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The Feast's Pop Art Pop Up



It's hard to imagine any other antics cramming their way into the latest installment of The Feast, a roving pop-up restaurant that hosts themed "dining experiences" all over New York City. Last Thursday was the inaugural evening of Pop Art Pop Up, a three-night affair that's being held in a soon-to-be-opened Times Square hotel [The Sanctuary](#). The menu was inspired by works of art by Damian Hirst and Jeff Koons, among others. The space, as designed by Devinn Bruce, features wall-sized reproductions of the artworks that inspired the evening's cuisine. Though the overall effect was meant to evoke the feel of being "inside the mind of Andy Warhol circa 1982," the most attention grabbing of all the stunts crammed into Pop Art Pop Up is probably still the charming guest chef, Greg Grossman, a culinary darling who [just turned fifteen](#).

"I have a weird life," Grossman admitted, while preparing to plate the evening's amuse bouche. Weird may only begin to describe this budding workaholic's achievements. He's already been featured on *The Today Show*, Oprah's Sirius radio station and in *The New York Post*, to name a few, and he's worked with some of the top chefs in

the world. Still, there was something very genuine about Greg, and none of the megalomania that's usually present in successful chefs. "These guys are my best friends," he said, gesturing to the young men (yet still much older than Greg) around him.

Alan Phillips, mastermind behind The Feast, found Greg through the same management agency that represents some of the other top chefs that have cooked for Feast. Though Phillips has been hosting the evenings for over a year now, he knew that with all the other temporary restaurants and pop-ups, he would have to do something bigger this time.

There's already an inherent theatricality to a pop-up or temporary restaurant like the ones that have been blooming across New York over the past few years, and marrying that concept with the art world is such an apt coupling that it seems nearly obvious. Devinn Bruce's transformation from what was a raw, mid-construction hotel lobby to a sleek dining room is a feat unto itself. According to Mr. Bruce, this was done with the ceaseless labor of only three workers. The impeccable results are more polished and final-seeming than the term "pop up" suggests. But come Sunday the whole site will be demolished.

The evening's festivities did double duty as a birthday party for Brandon Freid, a co-owner of The Sanctuary Hotel, along with his father, Hank Freid. The crowd was mostly friends of the Freids, guys who seemed to be aspiring New York hoteliers and women who may have been runners-up for *The Real Housewives of New York*.

Though the evening was billed as a mix of entertainment and cuisine, the result was just a mix. Club-volume DJ music caused a gentleman at my table to muse, "This reminds me of Fire Island," though I could barely hear him. Soon the tunes gave way to a performance by an unnamed singer, an objectively talented man who walked around the room singing, among other things, a tortured Lionel Richie cover. Patricia Field, who sat across from me looking baffled as I was about the spectacle, stuck her pointer fingers into her ears.

Eventually the waitstaff scurried around the room carrying the amuse bouche, an orange orb made of frozen carrot juice with a coconut filling. Looks were exchanged at the table akin to those shared at a child's ballet performance or piano recital. A second dish of scallops on a roasted slice of tomato was full of hits and misses— a creamy dot of tamarind sauce beside a sprinkling of over-cooked corn kernels— but the overall concept was interesting and there were certainly a lot of good ideas on the plate. Knowing that Greg was working out of a room that I could only loosely call a kitchen, it was impressive.

Fittingly, the dish inspired by Andy Warhol, arguably the father of pop art, was the most satisfying. A quartet of tastings were arranged beautifully on the plate: salmon paired with herb-infused potatoes, bass atop grated beets and a sautéed circle of leek, lamb resting on a pillow of yam mash and a sliver of beef on a cloud of pureed purple potato. Reminiscent of the colors and patterns of Warhol's iconic Marilyn Monroe, this was the moment of the evening that made Grossman's title of Wunderkind seem earned.

In the end it seems that all of The Feast's attention grabbing tactics has grabbed plenty of attention. Both of the remaining evenings of Pop Art Pop Up are sold out. The only question that remains is, what could The Feast possibly do to top this one?