

# Monkeying Around

If James Grashow invites you to dinner in his studio, be prepared to get into the swing of his sculptor's mind.

**T**HERE ARE OVER-THE-TOP centerpieces—and then there is the main attraction in James Grashow's studio. When he and his wife, Lesley, throw a dinner party at their Connecticut home, they often set the table in the separate building where James makes his sculpture. Hanging from the ceiling in a riotous mob above guests' heads are 64 (and counting) life-size cardboard monkeys.

"People walk into the room and the breath is knocked right out of them—it's wild," Lesley says. "James and I are used to it, but guests say, 'You have no idea what it's like to come into this.'"

The monkey business started in 1998, when a museum asked James to create an exhibition. Though he's worked in many media, he chose to use an unconventional material: corrugated cardboard, cut and pieced and glue-gunned together. "The cardboard is like an old friend," he says, "and reminds you of every box you've ever opened." He decided to create an entire zoo out of the material: elephants, tigers, rhinos, and the rest. But while all the animals in the show attracted attention, it was the monkeys, with their empty toilet-paper tubes for eyes, who seemed to swing head, shoulders, and curvy tails above the rest.

Now a permanent installation in his studio, the simian crowd turns a dinner party into dinner theater. "The more monkeys you have, the more the space between them starts to jump," James says. "The ceiling becomes an abstract painting." And the guests are right in it. —*Michael Callahan* 

Providing tonight's entertainment: 64 cardboard monkeys, glue-gunned to life by sculptor James Grashow (second from left). On the table, dinnerware, placemats, and napkins play up the jungle theme. *For details, see Shop Guide.*

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