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Party of the Century: Truman Capote's Black and White Ball



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Citation

Rodman, Sarah Jane. 2014. Party of the Century: Truman Capote's Black and White Ball. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University.

Abstract

Party of the Century: Truman Capote's Black and White Ball is a cultural history exhibition designed to transport museum visitors back to Capote's masked dance held in New York City on November 28, 1966 in the Plaza Hotel's Grand Ballroom. The interdisciplinary installation aims to reanimate host Truman Capote (1924-1984), author of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1958) and *In Cold Blood* (1966); his honoree, Katharine Graham (1917-2001), President of the Washington Post; and the convergence of 540 attending guests who traveled from around the world for the candlelit festivities. Few people stood in a more central position in the mid-1960s than Capote, one of the most well-known writers in his life time (Plimpton, "T.C." 300). His acquaintances and networks spanned disparate realms: partygoers were accomplished and interesting people from all walks of life who influenced the world around them in profound ways. In the gallery, cross-media displays—sembled from archives and museums as well as public and private collections—highlight the party's fashion, glamour, guest list, music, and reverie as well as establish the historical context of what was going on in the world at large. By examining the people who played a part in this once-in-a-generation gathering, visitors come face to face with the cultural, political, and social dynamics concurrently evolving over the 1960s decade. The evening's legacy endures and continues to resonate: people now refer to the Black and White Ball as a touchstone for its time. A prototype, as imagined, the exhibition will open at a metropolitan museum with plans to travel afterwards to other venues.

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I remember reading about Capote's Black and White Ball back in the 90s and being totally fascinated! In 2006, Vanity Fair contributor, Amy Collins, wrote a detailed overview of the party of the century and once again the whole affair just fascinated me. The story builds on Capote's rise as an esteemed and intriguing individual who's novel, "In Cold Blood" created a new genre. He loved gathering and shar Party of the Century is a documentary/biography of Truman Capote and the party he threw at the Plaza Hotel ballroom in NY in November of 1966 after completing his "non-fiction novel" In Cold Blood. Truman was an aspiring socialite. Through his literary success, he was able to meet and cultivate friendships with people of many different backgrounds. Truman Capote's Black and White Ball. 11 Photos. View Slide Show >. Even after a half-century, the party retains a dreamlike aura, one supported by photographs and newsreels that show the guests in black tie and monochrome couture dresses, masks by Adolfo and a young milliner who went by the single name Halston. Image. Truman Capote said that he paid 39 cents at F.A.O. Schwarz for the mask he wore at his Black and White Ball in 1966.Credit...Barton Silverman/The New York Times. Sometimes buried in the retellings of the Black and White Ball myth is its guest of honor, Katharine Graham, whose family owned Newsweek and The Washington Post.