



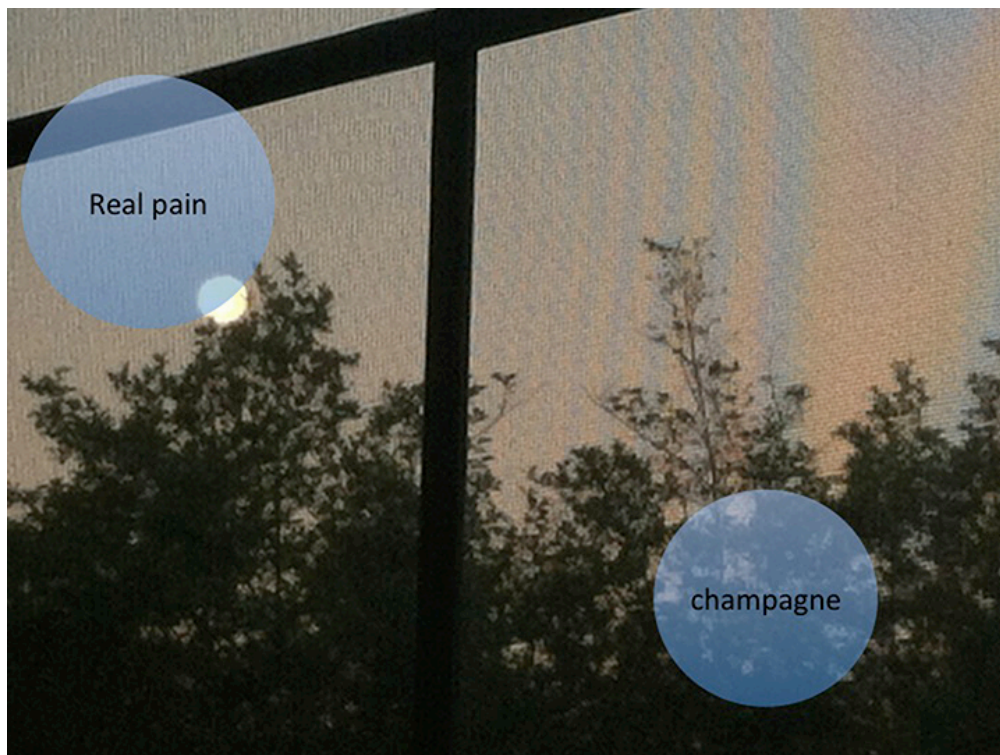
Cait Munro, “Artist Flips the Conventional ‘Benefit Gala’ on Its Head”, *Artnet News*, September 18, 2014.

## Artist Flips the Conventional “Benefit Gala” on Its Head

Cara Benedetto's anti-gala aims to expose art world power dynamics.

Cait Munro, September 18, 2014

“Feeding the hand that bites you” is how Cara Benedetto describes the experience of working as an artist today. After I thanked her for this incredible soundbite, she elaborated. “Artists are getting into these relationships with corporations and collectors and galleries that are altering the way that we make,” she told me. “And both not-for-profit, gift-giving art institutions and the commercial art market cater to the 1 percent. Institutions don’t give anonymously, and these gifts often come with restrictions for how the money should be used. That changes what and how you’re able to make as an artist. Artists aren’t making work that threatens institutions, but critical artwork is absolutely imperative. If you lose that, you’re losing a huge part of what drives you to make.”



Cara Benedetto, *Measuring Them Self* (2014). Courtesy of the artist and Chapter NY.

It's with that in mind that Benedetto has embarked on a multifaceted project that began with an installation at Chapter NY and will culminate on September 21 with a party at the home of well-known philanthropist, art collector and investment banker Christopher E. Vroom. A riff on the traditional benefit gala, the evening is slated to include a variety of strange happenings, nonsensical toasts and roasts, and vulnerable situations (as opposed to your usual drawn-out speeches and boring small talk). The benefit committee is comprised of artists, writers, and friends, most of whom will enact some kind of performance piece during the event. A press release for the soirée contains the relevant information in terms that are poetic, obscure, and slightly perverse.



But the evening isn't about cynicism or even poking fun. It is a benefit for art, and for artists. It's about providing a space for unbridled creativity and, as Benedetto put it, "highlighting the interaction between artists and their systems of support." Ticket buyers will be provided with an app that will generate a notification every time an artist they have supported makes a purchase. Whether or not this information is real or fictional is unclear, but by allowing them to see "exactly what happens to their money," Benedetto hopes to undermine our assumptions about transparency and where money goes once it is donated. This is something that many artists and other people not on the donating end of the income spectrum often fail to consider, yet it has a direct effect on what type of art gets made, and by whom.

Up for auction at the benefit will be the works from Benedetto's current installation at Chapter NY. These are juxtapositions of beautiful landscapes, cheesy Powerpoint grids, and poetic words about love, sex, and modern romance. The works showcase her talent for bridging disparate ideas. The focus is on the experience of sex from the perspective of both genders, and on the misguided social emphasis placed on orgasm. Benedetto feels that sex has become commercialized in much the same way that art has.



Cara Benedetto, *Measuring Him Self* (2014). Courtesy of the artist and Chapter NY.

"The work is very much about the erotics of consumerism and the patriarchal culture of sexual encounters where things are built around the isolated experience of a giant eruption," she said. If you're not sure you buy it, take a look at the cover of almost any women's lifestyle magazine and see what they're touting alongside this season's new boots.

In reference to the installation attendees of the event will get to explore, the benefit is called "Come Early and Often," and Benedetto hopes that mentality will be adopted throughout the evening.

Tickets, while limited, are still available, but beware: at this party, you're not just a guest, you're a participant. "Anything can happen," the artist said, "Everything is contingent on the way that [participants] treat one another."

*Cara Benedetto's "Come Early and Often" benefit takes place September 21.*