

Spear's Wealth Management Survey

When Lord Dalmeny, London's foremost charity auctioneer, jumps up on the ballroom stage of the Savoy's famous River Room, following the main auction, and manages to get a bid of £500 for a cardboard box containing 30 crisp-like packets of 'Mr Trotter's Great British Pork Crackling' – donated by Tom Parker Bowles and Matthew Fort – you know the evening has been a memorable success.

What was billed as an 'inspirational evening of Art and Food' was held at the Savoy Hotel in London on Monday, November 7, 2011 to raise money and awareness for PAC, a leading UK adoption charity.

The highlight was the 'Art Auction, featuring works by such contemporary British artists as Maggi Hambling, Ken Howard, Patrick Hughes and Tony Heywood, and Russell Young, with Lord Dalmeny advising the well heeled society crowd to 'imagine they were Charles Saatchi' for the duration of the auction.

Using a range of well tested Dalmeny ploys – helped by the specially created food, trays of ever-circulating Louis Roderer champagne - the black tie audience were wittily cajoled into bidding more than £75,000 for the works, with the Spear's favourite being when the auctioneer assured the room of the international art world's little secret that within the drawing rooms of Knightbridge and South Kensington, the contemporary artist du jour to have hanging above the chimneypiece is not some démodé name like Damien Hirst or Marc Quinn but rather a work by Ken Howard, the Turner of Kensington, former official artist of the Imperial War Museum, known not for his stuffed sharks in glass cases but rather for paintings of his cluttered paintings of his views of Cornwall beaches and Venice piazzas, works inspired not be decadence, death and decay – but works 'inspired by light'.

Dalmeny managed to ensure high bidding by insisting that it was well worth 'sacking the nanny, and taking the children out of Eton' in order to secure some of the works of art on offer, for which their uber-collecting nous would be rewarded with a fortune made at Sotheby's when the items were re-sold at a Contemporary Evening Sale circa 2030. Any tables putting down their hand were immediately condemned as 'the public transport brigade' whose wallets were bare save for their Oyster cards. Their hands soon went up again.

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When one painting struggled to make its reserve, Dalmeny swiftly reminded the audience that he was reliably informed that there was somebody in the audience – sitting in the 'platinum land' of £100,000 tables in the middle of the room - who had been on the winning side of the trade that had lost the UBS rogue trader over £1 billion, so we was expecting some very generous bidding.

Spear's recalled that this very same individual seems to glide around behind Harry, with exclusive access to his diary, as he has been present at all Lord Dalmeny's recent auctions, most recently the gala to support the Scots Dragoon Guards at the Royal Hospital.

The event and the raffle were sponsored by AXA Art, the world's only art-led insurance company. The chefs for the evening were four of the UK's best known chefs: Heston Blumenthal (The Fat Duck & Dinner at Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park), Jason Atherton (Pollen Street Social), Brett Graham (The Ledbury) and Lisa Allen (Northcote Manor) who prepared the mouth-watering menu to celebrate 25 years of PAC (formerly Post-Adoption Centre).

If the event was a special for art lovers, it was even more so for gourmands, with the most expensive 'Silent' auction bid being £2600 to have dinner with food guru Tom Parker Bowles and the Guardian's food critic Matthew Fort. The chance to join award winning critic Jay Rayner on one of his reviews sold for £1,125.

Such offers came as guests were feted over dinner to such specialities as Tarleton pigeon wellington with sweet and sour turnip prepared by Lisa Allen; the famous meat fruit by Heston Blumenthal; loin of roe deer on shiraz lees with beetroot & smoked beef marrow by Brett Graham and for dessert: peanut butter & jelly sandwich and sheep's milk jam with blood orange granita and sangria mousse by Jason Atherton.

Among the 250 guests were Margot James MP; Tim Loughton MP; Martha Lane-Fox; Emma Forbes; Tom Parker-Bowles; Tina Hobley; and Mark Hix who is a PAC Patron. Mark Hix said: 'PAC has been making a difference to the lives of children for 25 years. But it doesn't stop there. It works with their adoptive parents and their schools, offering holistic and lifelong support along the adoption journey. It improves lives.'

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The Gourmet evening was the invention of Guardian food writer and 'Great British Menu' judge, Matthew Fort, who had the support of PAC almost 25 years ago and his daughter, Lois, spoke movingly about how the charity had helped her.

Another highlight of the evening was a singing performance before dinner with the international tenor James Edwards, who also donated a singing lesson which sold for £650. James only heard about the evening through a newsletter he had read and immediately rang up to say he would sing for free and wanted to be involved in the evening.

Kate Newton, head of fund raising for PAC, said: 'It's not that we didn't invite him, it's just that we didn't know he had been adopted, and it was wonderful for him to come forward and also to speak so personally about what PAC had done to help him, saying that one reason he loved singing in opera was that it involved adopting new roles'.

The gala evening was to celebrate the 25th anniversary of PAC (formerly Post-Adoption Centre). Based in Kentish Town, London has been a pioneer of adoption support services since 1986. PAC's mission is to provide high quality, innovative services that support and make a difference to all those affected by adoption and permanency. In August 2011, the Big Lottery Fund announced that PAC has been granted more than £468,000.

Over 25 years, PAC has helped with almost 100,000 requests for help. PAC's expert counsellors are on hand five days a week to offer support and guidance to anyone affected by adoption, as well as provide consultation with professionals working in the field. In the past year, their Advice Line handled around 1,000 calls from throughout the UK. They have even been contacted from as far away as the Cayman Islands & Australia. PAC welcomes enquiries from high-net-worth individuals who may be interested in donating to the charity. Please contact Kate Newton at PAC.