

Museum's Ball Draws Arty Pickets Too

By ENID NEMY

It was black tie inside and out at the Metropolitan Museum of Art last night. As the 3,000 formally clad guests prepared to ascend the granite stairway into the building for a Centennial Ball, a smaller group, many of them also in black tie, picketed along Fifth Avenue in what they termed a "quiet, non-action, dignified" demonstration.

The group of about 60, members of the East Side Conservation Committee, was protesting the institution's planned expansion into Central Park.

"We also feel very strongly about cultural decentralization," said Mrs. John G. Heimann, the chairman, who put on a broadtail coat and white kid gloves for her marching chores.

"We are not a bunch of precious people or little old ladies and bird watchers in space shoes. We are deeply committed to what's going on in the city."

Mrs. Heimann, whose husband is a partner in E. M. Warburg & Co., an investment firm, said:

"Picketing is not my thing, but there comes a time when one must put some quiet action where one's mouth is."

The quiet action was just that. The pickets contented themselves with placards reading, "The Met Could Enrich the City With More

Branches Like the Cloisters," "Decentralize or Die," "Happiness Is a Park Tree," "Once Upon a Time There Was a Central Park." The protest was carried on in almost complete silence.

One of the most carefully coordinated demonstrators was Sheba, a black and white Dalmatian who trotted along in a white raincoat (her own) and a borrowed black tie.

"We walk in the park every morning, so she has a stake in this," said Esther Buble, her owner.

The protest was greeted with cheerful indulgence by centennial celebrants.

"It's a tempest in a teapot," said Mrs. W. Vincent Astor, a member of the museum's anniversary committee and ball chairman.

Mrs. Astor, who showed up in a fringed turquoise silk gown, an American-made copy of a French couturier original, said, "We are not planning to encroach on the park at all, just the parking space. I think when they realize this, they will calm down."

Earlier Mrs. Astor had entertained 60 guests at dinner in her Park Avenue apartment. Among them were Gov. and Mrs. Rockefeller; C. Douglas Dillon, president of the Metropolitan, and Mrs. Dillon; William S. Paley, president of the Museum of Modern Art, and Mrs. Paley, and George Seybolt, president of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Thomas P. F. Hoving, director of the museum, and Mrs. Hoving held their dinner party at the home of Mr. and Mrs. A. Ronald Tree. Mrs. Tree, a member of the committee, was in Europe.

Other hosts included Mr. and Mrs. Gardner Cowles, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur A. Houghton Jr. (he's chairman of the Museum's board of trustees), and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Scull.

The ball, believed to be the first sponsored by the museum, was expensive, with tickets at \$125 each.

Four of the principal areas on the main floor recreated the more colorful eras of the last century. The Arms and Armor Court became an 1870 ballroom, designed by Parish-Hadley, Inc. A 25-piece string orchestra, led by Emery Davis, played a continuous series of waltzes.

In the Blumenthal Patio, reconverted into a room of La Belle Epoque by McMillen, Inc., Jack Harris of the Meyer Davis organization led a 10-piece tango orchestra.

Hot and cold canapes and Meyer Davis's playing such tunes as "Whispering," "Avalon" and "Body and Soul" were features of the Egyptian Sculpture Court, transformed by Burge-Donghia, Inc., into a roof garden supper club of the 1930's.

Baldwin & Martin, Inc., converted the U-shaped Fountain restaurant into a discothèque. Music was supplied by Watson and the Sherlocks, a rock band.

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