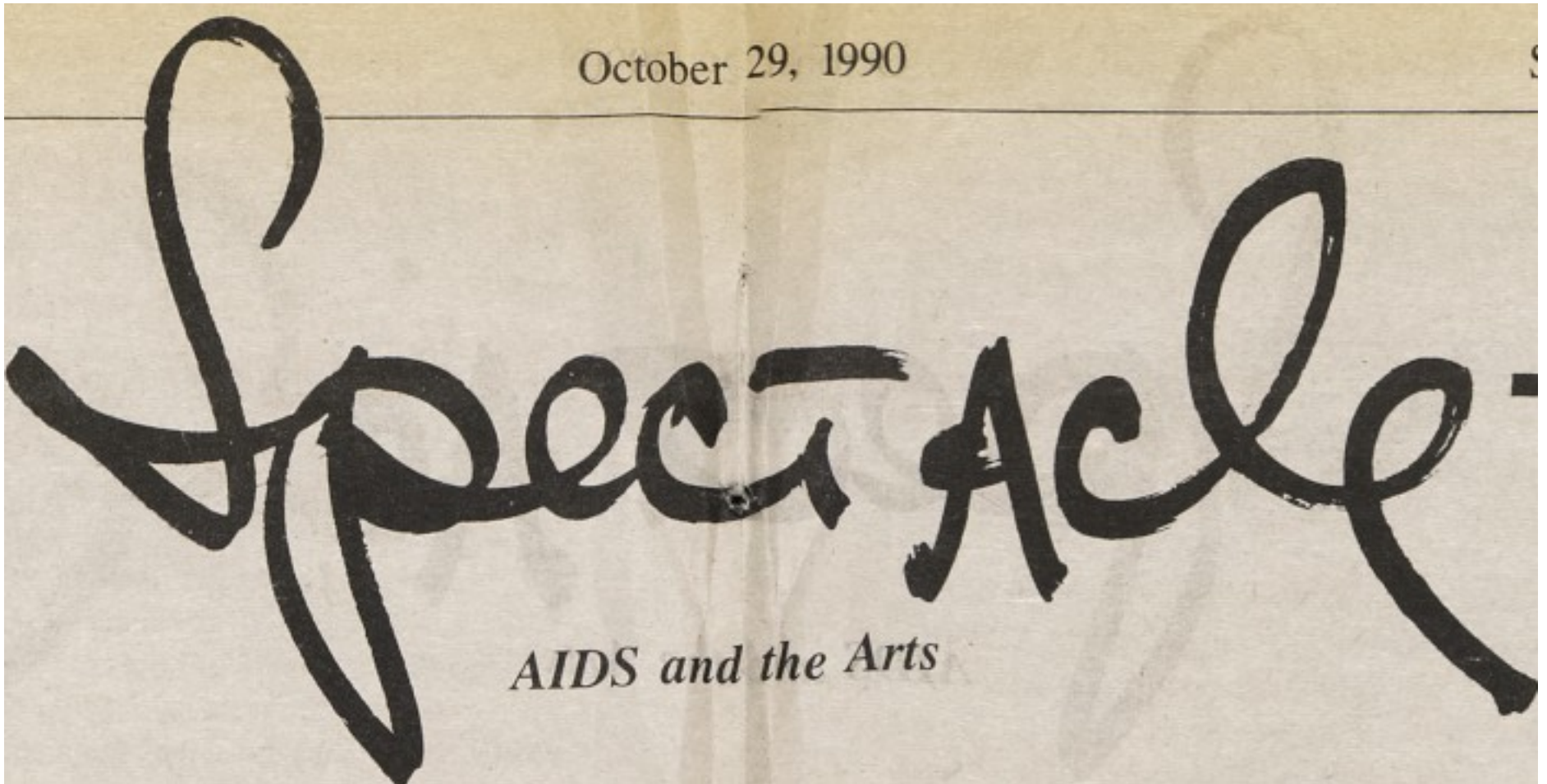


[Back](#)



AIDS and the Arts

Charity en Vogue

By Jack Chen

In the calendar pages of magazines, you can always see the dates for benefits. Sponsored by American Express; chaired by Paul Newman. There is a benefit industry in this city—an industry which feeds its workers, who in turn produce benefits for non-profit organizations. To hold a successful benefit, people resort to different ways of getting that

different ways of getting that extra pledge or name. The purpose of a benefit is to raise money and awareness for the needy cause at hand. Yet how many people benefit from these fundraisers? Who raises the money, and what happens when potentially spiteful industry competitors join forces?

Let's take the AIDS benefit "Seventh on Sale," and see how the fashion industry goes about raising money. "Seventh on Sale" is named after Seventh Avenue, a.k.a. Fashion Avenue—most designers are located near 42nd Street and Seventh Avenue, as is Parsons School of Design and Fashion Institute of Technology. A major part of "Seventh on Sale" is a three day high fashion

shopping spree starting Nov. 30.

Like most elements of what insiders call "the glamour industry," everything about this benefit depends on who you know. The nuances of "Seventh on Sale" are not top secret, either, even though some names are withheld here. To learn the inside dramas behind an event like this, all you have to do is know one or two people who work somewhere fashion-related.

The event, completely underwritten by Vogue magazine, is sponsored by the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA). Carolyne Roehm is the current president of CFDA, whose members include Bill Blass, Oscar de la Renta, Marc Jacobs, Isaac Mizrahi, Donna Karan, and many others. All of the sale's merchandise will be donated by CFDA designers; Vogue and Vogue Patterns will be selling merchandise from foreign designers. The night before the sale begins, a dinner is scheduled—the Dinner Chairmen are Bill Blass and Oscar de la Renta. Dinner will be followed by dessert, which is really a disco party (Dessert Chairmen: Marc Jacobs, Isaac Mizrahi, Elizabeth Saltzman). Dinner and disco—simple enough, right?

There is a feeling among the benefit organizers that history is being made, and the picture in September's Vogue of the event organizers makes this claim convincing. Not many causes can get Paloma Picasso, Arnold Scaasi, Oscar de la Renta, Bill Blass, Pauline Trigere, Donna Karan, and Carolyne Roehm all smiling and looking in the same direction.

and looking in the same direction. To be a chair of an event like this, you need to have money, power, persona and a strong back.

Meet the Chairs, and Their Friends

The event's four chairs are Donna Karan, Ralph Lauren, Carolyne Roehm, and Anna Wintour. While most designers are feeling the brunt of the recession, Donna Karan's couture line, DKNY, opticals, hosiery, accessories, and furs are all growing rapidly; ads for American Express and the Wool Bureau sometimes contain Donna Karan or DKNY clothing. From socks and hosiery to suits and ties, Ralph Lauren's impact on the American economy is, being a billion dollar company, great indeed—Lauren's many business contacts can help "Seventh on Sale."

Carolyne Roehm, a less familiar name to most people, started out as a designer under Oscar de la Renta, where she met Henry Kravis, a major partici-

pant on the RJR Nabisco takeover. Roehm's contacts through Kravis, now her husband, make her an important

Chairman. Being from the midwest, Roehm had a hard time getting acceptance from New York society: a recent article in *Vogue* described how she takes piano lessons, learns French, works as a designer and entertains as Carolyne Roehm Kravis.

Anna Wintour, the newest New Yorker of the four chairs, ran the British edition of *Vogue* and was selected as the one to replace Grace Mirabella as the main editor in New York. When Wintour arrived, she brought along a large company of her

British subjects to replace many *Vogue* editors. Wintour can help the benefit with her European contacts, from Chanel to Dior to YSL.

What do these four chairs do? Raise money for the benefit. Who, then, pays the bills? All the advertisements for "Seventh on Sale" state that the event is underwritten by *Vogue*, but there's more to it than that. *Vogue* is owned by Conde Nast publications, which also happens to own *Vanity Fair*, *GQ*, *House & Garden*, *Mademoiselle*, *Bride*, *Glamour* and, last but not least, *The New Yorker*. Why don't the

ads say "underwritten by Conde Nast?" In the last couple of years, Vogue has been getting fierce competition from Elle magazine, which has been taking some advertisements away from them, especially since Wintour took over. "Seventh on Sale" therefore works as a big PR campaign for Vogue.

But it may not be so simple. Conde Nast is synonymous with S.I. Newhouse and his family. For reasons unknown, Newhouse specifically requested that Conde Nast's name not be used in relation to "Seventh on Sale."

Connections have become as big a part of "Seventh on Sale" as they have with the whole fashion industry. The event's vice chairs are a good example: these include Anne Blass, Kelly Klein, Shirley Lord, Catie Marron, Anne McNally, Gayfryd Steinberg, and Blaine Trump. All of these folks happen to either write for a Conde Nast mag, be related to a rich man, or both. These vice chairs also are good friends with the chairs—when one looks at the photos from the Malcolm Forbes birthday bash, one can see pictures of a chair posing with a vice chair. And as for the three chairs

of the after-dinner disco—Marc Jacobs, Isaac Mizrahi, and Elizabeth Saltzman—Jacobs and Mizrahi are celebrity designers, and Saltzman is a *Vogue* editor.

Where Does the Money Go?

Now that chairs, vice chairs, and money are in place, all they need is a purpose. The beneficiary of "Seventh on Sale" is the New York City AIDS Fund, which is a regional participant of the National AIDS Community Partnership started by the Ford Foundation. The Fund gives out money to local groups such as Gay Men's Health Crisis, the Hettrick-Martin Institute, and AIDS groups affiliated with specific racial minorities.

At one point, the question of who would benefit from "Seventh on Sale" became slightly controversial. There was a major national AIDS organization that wanted to be the beneficiary. Rather than distribute the money

among all AIDS related groups like the New York City AIDS Fund will, this organization wanted to keep the money for itself. This was a wise move for the chairs—by giving the money

to the Fund, many more organizations will get help.

Interestingly, this funding decision might have caused a backlash. The organizers of "Seventh on Sale" invited a major star, fresh from her world tour, to perform on opening night. Unfortunately, the big star in question happened to do a lot of charity work for the AIDS group that was spurned by "Seventh on Sale." Eventually, the star turned down the invitation.

What seemed to be at the most a case of spite may have created a little drama at Conde Nast. Soon after the funding question was resolved, this same major star showed up at a photo shoot for Glamour magazine, which like Vogue is a Conde Nast publication. What did Anna Winter et al at Vogue think when they heard the news? Having snubbed Vogue's charity event, did the star know her shoot for Glamour might have fueled a rivalry within Conde Nast? With S.I. Newhouse and Conde Nast as well as this star formally disassociated with "Seventh on Sale," the distancing of Vogue in the context of this benefit

the context of this benefit becomes increasingly clear.

Back to Dinner

Who does one invite to this dinner? Everyone who wants to go, right? Sort of. Vogue must be sure to invite all the Conde

Nastys. CFDA must invite all its special members and business contacts. The chairs and vice chairs must invite all their stylish friends. This process becomes like splitting hairs: will Ronald Lauder will be sent a \$1,000-a-plate or a \$2,500-a-plate invitation?

Whenever you look at a listing of contributors for charities, be sure to see who (or what) is listed. For example, why does Maxwell Hamish's name appear on a list for a charity organization, instead of his company's name, Phillip Morris? Since this is an AIDS benefit, it will be very interesting to see who lists their names and who lists their companies.

Back to the dinner. Who does the decoration? Ian Schrager is one of the interior designers of "Seventh on Sale." Featured in a recent Vanity Fair, he designed the Palladium and just started getting active in the hotel industry, having just opened the Paramount Hotel in midtown. What's his connection? CFDA has a dinner/awards show each year where everyone shows up. This year the press conference will be held at Schrager's Paramount Hotel, where CFDA will announce its plans to give a special award to none other than "Seventh on Sale"'s Anna Wintour, for her contributions to the fashion industry.

But Seriously

Does "Seventh on Sale" serve other purposes than to publicize the fashion industry and its friends? This is an unprecedented event. Never before has the entire industry gathered to hold an AIDS benefit. It will raise over \$1 million, but it seems probable that they will raise over \$2 million. Every cent will go into the community, because all administrative costs are paid for by a grant from the National AIDS Community Partnership to the New York City AIDS Fund.

"Seventh on Sale" will coincide with National AIDS Day, which is also the Day Without Art. Last year, hundreds of museums participated in many different ways, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art covering Picasso's portrait of Gertrude Stein with black cloth to the entire Guggenheim being covered in black. At "Seventh on Sale," art works and books will also be auctioned off or sold.

The event has attracted the support of many people outside of the beauty and fashion industries. Some are donating calligraphy services, some are donating audio-visual services, and others are donating products or even volunteering their labor. There is no doubt that people with AIDS will get the help that they desperately need. And even if Karan, Lauren, or Roehm become more popular or if Vogue's subscriptions double, they deserve it. All the chairs and vice chairs have many other things they can do with their time. For them to put their time and energy into this AIDS benefit can only help. And "Seventh on Sale" gives New York City a lot to gossip about.



Izaac Mizrahi,
your Dessert Chairman





COURTESY DONNA KARAN

Donna Karan,
one of four chairs



Oscar de la
Renta,
your
Dinner
Chairman

COURTESY OSCAR DE LA RENTA

Oscar de la
Renta,
your
Dinner
Chairman





Carolyn Kravis (Kraus),
a well-connected chair

This article has been automatically clipped from the Columbia Daily Spectator 29 October 1990, organised into a single column, then optimised for display on your computer screen. As a result, it may not look exactly as it did on the original page. The article can be seen in its original form in the [page view](#).