

Bad Idea: Gender Reveals

It's time to burst the (pink or blue) bubble of this trend.



What if you learned that a completely frivolous celebration you had planned could result in bodily injury, a massive explosion, a devastating fire or even death? Now add to it the fact that the guest of honor would be pregnant. Would you still host it? Based on the growing popularity of gender-reveal parties over the last decade, the answer for many is a resounding yes.

It all started innocently enough. In 2008, pregnant blogger Jenna Myers Karvunidis gathered her family to cut a cake: The pink-hued contents announced to all (Myers Karvunidis included) that her first baby was a girl. *The Bump* picked up the story, and a hot new trend was born—as well as her daughter Bianca.

Alongside the rise of social media (and concurrently, an almost Pavlovian obsession with going viral), excited parents-to-be dreamed up increasingly elaborate spectacles of one-upmanship. The conceit had all the makings of a schadenfreudian social experiment: a crowd of unsuspecting people, a surprise, a reaction, and—of course—cameras trained on everyone for the duration. And so, naturally, tragedy ensued.

There was the Louisiana man who fed a melon full of blue Jell-O to an alligator and almost lost a limb; the Arizona man who set off colorful fireworks and sparked a 47,000-acre wildfire; and the Iowa woman who was killed by shrapnel from a homemade device meant to reveal her grandchild's

gender. Broken bones and burns have become an unsurprising side effect of these gatherings—and yet the trend has persisted.

Beyond the physical dangers, the concept of a gender reveal is both archaic and harmful. Gender is something a person defines for themselves, but these parties place an unborn child into a box, underscoring roles and expectations through assignment.

In July 2019, Myers Karvunidis revealed that Bianca now prefers to dress in gender-nonconforming suits. She expressed regret about the party that sparked it all, saying she's learned that focusing on gender is limiting to a child's potential. Perhaps the target of these reveals will be the ones to end them for good.

GOOD IDEA

by Harriet Fitch Little

Not all gender reveal parties are created equal. In 2017, Ohio couple Love and Brandon Gwaltney organized a reveal with a difference. "We wanted to announce that we got it wrong 17 years ago when we told the world we were having a little girl," Love wrote in a Facebook post that quickly went viral. "So, we'd like to introduce you to our son: Grey." In the accompanying images, Grey—who is non-binary but uses male pronouns—emerges from a box of multicolored balloons. His mother, who is pregnant in the photos, apologizes to viewers who came to the post expecting to find out the gender of the couple's next child: "Sorry (not sorry) to disappoint you."

Photograph: Gabriel Isak

Photograph: Valerie Chiang

Bargo's primary obsession is French mid-century furniture from designers such as Jean Prouvé and Charlotte Perriand.

Last Night

What did design dealer *Michael Bargo* do with his evening?

Michael Bargo knows the value of home. Renowned for his fashionable clientele (including Mary-Kate Olsen, co-creative director of *The Row*) and for his Instagram tastemaking, Bargo has filled his uptown New York apartment with design classics, which he sells to clients who come to visit.

BG: *What did you do last night?*
MB: I went for dinner with a client at Raoul's, a classic SoHo restaurant that's been there for 40 years. I wouldn't have gone out if he hadn't been in town from LA! I'm a real homebody—unsurprising, for someone who works in interiors.
BG: *Where's home?* **MB:** I've been slowly moving into this new place uptown since June. It has a doorman, and the architecture is a little *American Psycho*. I brought the most significant pieces of my collection, like my black Borsani sofa, and I've been experimenting with color; I now have a yellow rug and a blue Prouvé dining table!

BG: *What prompted your move?*
MB: I used to have a gallery/apartment in Chinatown, but my lease was up. This new place is consider-

ably smaller, but there's still room to entertain. I used to have dinner parties for 15 to 20 people—I've become close friends with most of my clients. Now it's six to eight maximum. Obviously big gatherings are out right now, but I've got company: my two cats and my Chihuahua mix, Timo. His back legs are paralyzed: When we go out, he scoots about on wheels.

BG: *Are you a good cook?* **MB:** Not at all, despite loving to host dinners. I like to do something simple yet extravagant, ordering sushi platters, or serving baked potatoes or spaghetti with caviar.

BG: *Do you worry that parties and pets are at odds with your pristine furniture?* **MB:** No. Although the French mid-century pieces I like and work with are considered masterpieces, they were made to be used in factories and public buildings. They can handle wear and tear! Take a piece by Charlotte Perriand/Le Corbusier; horsehair's much easier to clean than a linen sofa. Think about it: If you poured wine on an animal, it wouldn't stain!

