


#### PUTTIN' ON THE GLITZ

The sumptuous Costume Institute gala marked the opening of "Poiret: King of Fashion," an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum from May 9 to August 5. FROM LEFT: A coat designed in 1911 at Poiret's "Little Factory" by famed printmaker Raoul Dufy; the evening's cohosts Cate Blanchett (in Balenciaga) and Nicolas Ghesquière; the Charles Engelhard Court, where dinner was served.

*à grand*

INTERVIEW: ROBERT THAYER; BLANCHETT AND Ghesquière:  
KRISTEN SONODY © VWD/Conde Nast/Corbis

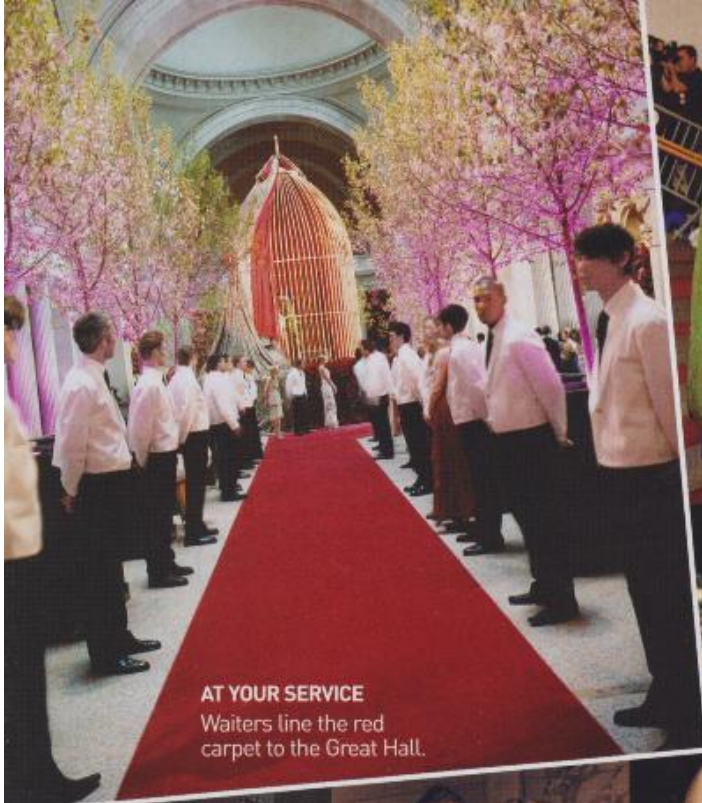


A man in a black tuxedo with a white shirt and black tie stands on a red carpet. He is looking towards the camera. To his right is a large, ornate dining hall with many round tables covered in white cloths. The tables are set with glassware, plates, and floral centerpieces. The room is decorated with large, colorful, abstract murals on the walls and a large, yellow, abstract lampshade hanging from the ceiling. The overall style is reminiscent of Paul Poiret's early 20th-century fashion and interior design.

Hollywood  
and fashion  
luminaries  
pay festive tribute  
to Paul Poiret's  
indelible style  
at the Met.  
William Norwich  
joins the  
celebration.

*affair*





**AT YOUR SERVICE**  
Waiters line the red carpet to the Great Hall.



Lisa Airan in a Poiret cape and a Rodarte dress.



Donna Acquavella and Annette de la Renta, both wearing Oscar de la Renta.



Tom Ford in his own design.



Liv Tyler, wearing Calvin Klein.



Agyness Deyn in Burberry.



Samantha Rosen in Rochas.



Jayne Wrightsman (in Chanel) with Oscar de la Renta.



Yves Saint Laurent's Stefano Pilati with Julianne Moore (in a dress of his design).



Jemma Kidd in Allegra Hicks, with her husband, Arthur Mornington.



Marc Jacobs and Winona Ryder, wearing a Marc Jacobs antique velvet dress.



Renée Zellweger in Carolina Herrera.



Jennifer Connelly, wearing Balenciaga, with husband Paul Bettany.



Marina Rust in Versace.



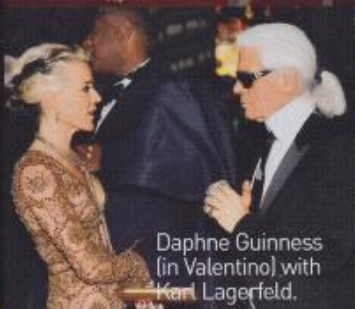
Kirsten Dunst, wearing vintage Yves Saint Laurent, and Johnny Borrell.



Renée Rockefeller in Oscar de la Renta.



L'Wren Scott (in Balenciaga) with Mick Jagger.



Daphne Guinness (in Valentino) with Karl Lagerfeld.



Rupert Murdoch and Diana Taylor, in Carolina Herrera.





Jacquetta Wheeler, wearing Roland Mouret.

Miranda Brooks in John Galiano.

Jessica Stam in a 1998 Dior Haute Couture by John Galiano dress.



Burberry's Christopher Bailey with Stella Tennant (wearing a tunic dress by Burberry).



Salma Hayek (in Balenciaga) with the event's honorary chair, François-Henri Pinault.



Joely Richardson in Peter Somi.



Karolina Kurkova in a vintage Roberto Cavalli cape.



Alexis Bryan, wearing Poiret.



Queen Rania of Jordan in Giambattista Valli.



Shalom Harlow in Viktor & Rolf.

tonight the hundreds of paparazzi erupting on the red-carpeted stairs of the Metropolitan Museum are screaming so loudly, even the Met's most hallowed distant halls are echoing: "Salma! Stop! MICK! Kirsten, who's the dude? Lindsay! STELLA!" Unlike an Oscar party where celebrities dodge photographers for every sip, kiss, or puff one might otherwise enjoy in polite society, however, a photographer-free Arcadia reigns inside tonight. Once the star has negotiated her entrance, a lady can relax. At the Oscars, guests wait anxiously to see who wins the gold. At the Met gala, the gold is the invitation.

Renée Zellweger, wearing a strapless Carolina Herrera dress, floats up the steps and encounters Jennifer Garner, who remarks that their dresses are as pretty in the back as they are in the front—"I wish I could enter backward," she says. "Me, too," says Renée, smiling. Once inside the museum's Great Hall, Renée stops before continuing along a red carpet lined with handsome waiters and pretty young magazine and museum volunteers—when Jimmy Fallon comically shakes all their hands, what can they do but laugh? Just beyond an allée of crab trees, the evening's cochair Cate Blanchett and Nicolas Ghesquière, the creative director of Balenciaga, are receiving near the entrance to this season's exhibition, "Poiret: King of Fashion."

A swarm of paparazzi may be par for the course, but what really grabs Renée's attention is a 20-foot-high birdcage filled with four exquisite peacocks and surrounded by more than 12,000 long-stemmed red roses and a cascade of brown and black fabric designed by the artist Raoul Dufy for Poiret. "So that's why I couldn't find red roses for my friend's birthday. That's crazy! How perfectly Poiret!" She smiles, relishing the visual references to the King of Fashion's vibrant designs inspired by the Ballets Russes, the Wiener Werkstätte, and *The 1001 Nights*.

This evening's event—which raised upwards of \$5.8 million for the Costume Institute—began two years ago, when the Metropolitan acquired clothing from Poiret's estate at auction. Support for an exhibition was sought and eventually received from Balenciaga, owned by the French company PPR—"Not so much the comparisons but the parallels between the two designers are very interesting," explains Ghesquière. Honorary chair of the evening was François-Henri Pinault—chairman and chief executive officer of PPR, and Salma Hayek's handsome fiancé. Ghesquière was asked to serve as cochair with Cate Blanchett.

Even before last year's exhibition, "AngloMania," came down, planning had begun for the Poiret evening. A group led by *Vogue*'s Director of Special Events Stephanie Winston Wolkoff and Met president Emily Rafferty began to meet in the Met's boardroom at 7:30 A.M. on Mondays.

Told that the direction for this year's event was to create a theatrical environment, some fifteen decorators, party designers, and architects were sent Poiret monographs for inspiration. Proposals were due back within two weeks. The winners were Jean-Hugues de Chatillon, a scenographer for European operas, and Raul Avila, the noted New York-based party designer. Jean-Hugues's proposal included a series of huge, colorful lanterns inspired by Poiret's dresses to hang in the Charles Engelhard Court, fabrics for the walls, and exotically colored tablecloths. Raul mastered the execution, including the great peacock cage. The



New York interior decorator Jesse Carrier found fabrics for chair coverings—for 750 guests.

After several tastings by the society caterer Glorious Food, a menu was determined, inspired by a cookbook Poiret produced in 1928. To start, rosettes of smoked salmon with caviar and Louis Jadot Chassagne-Montrachet 2003; next, scalloped veal with morels, served with spring vegetables and a potato galette with truffles. A Les Forts Latour, Millésime 1999, was served with the entrée. And for dessert, gâteau moka and crème anglaise.

Eleven days before the event, some 30 people convene to discuss the big night. After the meeting, event organizers spend an hour or so walking through the Met discussing the security needs of Queen Rania of Jordan should Her Majesty decide to attend—one hour she is, the next she isn't. The French ambassador is coming; so, too, the consul general and the mayor of New York. Issues of protocol emerge at a breakneck pace. Apart from all the dignitaries and movie stars, there is the not exactly small question of whether the Rangers will play a seventh game in the conference semifinals, in which case Sean Avery and Brendan Shanahan will not attend (they do attend).

**A**fter painstaking diplomacy with the queen's people—it is explained that it would not be, well, kosher American etiquette for her to command other guests to come to her table—the event planners retreat to Raul Avila's workspace in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. The materials for tablecloths, pillows, and settees—painted by Jean-Hugues and produced in China to save money—have arrived and are not precise replications of the samples sent, but never mind; the problem will be solved by a team of local seamstresses.

On Saturday, 48 hours before the event, the sound equipment is loaded into the Engelhard Court. The calligrapher, nearly finished with 750 place cards, is on hand for any last-minute changes. (Queen Rania, for the moment, is not coming.) In the Met's conference room, nearly two dozen people hover over names, lists, and place cards, while downstairs Raul installs faux and perimeter walls. Huge wall coverings go up in the Engelhard Court, as well as the gigantic lanterns—much discussion ensues about placement. The stage is decorated, the pond is filled, and rosebushes are situated here and there but look a bit spare. "We will fill in with cut flowers on Monday," Raul explains, a process someone equates with getting hair extensions.

A message arrives. The queen of Jordan is now coming. Sunday morning, Jean-Hugues is still obsessing about the



Zani  
Gugelmann  
in Lanvin



FROM LEFT: Kathryn  
Neale (in Calvin  
Klein), Suzy Menkes,  
and Jennifer Hudson  
(in Michael Kors)



Vera Wang and  
Carolina Herrera,  
each in her  
own design.



New York  
mayor Michael  
Bloomberg  
and co-chairs  
Anna Wintour,  
Cate Blanchett,  
and Nicolas  
Chesquière.

"That's why  
I couldn't find  
roses for  
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said Renée  
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"How perfectly  
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**BLOOMS AND  
PLUMES**

In honor of Poiret's extravagant use of feathers and flowers (the rose was his personal emblem), four peacocks perch in a gilded cage fringed by a hedge of more than 12,000 roses.





Cameron Diaz in Dior by John Galiano.



Lauren duPont and Hana Soukupova, both wearing designs by Thakoon Panichgul (center).



Eliza Bolen (in Oscar de la Renta) with Raquel Zimmermann and Caroline Trentini (both in vintage Balenciaga).



Jennifer Hudson (in Michael Kors), the evening's special performer.



Natasha Richardson (in Gucci) with her mother, Vanessa Redgrave (in Carolina Herrera).



Charlotte Gainsbourg (in Balenciaga) with husband Yvan Attal.



Wendi Murdoch in Alberta Ferretti.



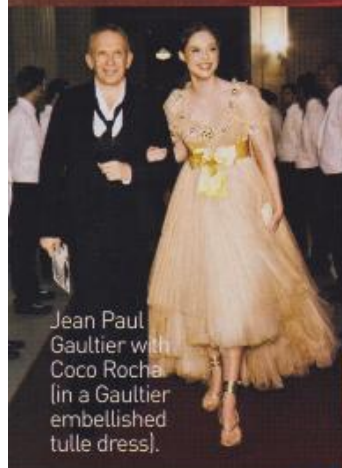
Josh Hartnett.



Alicia Keys, wearing Armani Privé.



Melania Trump in Michael Kors.



Jean Paul Gaultier with Coco Rocha (in a Gaultier embellished tulle dress).



Michael Sheen with Amanda Harlech, wearing Chanel Haute Couture.



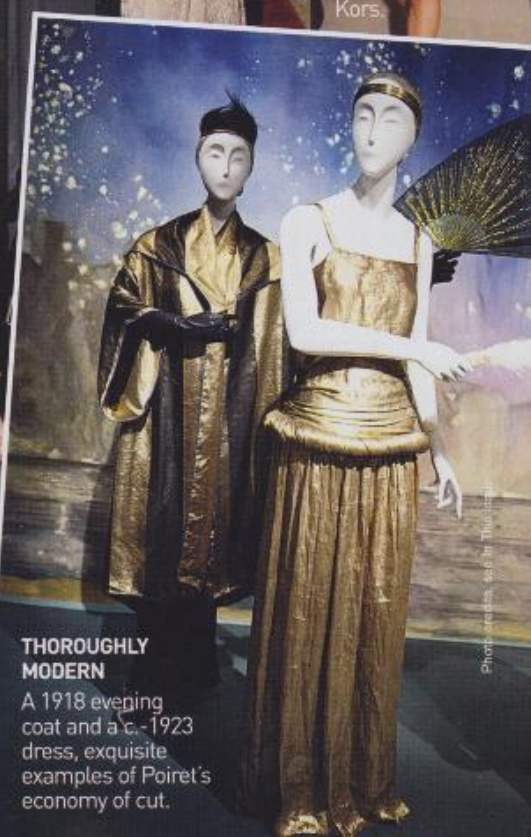
Ziyi Zhang (in Marchesa) with Vivi Nevo.



Gisele Bündchen (in Yves Saint Laurent) with Tom Brady.



Jennifer Lopez in Marchesa.



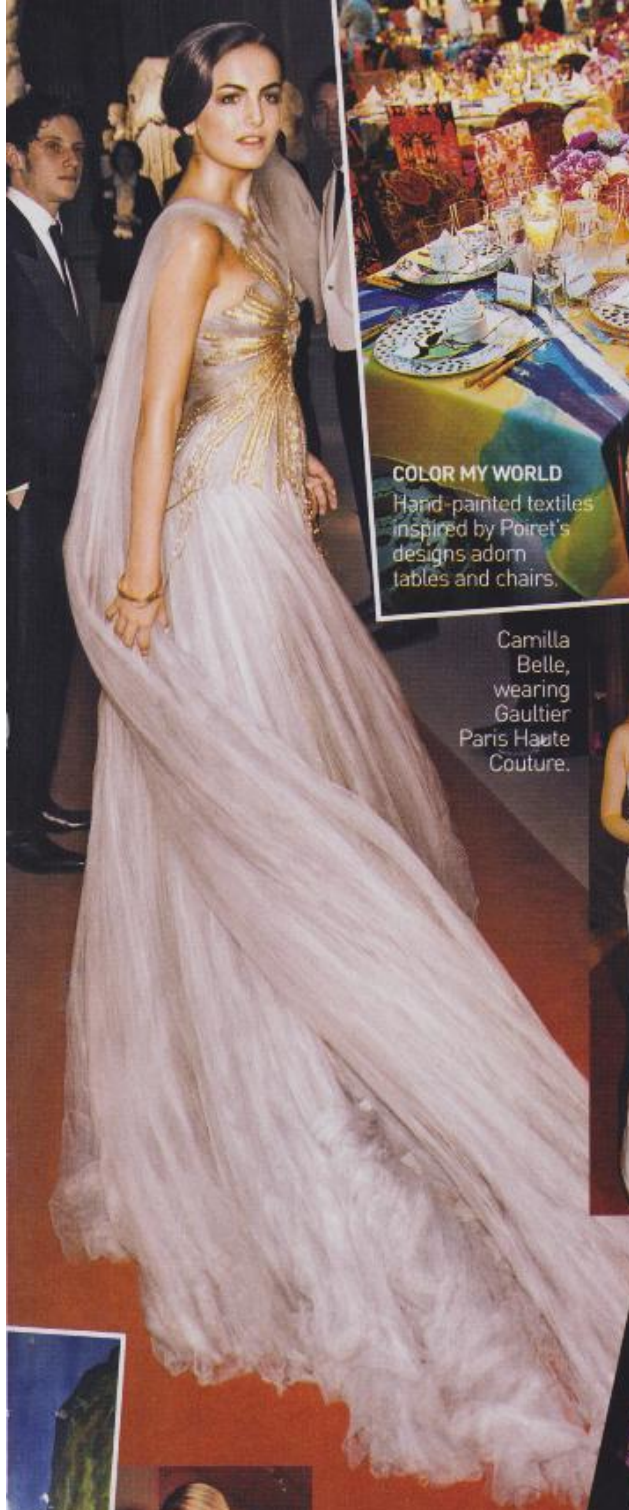
# THOROUGHLY MODERN

A 1918 evening coat and a c. 1923 dress, exquisite examples of Poiret's economy of cut.





**COLOR MY WORLD**  
Hand-painted textiles inspired by Poiret's designs adorn tables and chairs.



Camilla Belle, wearing Gaultier Paris Haute Couture.



**POIRET**



Elizabeth Banks in Prada.

Doo-Ri Chung in her own silk jersey dress.



Elettra Rossellini Wiedemann, wearing Yves Saint Laurent.



Hugh Dancy with Claire Danes, in Prada.



Scarlett Johansson in Stella McCartney.



Zac Posen with Lucy Liu, wearing a Zac Posen silk chiffon dress.



Mischa Barton, wearing Giambattista Valli.



Liev Schreiber with Naomi Watts, in Zac Posen.



James Rousseau with Kate Bosworth, wearing Prada.

Photo credits: see page 100

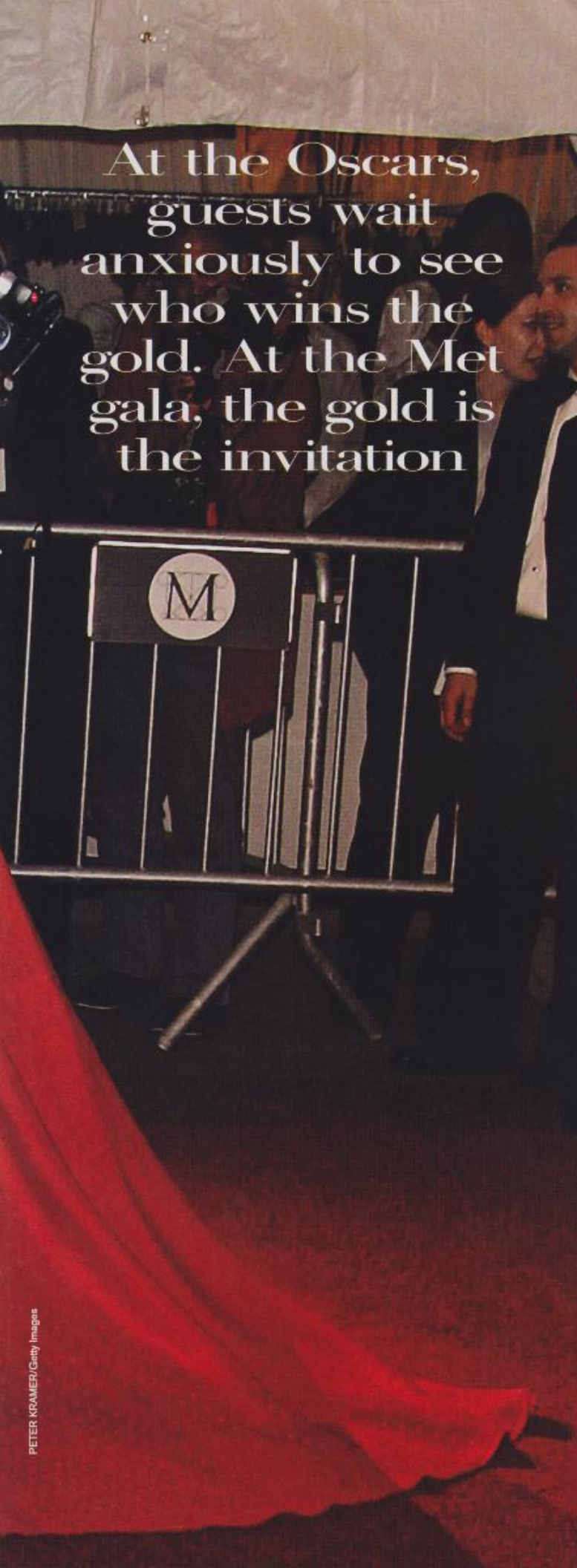




#### LADY IN RED

The sweeping hemline of Jennifer Garner's vintage Valentino Haute Couture dress pays homage to the King of Fashion's genius for drape.





At the Oscars,  
guests wait  
anxiously to see  
who wins the  
gold. At the Met  
gala, the gold is  
the invitation

placement of the lanterns. At about three o'clock, Nicolas Ghesquière arrives for a walk-through. When the museum closes Sunday afternoon, Raul loads in his birdcage for the Great Hall, the trees, and the ingredients for the floral arrangements. Raul stays at the Met until four in the morning, when he goes home, showers, and arrives at the flower market by 5:00 A.M. He survives by eating fruits and vegetables for energy and drinking a lot of water. "Tap water," he says. "If it is good for the flowers, it is good enough for me."

By Monday morning, Command Central rearranges tables as guests drop out. (Kate Hudson isn't coming; Burberry designer Christopher Bailey's table is in turnaround; Jack Black has called to say that he would like to attend the dinner—this may be a crank call; and is the queen of Jordan coming? Yes, but at 9:00 instead of 7:30, and who will greet her?)

**i**n the Engelhard Court, Glorious Food is setting up. Between the plates, the chargers, the silver, the glasses and the hyacinths, peonies, tulips, narcissus, and anemones for the centerpieces, its caravan kitchen off the Temple of Dendur looks like a cross between the third floor at Tiffany and a flower market along the Nile. A press conference commences in the Petrie Court. Met director Philippe de Montebello makes welcoming remarks to the press and assorted French visitors, including François-Henri Pinault and Nicolas Ghesquière. He is followed by Costume Institute curator in charge Harold Koda, who, smiling at Mr. de Montebello, says, "I have the rare and singular privilege of being able to correct our director's pronunciation of Nicolas Ghesquière," which is pronounced "Jes-care" as opposed to "Guess-care." This creates a frisson of pronunciation concerns that will last the rest of the evening, or at least until the second glass of champagne.

Meanwhile, out in the entrance area, Raul, practically floating in tap water, is providing last-minute camouflage for anything unsightly—some extra boxwood masks two small information booths. At 1:15 in the Great Hall, the peacocks arrive courtesy of their very humane keeper, Norm Johnson, who has been breeding peacocks for the past seventeen years. Just as the birds are placed in their cage, Naomi Campbell arrives. All male heads turn, which somehow results in one of the peacocks' taking flight in the direction of the Temple of Dendur. "He will come back as soon as he gets hungry," says Johnson, shrugging.

At 2:00, Jennifer Hudson, wearing jeans and white shirt, arrives to rehearse four songs, including "La Vie en Rose," and declares the acoustics in the Engelhard Court perfect. At 3:00, anyone attending dinner goes home to dress. At 4:10, François-Henri Pinault is spotted in Zitomer pharmacy on Madison Avenue shopping for baby toys. At 5:00, hairdresser John Barrett is styling the hair of Vanessa Redgrave and Tatiana Santo Domingo, while Peter Butler prepares Lindsay Lohan.

At 7:30, Mick Jagger rehearses Naomi Campbell in the correct pronunciation of Ghesquière. Kirsten Dunst and her boyfriend, the musician Johnny Borrell, explore the choir screen from the Cathedral at Valladolid, hoping they will run into a Jack-and-Coke. Cate Blanchett kids Renée Zellweger about pulling up the rear of the receiving line.

"You herald the end," says Cate.

"And you look gorgeous," Renée laughs, and looks back one more time at the explosion of life and red roses before dinner. □