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## Participant, Inc. PARTY UNDERGROUND by Elisabeth Kley

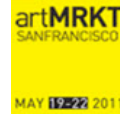
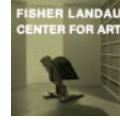
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Scary severed heads and cannibal dancers by **Kara Walker** glared down at the benefit party for **Participant Inc.**, the ten-year-old, super-hip Lower East Side alternative space overseen by the bohemian **Lia Gangitano**, held at **Sikkema, Jenkins & Co.**'s white gallery space over in Chelsea on Monday, Apr. 24, 2011.

How hip is Participant? So hip that 19 of our younger power galleries, including **303**, **James Fuentes**, **Andrew Kreps** and **Salon 94**, sponsored the event. Artist **Jacqueline Humphries**, wife of **Tony Oursler**, is board president.

The benefit itself was highlighted by a concert performance by **CANDIDATE**, an act including the artist duo **Lovett/Codagnone** and **Michele Pauli**, and featuring synthesized music, readings and recitations by actor **Jim Fletcher**, writer **Gary Indiana** and actress **Kate Valk**, one of the founders of the **Wooster Group**.

On the scene were painter **Kathe Burkhart**, known for her femdom portraits of **Elizabeth Taylor**; **Rafael Sanchez**, who once staged a version of Aeschylus'



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Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec  
Divan Japonais, pl. 2  
(from *Maîtres de l'affiche*), 1896

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*Libation Bearers* accompanied by music by **Queen** and starring himself in diapers; cult filmmaker and video artist **Charles Atlas**, whose collaborators have included **Merce Cunningham**, **Marina Abramovic** and **Leigh Bowery**; and **Marti Domination**, who distinguished herself as the leggy blonde arranging grapes in **Matthew Barney's** *Cremaster 1*.

Also on hand was artist **Hunter Reynolds**, who has survived HIV, strokes, infections and multiple hospital stays. He was radiant, anticipating his solo show at Participant, "Survival AIDS," which opens May 1, 2011. The show features his collage of every HIV/AIDS and LGBT-related article in the *New York Times* between 1989 and 1993, along with remnants from his "Blood Spot Series" performance.

Reynolds was excited about the upcoming issue of *alluPINIT*, the zine published by **Rafael Sanchez** and **Kathleen White**, which promises to include the story of his escape from serial killers as a teenager, and details of his father's film *Crème Rinse*, a porn takeoff on **Warren Beatty's** *Shampoo*.

As for Lovett/Codagnone, who have shown at **MoMA PS1** and **Sara Meltzer Gallery**, the duo is known as the art world's own aficionados of the gay S&M underground, and were appropriately decked out in dour black jumpsuits with jarring black stripes painted across their faces. During the CANDIDATE performance, Pauli wore a white newspaper mask, and sounds of sirens and other foreboding noises conjured up the specter of dangerous crimes.

"Each man kills the thing he loves," said the soundtrack (quoting **Oscar Wilde**), as the featured actors and poets recited their texts, menacing no matter how highbrow (**Lautreamont**, **Peter Handke**, **Richard Nixon**). The climax came when Fletcher, barefooted and garbed in a black hooded jacket, shouted streams of invective at the audience. "You deadbeat phonies, abortionists, anti-heroes!"

And everyone lapped it up.

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