

SOCIETY TEXAS

VIVA BECCA

How Becca Cason Thrash's Fab Mexico City Soirée Triumphed

BLAZING BOLD NEW TRAILS
How Philanthropy Moves Forward

CITY CHIC
Runway Your Way

FRANCE FOREVER
Your Paris Planning Now

NEED FOR SPEED
The Mighty McLaren

HERE'S HOPING
New Ways To Feel Great

**+ BEST OF NEW
FALL PICKS**

Where To Go,
Who To Know &
Why It Matters
More Than Ever



Becca Cason Thrash

sept/oct
2020

84. LARGER THAN LIFE

Houstonian Becca Cason Thrash is known for both her style and philanthropy. Take an extravagant weekend gala event in Mexico City, throw in that it benefits Paris' Notre-Dame Cathedral, and it's a recipe for a remarkably unforgettable world-class happening in high style.

By Lance Avery Morgan | Photography by Alejandro Célez & Iván de la Luz

92. PARIS, ALWAYS & FOREVER

The City of Lights. The City of Love. Call it what you will, but we'll always have Paris. A towering symbol of beauty and creativity, it stands the test of time as the most desired place to visit.

By Lance Avery Morgan | Photography courtesy of archival

98. COSMOPOLITAN LIVES

Fall fashion, always heralded as the official start to cooler weather, is as gorgeous and glamorous as ever. Join us as we dive into the best runway shows to recommend our favorites for you to wear and love.

By Jake Gaines

Becca Cason Thrash's Mexico City soiree for Notre-Dame. Photography by Alejandro Célez and Iván de la Luz

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departments

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It takes a village to create this magazine and our digital media platform, *SocietyTexas.com*. Here's a look at some of the many talented dynamos who make it happen as we dive into 2020's robust fall fun.

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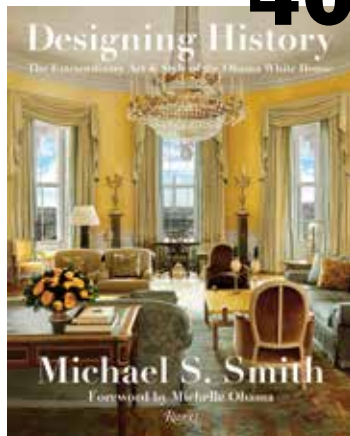
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UT's Main Mall, early 1950s. Courtesy of YouTube

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Our Ms. Social Graces, Sharon Schweitzer, J.D., offers insight into life's most challenging social situations, especially during these COVID-19 times.

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Join us as we choose the best things in life to know and experience...that are happening right now.

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My Darling Vivian is the new documentary that illustrates the life of San Antonio native Vivian Liberto, also known as the first Mrs. Johnny Cash.

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Sometimes a picture can paint a thousand words as to what we are thinking.



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72. DALLAS | Empress Gilbert, Joni Krieg and Regina Bruce



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65. R.S.V.P.

Our introduction to the must-see social events across the state...and the world.

66. LAREDO

The Society of Martha Washington gala

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The Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation luncheon

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The World Affairs Council gala

76. GALVESTON

The San Luis Salute gala

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80. DALLAS

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82. SAN ANTONIO

The Gardenia Club luncheon



82. SAN ANTONIO | Siobhain Anders, Sharron Batchelor and Carroll Dorsey Walker



74. SAN ANTONIO | Yvanna Gilliam and Alisha Lashay



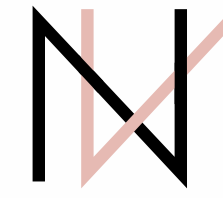
78. AUSTIN | Amy Terrazas, Darla Bilderback, Angie Hernandez and Holly Mills-Gardner



66. LAREDO | Alex and Sandra Garza, Sofia Cristina Ramirez Gonzalez and Marcello Garza



70. AUSTIN | Louisa Nash, Simms Ehrlich, Avery McCall, Evelyn Voelter, Emma Breckwoldt and Anna Whitehead



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Than Life

Tireless fundraiser and society style icon, Houstonian Becca Cason Thrash, is known for many things, with being a legendary hostess for a myriad of regional and international causes topping the list of her many talents.

Elegant, ebullient, and always successful, she ensures these events are illustrious for not only doing good for so many, but also as memorable adventures. Join our society chronicler Lance Avery Morgan as we venture to Mexico City, by way of Paris, for the decade's latest Thrash Bash.

Photography by Alejandro Celez and Iván de la Luz



Lisa Arpey



Gela and John Taylor





Derek and Christen Wilson

“Thrash is certainly no novice to fundraising and is absolutely not a stranger to hosting epic fundraising events on an international level. After all, she continues to raise millions and millions for the Musée de Louvre and Venetian Heritage organizations.”



French Ambassador Anne Grillo and Becca Cason Thrash



Kip Forbes and Becca Cason Thrash



John and Gela Taylor



Amin Jaffer and Eva Dichand



Cecille performs



John Thrash



Ana Lucia de Teresa and Eugenio Lopez



Chris Levine and Roger Klein



Bobby and Phoebe Tudor



Elizabeth and Will Galtney



Reggie and Leigh Smith & Duyen and Marc Nguyen

THE FUN IN FUNDRAISING

IT WAS DESTINED TO BE. BECCA CASON THRASH'S heart was deeply affected when she saw Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris burning in April of 2019. Within the flames of her own heart, as she viewed the tragedy, she reacted immediately and committed to helping fundraise for the re-building of one of the most significant architectural landmarks in the world. She had been approached before the tragedy to help raise much-needed funds for the restoration, and after the fire, that motion was fast-forwarded.

“To replicate those medieval materials, some of them almost 900-years old, and to re-create the manufacturing of such stones, metals, and patina would be cost-prohibitive after the fire,” confides Becca Cason Thrash. “So, the Notre-Dame team called and asked, ‘Please, we really need your help.’” She continues, “I said, ‘I’ll do it, but under one condition.’ I’m not bringing everybody back to France because I’ve hosted five fundraising events there for the Louvre, and I’ve always wanted to do something in Mexico City. So, if you’ll allow me to create a fundraiser, I’ll do it my own way, in my own style, and with my list. They said yes, and we were off to the races.”

Thrash, like the rest of the world, viewed it as a catastrophe that anyone who knows Paris can confirm: it rattled the soul of the City of Love. Never believing in borders, Thrash sprang into immediate action and did what she does best: she hosted an astonishing weekend of events for the fabled structure, outside of France, in Mexico City, to encourage high-level donations for the restoration of the Cathedral.

Thrash is certainly no novice to fundraising and is absolutely not a stranger to hosting epic fundraising events on an international level. After all, she continues to raise millions and millions for the Musée de Louvre and Venetian Heritage organizations. Never one to rest on her own successful fundraising laurels, Harlingen native and Houston resident, Thrash, was inspired to create a multitude of new experiences for the latest Notre-

Dame gala endeavor. The 12th-century Gothic structure would rise again, thanks in part to Thrash's gala expertise.

It's that point of view that earned Thrash the Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in 2011 for her philanthropic talents at home and abroad, her tireless fundraising for the Louvre, and her ongoing championing of Franco-American relations. Becca Cason Thrash has a natural affinity for international culture, including Latin culture. She was raised in South Texas and lived in Mexico City while working for *Vogue En Español*, as she started her career in marketing. These experiences prepared her for a very public life both in Houston and across the globe.

Perhaps Thrash's most important secret to entertaining at a high-level is the energy of the room she encourages based on the invitation list. Highly curated, like Thrash's couture wardrobe, her secret sauce is having a mix of guests. She always schedules time to focus on the laborious task of creating a seating chart for the coterie of international jetsetters, philanthropists,

business leaders, contemporary art collectors, and social swells. Preparation, preparation, preparation.

Thrash readily admits she's hosted countless more events in Houston for a plethora of her passionate causes, ranging from Best Buddies, on which she serves as a board member, to the Houston Ballet, Houston Grand Opera, The Menil Collection, Contemporary Art Museum Houston, Holocaust Museum Houston, and many, many more charitable and civic organizations of all kinds. Whether hosting at her home, or in monumental international venues, her events attract hundreds of guests who arrive to support five-star cultural institutions with an intention to also have fun. Her fundraising, by the Thrash's estimation, is likely north of \$100 million so far, and that might be a conservative assessment. “People support people. It's that simple,” shares Thrash about her hard-won fundraising success. “Plus, to me, it's so important to have a uniquely, hand-selected, and eclectic mix of guests. I know everyone who is walking in the door that evening. They must

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“For those who have never seen Thrash in action, as she passionately raises funds for events dear to her heart, it’s a tour de force to behold. A financial goal always in mind, Thrash knows how to read an audience.”

Becca Cason Thrash hosting the live auction

Stewart O’Dell and Lynn Mathre

Becca Cason Thrash, Ceron, and Holly Moore

Diego del Rio

Fred Heredia, Cassidy York, and Kathi Koll

Henry Richardson, Catherine Ozdogan and Monsour Taghdisi

Greggory Burk and Glen Gonzalez

Joe Blount and Becca Cason Thrash

Taffin Ray, Denise de la Rue, Roxana Velsquez, Sandra Pabst and Kathleen von Alvensleben

Peter Pavluk, Cherrill Farnsworth & Sue and Rusty Burnett

Samantha Boles and Scilla Boles

Gela Taylor

Lucas Somoza

Will Denton and Sara Dodd

Tracey Amon and Guillermo Ordorica

Denise de la Rue and Sergio Berger

be fun, interesting, generous, and bring their own brands of enthusiasm to the party. It doesn’t matter if they are moguls or not. They know why they are there...to have a one-of-a-kind time...and to raise money. People support the charity, of course, but people really support people.”

THE BEST OF EVERYTHING

The planning, like all of Thrash’s previous social triumphs, begins early, with months and months of advance preparation... and doesn’t end until the last guest has successfully departed. Mexico, a favorite locale of Thrash’s, is known for its colorful celebrations, and these, with Thrash’s own colorful personality, are a perfect combination of elements. Only the best will do. “I made seven trips to Mexico City to prepare all the details and met with many people including the six hosts and dear friends who opened their homes and collections for the special weekend,” Thrash confides. As in galas past, fellow Houstonian Richard Flowers, and his event design team of five, were enlisted to bring Thrash’s vision to life. Locally in Mexico, Diego

Del Río Zepeda and his team were on hand to collaborate for the events’ success. The best tableware, flatware, linens, and flowers, thousands upon thousands of flowers, would need to be implemented to create the regal setting for this triumph to-do.

Before the Mexican soirées, the fundraising efforts actually began in Houston, with a preview dinner event hosted by Steak 48, the hot Houston eatery that could accommodate the 160-plus guest list. Thrash proudly donned her favorite Zara sequined dress, instead of couture, and added a million dollars of Van Cleef & Arpels jewels to complete her hosting ensemble. The grand total raised for the kick-off night was \$100,000.

ONWARD TO MEXICO CITY

One hundred and fifteen guests, paying \$6,000 per ticket, began arriving in Mexico City from Paris, Vienna, Milan, London, NYC, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Washington DC, accompanied by equally glamorous, enthusiastic Texans from across the state, and especially from Thrash’s hometown turf of Houston.

Now, where to place each of the guests attending the soirée? No problem. Thrash arranges seating charts like an eminent chess expert at a championship match: play to win as if it was the most important thing to accomplish. Having attended and chronicled many Thrash Bashes, I can attest she will place a guest next to a fellow participant that the guest will invariably find interesting and remarkable in their life’s pursuits. This cadre of attendees at the Mexico affair would be no different.

The three-day series of events began with an intimate dinner hosted by the French Ambassador to Mexico, Anne Grillo, at her residence in Mexico. Her Excellency greeted the internationally-based guests upon their arrival. The Embassy of Mexico in France, based out of Paris, is the primary diplomatic mission from the United Mexican States to France. It also represents Mexico to the Principality of Monaco, as well as to the Council of Europe. The palace itself is resplendent with a abundance of both French and Latin culture.

The next day an alfresco afternoon luncheon was held in the exquisite home of megawatt art collectors Tato and Gaby Garza. Guests chatted and mingled, admiring the art everywhere they turned in the residence. Chapultepec castle, the Frida Kahlo home, Casa Azul, the Diego Rivera collection at Anahuacalli, and the home of famed artist Pedro Friedberg were just a few of the stops made by the well-heeled crowd. Additional visits, cocktail receptions, and other dinners were arranged in the homes of Mexican entrepreneur Sergio Berger, along with Rodman Primack, and Rudy Weissenberg. Stopping by the Barragan stables, designed by renowned Mexican architect Luis Barragan, was also a delightful treat for the attendees.

VIVA BECCA

The last evening’s fête was widely anticipated. Hosted by Eugenio Lopez, the sole heir to the Jumex fruit-juice fortune, he is considered to be one of the world’s top 200 art collectors. In his extraordinary, art-filled mansion, cocktails and canapes were served as guests chatted and greeted each other. The

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Greg Fourticq and John Cone



Becca Cason Thrash and Richard Flowers



Laura Greenberg

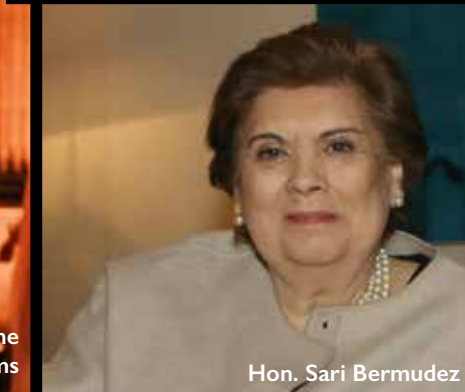
“By the end of the action-packed weekend, more than \$1.3 million had been raised for the restoration efforts of Notre-Dame de Paris, the venerable 850-year-old symbol of French culture”



Rodman Primack and Kathy Koll



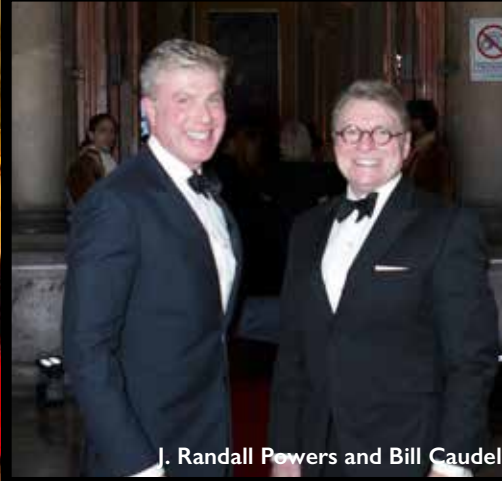
Jane Fontaine performs



Hon. Sari Bermudez



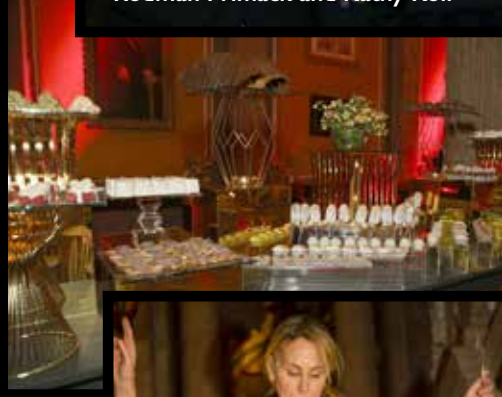
Lance Scott and Tony Bradfield



J. Randall Powers and Bill Caudell



Mark Sullivan and Elizabeth Galtney



Vivien Weisman



Pierre St. Albin and Kassidy Choi Smith



Christine Holzer



Evan Greenberg & Rose and Dave Capobianco



Meg Goodman, Carroll Goodman and John Wessels



Renee Lewis and June Chandler



Elin Niirenberg

attendees were dazzled by the white glove-served, five-course seated dinner, but most especially by the extraordinary design and architecture.

These ancillary events bookended the high point of the weekend, *La Grande Nuit*, as Thrash titled it. Held in the Casino Español—a 19th century building in the Distrito Histórico, complete with a 60-foot Tiffany ceiling and a Grand Salon rivaled only by Versailles itself. The venue was decorated as a million-dollar raising gala should be: over the top. Guests descended a grand staircase upon their arrival, fitting for both the venue and the occasion. Following the lavish, multi-course dinner, Becca Cason Thrash took center stage, donned in a beaded Naem Khan gown, topped with a fuchsia Dolce & Gabbana Alta Moda full-length mohair cape and plenty of her own, favorite jewels, and presided over the live auction like the pro she is.

For those who have never seen Thrash in action, as she passionately raises funds for events dear to her heart, it's a tour de force to behold. A financial goal always in mind, Thrash

knows how to read an audience. Part of that special skill is to understand what guests would be interested in buying at a live auction, from art to fashion, to experiences. Then, she goes about acquiring them with supporting brands she knows well, thus promoting these brands with this elevated exposure. Uber collector Eugenio Lopez prevailed on the final bid for a five-night cruise on the private yacht on the Nile River owned and donated by Parisian designer Christian Louboutin. Houstonian Lynn Mathre bid the highest on a Naem Khan bespoke gown and Buccellati necklace. British artist Chris Levine's limited edition of a gold-dusted portrait of Queen Elizabeth, along with ten lots of art, trips, and jewelry, took in more than \$700,000 in less than, yes, fifteen minutes. Talk about light speed for a live auction that can often exhaust audiences at other galas for an hour or more. To make the weekend even more special, Thrash was surprised with a mini birthday celebration amidst the revelry.

Among the decidedly stylish notables were the French Ambassador, Anne Grillo, the Former Minister of Culture,

Sari Bermudez, along with Sergio Berger, Christine Holzer, Alejandra Redo, Rodman Primack, Rudy Weissenberg, Lucas Somoza, Ben Aguilar, Andres Carretero, and Guillermo Ordorica. Other bold-faced names in the crowd included Duran Duran's John Taylor and his fashion icon wife, Gela Taylor, who jetted in from London, blue-chip art collector Tracey Amon from Paris, Christopher Forbes from New York, collector Eva Dichand from Vienna, Kathleen von Alvenslebenn from Berlin, and philanthropist Joseph Blount from Palm Beach. Amin Jaffer, from Paris, who is one of the world's foremost experts on royal jewels, was joined by notables hailing from Texas, including collectors Christen and Derek Wilson from Dallas. Sixty of the more than 115 guests supported the Thrashes from Houston, including Phoebe and Bobby Tudor, Reggie and Leigh Smith, Leslie and Russ Robinson, Barbara and Michael Gamson, and many more, along with John Thrash, Becca's beloved husband, and thirty Mexico City notables.

The action always seems to move to the dance floor to keep the party going. Songstress and ingénue Jane Fontaine, from

Los Angeles, entertained guests at the after party that went into the wee hours of the next morning. Seen on the dance floor were Randy Powers and Gregory Burk, Rose and Dave Capobianco, Tony Bradfield, Marc and Duyen Nguyen, Fred Heredia and Cassidy York, Elizabeth and Will Galtney, Valerie Fuller and Andree Aboolian, while the Mexican artist Denise de las Rue was spotted in deep conversation with Ford Hubbard.

By the end of the action-packed weekend, more than \$1.3 million had been raised for the restoration efforts of Notre-Dame de Paris, the venerable 850-year-old symbol of French culture. "If you create a once-in-a-lifetime experience for guests that they are happy to support, then it's a win for them and the charity," confides Becca Cason Thrash. "So that is what I've always tried to do: focus on the experience. Like my events that have had Tom Brady, George Clooney, Cindy Crawford, Prince Albert, Duran Duran, Marc Anthony, and many other similar honorary guests and celebrities, not to mention Willie Nelson playing in her great room to benefit Best Buddies one evening...people will show up. Let's face it...people want the experience of being a part of something special, and so I try give that to them." 🍷