

Ed Ruscha's party favor at Ruben Diaz and Bec Ulrich's wedding



PHOTO BY BETTINA HUBBY

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SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING BIZARRE

Get Hubbed turns a wedding into performance art

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

In a way, every wedding is a multimedia theatrical production. Each detail is managed, choreographed and rehearsed, from rings to cakes, seating charts, music, vows, catering, decoration and, of course, wardrobe.

Wedding professionals have to pull off people's most cherished romantic fantasies. Hell, the wedding-induced emotional meltdown is its own reality television subgenre. And these days, couples — especially young, hip, creative types — are increasingly interested in personalized, unique, YouTube-ready productions that seek to modernize tradition in a way that helps them feel better about their embrace of institutional social convention.

For one such couple, photographer Ruben Diaz and artist/designer Bec Ulrich, the answer wasn't to get married; it was to Get Hubbed.

Instead of hiring *My Fair Wedding* star David Tutera, or auditioning for a new season of *Bridezillas*, they expressed their love of art, adventure and each other through a creative collaboration with artist and interdisciplinary impresario Bettina Hubby.

What they got was both a memorable,

lively and infectious joyful wedding day on Sept. 25, and a one-day festival of interactive visual and performance art featuring contributions from friends and art luminaries — Barbara Bestor, Ed Ruscha, Joe Sola, Skip Arnold, Roger Herman and Michele O'Marah — some of which later were exhibited at the Eagle Rock Center for the Arts.

The overall concept was to have artists reimagine the common, fundamental elements of the traditional Western wedding ceremony. The favors by Olivia Prime, for instance, were earth-toned cardboard geodes hanging from a wall, designed to be pulled off it and opened to reveal the playbill — er, program — inside, written on a tiny parchment scroll.

Guests were greeted at the pre-ceremony cocktails with an installation examining the often-obscure origins of things like rice throwing, bridal veils and the business with something old, new, borrowed and blue.

Books were a running motif of the imagery, and Nicholas Kahn offered a series of manipulated books, one of which held “borrowed” family-heirloom jewelry.

An Andy Kaufman-esque “sermon” by Joe Sola used humor and even a fake pratfall to convey the unpredictability of

married life, the certainty of troubles and the indispensable value of having a sense of humor.

It was during this monologue that it first fully dawned on me that the wedding guests were divided equally between the couple's real friends and family, who were simply at their loved ones' wedding, and art-world people who had been invited to witness a performance event and, like me, may not even know the couple personally. I could tell them apart because the latter started laughing way before the initially horrified former group did.

The couple said their vows not on a

bed of rose petals but on a carpet of glitter, and then retired to a private space designed by Daveed Kapoor and Alison Kudlow, an architect and an artist who are themselves a couple. In the Jewish tradition, immediately after the ceremony and just before the wedding reception begins, they share a period of time, normally 10 to

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20 minutes, secluded in a room together. *Yichud*, literally meaning “becoming one,” is the first time the new husband and wife can be completely alone with each other. The blue and silver cloud chamber was sunlit and casual-comfy chic, like a perfect Pacific sky. “We are reimagining the traditional atrium — a central domestic area open to the sky — with a California theme,” says the couple in a statement about the piece.

The rice throwing was reconceived by Arnold as a double curtain of falling water through which the couple emerged to greet the crowd as husband and wife. The space between the waters was a light-infused private moment in which the setting sun cooperated to produce a bit of giddy magic.

Instead of a bouquet toss, the bride broke pinatas designed by Hubby herself, and all the singles rushed to grab the cascade of treats. William Stone created the wood-grain, asymmetrical ring box. The wedding cake was a triumph of sculptural trompe l'oeil by Karen Lofgren, resembling a concrete block sporting two bits of steel rebar instead of a plastic, dressed-up couple, to represent both strength and humor.

The fusion of tradition, history, risk and creativity was impressive, but by far my favorite part came about a week later, when I saw a handsome, smiling couple at a MOCA opening, couldn't quite place them at first, and then approached them with my best opening line ever. “Hey, you guys, it's Bec and Ruben, right? We've never met, but I was at your wedding ...”

Karen Lofgren's trompe l'oeil wedding cake



PHOTO BY TYLER HUBBY