

Have Mercy! Fashion With a Cause

By Lauren David Peden

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Louisiana and Mississippi are in the international spotlight following the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina last week, forcing our nation's inhabitants to come to terms not only with the death and destruction caused by this natural disaster but also with the sharp divide that plagues America's haves and have nots--a division that has largely been ignored by politicians and the nation at large until Katrina brought the festering issue of America's class divide to the fore.

Elsewhere, such as Africa, the issue of class and poverty has never *not* been in the forefront of civil and political discussion. "Mercy," a mixed media exhibition by photojournalist Scott Harrison that is running at New York's Metropolitan Pavilion Gallery from August 29th through September 8th (123 W. 18th Street, 4th floor, 11am-10pm daily), documents "hope, healing and miracles in the world's poorest nations" as it played out aboard the 550-foot Anastasis--one of the fleet of hospital Mercy Ships in Liberia, West Africa--manned by 350 volunteer doctors and surgeons who treat thousands of the area's desperately ill, and desperately poor, citizens.

Harrison lived on the ship for eight months and "Mercy" is the photographic account of everything he witnessed during that time: The good, the bad and the ugly.

On Wednesday, September 7th, Metropolitan Pavilion will play host to a gala fundraiser whose profits will go towards restoring the health and infrastructure for the underprivileged people of West Africa. In addition to being able to make cash donations toward various much-needed surgical procedures aboard the Anastasis, guests can also bid on a wide variety of items donated for the event's silent auction, including dinner for six at The Odeon or Cafe Luxembourg, a weekend at the Maritime Hotel, a Stila Cosmetics basket valued at \$1,000, and tickets to the upcoming New York Fashion Week shows of Heatherette and Alice Roi.

In addition, fashion-minded do-gooders can put their money where their mouth is by bidding on handbags from Marc Jacobs, Prada, Be & D, Christian Louboutin and Giorgio Armani, jewelry from Me & Ro and David Yurman, clothing from Diesel, Banana Republic, Diane von Furstenberg, and Joseph Abboud, and art and housewares from Calvin Klein, Peter Tunney, Wooster Projects Gallery and Lyle Owerko, among others.

Tickets to the September 7th event are \$125. Call 212-479-7796 or go to www.mercynewyork.com for details.

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