

“Riven Rock Refracted” Raises Money for Santa Barbara Museum of Art

By Ann Pieramici / Special to CASA

T.C. BOYLE'S 1998 NOVEL, *Riven Rock*, proved to be more than just a great read. It proved to be the inspiration behind one of the most

memorable events in the Santa Barbara Museum of Art's (SBMA) history. If Katherine McCormick, a protagonist in Boyle's book, were still alive, she would undoubtedly be reveling in the exquisite affair held at her former home, which grossed over \$115,000 to benefit the Museum she adored and ardently supported. Surely, Boyle, himself, could have never guessed that his bestseller, published nearly 13 years ago, would be used to promote art education in Santa Barbara.

But so it was on Friday, February 11th, when art, history, and literature collided in *Riven Rock Refracted*, a gala like none other. “This was one of the most enjoyable and touching events I've ever had the pleasure of attending,” commented Boyle via email. The concept for *Riven Rock Refracted* came from Patsy Hicks, SBMA Director of Education, who recalled reading a *New York Times* article

about an artistic installation on the lower east side of Manhattan based on *The Lush Life*, by Richard Price. Hicks realized Santa Barbara offered the same rich fusion of elements: a local author who penned *Riven Rock*, a novel set in Santa Barbara that fictionalized the mesmerizing true story of Stanley and Katherine McCormick, star-crossed lovers who never consummated their marriage.



Laura Shelburne, SBMA Board member, **Larry Feinberg**, SBMA Director and **Suzanne Deardorff**, smART Families chair



Jill Levinson; **Kate Gura**; and **Kim Thomas**

Hicks brought the idea to smART Families, a support group of the Museum, and under the creative direction of chair Nancy O'Connor, the team embraced and embellished the concept beyond Hicks' wildest imagination. Thirteen UCSB fine arts graduate students interpreted various passages from Boyle's book in art installations placed strategically throughout the Ridley-Tree Education Center at McCormick House, which ran the gamut from on-site video



T.C. Boyle with **Patsy Hicks**, SBMA Director of Education



Scott and **Ella Brittingham**, sponsors

projection and sculpture to mixed media on paper and vocal performance. Boyle says he was honored to have inspired the artists, “From the conceptual artist representing Stanley in the tree to the healing room, the wedding room and the projected eyes of both Stanley and Katherine and all the rest, the whole thing was a revelation. All of the artists have my deepest gratitude.”

An enormous debt of gratitude also goes to the gala committee, who resurrected the 1920s via décor, food, music, and fashion. O'Connor couldn't be happier, “I loved the varied elements, from the elegantly dressed guests to the outrageous performance artists and raucous band, to the thought provoking work of the artists.” Committee

members included Laura Macker Johnston, Ted Simmons, Laura Shelburne, Suzanne Deardorff, Kim Blankenhorn, Monica Epstein, Kate Gura, Jill Levinson, Allsion Marcillac, Jen Markham, Elizabeth Raith, Angela Siemens, Garrett Swann, and Kim Thomas, and Museum staffers Karen Kawaguchi, Liane Duffy, and Julia McCornack. And many will attest that Katherine McCormick's spirit also had a hand in infusing the evening with a strong appreciation for the arts.



Laura Macker Johnston (Decor Chair), **Ted Simmons** (Entertainment Chair) and **Nancy O'Conner** (Event Chair), proved a powerful trio, orchestrating a spectacular event.



Ann Pieramici, **Alix Rabinowitz** and **Darcie McKnight** mingle with **Eddie O'Kane's** character from *Riven Rock*.

Participating UCSB MFA artists: Van C. Tran, Tim Brown, Jared Flores, Ruby Osorio, Patrick Melroy, Rimas Simaitis, Desiree D'Alessandro, Emily Halbardier, Bessie Kunath, Elcin Joyner, Nick Loewen, Daniela Campins, and Nikki Leone. Top Sponsors: The Brittingham Family Foundation, Nancy and Kevin O'Connor, Leslie Ridley-Tree, and Laura and Craig Shelburne. Special thanks to Silverhorn for the raffle donation.

Photo by Mary Jane Photography