

Cake at Tiffany's: 200 Fifth's Back-Slapping Birthday Bash

By [William Alden](#)



Peter Lettre.

On the top floor of [200 Fifth Avenue](#) on Thursday evening, Simone Levinson compared herself to a mafia boss.

"You know how in *The Godfather III* when Al Pacino says, 'I keep trying to leave but they just suck me back in?'" she said. "I feel like that with party planning."

The event—celebrating the completion of a two-and-a-half-year renovation at 200 Fifth, which will soon house media agency Grey Global Group, jeweler Tiffany & Co.'s headquarters, and chef Mario Batali's new restaurant/brewpub Eataly—was indeed fit for a Corleone. On a rooftop terrace in view of the Flatiron, with a live band playing bossa nova, guests sipped cocktails and nibbled spring rolls and tuna tartare, marveling at a cake designed to resemble the building.

David Levinson, Ms. Levinson's husband and the chairman of L&L Holding Company, which in 2007 bought 200 Fifth (formerly the International Toy Building), milled around the terrace, receiving congratulations. Wearing a navy suit and a Yankees World Series ring (Mr. Levinson owns a stake in the team), the real estate magnate exuded confidence.

"Two-hundred is a symbol of what we're capable of doing," he said. Asked to elaborate, he cited the building's Gold LEED certification and said, "I mean, you're the writer—look around. This is one of the finest buildings in the city."

With that, he slipped away to attend to his guests. John Travers, vice president of Structure Tone, which supervised construction at 200 Fifth, furrowed his brow, looking serious and sentimental, and said of Mr. Levinson and the building's rehabilitation, "Not many people are capable of pulling this off."

Forty-five minutes into the party, everyone got quiet. Mr. Levinson and Robert Lapidus, the CIO and other "L" of L&L, stood behind a microphone. Mr. Levinson announced that June 17, the day of the party, which also celebrated the 100th anniversary of the building and the 10th anniversary of L&L, had been proclaimed by official mayoral decree 200 Fifth Avenue Day. He offered thanks.

"There are really four L&Ls," Mr. Levinson said in his speech. "That's Carol Lapidus and Simone Levinson."

The crowd applauded the men's wives. Mr. Lapidus addressed the crowd.

"L&L is really a family business," he said. "You all are really an extension of that family."

The two men held a large knife and pretended to cut the 200 Fifth Avenue cake, smiling for cameras. Of course, the cake would not actually be eaten. Waiters arrived bearing trays of plates with slices from another, similar dessert.

Near the elevators inside, Ms. Levinson arranged the gift bags, which each contained not only a cookie with a photograph of one of L&L's properties edibly printed on the front, but also a Tiffany & Co. key ring. Small cards in the bags read, "Thank you for playing a key role in our success." Ms. Levinson smiled at the pun.

"I couldn't help myself," she said.

[*walden@observer.com*](mailto:walden@observer.com)