

FINE-ARTS FUNDRAISER

MFAH's Grand Gala Ball has successful evening



SHELBY HODGE

AS the stock market was tanking last week, there was at least one bright spot on the economic horizon — the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, brought in \$1.3 million Friday night with its Grand Gala Ball.

Three cheers for chairs Ann and John Bookout III, who with sage wisdom and auspicious timing were able to get the big money in hand before the crunch.

"The Silver Ball: Celebrating 25 Years of Excellence" honored the museum's most recent board chairs — Isaac Arnold Jr., Alfred C. Glassell Jr., Cornelia Long and Isabel Wilson — and spotlighted the tenure of museum director Peter Marzio. It was a highly respected coterie that eased any potential fundraising strife.

But the current economic crunch was not far from people's minds. Asked to reflect on his 26 years at the museum, Marzio said, "I feel like I've gone full circle. I started with a crisis. We came in 1982 with the oil crisis, and now we have the financial crisis."

In the interim, the museum has prospered with an endowment that had grown from \$20 million to \$1 billion and an accumulation of more than 40,000 new works. Those figures were shared with the black-tie crowd of 425 by Ann Bookout, whom Marzio described as "the magician who made all of this [the gala] possible."

The ravishing evening was a silver celebration with beaded silver cloths on tables centered with explosive topiaries of white flowers by John Friedman. A number of ladies donned silver gowns, including the gala chair, who wore a shimmering design by Carolina Herrera.

Highlight of the décor was the ever-changing projection of artworks (enlarged dozens of times) acquired in the past quarter-century. It prompted Marzio to note, "What I like about this evening is that it focuses on the art."

Sitting down to a gourmet feast from City Kitchen and later hitting the dance floor were guests including Rose and Harry Cullen, Jeanie Kilroy, Margaret Williams and Jim Daniel, Nancy and Rich Kinder, Carolyn and John Bookout II, Sue and Lester Smith, Linda and Dr. Walter McReynolds, Sandy and Lee Godfrey, Macey and Harry Reasoner, Celina and Alfredo Brener, Pat and Dan Breen, Clayton and Shel Erikson and Carol and Mike Linn.

Book works

Big money news at the Julia Ideson Library Preservation Partners reception Tuesday night — fundraising is more than halfway to the \$38 million goal. Partners chair Phoebe Tudor announced that more than \$20 million is in hand for the preservation and



IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, director Peter Marzio, from left, honored for his tenure at the museum, is joined by his wife, Frances, and museum patrons Nancy and Rich Kinder.



ACCEPTING APPLAUSE: Alfred C. Glassell III, second from right, stood in for his ailing father, Alfred Glassell Jr., as MFAH board chairs past and present — from left, Isaac Arnold, Cornelia Long and Isabel Wilson — took bows for contributions that collectively reached beyond a quarter of a century.

expansion of the 1926 Julia Ideson Building.

Betty Newton and Judy Nyquist chaired the event, which honored major donors and offered them tours of the public library. Mayor Bill White praised Tudor's efforts before the group of 150, which included Bobby Tudor, Anne and Charles Duncan, Carol and Mike Linn, Margaret Williams, Andrea White, Janet and Leonard Tallierne and Cyvia and Melynn Wolff.

Political fare

The mayor's race might not be on the ballot until next year, but it was one of the political contests chewed over at a pre-election analysis luncheon Tuesday at the Four Seasons Hotel. Hosted by Klotz Associates and Fulbright & Jaworski, the experts covered the November ballot top to bottom.

Sharing their wisdom with an audience of 70 top business and political leaders were Rice University political scientist Bob Stein, political consultant Marc Campos, Defender Media Group CEO Sonny Messiah Jiles, University of Houston political scientist Richard Murray and moderator Margaret Menger

DYNAMIC DUO:

Grand Gala Ball chairs Ann and John Bookout III successfully led the charge to raise \$1.3 million for the MFAH.

of the Clifford Group. Absorbing every morsel were guests including City Controller Annise Parker, Wayne Klotz, Richard Huff, Ed Wulfe, Nell Thomas, Oliver Luck, Pam Gardner, Argentina James, Anthony Hall, Marty Stein and Cindy Clifford.



PARTY WATCH



DAVE ROSSMAN PHOTOS: FOR THE CHRONICLE

Bountiful feast

Who: Shari Mattern, left, chef Rahman "Rock" Harper and Carol Burke.
Where & what: At the InterContinental Houston, where Harper was celebrity chef at the March of Dimes Signature Chefs Gala chaired by Mattern and Burke.
Misc: In the evening that raised \$350,000 for the March of Dimes, 500 gourmands sat down for a five-course feast prepared by the city's leading chefs. Sampling the various courses were guests including Bill Perkins, Laura Spalding, Diane Lokey Farb, MOD board chair Gene Nettles and Wells Fargo's Glen Godkin.

Ethnic flavors

Who: Shannon Langrand and Doug Foshee.
Where & what: At the InterContinental Houston, where Langrand chaired the Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans' *Tacos y Tacones* gala. Foshee, president and CEO of El Paso Corp., was honoree and guest speaker.
Misc: Among the 500 guests were AAMA board chair Vanessa Sola and husband Juan, Laura and Rick Jaramillo, AAMA's new executive director Beatrice Garza and husband Victor, Lainie Gordon and David Minchberg, Tony Grijalva and Oscar Gonzalez.



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See more photos of the glam crowd at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Grand Gala Ball at chron.com/life.

Birthday boy

That would be interior designer Fred Smith, who was feted by friends at one long table in Bar Annie on Tuesday night. Lisa and Agbo Abiola, sculptor McKay Otto, Melissa and Michael Mithoff, Debbie Festari, Rob Rutherford and more helped him blow out the candles. After dining at their own table in the bar, Erin and Nick Florescu and Susan and Michael Plank stopped by to join the well-wishers.

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Bob Devlin, Dr. Juan Stern, Philip Meyer, Patty Dominguez, Trini Mendenhall-Sosa and Claudia Contreras.

Field play

Who: Susana Brener de Stern, left, and Jessica Meyer.
Where & what: At the InterContinental Houston, where they chaired the Kick Out Kidney Disease luncheon honoring Dr. George Nassar.
Misc: Dynamo soccer stars joined the luncheon fun on-stage with emcee Deborah Duncan of Channel 11. The action included a shoe-oriented fashion show from Neiman Marcus and a silent auction chaired by Traci Lee. Guests included Kimberly DeLape, Bob Devlin, Dr. Juan Stern, Philip Meyer, Patty Dominguez, Trini Mendenhall-Sosa and Claudia Contreras.

INSTITUTE OF HISPANIC CULTURE EVENT

Elaborately dressed crowd celebrates at Noche de las Américas festivities

IT'S good to be queen — even if only for one night. Just ask Kimberly DeLape, who walked in the slippers of Spain's Queen Isabel on Saturday at the Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa. DeLape portrayed one of the richly costumed historic characters at the annual Institute of Hispanic Culture *Noche de las Américas* gala. She was joined in the lavishly embroidered and bejeweled costuming by her husband, Frank DeLape, who portrayed King Ferdinand, and their 13-year-old daughter Brianna as the Infanta Isabel.

Neil Bush had the honor of representing Christopher Columbus. His wife, Maria, was stunning in her portrayal of Mrs. Christopher Columbus. Overseeing the festive evening for more than 350 was gala chair Carmen Maria Lechin, on the arm of her husband, Dr. Alex Lechin.

The lively party included a "crazy hour" during which guests rocked around the ballroom with party hats,



GARY FOUNTAIN: FOR THE CHRONICLE

COLORFUL ENSEMBLE: Neil and Maria Bush, left, portrayed Christopher Columbus and his wife at *Noche de las Américas*. Carmen Maria Lechin, joined by her husband, Dr. Alex Lechin, chaired.

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See more photos of the costumed fun at chron.com/life

— SHELBY HODGE