

The Sydney Morning Herald

SE News
HD **Private Sydney**
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WC 1,653 words
PD 17 October 2015
SN Sydney Morning Herald
SC SMHH
ED First
PG 24
LA English
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'Gatsby' can still throw a party

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There was no sign of former treasurer Joe Hockey at the "White Party" held on the manicured lawns of the multimillion-dollar Hunters Hill estate owned by his neighbour, Chinese billionaire Kui Zhang "Sam" Guo, who PS first dubbed the Chinese Gatsby thanks to his lavish parties.

Instead of Hockey, it was a mixed bunch of Shenzhen and Sydney socialites who mingled with Guo, who had donned his favourite party robes and slippers for the special occasion, his monthly knees-up overlooking Sydney Harbour.

While Sydney's VIP concierge to the stars Karim Gharbi chatted with fast rising Chinese-born Sydney real estate queen Monika Tu, also there was Chinese socialite Crystal Lynn, who appears to have mastered the selfie posing with equally photogenic Sydney bon vivant and Chinese business/social lubricator Ryan Gollan, who has been helping Guo host his regular soirees. Another guest of note was a chap named Meng Lee, who has been travelling the world buying millions of dollars worth of wine to stock his cellar back in China, with a few cases of Grange high on his list. While language was a bit of a challenge making conversations stilted, all came good with a little help from various translation apps on smartphones, firm friends were made by the time the champagne bar was drained dry.

On Monday, Guo made his first Australian television appearance on Four Corners with former Herald investigative journalist Linton Besser managing to get quite a bit of information out of the man who Hockey admitted suggesting he be investigated by the Foreign Investment Review Board after becoming suspicious of the circumstances surrounding his \$12 million purchase of the expansive Windermere Estate.

We learned Guo wanted to become China's greatest oil painter and regularly poses in photographs with instruments he does not know how to play. Thanks to Hockey he became a regular in gossip columns across China although he diplomatically told Four Corners: "I don't think what [Mr Hockey] did was wrong. Australia is a legal society, so everybody has the right and obligation to supervise us, these new migrants."

In June, Hockey outed his neighbour during a radio interview about the government's crackdown on foreigners buying Australian property.

"I referred one of my own neighbours for investigation and found out that yes, they had got approval, but on pretty spurious grounds," Hockey told 3AW. Those "spurious grounds" were proposed renovations approved by the local council before Guo's purchase.

"It was a kilometre down the road and they bought a property on the basis that . . . they were going to add to the housing stock by building a granny flat out the back or something, and I thought 'that's ridiculous'," Hockey said at the time.

Guo was reluctant to discuss the issue and told Four Corners: "I really don't want to publish that in the media. It's true about the investigation, but I already got development approval of the area close to here and very soon we will start construction," he said, showing Four Corners the fenced-off garage to be rebuilt into a second dwelling.

GROOM ON A LEASH

Sydney artist Charles Billich and his wife Christa have long held unconventional views on marriage but have managed to last the distance (as well as a few third wheels) to soon mark their 30th wedding anniversary. "Darlink, we also believe in marriage equality for everyone," Christa purred in her thick Bavarian lilt when PS asked about her upcoming wedding for their beloved pet fluff-ball, a pooch named Charlie, who is set to cross species borders in the name of love by marrying a giant fluffy cat named Bentley who belongs to Christa's friend Armana Hart, at a lavish ceremony (Charlie is arriving to the wedding in a Rolls Royce along with "mother of the bride" Christa) to be followed with a champagne-fuelled reception, speeches and screening of a special wedding video (eat you heart out Salim Mehajer) on December 5.

MOET UNCORKED

Once it was what was in the glass which distinguished the sort of soiree you were at, these days it is almost as much about what sort of glass you are holding. On Thursday night at a swanky mansion overlooking Gordons Bay, Moet Hennessy unveiled its new "Private Events" concept, which is essentially a service for private party hosts to have all the trimmings - from logo-emblazoned glassware, Moet bathtubs filled with ice and champagne, pop-up cocktail bars and a team of waiters and bartenders come to your home and throw the sort of party which was once the exclusive domain of social pages. While all that glamour doesn't come cheap, the booze giant is trialling the concept in Australia before rolling it out around the world, with the Chinese market and its status-conscious devotees expected to lap it up.

SYDNEY BALL

They both sport the "regulation bob" of the high priestess of world fashion magazines Anna Wintour, but rival editors and long-time friends, Harpers Bazaar's Kellie Hush and Vogue Australia's Edwina McCann, are duelling for another of Wintour's crowns: the ultimate party host. PS hears McCann has been in deep discussions with the Powerhouse Museum's Centre for Fashion about throwing a Sydney version of New York's Met Gala Ball which was pioneered by Wintour and has become the world's most coveted red carpet event. The Sydney ball would follow Australian Fashion Week next May with talk of a staggering budget of around \$1 million. Some big names have been discussing the idea, from Cate Blanchett and Catherine Martin to Miuccia Prada and even Wintour herself. But such a costly event seems a long way off from becoming reality, which opens the way for Hush to steal McCann's thunder with next week's grand Bazaar In Bloom ball she is hosting to raise money for the Royal Hospital for Women Foundation's Fertility Research Centre. While Hush hasn't snared Wintour for the party, PS hears the glamour editrix will have Lara Bingle at her table.

Real lives of Sydney'swives

Move over Gina Liano and your southern sisters: it's time for Sydney's unreal "housewives" to shine, but the big question is who will make it to the final cut.

Top secret screen tests have been undertaken in recent weeks across town of potential candidates to star in a new franchise of the hit Real Housewives television franchise to be filmed in Sydney.

And what an assortment of ladies they have been talking to.

PS hears celebrity hairdresser Joh Bailey's long-time business partner Marilyn Koch, a woman who is so plugged into the goings-on of Double Bay she could be nicknamed the Countess of Transvaal Avenue, has been filmed as a potential star of the show. So too has Matty Samaei, the exotic Iranian-born beauty therapist who has injected more botox into Sydney ladies than anyone and who bills herself as a "Persian Princess", who was filmed in her Sydney clinic.

Fashion designer Charlie Brown has also been in talks with producers, as has former beauty queen-turned-party planner Nicole Gazal O'Neil and Kate Sorrenti, the wife of comedian Vince Sorrenti.

"The show is in its very, very early stages - the final list of names is not determined and we could be looking at a dozen women before we make the final decisions on who is going to be the best talent on the show," a Foxtel spokesman told PS.

The Real Housewives of Melbourne has been a runaway hit for Foxtel, not just in Australia but across the world, with the unlikely ambassadors flying our bedazzled flag on television screens across Britain and the United States.

Let's see if our Sydney girls can turn up the volume on Liano and Co.

Will Vogue icon ruffle angel's feathers?

One can only imagine the scene as the late Bernie Leser (above) , the founder of Vogue Australia who passed away at home on Tuesday aged 90, arrived at the pearly gates this week to be greeted by the likes of his one-time bete noire, the somewhat tyrannical former editor of his famed magazine, the one and only Sheila Scotter (below), with whom he famously feuded for nearly half a century.

It was Leser who eventually sacked Scotter, the undisputed queen of style from the 1960s to the 1980s, from the helm at Vogue back in 1971 after the pair repeatedly clashed.

Leser told the Herald in 1995: "I terminated her career with Conde Nast which she thought could not be terminated. She thought she was running the show when I was. It was Sheila who didn't talk to me, by the way, not me who didn't talk to Sheila." Scotter, who died in 2012 aged 82, said of her old boss: "He didn't have instinctive style and he hasn't got it now".

In the end the pair apparently mended their relationship, though it was noted in 1999 at the Vogue Australia 40th anniversary Scotter talked loudly during Leser's speech, despite being repeatedly asked to keep quiet. Fashion designer Robert Burton stepped in and calmed things down.

But Scotter was just one of many chapters in Leser's extraordinary life, who went on from being a young Jewish boy who escaped Germany and the Nazis to become one of the magazine world's brightest stars during its halcyon years in the second half of the 20th century, launching Vogue not just in Australia but across five different continents and climbing his way to the top of the Conde Nast global empire.

Leser is survived by his wife of 63 years Barbara, a daughter Deborah, sons David and Daniel, and granddaughters Jordan and Hannah.

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AN Document SMHH000020151016ebah0005g