

DC

ARTS & POWER ISSUE

The Marvel-ous Frank Cho Opens Up!
Bethesda Broadway Baby Grows Up!
Hirshhorn Heavy Blows Up!
Mrs. Obama Takes DC Artists
Up, Up and Away!

+PLUS

URBAN ARTISTRY: COUTURE DE FORCE!
CREATIVES CLAMOR FOR BROOKLAND
MICHEL RICHARD'S SUPER-NoVa
DAVID RUBENSTEIN'S BENE-FACTION

DC MODERN LUXURY: 927 15TH ST NW WASHINGTON DC 20005

MODERNLUXURY.COM



DECEMBER 2010 \$5.95



ART AFTER DARK A far younger crowd than normal gathers at the Freer and Sackler Galleries for Bhangra Nights. The Phillips Collection, the Textile Museum and other institutions are offering DC's young professionals a myriad of reasons to forego the bars and head to the museums for nightlife exploits.

A New Image

Static electricity? The city's once-staid arts institutions are dimming the lights and becoming ecstatic rave scenes for culture-minded night crawlers | By Amanda Abrams |

Long after most museums had closed for the day, a DJ's bass notes throbbed as bright young things texted blurbs that were projected onto one of Washington's most famous paintings, housed in the city's oldest modern art institution. Across town, in a stately mansion transformed by Pabst Blue Ribbon signs and a graffitied portico by local artist Kelly Towles, an indie-pop band played to a crowd akin to the 930 Club's demographic makeup.

Welcome to Washington's new nightlife scene. In 2010, museums and performance spaces large and small upped their game with dazzling evening events in an effort to draw young hipsters through their doors. It's a trend, sure—one that was kicked off in 2007 by the Hirshhorn, which still sells out 2,200 tickets for each of its After Hours events—but these days, the fad has taken on a life of its own. Institutions that might have once turned up their nose at the idea of less-than-orthodox gatherings are jumping in.

Take the Textile Museum. The vast majority of DC's young professionals had never heard of the diminutive Dupont Circle institution before this year. That changed radically with the museum's Hapi Hapi Hour,

organized in partnership with the Pink Line Project. The after work event included gallery tours led by a two-man improv group, roving Harajuku girls, a bingo game, a popular DC rock band and an equally adored local DJ. The event was a massive hit, selling out with 650 attendees.

Then there's the Freer and Sackler Galleries, which are generally known for courting staid collectors—until now. Recent Asia After Dark events have featured a DJ spinning Buddhist chants with driving beats, henna tattoo stations and Bollywood dance demos. "This group craves a fun, artsy, contemporary atmosphere to mingle with cocktails," says the Smithsonian's Amanda Williams. The crowds of 800 have convinced the staff to start a young membership group in January, dubbed the Silk Road Society.

Even Strathmore, MoCo's earnest performance venue, pressed its mansion into service to launch Friday Night Eclectic, a mashup of music, art and beer. In October, the space that regularly houses afternoon tea was home to an innovative folk opera, *The Perfect Pipe Bomb*, which mixed puppets, choral arrangements and psychedelic rock. "The under-35 set is looking for events that are more interactive," says the event's organizer Georgina Javor.

For now, the White Party at the Phillips Collection—complete with dancers in white and a photo display of last year's Snowpocalypse—draws 900 revelers, while the quiet Kreeger Museum, having dipped its toes in the phenomenon with a French movie and DJ, garners 300. Whether the events are actually cultivating a new generation of arts supporters isn't clear. No one seems to be keeping tabs. Anecdotal, the institutions are getting publicity and night crawlers have an abundance of evening options from which to choose. But will the model go stale? "We are lucky to be in DC, where creative people think up new ways to present art on a daily basis," says Javor. "As long as we keep creating, we give audiences a reason to keep coming." ■