



MIKIKI

Going out for dinner on Valentine's Day, that saccharine celebration of heteronormativity, feels like an ideal occasion for a bit of subversion. I had some fun with it over the years, with Kalmplex's gender-fluid, vegan Ital Valentines, Paula Costa's 7 Deadly Sins, and my own attempt at a provocative Secret Heart Supper Club. So, when Mikiki approached me about doing some events, Valentine's Day seemed like the perfect place to shake things up.

Towering at over six foot five in huge heels, with 4-inch eyelashes and full kabuki-esque paint, Mikiki combined a wicked, transgressive sense of humour, ambitious culinary ideas, and a sophisticated conceptual and artistic sensibility that were all integral to the performance that was the meal. It was drag on a plate. The inaugural 2017 dinner, My Funny Valentine, tested the waters with dishes like Street Meat Urchin: an amuse-bouche of crispy pork skin, a light sparkling gel of sauerkraut juice, and a mustard/sea urchin crema. Or Any Port in a Storm: confit of salt cod with preserved

Roses are red Gender is performative Let's make Valentine's Day Less heteronormative

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quail egg crumble and pickled blueberries on a disc of grilled potato. Dishes were served interspersed with raunchy banter, cabaret songs, and personal storytelling around the inspiration of the dishes. It was literally and figuratively and colloquially fabulous. I was delighted that someone was taking full advantage of the freedom The Dep could offer to reimagine what a night at a "restaurant" could mean.

Emboldened by their success, **Mikiki went on to host a string of fantastic events, each facing the non-trivial challenge of how to outdo the previous one.** In 2018, the dinner was My Bloody Valentine, themed on the Saint Valentine's Day Massacre, the mob assassination of seven men on Chicago's North Side in 1929. Blood was the star ingredient, and each course was dedicated to one of the slain mobsters. Challenging the outer limits of food, art, and social convention, guests were given lancets and invited to garnish their digestif with a single drop of their own blood, or to exchange drinks in a ritual evoking the "blood brother" pacts of schoolyard boys.

The iconic image of the night was that of a glamorous Mikiki, in a magenta wig and gold lamé evening gown, delicately touching up their lipstick from a litre container of duck blood. Mikiki would host several more Valentine's Day Supper Clubs, with themes ranging from Tentacle Porn to Hot Garbage, each one fearless, funny, and truly provocative—in both the sexy and confrontational sense.

