

# FLASH

EDITOR: ALEXANDRA KOTUR

## IT GIRL MIRANDA BROOKS

THE LANDSCAPE ARTIST  
WEDS ARCHITECT BASTIEN  
HALARD IN A GARDEN  
OF HER OWN DESIGN.

In mid-June of last year, **Miranda Brooks** was walking through the exceptionally beautiful gardens she had designed for a friend's bucolic Long Island compound. "The gardens were perfect," Brooks remembers, every rose abloom, every scabious and daisy turning its face to the sun. So perfect, in fact, that her friend said, "We must do a party this time next year. We've got to find an excuse!"

Serendipitously, June 19, 2010, was the thirtieth birthday of the dashing architect **Bastien Halard**, Brooks's beau and the father of their enchanting daughters, **Poppy**, 4, and **Violette Grey**, 2. Halard felt that if friends and family would come in from Europe and points more exotic for the festivities, he might want to give them something grander to celebrate. And so, persuaded by an artful friend that Brooks "is far more traditional than people think; she's not just an old hippie," Halard proposed in the property's picturesque boathouse. "I'm a bit allergic to weddings," says Brooks, playfully declaring, "This is Bastien's wedding; he's the bride!" *flash >102*



**GYPSY WOMAN**  
BROOKS, IN OSCAR  
DE LA RENTA, DANCES  
THE FLAMENCO.  
HAIR, SUSAN  
CAMPBELL; MAKEUP,  
MELISSA SILVER.  
PHOTOGRAPHED  
BY JOSHUA BRIGHT.  
SITTINGS EDITOR:  
ALEXANDRA KOTUR.



**MOTHER'S LITTLE HELPERS**  
HALARD AND BROOKS'S ATTENDANTS INCLUDED DAUGHTERS POPPY (HOLDING TRAIN) AND VIOLETTE GREY.



**ART OF THE MEAL**  
THE PROGRAM, PAINTED BY HUGO GUINNESS, IN A CENTERPIECE DESIGNED BY JOHN FOLLINI.

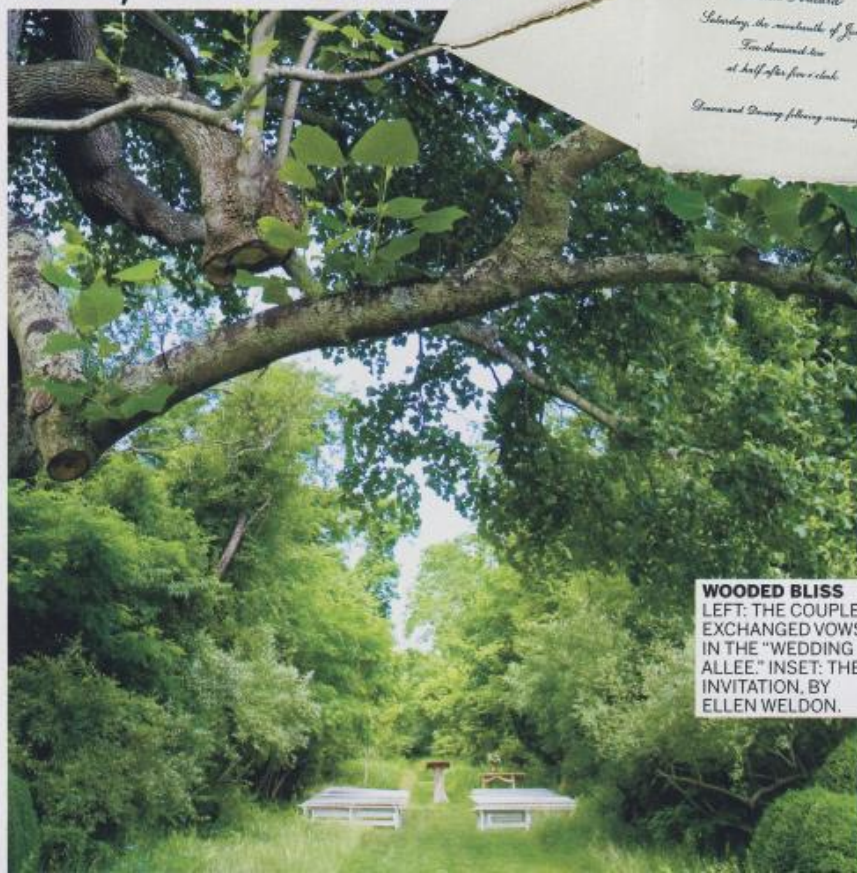


**EATING OUT**  
RAÚL ÁVILA'S STRIPED CANOPY.

The wedding preparations proved to be an elaborately choreographed dance. "Bastien said he wanted no tent and everyone to eat on their laps. He wanted a huge party, and I was happy with twelve intimate friends!" Brooks wanted her wedding to capture the atmosphere of *Underground*, a Serbian dark comedy by **Emir Kusturica**. Antic, chaotic, with a baffling plot involving Eastern European drug barons and Gypsy revelers, the film might have seemed an unlikely starting point for a wedding whose events would unfold in the lush acreage of this estate, but the couple was never going to have a conventional ceremony.

The bride worked with **Oscar de la Renta** on a dress inspired by Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette*—an elaborate froth of pintucks and ruffles, with a great bustled overskirt that was sent to India to be embroidered with poppies and violets (and that could be detached for dancing). Brooks and Halard spent Easter Sunday at the Paris *puces* looking for antique dresses for the bridesmaids. ("We were in so much trouble because we were late for the Halard Easter lunch," Brooks remembers.) The girls chose ribbons of pale yellow or blue, and *flash* >104

## PERSUADED THAT BROOKS WAS "MORE TRADITIONAL THAN PEOPLE THINK AND NOT JUST A HIPPIE," HALARD PROPOSED



*The pleasure of your company  
is requested at the marriage of  
Merenda Brooks  
and  
Bastien Halard  
Saturday, the nineteenth of June  
Two thousand two  
at half after five o'clock  
Dinner and Dancing following ceremony*

**WOODED BLISS**  
LEFT: THE COUPLE EXCHANGED VOWS IN THE "WEDDING ALLEE." INSET: THE INVITATION, BY ELLEN WELDON.





**FIELD DAY**  
LEFT: SILVIA LLOSES.  
BELOW: ALEXIS  
BRYAN MORGAN.



Brooks wore Queen Anne's lace in her hair. (The groom's suit was fashioned by **Mr. Ned**, with a great deal of direction from the sartorially impeccable **Daniel Romualdez**.) Brooks's nieces, Isabelle, nine; Lola, eight; Bea, four; and her nephew, Jasper, two, joined her daughters as attendants.

In the end Nature, as is her wont, did not quite perform according to plan. After a late spring of blistering heat, the gardens had already bloomed and faded by mid-June, leaving a more mysterious backdrop of oceanic greens. "That whole courtyard is supposed to be covered in poppies, and literally only one came up!" Brooks moaned. "I've forbidden anyone to touch it. At the last minute I'll pick it for Poppy to wear in her hair." But the day dawned balmy, and the Long Island light was perfection.

As Brooks was readied, her elegant mother, **Ronni Sergeant**, taught the girls how to walk (under the shade of a wisteria-and-honeysuckle pergola), and 96 guests made their way to the trestle benches set up in the linden-tree walk that Brooks named the Wedding Allee on the invitation's garden plan. Guitarist **Rob Powell** heralded the bridal party with "Greensleeves," and a moist-eyed Brooks appeared, a *Barry Lyndon* vision of frothing sprigged muslin, her brother, **Sebastian Sergeant's** lurcher, Finn, gamboling at her feet, completing the *Gainsborough* picture.

**Father John Owens** (at a lectern fashioned from branches by multi-tasking estate manager **John Follini**)



**WORLDLY GUESTS**  
ABOVE: STELLA TENNANT.  
BELOW: OLYA THOMPSON AND HER DAUGHTER ANASTASIA.



**LIVES OF THE PARTY**  
CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: WEDDING GUEST SCOUT. INDIA JANE BIRLEY. TARAJIA MORRELL, WITH ELLIOTT PUCKETTE. SEBASTIAN SERGEANT AND FINN.



quoted **Gertrude Stein** and **Emily Dickinson** as he expounded on the inexplicable magic of love, and Poppy, in a gesture of touching poetry, clung to her father's leg and her mother's skirts. Free-spirited Grey, meanwhile, took off into the woods, muddying her broderie anglaise.

The marriage rites duly completed, the strains of the Gypsy band Romashka wafted through the woods. Then this motley group led us through magical woodland walks to the Tulip Tree Field, where cocktails were served in brightly colored blown-glass beakers and hot-air lanterns were released (and set a tree alight—but what is a wedding without drama?). Brooks donned a Spanish felt hat and danced the flamenco with her new husband and their daughters, and **Olya** and **Charles Thompson's** exquisite seven-year-old *flash* >106



daughter **Anastasia** (with a giant blue rose in her hair and a spangled antique dress) stole all hearts performing a Russian dance with a preternatural grace and assurance.

For guests who didn't receive the *gitanes* memo, goddess-draped Lanvin was the dress of choice, and **Stella Tennant** was breathtakingly elegant in vintage Galliano. Dinner, prepared by **Hank Tomashevski** and **James Abbate**, was served by an Adonis army in a *salon vert* hemmed by high hornbeam walls, under a tented burlap-and-linen striped canopy designed by **Raúl Ávila** and hung with pressed-tin lanterns from Istanbul. Picnic tables were shrouded in burlap and set with a vast assortment of antique pottery jugs filled with peonies and meadow flowers (earlier in the day Ávila's assistants could be seen gingerly picking their way through the tick-thronged undergrowth in search of the perfect frond of wild grass). Sebastian claimed that he had waited 34 years to give his roast, recalling his elder sister feeding her siblings ladybug "sweets" in the bluebell woods of their childhood. Bastien's best men recalled their affectionate nicknames for him, and the groom confessed, "I actually love being bossed," which is frankly just as well.

The dance floor was set in another enclosure, within a tapestry hedge of hornbeam, box, and ilex. Under a spreading crab-apple tree, bales of straw were scattered over the striped Moroccan dhurries for weary dancers to rest. The revelry continued into the small hours, music echoing through the woodland glades. Just as the newlyweds had conceived it, the effect was as painterly and bewitching as a Gypsy encampment in a **Constable** painting.

—HAMISH BOWLES

flash >108



**THE MERRYING KIND**  
THE COUPLE, SERENADED BY THE GYPSY BAND ROMASHKA.



**EARTHY DELIGHT**  
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: BROOKS'S GARDEN PLAN, EDWARD SHAFFER AND POPPY HALARD. THE BRIDE'S OVERSKIRT WAS DETACHABLE.

**THE COUPLE WAS NEVER GOING TO HAVE A CONVENTIONAL CEREMONY**

