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guys

Bape's Nigo: The Man Behind The Bling

The Evolution
of Queens of
the Stone Age

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school project

EVERY SUMMER, THE COURTYARD OF NEW YORK'S P.S.1 GALLERY IS TRANSFORMED INTO A BEER-SOAKED PLAYGROUND/ART INSTALLATION. AMANDA FORTINI TALKS TO **BENJAMIN BALL** AND **GASTON NOGUES**, THE MEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS YEAR'S DESIGN. PHOTOGRAPHED BY CHRISTIAN COOPER

This summer, patrons of P.S.1 in Queens, New York, will experience the oxymoronic strangeness of a daytime nightclub. Benjamin Ball and Gaston Nogues—winners of the eighth annual Young Architects program held by P.S.1 and the Museum of Modern Art, in which rising architects compete for a chance to revamp P.S.1's courtyard—plan to create "Liquid Sky," a hallucinatory installation that uses the sun's rays and an enormous diaphanous canopy to suggest the trippy light of a discotheque. The tent-like structure, a fantastical take on what you might find at a circus, is composed of blood-orange colored Mylar "petals" or "scales," when the sun shines through

them, dappled patterns appear on the revelers standing beneath. (Mylar, a material used for sails, both filters sunlight and reflects it.) This disco-ball effect is the reason why Ball and Nogues, founders of the Los Angeles-based Ball-Nogues Design, chose a warm "marmalade rust" hue, as they call it. "Earthier colors are more flattering," Ball notes. "Blues, greens, or purples would make people resemble the undead." Suffice it to say, zombie-chic is not exactly a desirable look on the dance floor.

A nightclub atmosphere is further evoked by wooden utility poles, grouped in triplicate, which create intimate space (similar to that of a teepee) for gathering. In this way, the poles gesture loosely toward a club's booths or banquettes, though seating is provided by hammocks made of cargo netting suspended from five of the eight 30-foot tripods. The "hang-out hammocks," to borrow Ball's term, are intended for collective enjoyment. "My hope is that they will be used by a group of club kids in orgiastic bliss," he says, half-jokingly.

But Liquid Sky is not only for hipsters seeking hook-ups. Sitting on his couch at home in L.A.'s Silver Lake neighborhood, clicking through images on his laptop of the model he and Nogues built for the P.S.1 jury, Ball explains that there are multiple ways to experience the project. "One is as a club, another is as an art installation, yet another is as a family destination—like going to the beach with the kids." The canopy, in this view, becomes the equivalent of an oversized umbrella, and the hammocks communal beach chairs. Adds Ball, "It's really for all of New York."

Certainly the piece takes elements familiar to denizens of New York City (or indeed of any urban center)—those ubiquitous utility poles, for one—and re-contextualizes them. "We wanted the street to extend into the courtyard," says Ball. "We wanted this new kind of street we've created, and the artificial sky above it, to be surreal." In this imaginary cityscape, he and Nogues hope, concert notices and lost-cat posters will replace the "Post No Bills" signs of an actual city.

Of course, the ephemeral life of such signage echoes the ephemeral character of the installation itself. The work of Ball-Nogues Design—a fusion of art and architecture—tends to be of a transitory sort: a "runway" made from recycled clothing for a LACMA opening; Rodeo Drive re-imagined in layers of rippling cardboard for Frank Gehry's jewelry launch at Tiffany & Co. This impermanence seems very much of California, like Hollywood sets painstakingly erected and then dismantled days later. Although Ball previously worked in set design, he insists that Ball-Nogues' creations do not arise from a West Coast sensibility. "We're interested in the experiences created by the objects we build," he remarks, "which is not that different from what architects have always done." Still, hailing from California creates certain logistical concerns, especially given the architects' shoestring budget—like whether to construct the project at home and then ship it cross-country (an option Ball calls "sick expensive"), or whether to assemble it in New York, which raises the question: where to stay?

"Couch tour," Ball says wryly.

