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(AND
LOUDEST)
FOO
FIGHTERS
ALBUM
IN YEARS**

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RUGGED CLOTHES AND
HUNDREDS OF OTHER REASONS
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ADAM ALEKSANDER'S EXPERIENTIAL EVENTS ARE A GENRE ALL THEIR OWN.
BY CAITLIN SMITH.
PHOTOGRAPHED BY IAN ALLEN

A LOW-KEY CONVERSATION over tea and orange slices takes a dramatic turn when Adam Aleksander leads me out of his charming apartment on New York City's Lower East Side, through his backyard, and into a neighboring five-story abandoned building that he refers to as his "haunted house." In his striped tie and tapered gingham pants, and accompanied by a frenzied Maltipoo named Piglet, Aleksander cuts a dapper figure in this run-down space: Lead paint peels from stained walls (the ones that are still standing); dust, dirt, debris, and broken furniture litter the floor; and in one corner, a pile of dismembered doll parts lies next to a nude animatronic Santa Claus, a small white robot, and what appears to be the upper half of a large dog costume. The ceiling, with its beautiful original molding, is caked with dirt and embellished with colorful streamers and plastic flowers hung on string. An eerie combination of dilapidation and the remnants of parties past, this skeletal building is where Aleksander hosts many of the soirees he has become known for.

From commercial events for clients such as Bacardi, Red Bull, and Gilt City to the more intimate dinners thrown for groups of friends, Aleksander is reimagining and reviving New York nightlife for a new generation.

Though the School of Visual Arts graduate and former costume design intern classifies himself as an experiential designer, that in itself is loaded with a dozen subtitles. "My job is producer, publicist, promoter, art director, and even floor manager," he says. Through word-of-mouth, Aleksander's pop-up parties have been attracting young creatives from across the five boroughs. Since his first bash in 2009 (a three-day masquerade-themed dinner dubbed The Carnival of Ascension), Aleksander has perfected these extravagant events, many of which take place in unconventional venues. "I would spend my nights making my own

projects," he says. "I was teaching myself carpentry [along with] a lot of metal and sculptural things." It all results in an immersive experience, aimed at "getting people out of the norm," he says. "I like people to come dressed up because they bring a different part of themselves—I also like them to have a weird journey." So far, his guests have explored modern-day speakeasies (Les Salonnieres), magical woodlands (Hendrick's Enchanted Forest of Curiosities), lavish period-themed fêtes (Marie Antoinette's Boudoir), and even a dinner show in collaboration with Marina Abramovic and her students (This House is Empty).

Aleksander is currently working on an ambitious list of ventures, the next of which is Academy—an event that will transport party-goers to a fantasy school where they'll attend cocktail, wine and cheese, and dessert classes. "It's been

my dream for a year and a half," he says. "If I can get away with it, there will be smoking in the bathroom and [people will get] picked up in school buses." Aleksander plans to make Academy a regular occurrence, and eventually take it nationwide.

And although he spends months at a time drawing up floorplans, pitching ideas to sponsors, obtaining funds, hiring team members, constructing props and décor, and promoting his parties, Aleksander's own enjoyment isn't his main objective. "I'm a wreck [at my parties]. I'm so nervous and doing so many things," he admits. "But it's worth it because I love it. The day after I do a big event, I have a high that feels like I've just conquered the world." He smiles. "Even if it's small."

