

OLIVIA HSU DECKER IS
THE FOUNDER OF DECKER
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INTERNATIONAL REALTY

By Olivia Hsu Decker

LUXURY EVENTS AND TRAVEL

THE ROOM OF
GOLDEN TULIPS



AT ANN & GORDON GETTY'S ANNUAL PARTY

2009 will go down the history as one of the worst years in financial history. While it was a time when many luxury events were cancelled and travel was cut back, I was fortunate enough to attend many events, which I reported in my column throughout the year. Let's hope 2010 is the year for bold recovery and luxury dreams come true. Whatever your dream is, I hope my stories inspire you...

Party of the Year 2009

My vote for the party of the year goes to the annual double celebration of the holidays and the December birthday of composer/philanthropist/venture capitalist Gordon Getty. This year, event guru (and former fellow Haute Ambassador) Stanlee Gatti worked his magic again, transforming the Getty mansion into a magnificent flora extravaganza that topped all previous years.

Each room took on a different theme represented through both flowers and food. A two-story tent erected on the street served as the party's lobby, where calla lilies cascaded from the ceiling, wrapping each post, while a dozen orange trees shaded the couches in the lounging areas. An oyster and seafood bar by Aquatic Culture and an artisanal made-to-order pizza bar (complete with a portable pizza oven) by Evan Shively welcomed guests on opposite sides of the tent.

In the hall, garlands made of thousands of gardenias and lemons framed the doorways, while a candy bar flanked by two orange topiaries offered holiday treats in a dozen glass jars. The marble courtyard, where the Bill Hopkins Rock'n Orchestra performed, was decked out with pink peonies and limes, while a sushi bar by Sushi Ran of Sausalito and a charcuterie



provided the cuisine. Huge urns filled with hundreds of long-stem golden tulips lined the rectangular dining room where a gourmet buffet prepared by Getty's chef, Jennifer Johnson, was served.

In the next room, a wall of white hydrangeas and huge oranges provided a beautiful backdrop for classic guitarists and a vocalist performing on the stage. A cheese bar by Vella Cheese offered the finest varieties from around the world. In the adjacent lantern-lit garden, ice cream was served from a gingerbread-like booth.

More than 700 guests were in attendance, including Mayor Gavin Newsom with Jennifer Siebel Newsom, Paul Pelosi (sans Nancy), George and Charlotte Shultz, Walter Shorenstein with Cindy Testa McCullagh, Charles and Helen Schwab, Margo and Harry de Wildt, Jerry Brown and Anne Gust, Willie Brown with Sonya Molodetskaya, and other luminaries. The crowning moment of the evening was when Gordon cut his Julie Durkee-designed birthday cake, which was topped with a statue of Gordon holding his beloved opera music sheets.

Keeping with her tradition, Ann Getty went to bed shortly after the guests arrived; I can imagine she was exhausted from planning such a lavish affair for guests to enjoy. I personally was sampling 20 different cheeses and admiring the flower decorations until past midnight.



SUSHI BAR CATERED BY SUSHI RAN OF SAUSALITO



THE "CANDY BAR"

LUXURY CAR EVENTS OF 2009

TWO OF THE WORLD'S MOST ESTEEMED CARMAKERS—BENTLEY AND ROLLS-ROYCE—INTRODUCED THEIR NEW DELUXE CARS IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA DURING TWO UNIQUE EVENTS.



BENTLEY INTRODUCED THE MULSANNE AT THE ST. REGIS HOTEL

Bentley Mulsanne

THE ST. REGIS HOTEL, SAN FRANCISCO

Bentley unveiled the luxurious new Mulsanne with a lavish reception on the roof terrace of the St. Regis. If you ask how they used a crane to move the 5,200-pound car to the fifth-floor terrace, the answer is very carefully and very expensively!

More than 200 invited guests sampled sushi and sipped Champagne while savoring the smell of the sumptuous leather interior, feeling the silky softness of the polished ring of wood waistrail, and marveling at the state-of-the-art multimedia technology.

Unfortunately, the ultra-high-performance sedan was not ready for a test drive yet. Resembling a luxury car of a bygone era when skilled craftsmen built fine autos by hand, the modern-day Mulsanne takes more than nine weeks to complete. Keep your eyes peeled for the car at a Bentley dealership near you.



ROLLS-ROYCE GHOST UNVEILED AT OPUS ONE WINERY

Rolls-Royce Ghost

OPUS ONE WINERY, OAKVILLE

Rolls-Royce Motorcar North America hosted an exclusive "Evening of Expressions" for 50 guests to reveal the new Ghost at Opus One in Napa Valley. The event paired fine wine and gourmet dining with the magnificent new car. Ian Cameron, the chief designer of Rolls-Royce, spoke about the "power of simplicity" out of complexity that runs throughout the Ghost. But the performance is far more dynamic than it's simplistic in style; the Ghost's twin-turbo, 6.6-liter, 12V engine will effortlessly propel you from zero to 60 mph in 4.9 seconds.

As I touched the Ghost in the temperature-controlled wine cellar of Opus One and looked out to the vineyards from my dinner table, I couldn't help but add buying a Ghost on my 2010 to-do list. I know dreams can come true if I work hard enough.

FINANCIAL CRISIS SURVIVORS

2009 SAW ONE OF THE WORST FINANCIAL DISASTERS IN RECENT HISTORY. I AM STILL IN SHOCK THAT HOUSEHOLD NAMES LIKE LEHMAN BROTHERS, BEAR STEARNS, AND WASHINGTON MUTUAL ARE FOREVER GONE. A FEW SURVIVORS ARE STRUGGLING TO INJECT NEW ENERGY TO GENERATE BUSINESS, AND I ATTENDED A COUPLE OF SUCH EVENTS...



MERRILL LYNCH "BOOT CAMP" AT CHATEAU VILLETTE

Merrill Lynch Financial Crisis Survivor Boot Camp

CHATEAU VILLETTE, PARIS
WWW.FRENCHVACATION.COM

The Merrill Lynch Global Wealth Management rented my Chateau Villette near Paris for "The Financial Crisis Survivor Boot Camp," designed to boost enthusiasm, cheer spirits, and encourage bonding for 40 of their top financial advisors. The group arrived on a bus at 8 a.m. for a power breakfast followed by professionally led problem solving, role-playing, and team-building workshops.

The 17th-century chateau and its beautiful 185 acre gardens served as an ideal setting for injecting the group with new energy and a new mindset. By lunchtime, I already saw changes in the typically stiff, mostly white male French investment bankers. Many of them had removed their shoes to run around the gardens while others picnicked on the lawn. Many then ransacked the chateau's costume room, finding wigs and 17th-century costumes to wear. The wine business was the topic of business-building practice during the afternoon session, which further relaxed the group. By the time we took group photos at the end of the day, they had transformed into a wild and fun bunch, ready to head back to the office and take the financial difficulties head on.



CREDIT SUISSE GUEST SPEAKERS SIR JOHN MAJOR AND DAVID GERGEN

Credit Suisse Wealth Management Conference

RITZ-CARLTON, HALF MOON BAY

Credit Suisse Private Banking USA hosted a conference with a theme of "The World Transformed After the Crisis" to help its ultra-high-net-worth clients understand the global economy crisis and plan for the future. The topics included Global Restructuring: The Upside of the Downturn; What the Future Holds in a Post-Crisis World; and The Future of Private Equity. Credit Suisse fared well during the crisis and continues to be in a strong strategic position, benefiting from its integrated business model and well diversified business mix.

The impressive line-up of speakers included Robert Weissenstein, its chief investment officer for Private Banking Americas; former Prime Minister of the U.K. and Senior Advisor to Credit Suisse Sir John Major; Co-founder of the Carlyle Group David Rubenstein; former White House Advisor to Presidents Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Clinton David Gergen; amongst other luminaries. I learned a lot during this insightful day and feel ready to meet the financial challenges in the coming year.

Happy Travels,

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