

BODY OF WORK

From left, Vanessa Beecroft's *Show* at the Guggenheim, 1993; Force cohosts a Chloé party at Bergdorf Goodman, spring 2004; Rachel Feinstein's *Satinstein* at Sotheby's, 2002.



another day, another commute, summer's heating up, the weekend's coming . . .

Adding to the whirl of thoughts in riders' minds as they step off their trains at Grand Central this month will be a new sensation. Loud (visually) Soft (tactilely). Shocking (mentally). After the tasteful renovations of Manhattan's landmark station in the last few years comes a new addition: acres and acres of gaudy floral carpet stretching the length and breadth of Vanderbilt Hall.

The woman who brings you this field of dreams, 18,000 square feet of va-va-voom floor covering that is actually an artwork by Rudolf Stingel, is Yvonne Force Villareal, an increasingly high-profile fixture on the New York art and social scenes. Force's fluffy appearance—quite literally; she favors feathers and furs and stuggy colors—betrays a steely will and an astute eye for grand and provocative gestures. Unsettling in its “off” colors and unexpected context, Stingel's piece, she says, “will be like stepping into a humongous color-field painting. The acoustics of the whole place will change and become quieter. It's refreshing, a gift to the city, something optimistic and joyful and also very intelligent.”

And also logistically mind-boggling. When we meet, Force is thinking about the project's impending installation, which will take two to three days, *around the clock*. But from the way she's been directing traffic from the couch on which she is curled in her new downtown loft-cum-office near the Hudson River, it's

clear that presiding from the midst of an ambitious swirl of activity is a mode that comes naturally to Force. Large wrapped artworks are coming in; others are being moved out by her husband, light artist Leo Villareal, and various helpers. Furniture, including a massive seventies Pierre Cardin sectional couch, is wedged against the walls. Couriers buzz constantly—Force raves about the services of FreshDirect and Netflix—setting off a barrage of yapping by Puff Baby, the black Fomorian she wears like an accessory draped over her lap. Through it all, dressed like a comic-book action heroine in a YSL-logo T-shirt, black stretch-satin pants, and Dolce & Gabbana boots with built-in fur leg warmers, Force remains serene, as does nine-month-old Leo Villareal IV (known as Cuatro)—in fuzzy gray booties like his mama's—who naps through the commotion.

*Plan B*, as Stingel's project is named (after an earlier idea went awry), is by no means Force's first big foray into the American art scene. With her partner Doreen Remen, Force set up her company, Art Production Fund, after making her producer's debut with *Show*, a much-talked-about performance piece by Vanessa Beecroft that Force coordinated in 1998 at the Guggenheim Museum. Twenty models in Gucci heels and underwear—a few were completely naked—were assembled, posed, and shifted in attitudes of boredom and discomfort before a simultaneously enthralled and unnerved crowd. At the time, Beecroft's budgets for such performances were around \$2,000. *Show* wound up costing \$200,000. “Most projects are a compromise,” says Beecroft. “Yvonne was the first person who ever

came to me and wanted to invest everything she had: the maximum, the most beautiful girls, the Gucci wardrobe.”

*Show* scored a double whammy, taking Beecroft's reputation to a new level and heralding her producer as a Force to be reckoned with (as well as marking Tom Ford's first foray into art sponsorship). “When it happened,” says Force, “I realized that doing these kinds of productions was significant. It really made a difference for Vanessa. It really made a difference for me. It might have taken two years to organize, but those three hours were very worth it.”

Though she insists that not all her endeavors are big and splashy, Force's projects have a way of escalating. A collaboration she brokered between artist Keith Edmier and his idol, Farrah Fawcett, burgeoned from a single sculpture to a full body of work by both artist and subject shown at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Andy Warhol Museum last year. Her latest venture similarly multiplied: The Stingel carpet at Grand Central is twinned with another currently installed both inside and outside the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. “You already go to one amount of effort,” Force reasons, “so why not push it a little bit?”

Force pushes it real good. She's assured and often prescient in her tastes, which tend toward art that reflects the power of pop culture, fantasy, and shock value, and she goes all out for her choices. “She came to my studio in the mid-nineties, when there was not a lot of enthusiasm for my work,” says the now-celebrated painter Lisa Yuskavage. “She doesn't hesitate, and her enthusiasm is contagious.” As Force explains, “I only work