# Susanne Bartsch's memoir celebrates legacy of NYC's queer nightlif



The atmosphere was electric at the Standard's Boom Boom Room as Susanne Bartsch, a prominent figure in New York City’s nightlife scene, hosted a lavish book party for her pictorial memoir, *Bartschland: Tales of New York City Nightlife*. Attendees, including Michael Musto, Amanda Lepore, Joey Arias, and Aquaria, gathered to celebrate Bartsch and her indelible mark on the city's nightlife. The event, akin to a reunion of New York's glitterati, later morphed into a vibrant party at Le Bain, home to Bartsch's popular Tuesday night event, On Top.

*Bartschland* provides a vivid chronicle of Bartsch’s life and career, underscoring her influence as a club queen and cultural trailblazer since she first moved to the iconic Chelsea Hotel in 1981. The book’s foreword, penned by RuPaul, doubles as an homage to Bartsch. RuPaul, recounting his early days as a go-go dancer at Bartsch’s weekly party Savage, credited her with recognising his potential. “When she entered the room, she hovered over the crowd like a magical fairy, sprinkling excitement on everyone,” RuPaul wrote, emphasising Bartsch's role in his journey to becoming a pop star.

Bartsch reciprocated the praise, identifying RuPaul as a great supporter who attributes much of his success to her. This mutual respect has extended to business ventures, with RuPaul promoting *Bartschland* through his new bookselling company, Allstora. Purchases from Allstora granted access to an exclusive chat between the two friends earlier this year.

Renowned for her sartorial influence, Bartsch significantly impacted New York’s fashion scene by importing British fashion to the city through her SoHo boutique, introducing designers like Vivienne Westwood and John Galliano. A 2015 exhibit at the Fashion Institute of Technology celebrated her elaborate costumes and unique sense of style. However, Bartsch’s contributions extend beyond fashion; she has created inclusive spaces and platforms for LGBTQ+ individuals, fostering a culture of acceptance and self-expression.

Reflecting on her draw towards the LGBTQ+ community, Bartsch remarked, “Since the beginning, I’ve been very, very drawn to the LGBTQ community…. Honestly, I think the gays have more fun.” Her talent lies not in conventional performance arts but in her ability to create environments where people feel safe and free to express themselves.

Bartsch has also channelled her producing skills into philanthropy, notably launching the Love Ball in 1989 to raise funds for AIDS research, an event that garnered $400,000 and brought mainstream attention to the ballroom community. Continuing her philanthropic efforts, she is organising an event next year to highlight emerging designers, with proceeds benefiting The Center, an LGBTQ+ organisation.

Bartsch’s distinctive style and fearless approach to fashion have been a hallmark of her career. Hailing from Switzerland, her unique fashion sense propelled her to London in the late 1960s in search of a creative community before eventually settling in New York, which she now calls home. Her homecoming to Switzerland for Zurich Pride was a highlight for Bartsch, who performed on the main stage with drag performers.

Reflecting on this moment, Bartsch noted how much Switzerland has progressed in terms of open-mindedness since her youth. She plans to launch an exhibition at Zurich’s Museum of Design on July 10, celebrating her world of inclusive fashion and nightlife.

Known for her unforgettable sense of style, Bartsch's preparations for any event can take from 90 minutes to three hours, depending on the complexity of the look. Her approach is fearless and unapologetic. “I dress for myself. I really do. And I am not afraid of anything,” she explains, encouraging others to embrace fear without letting it control their lives.

For those curious to delve deeper into Bartsch’s world, *Bartschland: Tales of New York City Nightlife* is available on Amazon and Allstora. Her documentary, *Susanne Bartsch: On Top*, is also streamable on Prime Video and WOW Presents Plus.

Bartsch's story is a testament to the power of creativity and the importance of carving out spaces for self-expression. Her contributions to fashion, nightlife, and the LGBTQ+ community continue to resonate, inspiring many to follow in her footsteps.