

THE STEPHEN MASS PAPERS
MUDD CLUB 1978–1983



Two of Anna Sui's models

EVENT: Anna Sui Fashion Show 1981

LOCATION: 1st and 2nd floors

STYLE: Eclectic Punk and swaggering pirate

THEME: Anti Puritanism

In 1981, Parsons student Anna Sui would hang out with impoverished fellow design students– Marc Jacobs and Tom Ford– and photographer Steven Meisel, all of whom could barely afford the Parson's tuition of \$3,000 much less pay for expensive cocktails at the Mudd Club. S.M. accidentally met them while passing his get in free cards and drink tickets in the student cafeteria and pinning M.C. posters on the student bulletin boards. At the time Anna Sui was working hard to build her own collection for her thesis which was presented as a mix of punk and pirate buccaneer styles. She would work and study all day, take a nap, then meet up with friends and go to the Mudd Club.

–Stephen Mass



Attendee

EVENT: "Brides Night" with George Clinton and spin off musicians from Brides of Funkenstein and Parliament Funkadelic

LOCATION: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Floors

STYLE: Afrofuturism, Glam

MUSIC: Funk Jazz Ska Parliament Funkadelic, Brides of Funkenstein DJ's Dirty Hairy. Roland Alphonso

Brides of Funkenstein made a spectacular entrance teetering on their nine inch platforms while steadying their Larry Le Gaspi plumage. As the Brides left the stage they were accompanied by the Jamaican National Anthem played by Dirty Harry, co-star of the film, *The Harder They Come*. He continued to DJ to the exhilarated crowd until the early hours. Miraculously there wasn't a single wardrobe malfunction. The evening was marred by a New Jersey Grateful Dead fan who loudly made fun of George Clinton's dreadlocks. It was explained to him in a courteous manner that he was not seeing an invasion of martians. But he continued his supercharged acid rant and had to be ejected.

-Stephen Mass



Male model on runway

EVENT: Group Fashion Show of downtown boutiques

LOCATION: 1st and 2nd floors

STYLE: Galactic

THEMES: Pierre Cardin Jetsons, Julie Newmar catwoman

MUSIC: Shox Lumania, Brian Eno

Numerous patrons of the M.C. were boutique owners and fashion designers for rock bands and private clients. This included Mudd Club regulars Anya Phillips, Tish and Snookie Bellomo, Natasha of Revenge, Animal X of Asphalt Jungle, designers from the Cha Cha boutique, Trash and Vaudeville, Cheap Jacks, and Confetti Sport. Spandex was one of their favored fabrics for their fashion experiments, especially prized for its flexibility during the extreme exertions of rock performance. These talented women were a continual presence at M.C. and often held their fashion shows on the Mudd Runway.

–Stephen Mass



Disco dancers resting

EVENT: Disco vs. Punk Group Fashion Show

LOCATION: 1st and 2nd floors

STYLE: (Left) Panty hose with red fetish garters, loose brown tunic and transparent vinyl shoulder wrap. (Right) Bare shoulders dress with turquoise accessories.

THEMES: Studio 54 Disco and Punk Rock

MUSIC: Grace Jones Village People, Gloria Gaynor, Sex Pistols, Clash, Buzzcocks

S.M. had undertaken a personal study to see what kind of interaction might take place between the two contending music styles of disco and punk. He would compose dance floor confrontations and promote fashion feuds between the two camps, sometimes alternating between disco hits like *Ring My Bell* or *YMCA* with punk anthems like *God Save The Queen* and *Life During Wartime* with their punk and pogo rhythms promoting the aggressive behavior of the participants. The results were inconclusive as each group tended to stay in their own silos.

–Stephen Mass



Black Flag guitarist Gregg Ginn

EVENT: Black Flag Concert with presenter and DJ Black Randy

LOCATION: Mudd Club 1st and 2nd floors

STYLE: Hardcore

THEMES: Anti-suburbia anger

MUSIC: Hardcore punk, punk jazz, sludge metal

This band, Black Flag had been referred to Mass by Black Randy, a Los Angeles scenester and radio personality. His recommendation was seconded by Belinda Carlisle, a respected Los Angeles chanteuse. What S.M. didn't realize that Black Randy and Belinda were tricking him into the booking so that Rolling Stone could give Black Flag a write up. As the concert started there was an explosion of violent dancing by fans of the band accompanied by a dervish like eggbeater whirling of arms slapping into anyone in their way, including fifteen year old diminutive skinny goth girls.

–Stephen Mass



Mudd Club 2nd floor, Two women on the ballroom settee

EVENT: 1980 UK ball gown designers fashion show in association with
Blitz Club London

LOCATION: 1st and 2nd floors

STYLE: New Romantic

CONCEPTUAL SOURCES: Cecil Beaton, Newport Society, Alva Vanderbilt,
Zandra Rhodes

THEMES: Women as gift packages

MUSIC: Steve Strange of Visage, Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet,
A Flock of Seagulls, Culture Club

The society ball was a favored template for events at the M.C. There was an Inaugural Ball, a Paranoids Anonymous Ball, a Rock and Roll Funeral Ball, and a D-Day Invasion celebration ball among many others. S.M. was a fan of Charles James. For the Mudd 1980 event S.M. had gowns by Raymond Russell, Zandra Rhodes, and Jasper Conran with models and designers flown over from the UK on Laker budget airlines. S.M. supplemented their gowns with a trove of M.C. bridal gowns salvaged from a bankrupt Puerto Rican dress shop in Queens and madeover for the occasion.

–Stephen Mass



Attendee

EVENT: Joan Jett Live Concert

LOCATION: Mudd Club 1st and 2nd floors

STYLE: Goth

DANCE MUSIC: Joan Jett, Misfits, The Slits, The Go-Go's, Nina Hagen

S.M. booked many of these girl groups including, The Go Go's, Blondie, Malaria, Die Hausfrauen, Nina Hagen, The Slits, and The Runaways. The M.C. outreach to women in rock extended to such musicians as KoKo Taylor, The Shirelles, Crystals, Marvelletes, Joni Mitchell, Holly Near, and Nico.

–Stephen Mass



Marcus Leatherdale and musician performance artist Judy Nylon

EVENT: 1978 Mudd Club as office.

THEME: Artists using the club as their office and salon

LOCATION: 2nd floor, V.I.P. Lounge

STYLE: Motorcycle rockers style black suede jacket from the 1950's

Numerous salon type socials and office conferences were held in the booths with their pink banquetts salvaged from a bankrupt Greek diner. Unable to afford their own offices either because they were homeless (Basquiat) or had dorm rooms that were too small (Rick Rubin). Also using M.C. when bored, Basquiat would paint girls' T-shirts for \$10.00.

Leatherdale who S.M. had met passing out fliers at SVA, had shaved his head and was an aggressive pogo dancer. He also used the Mudd Club as his office, plotting with friends and sharing tips on making it in the New York art world. He apprenticed himself to Robert Mapplethorpe and was also his model and office manager. Nylon is the subject of Brian Eno's song "Back in Judy's Jungle" S.M. and Eno shared a duplex apartment at 9 West Eighth Street.

–Stephen Mass



I LOVE JESUS

I will not bleach my hair
I will not bleach my hair
I will not bleach my hair
I will not bleach my hair
I will not bleach my hair
I will not bleach my hair
I will not bleach my hair

I was
mad
+
of
SASST



***Catholic Parochial School Classroom as part of Catholic Schoolgirls
Disciplinary Reenactments***

EVENT: Reenactments of school discipline from the nuns

LOCATION: 1st and 2nd floors

STYLE: Confessional architecture and design installation

MUSIC: Tish and Snookie Bellomo

The good obedient student and the bad student. Having been found by the Mother Superior to have breached the school dress code she is having to write "I will not bleach my hair" 100 times on the blackboard while the dutiful student shows her art sketch book to the class.

–Stephen Mass



Art Gallery and Performance Space combined floors 3 and 4

Combining two floors of the Mudd Club. Attempting to duplicate his friend Jack Smith's duplex loft on Grand Street, and influenced by the 19th century sculptor Auguste Rodin.

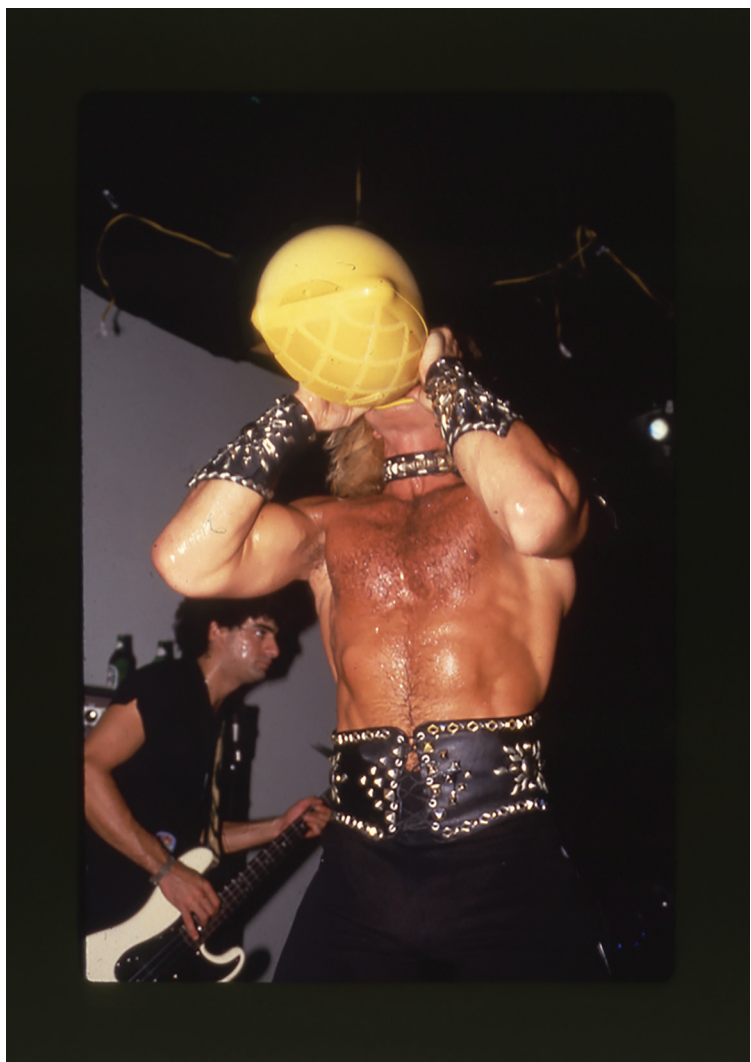
–Stephen Mass



Walter Steding, musician and painting assistant to Andy Warhol

Walter and other performers found the prop room of the M.C. useful in setting up their performances. The cage, along with random furniture, were part of the detritus that filled a whole M.C. floor. Many of the props were discarded objects that Mass had found in the street, the picking of random wanderings he would undertake with Jack Smith, his mentor.

–Stephen Mass



Rock Performer lead singer Thor

EVENT: Bodybuilder Rockers Thor and dancer Kelly Everts self-styled stripper for God

LOCATION: 1st and 2nd floors

STYLE: *Hercules in New York* (film, 1970), *Pumping Iron* (documentary film, 1977)

THEMES: Bodybuilding alternative to Jane Fonda hedonism with fusion of fitness and spiritual redemption

MUSIC: Thor band with Kelly Everts, soundtrack from *Pumping Iron* and Soul music with heavy grunting and breathing.

Thor would perform feats of strength on stage such as gulping down a rubber bag full of beer in less than a minute while his partner Kelly Everts would strike bodybuilder poses next to him. She once shared a stage with Arnold Schwarzenegger and was a Miss Nude Universe. The Mudd Club newsletter described her as spiritual to the core. "Although she is a stripper she is also a Goddess-worshipping feminist, a preacher of sexual liberation, enlightening men to their wicked ways by appealing directly to their libidos. She's staunchly feminist, firmly anti-patriarchy, with a decidedly pro-body image."

–Stephen Mass



Attendees

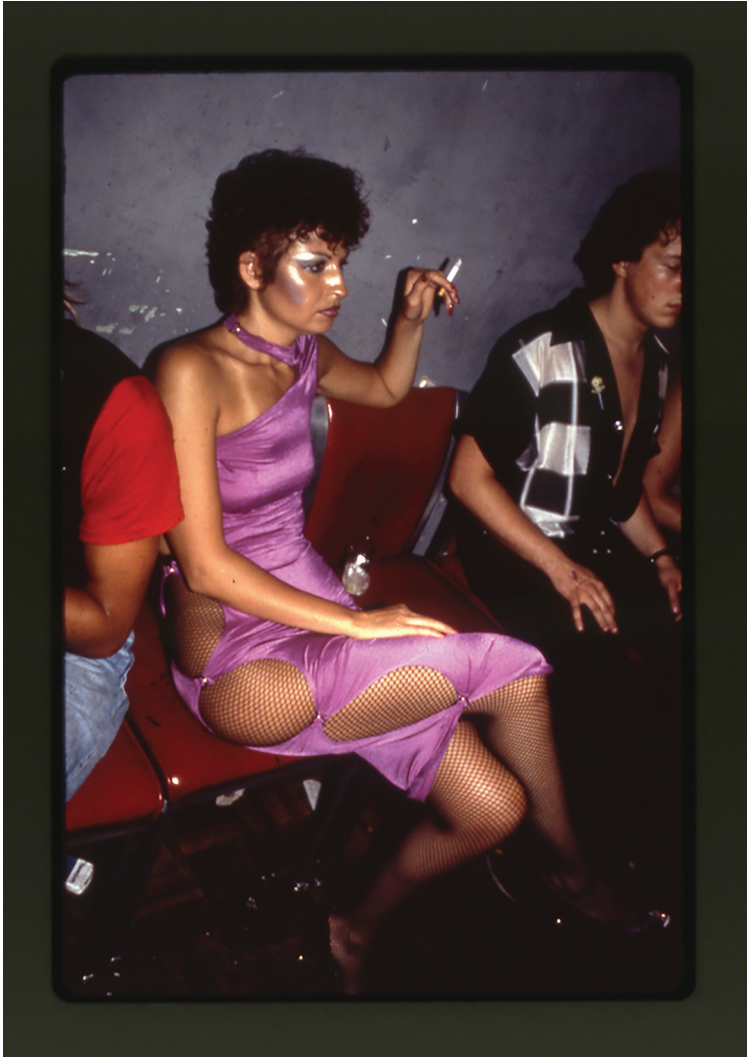
EVENT: Live Music and Soul Party with *Super Fly* Reenactment of scenes from Blaxploitation films

LOCATION: 1st and 2nd floors

MUSIC: Live Clarence Carter 1st Floor, Recorded music Issac Hayes 2nd floor

2nd floor exploration of themes found in films like *Coffy*, *Foxy Brown*, *Shaft* and *SuperFly*.

–Stephen Mass



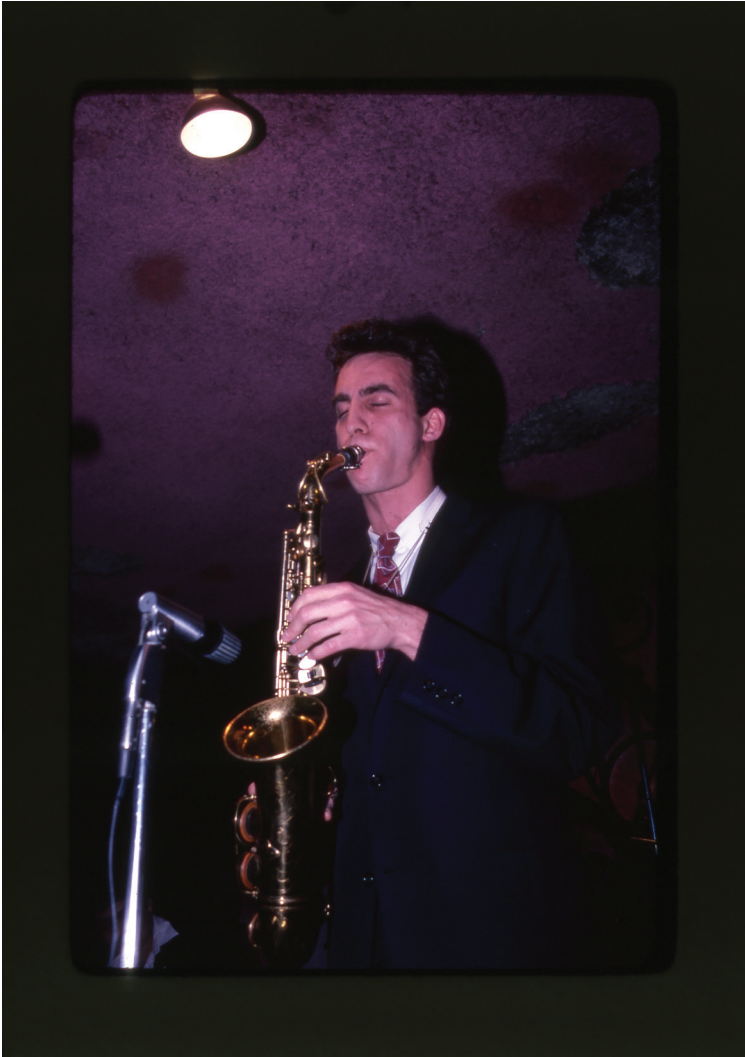
Model, Betsey Johnson fashion show



Lil Picard holding court at the Lower Manhattan Drawing Show in February 1981

Lil Picard inspired the women of the club with her performances. She had been a major figure in the Dada scene in Berlin in the 1920's, and was an inspiration for art fashion designers at the M.C. She was known for her cosmetic destruction happenings which inspired some of the M.C. installations.

–Stephen Mass



John Lurie playing sax

EVENT: Concert with focus on downtown VIP audience

LOCATION: 1st and 2nd floors

STYLE: Lurie in John Coltrane style wide shouldered baggy zoot suit recalling jazz musicians in the 1940's using extra fabric and padding and extending the jacket length flaunting wartime textile.

MUSIC: Critic description of Lounge Lizards: "A crashing, polyrhythmic brawl of jazz, funk, fusion, rock, experimental John Cage-style stuff, including the kitchen sink."

S.M. liked Lurie's music and felt it would blend well with his vision of the Mudd Club second floor as a Jane Austinish style salon. It would serve tea and provide a break from the dance floor and would be available to Mudd youth at all hours, day and night. It would also show testy neighbors that the Mudd Club was a dignified addition to the neighborhood, which at the time had only the Market Diner and Magoos— a notorious brothel/ restaurant where the women sat at tables waiting for overtures from the customers.

—Stephen Mass



John McLoughlin (aka John Sex) and Katy Kattelman

EVENT: Inaugural ball, Jan. 21st 1981

LOCATION: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th floors

STYLE: Adolfo, Oscar de la Renta, Bill Blass

THEMES: Up With People, Young Republicans, Moral Majority

MUSIC: Ballad of the Green Berets, Kate Smith God Bless America,
Merle Haggard, Mormon Tabernacle Choir

S.M. had attracted the attention of the New York Times because it was featured in the Mudd Newsletter for November of 1980 and in a full page ad in the Village Voice. Journalists found this disturbing in that S.M. had accurately predicted the Reagan victory a week in advance of the election and they wondered how he could have had the nerve to publicly announce and advertise such an irresponsible speculation.

[New York Times Coverage](#)

–Stephen Mass



Photographer Tseng Kwong Chi, Inaugural Ball

Kwong Chi was immediately recognized by S.M. as a fellow traveler as both engaged in elaborate delusional flights of fancy imagining themselves as powerful world leaders— although S.M. preferred Nehru style suits with imitation leopard skin caps as worn by Congo dictator Joseph Mobutu. With great daring Kwong Chi specialized in insinuating himself next to dignitaries and in front of iconic public touristic monuments. S.M. chose him over other applicants, making him the official photographer of the event. Kwong Chi took hundreds of photos of the celebrity impersonators including Donnie and Marie Osmond, John Wayne, Ethel Merman and Gloria Vanderbilt.

–Stephen Mass



Two masked Inaugural ball attendees



Stairway leading to the 2nd floor V.I.P. area

Built so that VIP guests and rock stars could enter the band and dance floor area with their own roped off seating area without making their way through the sweaty mass of gyrating bodies.

–Stephen Mass



Designer Millie David on the runway in reggae Afro nationalism inspired dress

EVENT: Ball Gown show party with George Clinton and spin off musicians from Brides of Funkenstein and Parliament Funkadelic

LOCATION: 1st and 2nd floors

THEMES: AfroFuturism

MUSIC: funk, reggae, jazz

Bunny Wailer was in attendance and became infatuated with Millie's dizzying body movements. He proposed to her six months later.

–Stephen Mass

All Images:

Stephen Mass Papers, MSS.592.

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