



An Evening With Attorney and Bon Vivant John Reoch

by Laura Kostelny, portrait by Dan Sellers, party photography by Kevin Hunter Marple

If you've been to a Dallas social event in the last 10 minutes, odds are that you've exchanged triple-kisses with John Reoch.

If not, you've seen the 62-year-old man about town in the society pages, clad in bright colors, myriad hats, and captivating capes. The flamboyant attorney dresses for every occasion, which is no easy task. A busy evening for Reoch could include up to six events, followed by dinner and a club—which might require multiple wardrobe changes.

People talk about his clothes—but little else. I'd heard that he's a widower with a twentysomething daughter. I'd seen him in his Mini Cooper. But I wanted to know more. I wanted to see what his closet looks like. I wanted to know if he has as much fun as his pictures suggest. And I wanted to know what it's like to spend an evening with him. So I asked him out on a date. At the moment, John Reoch is annoyed. It's 4:32 pm, and he is concerned about our (barely) tardy photographer. Luckily, the doorbell rings at his State and Allen townhouse before annoyance turns to resentment, and Reoch, clutching his cocktail, immediately leads the way up three flights of stairs. He has decided that the first shot should be on his fourth-floor patio. "My patio is pink," he says, "and all the art is regional. It overlooks One Arts Plaza, which is the perfect bookend for the story."

On the way, we pass numerous pieces of modern art in the living room, maneuver over stacks of books laid artfully here and there, past a bold piece of art in the library that states "Death is stalking you," and past his master bedroom, about which he remarks, "My maid changes the sheets every Wednesday to either all black or all white. It depends on her mood."

Reoch poses for two minutes, checks his watch, and declares that it's time to go. On the way back down the staircases, he grabs a white straw fedora and continues talking the entire way. "I wear a flower every day—period. I may even have three flower changes tonight." He advises on an orchid wholesaler he uses, and then quickly informs us, "The flowers that I send to women are from Cebolla."

On the way to his yellow Mini Cooper, we catch sight of his garage, which houses a \$25,000 limited edition Erick Swenson sculpture, a bejeweled plastic crown, at least 20 pairs of Adidas tennis shoes, three motorcycles (including a 1967 Triumph Bonneville), several hatboxes from Neiman's and Barneys, and helmets "that I don't wear," he sniffs.



Our first stop is the **Marty Walker Gallery** for **Ted Kincaid's "Grids/Blurs"** opening. Reoch enters and helps himself to a glass of red wine and insists that **Walker** show us something wonderful "backstage." **Walker** has no problem taking us to the storeroom for a quick tour because it's 4:55, and aside from Walker and her assistant, we're the only people there. **Kincaid** hasn't even arrived. It's in the storeroom when I realize that Reoch has no plans to remove his mirrored aviator sunglasses. That's also when I begin to understand that he has planned the entire night. He's musing that the evening should end at the Ritz or Brooklyn. Again, it's 4:55 pm.

Ted Kincaid arrives a bit after 5 and explains his current collection, which includes photographs of shadows and is "straight photography," no enhancement. "I like that," Reoch says. "A non-straight guy doing straight photography." After enjoying the polite laughter, he places his empty wine glass on a table, advises our not-yet-finished companion, "Just slam it," and heads for the door.

We arrive back at the townhouse a few minutes later for the first wardrobe change. As he heads upstairs, he calls out, "I have bathrooms on every level. I started drinking early, so I may have to avail myself." I don't want to be too intrusive—no reason to shadow him in the bathroom—so I take the opportunity to study my surroundings, which are more museum than living space. Modern art hangs everywhere, from the laundry room to the bathrooms. A multicolored pacifier rests on a stack of books adjacent to a stack topped with a handgun-shaped chocolate mold. Chocolate coins are shelved next to various medals.

Reoch calls me into his room as he finishes dressing. He's clad in Armani pants, shoes, shirt, and jacket. When I ask him about the correlation between art and fashion, he answers, "Fashion is probably the most talked about, interesting art of any. Fine art people put it down, but they're interested." He then makes sure that I note that the leather Armani jacket is this season's and "the open snap cuff links are from the 1920s. They allow me to make a bigger statement."

He pauses and then says rather seductively, "Something you may not want to talk about—" I gasp and put down my notebook. We're in his bedroom. Should I be nervous? Should I be flattered? He continues, "I have a number of French knives. I carry one with me at all times—the corkscrews are good for emergencies. And they're good for opening mail."

Stop number two is the Armani book signing at Neiman Marcus NorthPark. We hit the parking lot at 6:18, and Reoch begins throwing out fashion opinions almost as fast as he walks across the parking lot. "Last Call is such a bargain." "I work with Sam Saladino. I think he has a better sense of fashion than Ken." "I only look at women's fashion magazines—not men's. Women's fashion precedes men's trends by three years." By the time we enter Neiman's, I'm sweating.



EASY RIDER: Reoch owns three bikes, including this '67 Triumph Bonneville.

After Reoch poses for photographs with a noted Neiman's personality, we head upstairs for the Armani "party"—which turns out to be a bunch of pretty people who got dressed up to stand in line. In the next five minutes, Reoch hands off his personal Armani books and tearsheets to Neiman Marcus director of special events Ginger Reeder to ensure that they get signed—without having to stand in line. He then cuts in line for a brief moment simply to espy what Armani is wearing—"white sneakers"—and he's ready to go.

We're riding down the elevator when he turns backs and says, "I've known Ginger for 20 years," in a manner that begs for a follow-up question. But before I can ask, he's already four steps in front of me.

Back at the townhouse, it's time for wardrobe change number two, his third outfit, which involves a Ferragamo crushed velvet vest, Ermenegildo Zegna white silk coat, and a tie out of *Pride and Prejudice* that is Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel. I'm sitting on the bed, the photographer is snapping shots, and Reoch ties his Mr. Darcy-esque tie, completely at ease in front of his entourage. He expounds on what attracts him to a woman. "Intelligence," he states as he reaches for his Ferragamo shoes. "And a Christian Louboutin shoe gets my attention." I ask about his lack of socks. "It's a *louche* way of going. It suggests nakedness. A bare ankle on a man is like toe cleavage on a woman." Something tells me that this is not the first time he's uttered those words.

Once again, we're on the move, headed toward our third party. The theme for the Contemporary Legends party at One Arts Plaza is hot pink, and Reoch and his pink fedora from New Orleans' famed Meyer the Hatter blend right in—which is a problem, as he ditches me almost immediately. I see him set up shop in one corner of the room, unloading champagne flutes and bottles of Duval-Leroy from a bag among a throng of people, including "good friend" Anna Walker, William Rudolph, Lisa Miller, and Karen and Steve Levine. I finally make my way over and ask him what the deal is with the BYOB. "I was told that they weren't going to be serving champagne," he says. His tone suggests that he's speaking to a child. "But it's a celebration, and I wanted to drink out of champagne flutes. And when we finish this, we'll drink vodka."

And then he's off. I marvel as he pollinates the entire place. He shakes every hand and kisses every cheek. I catch pieces of conversation where he's expounding on art or asking a woman to run away with him or offering to rip a skirt off another. Every so often, he returns to that corner—his touchstone—and speaks to Walker or another friendly face, and then he's off again to preen, flirt, and opine.

After performing raffle announcement duties and listening to this year's honorees speak (Reoch was one of Dallas Contemporary's 2006 Arts Patron Legends Award recipients), he is ready. We agree to meet at the Ritz—we're in separate cars, and I am apparently much farther down on the valet VIP list than Reoch. When I finally get inside the Ritz, there's no sign of him, and I'm convinced that he's ditched me for good. Not so. It turns out that he had to go home to drop off his car. No wardrobe change, however.



SIP AND SEE: (top) Reoch performs raffle duties at the Contemporary Legends party; and (bottom) kisses a damsel's hand.

Reoch enters with great fanfare—greeting me with a wave, shaking hands, kissing even more cheeks, and beckoning a waitress with, “You know what I’m having, right?” He turns without waiting for an answer—but she grabs his arm, and says, “The last time you were here, you walked [the check].” I’m horrified, but Reoch is a perfect gentleman. “Oh no. I’ll take care of it,” he says. But the waitress won’t let it go—and the situation becomes horrifying for a different reason. One gets the feeling that she is the one who doesn’t belong at the Ritz. “They told me you’re a good customer, but I had to pay for it out of my own pocket,” she whines.

“Let’s take care of it now,” he says kindly. He’s not at all affected by it—he pays, runs off to get photographed with Dean Fearing, comes back and orders lobster nachos. “Darling, you need some of those,” he tells me.

After having a bite, he grabs his drink and takes up next to a couple that hasn’t had the pleasure of meeting him just yet. Thirty minutes later, he’s convinced them—as well as the rest of the group—to head to Brooklyn for all-night dancing.

I beg off, even though I know the night holds a great many more adventures. I’m 28 years younger than the man, and I am physically unable to hold up my head. And I’ve accomplished my mission. I’ve seen the closet. I’m sure he’s having just as much fun as the party pics suggest. And though I don’t quite know what to make of the man—i.e., is he serious?—I’d need more than a few hours to figure that out. So I say my goodbyes. Ever the gracious host, though, he gives me one more surprise. Instead of bussing both my cheeks, John Reoch slips me the tongue.

Which, it occurs to me, is precisely the ending to this story that he’d planned all along.

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