

Interview

Artist Misha Kahn's Perfect Dance Party Has A Lot of Arm Room

By Interview
Photography Richie Shazam
Stylist Lana Jay Lackey
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All Clothing and Accessories: Michael Kors Collection.

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For the artist Misha Kahn, less is a bore. Known for his maximal, playful [furniture-as-sculpture](#), the RISD graduate has been making the most of the most in his exhibitions—from [Friedman Benda](#) in New York to the Dallas Contemporary—since he was first featured in the Museum of Modern Art’s NYC Makers biennial in 2014. Constructed from disparate, often unexpected materials—think mohair, cement, vinyl, pool noodles, and trash—Kahn’s creations are tactile and textured, marrying the functional to the fantastic with an emphasis on the latter. With names such as “Slurp, Slap, Arm Akimbo,” Kahn’s objects wouldn’t feel out of place in a heady ‘60s house party or a trippy underground disco. His work doesn’t push the boundaries of conventional design so much as it giddily dances around them, which makes sense, since it’s also work that is meant to be giddily danced around.

INTERVIEW: When you think of Studio 54, what are the first things that come to mind?

KAHN: Honestly? I think about how many times I’ve been out somewhere and heard someone say, “This isn’t Studio 54.” So I suppose I think of Studio 54 as a place that’s the opposite of whatever those shitholes were.

INTERVIEW: If you were able to go back in time and have one night at Studio 54, who would be in your banquette?

KAHN: A Noah’s Ark of baby animals dressed in [Halston](#).

INTERVIEW: What is it about that time that has left such a mark on the cultural imagination?

KAHN: Even with hedonism, I think we all have goals. We can go out now and have an insane night, but Studio 54 exists in our minds as a place that must have been even wilder.

INTERVIEW: Describe your ideal night out.

KAHN: A group of four friends, a pinch of psychedelics, and a mission to dance.

INTERVIEW: Describe your most memorable New York nightlife experience.

KAHN: It was a party, somehow, for a fashion brand and Third Eye Blind played. It was at Sleep No More, and at some point we snuck into the craft services section for the actors. We started stealing full bottles of wine from the bar at that point and ended up relocating to a weird indoor train where I believe we lost most of our clothes. After that, we ended up at an art opening at the Swiss institute, in the jeans

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from the gift bag—all completely splattered in red wine. It gets hazy from here, but there's a picture of a friend getting into a dumpster and doing a lot of handstands.



INTERVIEW: What are the elements that make up a perfect dance party?

KAHN: I'm more into a small enthusiastic group than a big situation, so I think it's a magic cocktail of people being in the right mood and the perfect music coming on. And a lot of room for arms.

INTERVIEW: What impact has technology had on the nightlife experience?

KAHN: Well, the tone has changed now that people love using apps to meet other humans. I think the culture at large is more hesitant to talk to strangers. But I don't know if I care because the good ones never stopped, so it just vetted all the unadventurous ones out.

INTERVIEW: Which era of New York nightlife inspires you the most?

KAHN: The future, when people pull up to the club in little makeshift rafts.

INTERVIEW: How would you characterize New York nightlife at this moment in time?

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KAHN: I think it's fun how weird it is. The internet let people go down a lot of rabbit holes to explore their own freak interests—having so many versions of this show up in one place at the same time is really cool. Pictures from other eras make nightlife look more cohesive. That said, I think I could do without the iPads at the door.



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