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CULTURE

## Gloria Steinem Celebrates Her 91st Birthday With an Evening of Art and Activism

West Coast-based gallery ILY2 gathered influential creative women together at the feminist icon's Upper East Side apartment.



Amy Yip, Gloria Steinem, and Saad Amer. Mike Vitell/BFA.com

by **Carolyn Twersky Winkler**

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“What’s really exciting is we don’t know what might come from tonight,” said Gloria Steinem—five days short of 91—from her perch on a cushy red chair in the middle of her apartment. “It’s what this living room was made for.” The living room in question sits in her apartment in the heart of the Upper East Side, where Steinem has resided for almost 60 years and hosted some of the most prominent figures of the 20th and 21st centuries. On Wednesday night, that tradition continued.

With the help of the female-focused, Portland-based gallery ILY2, Steinem opened her doors to an influential crowd once again. The gathering held many different purposes: a celebration of Women’s History Month, promotion for the new biannual publication, *The Shift*, in partnership with Inez & Vinoodh, and a breeding ground for conversation. Situated around a grazing table created by Saison, ILY2 director Jeanine Jablonski and activist Saad Amer led a dialogue that encompassed themes of productivity, motherhood, and the arts’ impact on culture.



Mike Vitelli/BFA.com

The conversation began with introductions as the women in attendance shared some basic information with the group. The room was filled with writers, artists, curators, and the self-proclaimed creative-adjacent, but there was one constant throughout: everyone was extremely honored to be there, a sentiment that was repeatedly shared. Despite the range of ages and identifiers, it was clear the impact Steinem had on everyone in the space, from the more serious to the light-hearted. “After you published your Playboy exposé, my mother left her second husband,” former *Elle* editor-in-chief Roberta Myers said as the room erupted in laughter.



Mike Vitelli/BFA.com



Bonnie Lucas, Rosie Motley, Allie Furlotti, Leena Similu, and Jeanine Jablonski.  
Mike Vitelli/BFA.com

Carolyn Twersky Winkler, "Gloria Steinem Celebrates Her 91st Birthday With an Evening of Art and Activism".  
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ILY2-represented artists Bonnie Lucas and Leena Similu both spoke about their experience in the industry. Lucas, one of the only attendees who was alive during the heart of the second-wave feminist movement, connected with Steinem on how coming of age in the late '60s and early '70s still affects her practice. There was talk of progress, both within the art industry and the world at large, as well as where work still needs to be done. Thirty-year-old artist Anna Weyant chimed in, sharing her own experience with gender bias. The group responded with a chorus of “mm-hmms” and head nods, as well as scattered applause. All were impressively tuned in, and not one phone came out during the 90-minute discussion, a testament to the quality of conversation and respect for the space.



Sarah Hoover and Anna Weyant.  
Mike Vitelli/BFA.com



Steinem and Cathy Yan.  
Mike Vitelli/BFA.com



Ella Stiller, Shilpa Yarlagadda, and Suleika Jaouad.  
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After additional remarks from authors Sarah Hoover and Suleika Jaouad, filmmaker Cathy Yan, and jewelry designer Shilpa Yarlagadda, it was time to celebrate the host. Amy Yip of Yip Studios presented Steinem with a frothy pink cake exploding with fruit and flowers as attendees sang “Happy Birthday” (the confection came on a blue floral platter from fashion’s favorite plateware brand, Ginori 1735, which provided china for the event). A bar situated in Steinem’s bedroom served up another round of drinks inspired by the icon, aptly named “Outrageous Woman” and “What If Women Win” in reference to Steinem’s 1983 book and 1970 *Time Magazine* essay, respectively. Those with drinks in hand lingered in the space, taking in memorabilia and pictures from decades of travel and activism, aware that they are now a part of this great history. “I hope this is going to be the home for a movement for a long time,” Steinem said to her guests, and that future seems likely.