac Posen of the Gap, and the interior designer Jacques Grange had greeted Axel Dumas of Hermès, and Betty Catroux, the muse of Yves Saint Laurent, had air-kissed Marisa Berenson.

And it all helped make the case that this was a party meant for those attending, as opposed to the outside world

ogling; that as fancy as it was, it could still feel intimate. While the Bal may have made less money than the Met (well, every gala makes less money than the Met, given it raked in \$31 million this year), but a spokeswoman for the Arts Décoratifs said it exceeded its financial goals. Even as attendees dressed for the occasion and one another, but not for social media, and seemed to have a lot of fun in doing so.

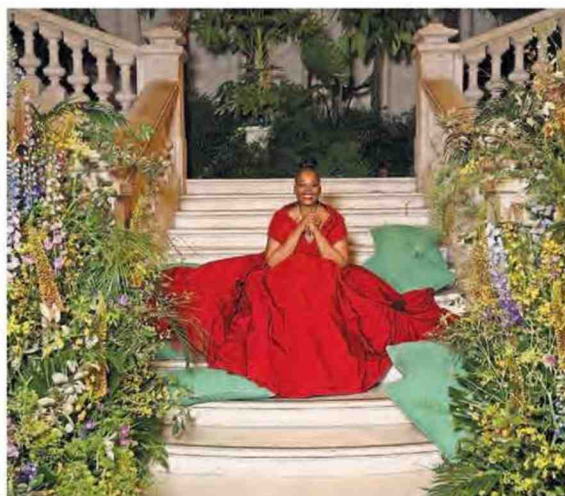
It was, thus, kind of old fashioned. But when it comes to fashion museum fund-raisers, it might also be the future.



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At the Bal d'Été, a fund-raiser for the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, from far left, Jordan Roth and Betty Catroux; Penélope Cruz, Sofia Coppola and Kirsten Dunst; and Pretty Yende. Unlike the Met Gala, the event was not underwritten by a fashion brand, or hosted by a celebrity.