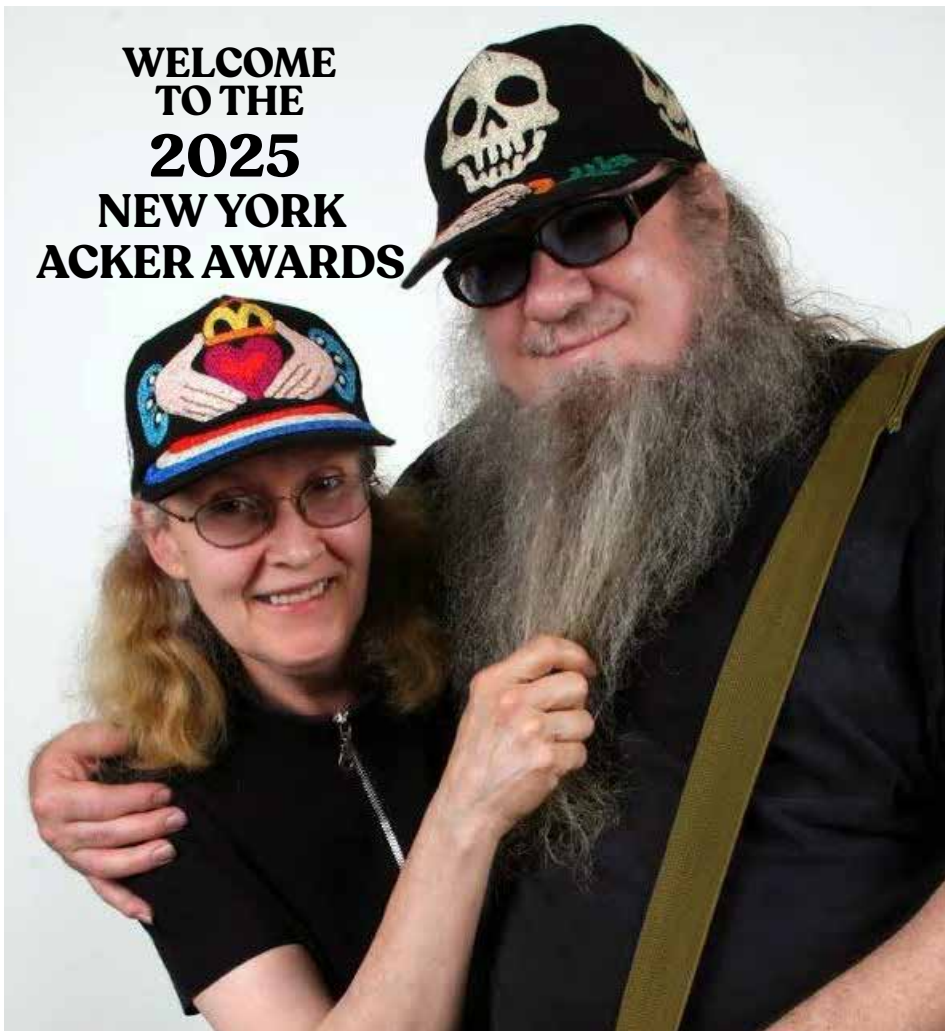


THE 10TH ♦ NEW YORK
ACKER
AWARDS 2025



Painting by Ari Roussimoff

WELCOME TO THE 2025 NEW YORK ACKER AWARDS



By Clayton Patterson, Creator and Producer

2025 marks the celebration of the 10th NY Acker Awards presentation. This award is presented annually to New York City residents who have made unique and under-recognized cultural contributions to their communities. It honors avant-garde creators, celebrating their original ideas and creating venues for their work to be recognized.

Some past recipients include Crystal Field, Spider Webb, Dietmar Kirves, Steve Delachinsky, and M.M. Serra. The ceremony takes place at historically significant Lower East Side venues like the Orensanz Cultural Center, Theater 80, HOWL Gallery, or Theater for the New City. Each year, a well-known creative talent such as Bob Holman, Kembra Pfahler, or Phoebe Legere hosts the event.

Each honoree receives a handmade NY Acker Award Box containing mementoes reflecting their specific contributions. A booklet with bios and photos of recipients is published, and a commemorative poster designed by local artists like Jerry Pagane, Ray Felix, Fly and Steven Ellis, Ernest Gusella, and Clayton Patterson is presented. RIP Cups, created by Antony Zito to honor those who have passed, are also included in each recipient's Award Box.

This year, around forty creators will receive NY Acker Awards. The ceremony will take place on March 10, 2025, at Theater for the New City.

BEGINNINGS

When Elsa and I moved to NYC in 1979, the Lower East Side was alive with creativity. We were inspired by the energy and simple pleasures, like the 99-cent breakfast: two eggs any style, toast options (white, brown, pumpernickel, rye), orange juice, and endless coffee. For \$3.00, you could impress someone at Lesko's - a meal for your guest, a dollar for yourself, and a tip for the waiter. You could linger for hours, fueled by caffeine and inspiration.

It was a dream for artists. Canal Street overflowed with affordable supplies at places like Job Lots, Plastic Places, and the five-story Pearl Paint emporium, opening doors to endless creativity.

In 2013, I created this award to celebrate NYC's wildness and creative freedom. Cheap rent and an inexpensive lifestyle drew independent thinkers and creators. NYC was a crucible for genius and originality.

Today, gentrification has eroded much of what sustained the avant-garde - cheap rent, independent venues, and community-driven creativity. Art risks becoming commodified, equated with money and profit. The rise of "A.I. artists" highlights this dehumanizing trend.

NYC's prominence comes from its people - an ever-changing cast of larger-than-life characters. While mainstream media focuses on celebrities, countless unknown artists, activists, historians, and thinkers enrich our neighborhoods. From Joseph Cornell to YouTube's New York Nico, these individuals make NYC the cultural capital of the world. The NY Acker Award shines a light on these creators, preserving the spirit that defines this city.



SPECIAL THANKS

The Acker Awards would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the individuals listed below for their dedication, and extraordinary efforts in making this event possible.

Chi Lau, Zach Lau, Paulo Borga, Antony Zito, CLLCTV, Edward Rivera, Freaky Frige, Theater for the New City, Crystal Fields, John Gagliano, Chris Heffernan, Jim Muscarella, Coss Marte, Phoebe Legre, Frank London, Ray Felix, Ari Roussimo, Ernest Gusella, Joe Ro, Javier Torres, and Jose "COCHISE" Quiles.

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HOST

Phoebe Legere

Phoebe Legere is the Executive Director of the Foundation for New American Art, a nonprofit corporation that brings art and music to the children of low-income communities. She is the Music Director and Conductor of the Lower East Side Children's Chorus. A political playwright, Five of

her plays have been produced by Theater for the New City. Her musical Hello Madam president, about the first female President of color, starred Laverne Baker in the title role. Shakespeare and Elizabeth, Legere's musical comedy, starred Phoebe as Elizabeth I and Crystal Field as her sister Bloody Mary. Legere's new play, Nefertiti and the Jews, was produced at TNC in 2020. For more information, visit: www.foundationfornewamericanart.org

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Stephen Kent Jusick

Written by Jack Waters culled in part from MIX History as told to, researched, and remembered by August Eckhardt.



Shortbus is a 2006 American erotic comedy-drama film written and directed by John Cameron Mitchell. Influences include the Lusty Loft Parties that took place at a Brooklyn art collective called DUMBA (where the film's salon was actually shot), and the Downtown weekly CineSalon film gathering near the edge of the East Village, both of which were organized, in part, by Stephen Kent Jusick who plays Creamy in the film.

An experimental film maker, Stephen's main output is hand processed super 8 film. His greater body of work is a who's who of early 21st century Queer art and culture. The films take the form of gay porn portraiture. Stephen is one half of the all-analog sound and projection duo Cinesonic with DJ Econ. Part installation, part performance, and ALL expanded cinema, the immersive environment generated by Cinesonic pushes the boundaries of cinema rejecting the traditional one-way relationship between the audience and the screen.

An instigator in the truest and most consistent sense, Stephen may be best known for channeling MIX NYC - the New York Lesbian And Gay Experimental film festival - into the most popular, yet furthest underground queer public venue anywhere, EVER.

In 1998 the festival included a sidebar of 8 mm films that Stephen curated, featuring work by both contemporary makers and old masters such as Jack Smith, and Andy Warhol's Polavision home movies. With a festival reboot in 2006 Stephen Kent became MIX's executive director with co-directors Szu Burgess, Andre Hereford, and Kate Huh. By 2009 Szu and August Eckhardt were co-directors and Stephen was executive director.

Since inception in 1987, for most of its life, and in its most recent incarnation MIX happened downtown - mostly on the Lower East Side and in the East Village. By 2014, the festival was at home in Brooklyn. The queer erotic body in public was a major theme for the 2014 festival, which included a guest curated sex positive program, and the East Coast premier of Un(dis)sing Our Abilities, a program of shorts.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Patti Astor

"Let's call it Just for FUN! - starring Patti Astor!"

Written by Jim Muscarella

Patti Astor passed in April 2024 at the age of 74. Widely recognized as the "first lady of Graffiti art" for helping to bring the art form to an international audience, she is remembered as a visionary whose true love for the rebellious nature of the lifestyle contributed to its longevity.



Jim Muscarella & Patti Astor (photo)

Patti was introduced to the scene while playing a role in Charlie Ahearn's WILD STYLE alongside artists Lady Pink, Lee Quinones, Fab 5 Freddy, and Zephyr. The film, regarded as the first hip-hop motion picture, features her character discovering the uptown graffiti culture and follows its introduction down to the LES. In true 'life imitates art' fashion, Patti went on to launch NYC's FUN Gallery with Bill Stelling in 1981. FUN exhibited works by artists Jean-Michel Basquiat, Dondi, Futura 2000, Keith Haring, LA2, Kenny Scharf, and others.

I never envisioned that my life as a filmmaker would lead to an opportunity to collaborate with such a downtown legend like Patti in

what, unbeknownst to all, would become her last art show. For me, the 1980s art and music that shaped my artistic voice reigns as the most memorable and important time in NYC history, and Patti was a key player at the center of it all. This era reflected the opportunity that so many took to focus on living creatively. The quality of life for NY artists was viable back then, as the cost of city living was dirt cheap.

On the heels of the punk and rock scene, the No Wave cinema movement became a pinnacle of avant-garde, independent energy. This tight-knit community of struggling artists stripped down the film-making process partly as a reaction to the ongoing clichés of the rock-and-roll scene but essentially due to lack of funds. Patti worked her way through the LES and became highly recognizable as the “Queen of the Downtown Scene,” appearing in films by Eric Mitchell and Amos Poe.

Fast-forward to 2022. I was planning a group art show at my Brooklyn studio when I happened to hear that Patti was looking for a place to preview her documentary series, True Story, a companion to her memoir of the same name. After bonding over a phone call, we decided to join forces. Patti was full of ideas, including naming the show “Just For FUN!” She was excited to help plan and meet the artists we’d already arranged to be involved, including Mike Mills (co-curator), Pierre Jean Baptiste, Ronald Bianco, Ari Corino, Danny Cortes, Valeri Larko, Albert Scambati, and Jim Tozzi. Before long, we added Delta 2, Al Diaz, Duke 9, and Eric Orr to include work from artists who had been active since the Wild Style /FUN Gallery era.

I was thrilled to be part of her making her way back from LA for ‘Just for FUN!’ In true Patti fashion, she made her first stop at the Mets opening day game and arrived at the gallery space grinning in her home team jersey, proudly clutching the ball she’d caught at the game. What a memorable way to meet her in person. The bubbles in her glass of Veuve Clicquot were still rising as she reacted to the art around us, which was mid-hang. In her classic voice, she shrieked with joy as she discovered the layout of the show, particularly her reaction to the “Old School Room,” which featured a mix of artists spanning over 40 years. Watching us clip the work lights onto the beams, she quipped, “Oh my Gahd! We used those same lights at FUN!”

The timeless memories from her origins in the NYC art scene had been recovered in a sense. It was a privilege to provide Patti with a familiar environment where she could interact with artists and guests during opening night. Once again, she was able to be the star! The greatest moments of our friendship in the last years of her life were witnessing the recognition by all kinds of people who acknowledged her significance and thanked her for her influence and inspiration.

We owe Patti a great deal. She was instrumental in creating the essence of our prevalent culture, which remains strong to this day. My thanks go to an icon who helped shape the definition of NYC cool and will always remain a light in that center.

“Just For FUN Show - Starring Patti Astor” - May 20-22, 2022. Brooklyn, NY

Artists: Pierre Jean Baptiste, Ronald Bianco, Ari Carino, Danny Cortes, Cose, DELTA 2, Al Diaz, Duke 9, Rich Fie, Valeri Larko, Julien Gardair, Joseph Guillette, Tim Kent, Hayley Martell, Mike Mills, Eric Orr, Amy Regalia, Leia Sands, Michael Saville, SNAKE-1, Albert Sgambati, Jim Tozzi, Melanie Vote

Curated by: Mike Mills & Jim Muscarella
Produced by: Adam Elliot & Jena Kaplaniak
Poster design by: Rich Fie



The Patti Astor “DOWN BY LAW” AWARD for GRAFFITI LEGENDS

The ACKER Awards is introducing a new category honoring NYC’s Graffiti culture, which ignited the global Hip Hop movement. Born in the Bronx in the 1970s, graffiti was a movement started by children using it as a means of expression, reflecting their times.

As the mainstream art world caught wind of its importance, Patti Astor became a key supporter of the energy at the time. When she and Bill Stelling launched the FUN Gallery in 1981, the downtown art scene became transfixed by the cultural shift.

Patti recognized, befriended, and supported the artists of that era, shaping a transcendent period in NYC culture that remains stronger than ever four decades later. This award honors the spirit and perseverance of artists who feel an unshakable daily obligation to push this movement forward.

"DOWN BY LAW" AWARD

DELTA 2

DELTA 2 is being recognized for being a pioneer in the art world bridging the gap between graffiti and gallery.



DELTA 2 (born Calvin Gonzalez, Manhattan, 1965) grew up on 102nd Street in East Harlem and began painting subway cars in the late 1970s. Vibrant colors and calligraphic writing styles characterize DELTA 2's art as he came to dominate the 6 and 4 train lines in the early 1980s.

Beginning in 1984, he transitioned to painting on canvas and exhibited his work first in New York City's FUN Gallery.

That same year, DELTA 2 participated in the groundbreaking Quattordio Graffiti, an exhibition and publication of artwork at the IVI Paint Factory, in the village of Quattordio, Italy. The next year he participated in Guillaume Gallozo's celebration for Valentino's 25th Anniversary in Rome.

Throughout his career, DELTA 2 has collaborated with artists and designers across disciplines. He was a member of the hip-hop group The Gettovetts with RAMMELLZEE and Shockdell. Today, DELTA 2 actively continues to exhibit his paintings internationally.

THE 2025 10TH ACKER AWARDS RECIPIENTS

ELIZABETH BOUISS	<i>FILM MAKER</i>
MARTHA COOPER	<i>PHOTOGRAPHER</i>
TINE KINDERMANN	<i>PAINTER</i>
& FRANK LONDON	<i>MUSICIAN</i>
JENNIFER JUNEAU	<i>WRITER</i>
DESTINY MATA	<i>PHOTOGRAPHER</i>
GLORIA MCLEAN A	<i>DANCE</i>
& KEN HIRASUK	<i>SCULPTURE</i>
MAGGIE REILLY	<i>PRINTMAKER</i>
INDIA EVANS	<i>PAINTER</i>
KATE STORCH	<i>ART CURATOR</i>
LISSA MOIRA	<i>PLAYWRITE</i>
& RICHARD WEST	<i>PLAYWRITE</i>
ALEJANDRO EPIFANIO TORRES	<i>CULTURE ORGANIZER</i>
JAMES TOP	<i>GRAFFITI ARTIST</i>
RICHARD RIVERA	<i>GRAFFITI HISTORIAN</i>
MARK PELLICI DUKE9	<i>GRAFFITI ARTIST</i>
JONATHAN MERES ONE	<i>AEROSOL ARTIST</i>
& CYNTHIA DE MOSS DUTCHESS	<i>PERFORMANCE</i>
ALBERT SGAMBATI	<i>TATTOO ARTIST</i>
RICHIE FIE	<i>TATTOO ARTIST</i>
RONALD BIANCO	<i>TATTOO ARTIST</i>
PRODUCER PLUG AKA	<i>MUSIC PRODUCER</i>
GUSTAVO GUERRA	
MARIO HYMAN	<i>MUSIC PRODUCER</i>
CHARLES BUCHOLZ	<i>ROCK 'N' ROLL HISTORIAN</i>
GEORGE IBANEZ CRIME 79	<i>GRAFFITI ARTIST</i>
SHAMMON CASSETTE	<i>PERFORMANCE</i>
& SPKY	<i>PERFORMANCE</i>
ANNA KOBEN AND	<i>ARTIST</i>
& PILU VON WEHRMAK	<i>TATTOO ARTIST</i>
JEE SANCHEZ	<i>GANG HISTORIAN</i>
JAMES MUSCARELLA	<i>EVENT PRODUCER</i>
LAURA PETTIBONE WRIGHT	<i>DANCE HISTORIAN</i>
VIVIAN FORLANDER	<i>WRITER</i>
DENNIS GORDON	<i>ENVIRONMENT SCULPTOR</i>
SNOW GALLERY	<i>EXCELLENCE IN ART</i>

NY ACKER AWARDS

PRODUCED BY CLAYTON PATTERSON



Poster by: Ray Felix

Charles Bucholz

Rock 'n' Roll Historian



A Brief History
I was born to Jewish, Polish holocaust survivors in Paris, France. We lived in Crown Heights and Forest Hills. I then moved to the East Village. I went on to work with my father in his tailor and men's-wear shop. I now sell Rock and Hip-Hop T-shirts on Orchard Street. My life was saved by Rock and Roll.

I married Sherry Lee Gabbi-don. We live on St. Mark's Place with our French Bulldog Soloman.

Some Highlights
August 23rd, 1968 - I saw Jannis Joplin and Jimmi Hendrix perform in Flushing Meadow Park.

August 16th - 17th 1969 - I went to the Woodstock festival.
June - October 1971 - I traveled through Europe and Israel
Summer 1973 - I hitchhiked from San Francisco to Vancouver then Montreal

August 1987 - I bicycled through Nova Scotia and Cape Breton
January 1989 - I bicycled in New Zealand for a month
July 1990 - I returned to Nova Scotia and Cape Breton
January - February 1996 - I returned to New Zealand
1990 - 1991 - I led bicycle rides in conjunction with Transportation Alternative



Scan for store

Elizabeth Bouiss

Film



Elizabeth Bouiss is an unapologetic progressive and adventurer in the world of filmmaking, she's not just an award-winner; she's a force of social and political change, a fierce activist, and an educator with an unquenchable passion for shaking the world awake.

Elizabeth's journey stems from being raised in the tradition of liberation theology, and a legacy of activism written into her DNA.

Her personal and family history pulses with the beat of rebels and change-makers that led her to embrace the torch of documentary filmmaking..

Innovative in her approach to filmmaking, she doesn't just create movies; she produces instruments of expression, outreach, education, and transformation. Her credentials speak volumes: a BFA in Film and Television Production and an MA in Educational Technology from New York University, combined with community organizing since high school, fuels her commitment to using media arts to weave narratives that transcend the screen.

Elizabeth is a multi-faceted creator, often serving as the driving force behind every aspect of her projects. Whether it's producing, directing or editing, she brings stories to life in ways that draw the viewer in and inspire them to become agents of change themselves.

In a world that often craves progress but avoids action, Elizabeth is dynamic, constructing classic and unorthodox narratives through the medium of film. Her long journey through the heart of social change and cinematic innovation started in high school and continues to this day! She is committed to sparking discourse and action by providing a forum for untold stories and underserved populations.

Scan for work



Ronald Bianco

Tattoo Artist



Ron Bianco started tattooing in 1995 under the tutelage of Albert Sgambati. Albert was tattooing in Miami Beach at the time and wanted to come back to New York to open his own tattoo shop in his hometown of Bellmore, NY. He asked Ron, his longtime friend to help out with the construction of the shop in return for his apprenticeship.

At this time Ron had already been getting tattooed for over ten years. Growing up in the New York City Hardcore scene of the early 1980's. He had tattoos of the likes of Mike Perfetto who had done his first tattoo and that led

him to finding Tony Polito and Old Calcutta. Between these two men, Ron discovered what he liked in tattooing, that classic Brooklyn tattoo look.

Years later when it was his turn to step up to tattooing, he knew what he wanted his tattoos to look like. It was solid, clean, classic tattooing that he was after. Steeped in the tradition of that East Coast tattoo, he used the foundation of this look to make his style come through. He used these elements of hard lines heavy black shading and solid fades of color regardless of subject matter.

In 2010, Ron took over ownership of Lone Wolf Tattoo. Now 30 years later Ron is still at the same location carrying on the good name of Lone Wolf Tattoo. Lone Wolf is one of Long Island's longest running tattoo shops. Although the personnel has changed a few times, Ron is still here doing what he does best, laying it down in that New York City style just like it's supposed to be. Making tattoos that look like tattoos.



Scan for work

GEORGE IBAÑEZ "CRIME79"

Graffiti art



George Ibañez, known by his graffiti moniker "Crime79," was born on December 31, 1964, in New York City.

He began his graffiti career at age 13 in Brooklyn's East New York, painting subway cars from 1977 to 1985. Ibañez gained fame for his zpolitical and pop culture-inspired artwork, including a memorable painted poem featured in Subway Art by Martha Cooper and Henry Chalfant.

He was also a key member of the "Soul Artists," one of the first groups to transition graffiti from the streets to galleries. His first solo show took place at the Rainbow Gallery in SoHo in 1983, where his works were highly praised.

Ibañez's art gained international recognition, appearing in numerous documentaries, music videos, and video games such as The Warriors. His work has been featured in major publications, including The Source Magazine, ARTnews, and The Village Voice. In 2009, two of his paintings were sold at the Millon & Associés Auction House in Paris.

Ibañez continues to be a prominent figure in the graffiti art world, showcasing his work globally. He operates a graphic design and printing studio called Graphics 247 in New York. In 2022, he published his memoir, My Creative Journey, sharing insights into his artistic evolution. Ibañez remains a pioneering force in the graffiti movement, with his art held in major collections worldwide.



Scan for work

MARTHA COOPER

Photography

Martha Cooper is a documentary photographer who has specialized in shooting urban vernacular art and architecture for over forty-five years. From 1977-1980, Martha worked as a staff photographer on the NY Post.

While driving through the Lower East side every day, Martha photographed kids playing creatively in abandoned buildings and vacant lots.

During that time she began to document graffiti and breaking, subjects which led to her early coverage of hip hop. Her photos, published worldwide, helped make urban art and hip hop the predominant international youth movements they are today.

Martha's work has been exhibited in museums and galleries worldwide and published in numerous magazines from National Geographic to Vogue. Her first book Subway Art with Henry Chalfant, has been in print since 1984 and is affectionately called the "bible" by graffiti artists. Martha: A Picture Story, a documentary about her life and work, premiered at the Triboro Film Festival in 2019. Martha lives in Manhattan but travels frequently to urban art festivals around the world.



Scan for work

Rich Fie

Artist



Rich Fie was born in the working class section of Woodhaven, Queens in 1975. He was born to an Italian-American blue collar family that encouraged hard work. The bustling Jamaica Avenue was the cultural center of the neighborhood where Rich was introduced to hip-hop and punk rock while these genres were still in their infancy. Graffiti and street art were also prevalent in the neighborhood.

The underground art and culture drew Rich in and he got involved in the NYHC and hip-hop scenes as an adolescent. Eventually when attending high school in Long Island City in the early 90s he started playing in bands,

spray painting walls...and at 16 got his first tattoo.

The proximity of his high school to lower Manhattan had him attending punk shows on the Lower East Side and discovering different underground art.

After a few working class jobs in his late teens and early twenties, Rich decided to pursue tattooing as a full time profession and has worked at R&D Tattooing in the Glendale/Ridgewood section of Queens since 2002. He became co-owner of the establishment in 2009.

Rich was lucky enough to be embraced by members of the older tattoo artist community, many of these artists thrived during the NYC tattoo ban (1964-1997). These older New York underground tattooers taught Rich the proper way to conduct himself as a true traditionalist in the art. Mixing traditional tattooing with 80s and 90s NYC street culture, he continues to be a link in the chain of traditional tattooing in his beloved city.



Scan for work

SHAMON CASSETTE & SPKY

Artists



SHAMON CASSETTE & SPKY Shamon is the eldest child of a single mother soldier. Their art and life reflect that sentiment. Identifying as non-binary, which usually confuses the shit out of older people, but it's something I take pride in.

I have a special connection to my father's brother, who along with my mother were exceptionally imaginative. My uncle wound up being discovered by Jello Biafra in a filthy pub in the tenderloin section of

San Francisco in the early 90s. He taught me everything I know about music and the business.

Growing up in Tokyo as a military child, I discovering visual art as a means of communication I was enthralled. I followed my family's footsteps and joined the military and when I got out I went to study handbags and footwear at F.I.T. Their passions stay rooted in world building. They front their own hockey themed punk band and with the help of their wife SPKY build the world's in which it exists. Shamon has a wife variety of creative projects and accomplishments. From scoring short films to creative directing with skills obtained from working under the head style director for Forbes magazine.

Shamon has toured summers in Europe with legacy acts such as The Prodigy and RIDE, as well as acts in the USA like Kool Keith and Thirstin Howell. Shamon creating their own grass roots cassette tape label Rad Safari Tapes that currently hosts a roster of American and international artists. Shamon found love and became married during the pandemic to a beautiful Fairy named SPKY and they live happy altogether in an inner city animal sanctuary that resembles art vomit, currently minding 13 little muses and counting.

SPKY was born into and currently lives breathes eats and sleeps art, of every medium. She was in a dance company as a child, live art classes for adults at the age of 9, from which she sold her first art piece for \$200. She grew up in an environment of endless creativity and was allowed to follow every artistic interest, learning to use a sewing machine at 5 years old.

When she was older she started acting, and learned to build and paint sets for theater productions. Now she writes poetry, dances, acts, paints, tattoos, builds sets and props, does scenic painting and carpentry, makes costumes, styles, directs, and edits music videos, makes jewelry and handbags/backpacks, sculpts, makes music doing vocals production and drumming, event curating and probably a lot more that shes forgetting to mention. When Shamon and SPKY met they forged their relationship from creative collaborations, and now build worlds together, everything they do and touch is art. People call them a power couple because they truly do it all.

Scan for work



MARK PELLICI “DUKE9”

Graffiti Artist



Mark (left) & Cynthia (right)

I was 13 in the summer of 1974 when I began sneaking into subway tunnels at night to write duke9 on parked trains. I was good at stealing spray paint, so I was prolific. I didn't know graffiti writers hung out or signed books. I only knew whoever had the most pieces and tags was King. By September, I knew I was King.

One day, an older Black teen approached me. “You write?” he asked. I said, “What makes you think I do?” He replied, “You have paint and ink all over your sneakers.” He added, “Don't

worry, I write too.” I asked what he wrote, and he said, “EarL.” When I told him I was Duke9, he was shocked. A 13-year-old white boy with long hair and bell bottoms.

In the 1980s, my partner and I started a backdrop studio on W42nd Street. We ran ads in Photo District News and made hundreds of backdrops for clients like The SoHo Performing Garage, Jonathan Demme, Details Magazine, Esquire Magazine, The Scorpions, John Waite, and others. We designed the Trojans condom box, and Macy's Bambergers was our biggest client.

After the Tompkins Park Police Riot in 1988, activists met late at night at 9 Bleecker Street. While preparing for the Halloween Smoke-In, we discussed the Yippie Curse and Yippie Magic. I brought day-glow spray paint to add pentacles around our posters, unlocking some magic. It worked, and the event was a success. One day, I tagged a wall by Avenue A with “Mug a Yuppie” and a pentagram. The next day, everyone was talking about it, and it was mentioned in the press. After that, I painted large pentacles across downtown Manhattan, some upside-down, some right-side up, as part of guerrilla actions to fight gentrification.



Scan for work

In the 1990s, Meresone established 5 Pointz, a graffiti museum. I painted one of the first masterpieces there, invited by IZ THE WIZ and SAR.

In the 2000s, galleries increasingly featured graffiti art. I participated in shows with James Top and others. In 2022, Patti Astor invited me to her final show, Just For Fun. My latest project is called Over 50 Years of Brooklyn-Queens subway handstyles of the early 1970s through paintings.

Cynthia De Moss Dutchess

Activist (photo on p. 22)

Cynthia De Moss, aka Dutchess 333, journeyed from her Illinois roots to Boulder, San Francisco's Climate Theatre, and eventually NYC's East Ninth Street. At HB Studios, mentor Sandy Dennis encouraged her to relax and live life, while Susan Grace Cohen helped her secure an audition for a major role opposite River Phoenix. Warner Brothers deemed her “too pretty,” and the part went to Lili Taylor in Dog Fight.

Cynthia thrives in experimental art: on stage, screen, and mic. She gained acclaim with Hit and Run Theater at NYC venues, including the groundbreaking LALALANDIA in Williamsburg. She co-starred in a futurist series with conceptual artist Ebon Fisher, filmed in his home and broadcast to MIT Media Lab. She performed over eighty shows of the musical comedy The Best Sex of the Twentieth Century Sale, originating at TNC and touring cabaret venues. Her involvement with Pseudo.com led to Ondi Timoner's Sundance-winning documentary We Live in Public (2009).

Cynthia met her husband, graffiti artist Duke9, and together they became activist-artists, joining We Are Change and Occupy Wall Street. She founded Occupy Art NYC, staging shows at TNC in 2011 and 2015. Encouraged by Duke, she embraced digital art, developing a unique vocabulary through thousands of hours of dedication.

Her proudest moments include her multimedia show The Cynthia at Baktun and narrating Amy Greenfield's Raw Edged Women at Anthology Film Archives and the Museum of the Moving Image. She starred in Matt Mitler's Cracking Up and Mitch McCabe's This Corrosion, which relied on structured improvisation. Many in the LES discovered her through Scott Free's Strange Love, co-starring Nick Zedd, screened guerrilla-style at underground parties. And that about sums it up!



Scan for work

Ken Hiratsuka

Film



Sculptor Ken Hiratsuka was born in 1959 in Shimodate City, Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan. He graduated in 1982 from Musashino University of Art in Tokyo. In the same year, Hiratsuka came to New York City, received a fellowship from the Art Students League, and embarked on his life work of carving one continuous line in stone around the world, ultimately redefining stone sculpture.

Committed to art for everybody, Hiratsuka began sculpting the slate and granite sidewalks of New York City, becoming a figure in the Street Art Movement of the 80's. Driven by his

vision of art's capacity to transcend the differences of nations and languages, Hiratsuka's work can now be seen in permanent public sites in both urban and natural environments in 25 countries, to date.

His work is included in museum collections in Finland, Japan and U.S. Wynwood Walls Museum Miami. Commissioned works include sculpted city sidewalks, building facades and entranceways, water sculptures and gardens. Public monuments include his 12 boulder "Peace Monument" for the Japanese Gardens of Cowra, Australia; "One Line Tower" – 40 tons x 30 ft. high -- in Yuzi Paradise Sculpture Park in Guilin, China; "One Line Boulder", a 2004 commission for the city of Chikusei, Japan; "River," a 100-ft long carved granite sidewalk at 25 Bond, NYC, a 9-Boulder Sculpture Garden at Hillsdale Shopping Center, San Mateo, CA. From the inner city, to the desert, to the coastline, Hiratsuka's stone works are characterized by maze-like designs of infinite variation, always formed by one continuous line that never crosses itself. Hiratsuka often refers to his works as "fossils of the moment." They are both modern and ancient, a symbol of human communication through universal language on the surface of the earth as one



Scan for work huge rock.

Gloria McLEAN

Dance



Gloria McLEAN (BA Connecticut College, MFA Hollins University) a NY-based dancer, choreographer, teacher, and artist. Founder of LIFEDANCE/Gloria McLean and Dancers, her work blends physical, psychological, cultural, and aesthetic concerns, reflecting a lifelong study of dance through form and feeling. Known for an experimental yet disciplined approach, she has created over 100 works, from formal choreography to interdisciplinary events. The New York Times praised her "intelligent, witty, and sensuous choreographic voice" (April '93).

From 1982-1993, McLean danced with Erick Hawkins' company, whose vision of life-art unity inspires LIFEDANCE. Her repertoire includes pure dance (Polyrhythmic Perversity), social issues (Manhattan Book of the Dead), autobiography (Body of Memory), and performance art (The LifeDrawings). She frequently collaborates with artists, notably sculptor Ken Hiratsuka since 1985, creating works like One Line Tape Piece and Oaxaca Ritual.

Her choreography has been showcased at NYC venues like the 92nd Street Y, Alvin Ailey Citicorp Theater, La Mama, and internationally in Ireland, Paris, Japan, Korea, and more. Teaching credits include professorships at Keimyung University (South Korea), UW/Madison, George Washington University, and residencies at Manhattanville College and Hofstra.

McLean has received support from Meet the Composer, NYSCA, and Creative Time. She served as President/Executive Director of the American Dance Guild (2012-2024) and co-founded Andes Dancing in the Park and Andes Dance Collective, bringing dance to underserved communities in New York's Catskills region.

"The beauty of dance is it puts us in the present. It's all about coming into awareness." – Gloria McLean



DENNIS GORDON

Sculpture / minatures



Dennis Gordon moved to the East Village in 1980 while serving as a Firefighter in the South Bronx since 1978. After 10 years in the South Bronx he was promoted to Lieutenant and was assigned to Brownsville, Brooklyn. He continued with the FDNY spending his entire career of 37 years working in the field. He was decorated for bravery 11 times.

While living in the East Village he was introduced to the performance art subculture and performed with Steve Buscemi, Fiona Templeton, Kestutis Nakas, Cindy Lubar and others. He performed in Darinka, Dixon Place, PS 122, Pyramid, King Tut's Wah Wah Hut and others.

Currently he creates miniature dioramas representing the abandoned buildings of NYC in the 1970's and 1980's. He has also travelled extensively photographing abandoned structures throughout the US and internationally.

His miniature diorama work has been shown in multiple group shows, Sensitive Skin Magazine, Brut Journal, Art News, some documentaries and the Outsider Art Fair. His work can be seen Feb. 27th through March 2, 2025 at the Manhattan Pavilion represented through Andrew Edlin Gallery.



Scan for work

VIVIAN FORLANDER

Writing



BIOGRAPHY of v FORLANDER (Two-bosombuddies Ari Roussimoff)

A long time resident of Greenwich Village, Vivian Forlander in the sixties and seventies did not deem her writing worthy of publication. A friend, former "East Village Other" editor, Jaakov Kohn submitted a story of hers, written in the x-rated genre, to an editor friend of his, so Vivian could receive a paid publishing gig and write anonymously. Vivian wrote a story for the adult magazine "High Society" entitled "The Art of It," by Katie Nibbs. Ironically, the magazine was pulled from the newsstands, because Barbra Streisand sued for the use of her photo on the cover.

From then on Forlander became a prolific writer for many adult magazines, and got to hone her craft under the cloak of anonymity.

Active in Feminists for Free Expression, Vivian created the video distribution for feminist filmmaker, Candida Royalle. During efforts to rezone adult businesses out of NY neighborhoods, using the protection of women as one of the excuses, Forlander wrote op ed pieces for the New York Times and The Daily News, making a strong case that these adult businesses employed women, who were often providing incomes for their families.

With artist/filmmaker Ari Roussimoff, Forlander wrote the script for the award winning documentary, "Freaks Uncensored", which opened at the Anthology Film Archives and was described in the Village Voice as a "breezy ride that shoots from the medieval origins of the carnival to P.T. Barnum.."

Currently Vivian is writing a collection of short stories, profiles of extraordinary characters, who were inspiration for her, including the bygone creative voices of downtown Manhattan.



Scan for work

Anna Koben & Pilu Von Wehrmak

Street Artists



Koben and Pilu are Berlin street artists from the outskirts of the metropolis, where people are raw and real, in Berlin, a wall falls every day—for humanity.

Pilu and Koben wield jackhammers, paintbrushes, and tattoo machines in their two-room punk studio, where a monkey sits naked on the fridge throwing candies.

One taste takes you back to 2012, when the two met at the Antifa bar BAIZ. At the time, Koben was sleeping in the park, and Pilu offered her shelter. What began as a spark turned into 12 wild years of occupying houses, painting walls, tattooing people, and creating art that serves as a

compass for those in need.

Pilu's tattoos combine modern, abstract lines into complex organisms, while Koben's paintings and sculptures, crafted from street trash, reveal the souls of wanderers. Their work has been displayed in Berlin and Sweden (SVENSK KONST/NORA, OPEN ART/ÖREBRO) and at tattoo conventions (WILDSTYLE). Beyond their primary creations, they design textiles, books, movie posters, clothing, puzzles, podcasts, and films.



With love. Pilu and Koben and Brasse

Scan for Pilu

Scan for Koben



Mario Hyman

Music Producer



Mario Hyman, a lifelong resident of Manhattan's Lower East Side, has spent over 60 years immersed in the vibrant, gritty, and evolving tapestry of Avenue D and Alphabet City. A retired school counselor for the Department of Education, Mario dedicated 30 years to serving District 1, helping countless students navigate the challenges of urban life with guidance and compassion.

Having witnessed the neighborhood's transformation, Mario knows the Lower East Side in all its dimensions—the good, the bad, and the ugly. His experiences span from en-

during the turbulent days of rampant crime and personally knowing and witnessing the activities of notorious drug dealers and gangsters to celebrating the resilience of individuals who rose above their circumstances to achieve greatness. This dynamic, diverse environment has shaped his deep understanding and love for the community.

Mario's passion for storytelling extends beyond history into music and songwriting. He has composed theme songs for Clayton Patterson and Julian Voloj's international graphic novel and collaborated with filmmaker Rich Allen on the upcoming movie *Small Potatoes*. As the founder and creator of "The Lower East Side Scrapbook," a digital archive of historical images and stories since 2014, Mario continues to preserve the legacy of his beloved neighborhood.

An active resident advocate, Mario remains deeply committed to the housing and well-being of Lower East Side residents. His life's work is a testament to the enduring spirit of a neighborhood that continues to inspire and thrive amidst change.



Scan for work

India Evans

Artist / Painter



A native New Yorker and the daughter of a collage artist, India Evans is the master of her own provocative dream world.

The female nude (taken from antique photos and postcards) is her muse, and her magic is drawn from a woman's world: fabrics, beads, sequins, butterflies, flowers, peacock feathers ... a leather glove, a Japanese fan.

Evans gathers her materials by combing markets, such as the massive Porta Portese market in Rome. She also sharply cuts images from old science texts and zoology books. Her flowing words, which are applied with thread and glue, are poetic and Surreal, recalling the rounded script of Miro. Evans's collages have been well received in America, via important exhibitions and

art fairs, as well as in Italy, where she trained at the Lorenzo de' Medici and Accademia di Belle Arti.

Scan for work



Jennifer Juneau

Writer



JENNIFER JUNEAU is the author of the novel *ÜberChef USA* (Spork Press, 2019) and the full-length poetry collection *More Than Moon*, which was a finalist in the National Poetry Series, (Is a Rose Press, 2020). Her short fiction collection *Maze* was published in September, 2024 by Roadside Press. Her work has appeared in *Barrow Street*, *Cimarron Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Columbia Journal*, *Evergreen Review*, *Rattle*, *Seattle Review*, *Verse Daily* and other magazines. Her work has been nominated twice for the Pushcart

Prize for fiction, The Million Writers Award and a Best of the Net. She has lived and traveled in Europe for 18 years where she wrote her books and worked as a professional sports journalist. She lives and writes in New York City, and is the curator of the literary series, Phoenix Poetry Open Mic, Monday evenings in the East Village.



Scan for work

Destiny Mata

Photographer



Destiny Mata is a Mexican American photographer and filmmaker based in her native New York City as she focuses on issues of subculture and community.

After studying photojournalism at LaGuardia Community College and San Antonio College, she spent 2 two years as Director of Photography Programs at the Lower East Side Girls Club Mata and has had work published and featured in The New York Times, The Nation, VICE, The Culture Crush, The Guardian.

Mata has recently exhibited La Vida En Loisaída: Life on the Lower East Side at Photoville Festival 2020.

She has taken part in a group exhibition at Photoville Festival 2024 Punks Not

Dead, 2023 From Her To Eternity: Women Who Photograph Music Curated by Julie Panebianco & Courtney Love, ICP Concerned Global Images for Global Crisis at the International Center of Photography 2020, Magnum Foundation US Dispatches Grantee 2020, Mexic-Arte Museum, Young Latino Artists 21: Amexican@ 2016 and in 2014 she exhibited photographs of the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy at the Museum of New York City's, Rising Waters: Photographs of Sandy exhibition.



Scan for work

James Muscarella

Filmmaker



NYC based filmmaker Jim Muscarella has been active in art culture for 35 years. Primarily a documentary producer, Jim has been gathering creatives in many ways, including art curation & live music productions. In 2005, he founded the E.Vil City Film Fest, a multi day independent arts festival that grew from the backrooms of small neighborhood venues to institutions like Anthology Film Archives & The Knitting Factory.

In 2022, along with Mike Mills, he curated "Just for Fun, starring Patti Astor," a 20 artist group show that spanned a 40 year period by 20 NYC artists. It became the last exhibition Astor was involved with before her 2024 passing. Jim has been a driving force in the community through his support of the underground. relationships with filmmakers, artists, comedians & musicians and plans revive his festival model for 2025.

Jim is also the producer of the upcoming feature film, "How Dark, My Love" which follows the lives of Joe Coleman & Whitney Ward, directed by Scott Gracheff and slated for release in 2025.

Scan for work



Tine Kindermann

Visual Artist



Tine Kindermann is a visual artist and musician from West Berlin, Germany, who has been living and working in New York City's East Village since 1993. A figurative artist working in various media, her work, which includes miniature tableaux and dioramas, video and painting, has been shown at Stephen Romano Gallery, the Governors Island Art Fair, RePop, Mark Miller Gallery, Equity Gallery and other galleries in New York City, as well as Neurotitan Gallery and Galerie Kurt im Hirsch in Berlin. Tine has also co-curated several exhibitions

for Yiddish New York, an annual cultural festival in NYC.

Tine Kindermann's artistic work focuses on the narrative and strives to evoke strong feelings in the viewer, emphasizing empathy with the human condition, often using vintage dolls as a stand-in for humans. Tine's recording of old German folk songs, "schamlos schön", was nominated for the German world music award and she performed the program at the renowned Ruhrtriennale Festival together with Iggy Pop.

Aside from being an artist and a musician, Tine has long been a neighborhood activist. A founding member of Artists Alliance, Inc., she has served on the boards of both Artists Alliance and the Clemente Soto Véllez Cultural Center and is currently serving on the board of the Lower East Side People's Mutual Housing Association, an affordable housing non-profit organization. As a trained mediator, Tine has worked with both Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts and Safe Horizon, now the Peace Institute.



Scan for Tine's work

Frank London

Musician and Composer



Frank London is a Grammy Award-winning trumpeter and composer, a member of the Klezmatics, and leader of the Astro-Hungarian Glass House Orchestra, the Klezmer Brass Allstars, and his Shekhinah Big Band.

He has performed and recorded with John Zorn, Pink Floyd, Mel Tormé, Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, LaMonte Young, Gal Costa, They Might Be Giants, David Byrne, Itzhak Perlman and is featured on over 500 albums.

His latest recordings include the Klezmer Brass Allstars' Chronika, The Elders' Spirit Stronger Than Blood (NY Times Top 10 Jazz Recordings of 2024), the brass trio with percussion Conspiracy Brass (on Tzadik Records), and the spiritual song cycle, In The City of God.

His first symphony, 1001 Voices: A Symphony for a New America (with text by Judith Sloan and video by Warren Lehrer), premiered in 2012. His Yiddish-Cuban opera, Hatuey Memory of Fire (libretto by Elise Thoron), premiered in Cuba and New York in 2018.



Scan for work

Jonathan Meres One

Aerosol Artist



Jonathan “Meres One” Cohen was born 1973 in the South Bronx and raised in Queens, New York. Cohen’s interest in visual art spans the entirety of his life, but it wasn’t until 1987 that Meres One discovered graffiti art and began expressing himself through tags in the streets, graduating to piecing together larger works by 1990 and the birth of his trademark lightbulb, “The Bright Idea.” Using aerosol art as his primary vehicle for expression, Meres One has taken his multi-layered, technically sound, color laden visions from local to global arenas, from street walls to galleries. He is recognized for his work by news

publications such as the New York Times, The Huffington Post, and The Wall Street Journal, as well as providing notable contributions to major motion film works

Throughout his 30 + active years as an aerosol artist, Meres’s works number in the thousands. He has innovated making 5 Pointz a vehicle to elevate the art form, educate both the general public and fellow spray can craftsmen in providing a creative, legal alternative to street vandalism.

Meres One is the pinnacle of visual elevation. A graffiti writer draws his name; Meres One elevates art with a prescient sense of constant innovation and a contagious child-like excitement.

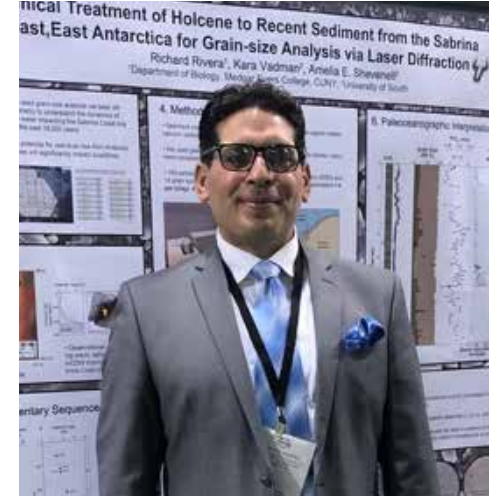
“I don’t do graffiti, I am graffiti” - Meres One



Scan for work

Richard Rivera

Naturalist and Graffiti Artist



LES Naturalist and Graffiti Artist Historian Born on the Lower East Side (LES) of NYC exposed me to diverse cultures that shaped my artistic and scientific journey.

Raised by my mother and grandmother on Allen Street, I collaborated with graffiti artists and immersed myself in 90’s hip-hop art, music, and fashion (Polo head). Sports played a big role in my life: from softball with the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC) to hardball with the Smith Royals and tackle football.

My love for handball remains.

In 1991, I created my graffiti character, which is a symbol of my identity. A Skate Shop called Strange stole my character. Since I wasn’t sure what to do as a teenager, I sought advice from Clayton. Eventually, the shop went out of business.

In 1996, I left the LES for Europe, working as a financier, but returned in 2014 with renewed purpose, leaving the private sector to focus on community work and environmental justice. I enrolled in CUNY’s community college, earned my Biology and Environmental Science degree, and am now a second-year Environmental Science Ph.D. student and NOAA researcher, focusing on the LES. I aim to create an evacuation plan for all five boroughs to prepare for climate change-related disasters.

Beyond academics, I advocate for more green spaces in Manhattan, collaborate with Maggie’s Magic Garden in Harlem, and mentor students through City College’s HIRE program, focusing on building a resilient Lower East Side in partnership with local teachers and leaders to address climate change challenges.



Scan for work

Albert Sgambati

Artist



Albert Sgambati is a mutli-me-di artist based in New York. His journey began in the creative haven of the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Albert attended two of Manhattan's most prestigious art institutions, Cooper Union and the School of Visual Arts (SVA). From these esteemed academic foundations, he exhibited his paintings in galleries and art installations around the city before venturing into the world of tattoos on the Lower East Side.

In the early 1990s, Albert followed the artistic pulse of Miami, a town then exploding with vibrant cultural transformations. He worked with renowned tattoo artist Lou Sciberas at Tattoos by Lou.

Albert returned to New York and opened Lone Wolf Tattoo on Long Island. The thriving shop sparked a trend that saw numerous others in its wake, each trying to emulate the unique artistic atmosphere and high standards he set.

Albert continued his career by relocating to Los Angeles. The city's celebrity-driven culture served as an ideal stage for showcasing his talents, with his needlework adorning the skin of A-listers, appearing in reality shows, and his larger-than-life murals gracing landmark buildings, eateries, and theaters in the Hollywood area. He worked closely with film producers and art directors, having his paintings featured in numerous films. After making his name on the West Coast, he returned to his East Coast roots. Settling back in the Central New York area has allowed him to reconnect with his original artistic influences and share his unique vision with a new generation of artists and enthusiasts in the region.



Scan for work

"Producer Plug" aka Gustavo Guerra

Producer



Gustavo Guerra is a producer, DJ, cultural curator, and entrepreneur based in New York city.

Guerra founded Producer Plug, and has been committed to the support and growth of emerging artists and producers ever since.

As an award winning producer and curator, Guerra has worked with some of Hip Hop's leading artists and entrepreneurs to help the next generation of artists and creators.



Scan for work

Maggie Reilly

Performance Artist



My experiences are invaluable. I create despite social forces, yet find inspiration in them. Art healed me during adolescence, and I recognize its transformative power. To me, art is a medium for social and emotional change.

As an art therapist with the Organization of Independent Artists (1980–81), I designed two interactive sculptures through grants and donations, engaging adolescent residents from Ward's Island and South Beach Psychiatric Centers in NYC. My 1978 Master's in Art Therapy/Recreation from Columbia University

enabled me to use art as a healing tool for students of all ages and needs.

Before teaching for over 20 years in NYC public schools, I spent two decades running RAM STUDIO in Chelsea, where I collaborated with artists, exhibited my work, and curated the first art show at the World Trade Center for the Association of Artist-Run Galleries (AARG) in 1979. In 1986, I co-curated "Artists as Workers" with Lowery Sims of The Met at Lincoln Center's Cork Gallery. My curatorial projects have been featured at venues like Ward-Nasse Gallery, Lever House, and De Refuse.

As a performance artist, I've presented work at Arleen Schloss's Events, The Pyramid Club, Fashion Moda, and more. Currently, as director of RAM STUDIO in Harlem, I continue to produce artist books, print editions, and teach NYC youth. I'm honored to be the 2025 recipient of the Kathy Acker Award and a member of Plexus International.



Scan for work

Kate Storch

Curator



Kate Storch is a curator and event planner from New York City. Inspired by Her love for music and art, especially Hip Hop, her events celebrate the different elements of Hip Hop culture and its history. Behind all of her events is the belief in the power of music and art to heal and uplift.

Her original goal has never changed, to create an environment that allows people to experience that power for a few hours and hope that it stays with them longer.

Kate has curated multiple gallery shows as well as putting on a successful series of outdoor festivals. Her events have included Hip Hop legends: Grand Wizard Theodore, Easy Mo Bee, Large

Professor, Ice T, Melle Mel, Kool Keith and Pharoahe Monch, as well as Graffiti Legends: Skeme, Tkid, Bluster, Doves, Stash and many more. She has been featured multiple times in Time Out, the Source, Vibe, Street Art news, among others.

Currently, she is focused on the Landmark Series, a project honoring influential Hip Hop locations, now entering its third year. Kate is excited to continue building on the success of the first two years and to further contribute to the culture she deeply values.

Scan for work



Jee Sanchez

Outlaw historian



Jee Sanchez, born in Santurce, Puerto Rico, and raised in Manhattan's Lower East Side, is a key figure in preserving the history of the area's outlaw culture. Having witnessed firsthand the rise of street gangs, the Mafia, and the heroin trade, Jee is considered one of the foremost historians of the LES's complex underground world. His deep connection to the streets and the people who shaped them provides him with a rare authenticity in describing the era, far beyond what academic research or Hollywood portrayals can capture.

As a young man, Jee became intertwined with notorious figures—gangsters, bikers, and street toughs—who were integral to the Lower East Side's identity. This firsthand experience allowed him to understand the boundaries, the politics, and the subtle codes of this subculture. His ability to recount the time, place, and key players with such depth has made him indispensable in preserving this history.

Jee's contributions go beyond mere recollection; he has become a critical resource for documenting the often-overlooked history of the LES. His work in projects like Rubble Kings has shown the pivotal role of gangs in shaping New York City in the 1970s and the emergence of hip-hop culture. His research, based on government documents and court records, uncovers details often lost in mainstream accounts. Jee ensures that the gritty, multifaceted history of the Lower East Side remains alive—his voice a bridge between the past and the present.



Scan for work

Alejandro Epifanio Torres

Artist & Cultural Advocate



Alejandro Epifanio Torres, born in 1982 in Santurce, Puerto Rico, is a multidisciplinary artist and cultural advocate. He earned a BFA from the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan. As the executive & artistic director of Loisaida Inc.,

Alejandro has revitalized this historic Puerto Rican-founded organization, focusing on social justice through the intersections of art, culture, environmental literacy, media, and technology. Under his leadership, the Loisaida Center has re-

turned to its grassroots ethos, providing multigenerational programs, expanding its budget, and strengthening partnerships to support its sustainability.

Alejandro's contributions to the community have been recognized with numerous awards and accolades, including a New York State Proclamation and a spot on City & State's inaugural 2024 Arts & Culture Power 100 list.

He also serves on various boards, including the Trinity Church Wall Street Neighborhood Council, the Francisco "Pancho" Ramos Community Garden, and the New York Presbyterian - Lower Manhattan Hospital Community Advisory Board, where he continues to be a strong advocate for the arts and community development. As a parent, he sits on M363, The Neighborhood School's Leadership Team, and is an active advocacy committee member.

Scan for work



Lissa Moira

Actress



Lissa Moira(AEA, SAG/AFTRA) is a much produced playwright, screen writer, director, actor, poet and collage artist.

She is a two time Jerome Foundation grantee, OOB award winning actor, finalist in the Chesterfield/Paramount screenwriting competition (final 10 of 5,000 international entrants) for her script "TIME IT IS." Her play "Before God Was invented" was nominated for the Susan Brownell-Smith award. Lissa is the co-writer of the film "Dead Canaries" starring Charles Durning, Dan Lauria, Joel Higgins and Dee Wallace Stone. She is the co-writer (with Richard West) Director and one of the stars of the musical comedy revue, "The Best

Sex of the XX Century Sale,"which ran to rave reviews and packed house for 18 months at venues all over NYC.

Lissa is the Book Writer, Director and Lyricist of "Who Murdered Love?" A Dadaist, Surrealist, Noir Mystery, Musical Comedy (with music and added material by Richard West) it enjoyed incredible reviews and a sold out run at TNC. Lissa co-wrote and directed "Marilyn in Purgatory" which had a 14 month Off Broadway run. A few other musicals and operas Ms Moira directed and or wrote: "Nicholas Nickleby," Bliss Street," Phoebe Legere's "Speed Queen," Rappaccini's Daughter," and Rita Costanzi in "Woman on a Ledge."

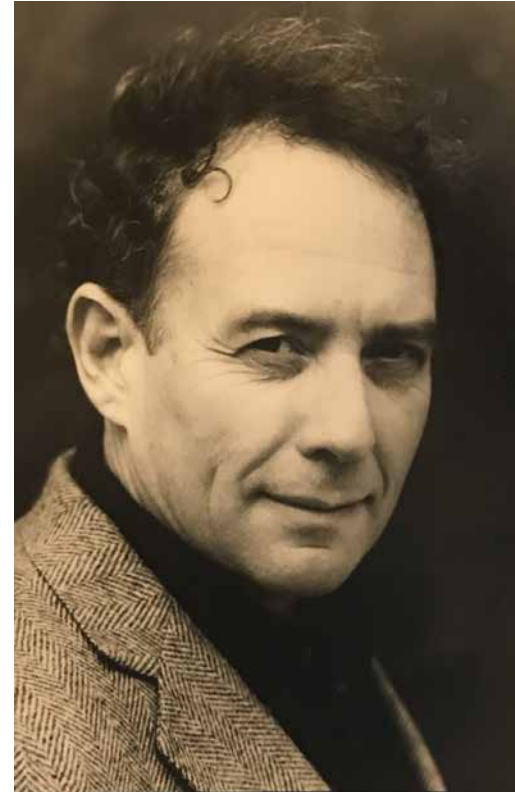
Lissa has been on the production committee of the TNC LES festival since it's inception, performing in and writing for the fest for 29 years, she also curates, hosts and reads in the poetry portion of the fest. She is the founder of The Live Poets Society. Do not miss her next project: Roberto Monticello's "Cafe Resistance" opening April 10 at TNC.



Scan for work

Richard West

Writer



Richard West: writer, composer, playwright, actor, musician, poet and unreformed dreamer. Richard is the recipient of two Jerome Foundation Awards, and is a much published poet and satirist. Included in his writings are "Warhol in Hell," " Coastal Complexes," "Bohemia on Wry" and "You Sure Got a Lotta Nirvana."

He has co-created three productions with Lissa Moira "Sexual Psychobabble," "The Best Sex of the XX Century Sale," and "Who Murdered Love?" He also conducted a radio show in California on KPFA, a Manhattan Cable TV show, "That's More Like It," and a number of variety shows including, "The Blue Monkey," "The Floating Duck," and "Cafe Vanity." His one man shows include,

"Coming of Age in a Stoned Decade," "Avant God," "Sex and the Social Samurai," and "Daffodils for Duchamp." Richard curated and emceed, "The Beat Jubilee," with Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso and others.

And the symposium, "Art, Existence and Stuff," with Quentin Crisp, Eric Bogosian, Reno and Cynthia Heimel. Richard has curated the outdoor portion of the Lower East Side Festival at TNC, since it's inception 29 years ago. Richard also performs satirical and serious songs, original and take-offs. Richard has written a book on Thai Bodywork, and a yet to be published novel. Richard has worked his way up from nothing to extreme poverty; and wants to know, if all the world's a stage, when's the dress rehearsal over?



Scan for work

James Top

Graffiti Artist



Many new art movements have their origins in transgression and so it was with graffiti. Subway cars and city walls became the canvas for kids with a can of aerosol paint. In tags and masterpieces, they demanded attention and acknowledgement. The graffiti art created by these young people was immediate, confrontational and beautiful.

James Top grew up as a warrior in East New York. Fighting for survival in the projects was not a choice,

it was a reality. With a can of spray paint, he created a new identity for himself - Jee2. Over and over again, he wrote his name on doors, walls, and trains in defiance and with pride. The legend began with Jee2.

The Odd Partners was his crew and its members became his brothers. He renamed himself James Top because it expressed his hope and desire to reach the top of his art and his life. His art is iconic; his life is deep with meaning. His series, Afrology, graphically tells the story of the black man in society, a precursor to the Black Lives Matter movement. Top's masterpieces in the Graffiti Hall of Fame assure his status as a dominant force in graffiti art.

James Top's optimism about life is strong. He is committed to preserving and advancing graffiti art. His dream - a museum in NYC dedicated to graffiti art to acknowledge those who came before and to encourage the graffiti artists of the future



Scan for work

Laura Pettibone Wright

Dance



Laura Pettibone Wright grew up in a Chicago suburb, the youngest of three talented sisters, all D.A.R. Their ancestor Pettibone, killed in 1777, wore the first military hat in the Smithsonian's American Revolutionary archive. Her father was a chemist and tennis ace; her mother, a math teacher and pianist. The family played Mozart and Bach in Victorian-style parlor sessions.

In high school, Laura excelled as a field hockey player. At Wellesley, she felt constrained by traditional female education and transferred to Beloit College, where she

designed her own arts and dance curriculum.

In her 20s, drawn to the East Village, she studied with Erick Hawkins, whose focus on sensation, intellect, and beauty inspired her lifelong passion. She became a principal dancer in his troupe, later restaging and sustaining his work. After leaving the company, Laura formed her own dance group, performing across NYC and the U.S. She moved to Virginia Beach, raised her son, and became a celebrated public school dance teacher, deepening her understanding of the art form.

Fate and love brought her back to the East Village in her 60s, where she now thrives. Laura is a dancer, restager, and historian of dance, as well as a fiber artist knitting alpaca creations and needle-felting whimsical creatures. Recently, she has embraced visual art, filling notebooks with surreal dream drawings of a parallel psychological world. Critics see these works as the culmination of a life devoted to beauty and art.



Scan for work

Snow Gallery: Caroline Snow, Chip Kolpen & Frank Haines



Snow gallery is run by a witch triangle composed of Caroline Snow, Chip Kolpen and Frank Haines.

The gallery is currently located in Brooklyn, at 430 Via Vespucci (Graham Ave). In addition to running the gallery, they host a quarterly night of performance called Frankie's Clownhouse, usually taking place at Francis Kite Club (on the equinoxes and solstices).

Along with RD Mayson, the three perform in the band Sandy Smiles (who also perform at every Clownhouse). The three also regularly publish books and editions under the name Heinzfeller Snow. The

books are available online and inside the Snow Gallery store, which also features curated art objects, ceramics, jewelry, clothing and prints.

Long time New York residents, they seek to present work they want to see in the world, reflections of seekers on the transformative path. Love is the Guiding Force.

Caroline Snow (b. 1982) was born and raised in NYC, where she worked in fashion (working with ThreeAsFour) and modeling. She spent a number of years in California earning a BFA from California Institute of the Arts, studying with Scott Benzel. Upon her return to NYC, she opened up Snow Gallery in the Lower East Side, teaming up with Frank as a creative partner soon after.

In 2024 Caroline purchased a 104 year old building on Graham Ave. The purchase of this building prevented another historical NYC building being turned into lifeless condos. The building on Graham Ave also gave Snow Gallery a more secure home, in the neighborhood that that the three of us live in. The gallery is currently planning programming, readings, screenings, and small music shows to occur in our new space.

Caroline works in a variety of media including drawing, video and zines. Her zines and films have often dealt with the subject of feral children. She has collaborated with a large number of artists, including all the artists who work with Snow. Caroline will soon launch Snow Records, with the first release being her late Father: Chris Snow. A lifelong musi-

cian, Chris left an archive of great free form /outsider country recordings, which have never been released.

Chip Kolpen (b. 1978) moved to New York City in 1996 to study painting at Hunter College. Since arriving, Chip has been immersed in the worlds of both fashion and local music. She has supported herself as a DJ (Motor City, Max Fish, Beauty Bar), model, wardrobe stylist, dancer, costume designer and musician. She has been a member of many bands / performance acts such as Triple Hex, Trouble Makers, Silk Stalkings, Get On Get On, Chorizo, Frenemas, among others. She has performed widely around NYC at venues including Bowery Ballroom, CBGB's, Warsaw, Pyramid Club, Elsewhere, abasement and many more.



Frank Haines (born 1973) practices his witchcraft through art, writing, performance, publishing and music. He grew up in Florida and studied under artist Ed Love. After living in San Francisco for a spell, he moved to NYC in 2006. Thanks to the generosity of Ursula Krinzinger, Frank lived in Vienna for a time. Moving in and with the shadows, he recently released Book 2 of Witch Hotline : a book of documenting a community video project of disembodied poetry.

Haines is know for his visual work with stained glass, often making large sculptural works. He has exhibited and performed internationally and had several solo exhibitions. He like making candles and potions for friends.

Frank has been in three New York bands: Blanko & Noiry (with Chris Kachulis), Nastie Band (with a bunch of beefy men) and Sandy Smiles (with Caroline, Chip and Rob). Frank had a solo act named Heinzfeller, who performed 3 times : At Santo's Party House in NYC, in the woods of Delphi, NY and at Basso in Berlin. The performance was the embodiment of an entity that came to him while sitting at the base of a tower at Treptower Park, Berlin.

Frank has had the privilege of curating a bunch of exhibitions, largely with Caroline. Through the generosity of Performa13, Frank produced a night bring Zeena Schreck back to the states to perform in a Midtown Unitarian Church.

Frank's writing has appeared in publications like F Magazine and Land and Sea's poetry anthology "Seasons" (compiled by Chris Duncan). Land and Sea also released a book called "The Collected Works of Frank Haines and Cedar Sigo" , pairing Frank's works with Cedar's poem. Frank is currently working on a cassette release which contains Cedar and Frank reading their poetry.

Gallery Link



W.A.R.S. WOMEN ARTISTS OF RIVINGTON SCHOOL

“From Then to Now: Women’s Artistic Contributions to Society”

In the late 1960s, New York City became the epicenter of the art world—a hub for emerging artistic movements that drew creative individuals from across the globe. These artists transformed the neglected, grimy streets of downtown New York into an open canvas, tagging walls with powerful images and socially engaged language. Through vibrant murals, thought-provoking graffiti, and sculptures crafted from discarded materials, they revitalized forgotten urban spaces and infused life into their surroundings. Their work transcended artistry, addressing homelessness, the struggles of war veterans, and uplifting the spirits of a city grappling with poverty, addiction, and inequality.

By the 1980s, New York’s East Village had become a boiling cauldron of creativity, where people sought a space for differences to coexist. Artists converged in this gritty yet inspiring neighborhood, producing innovative expressions in fine art, performance, alternative music, and installations. While a few gained global recognition, most remained anonymous, yet their collective impact shaped the era’s spirit and influenced artistic movements for decades to come.

Among these trailblazers were W.A.R.S. (Women Artists of the Rivington Street, Stanton Street, Alphabet City, ABC No Rio, and beyond). They utilized every medium imaginable, contributing significantly to shaping culture and society. Their work ranged from raising awareness about AIDS and social inequalities to educating children, organizing auctions to support schools in Harlem and the Bronx, and hosting events like “Mother and Child” to foster community engagement. These women artists defined the art movements of the 1980s, which remain among the most influential of the late 20th century. Their legacy continues to inspire socially engaged artists in the 21st century.

The Impact of Women Artists

Mémoire de l’Avenir (MDA) and Humanities, Arts, and Society (HAS) have brought together approximately 20 of these pioneering women

artists to reflect on their decades-long contributions to art and society. Their work embodies the rebellious spirit of the 1980s, and they remain active players in today’s global art scene, influencing communities far beyond New York City. While only a few broke into the commercial art establishment, these women have built impressive careers grounded in research, activism, and artistic innovation over the last 40 years. The East Village, with its parks and streets teeming with visual artists, performers, musicians, and poets, served as an open gallery for underground art and life. This unique environment allowed for direct interaction between artists and the public, challenging mainstream ideas, blurring the boundaries between aesthetics and ethics, and advocating for justice, equality, and care.

The 1980s also marked the onset of the AIDS crisis, which deeply impacted this vibrant community. It sparked conversations about freedom, equality, and care, addressing issues like gender equality, racism, and social justice. Artists became the voice of the people, using their work to propose solutions, raise awareness, and inspire action.

The Role of the Arts in Society

Artists from this era challenged the boundaries between art and activism, creating works that reflected on identity, migration, poverty, illness, struggle, and love—blending aesthetics with ethics to form a unified political and creative agenda. They redefined art as something public and communal, with the power to instigate change.

Tim Lawrence, Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of East London, recognized the East Village during this period as one of the most influential cultural hubs of the 20th century. Despite struggles with poverty, drugs, and crime, the East Village offered fertile ground for meaningful artistic and community-driven creativity.



Nina Sobell

The 1980s and 1990s were a time of immense pain in New York. As David Wojnarowicz, the American artist who passed away from AIDS in 1992, wrote: “We’re angry and complaining because we have to, but where we want to go is back to beauty. If you let go of that, we don’t have anywhere to go.”

Post-Vietnam, Cambodia, and Afghanistan wars, the Cold War, and the AIDS virus devastated not only queer communities but also poor, immigrant, and racial minorities. Politicians around the world remained largely silent on the pandemic and issues of justice and equality. Amid this backdrop, artists began using their work as a powerful call to action.

The women artists of the East Village spearheaded groundbreaking initiatives, including the first Guerrilla Girls event, held at 719 Broadway. These artists tirelessly addressed issues of justice, equality, and liberty, shaping art as a medium for social change.

Legacy and Influence

Art has always been a cornerstone of human society, reflecting histories, identities, and cultures while challenging realities. The women of W.A.R.S. bridged gaps between time and place, uniting people through a universal language that transcends borders. They demonstrated that creativity is essential for critical thinking, innovation, and fostering respect among all beings and the planet.

Vibrant, empty squats opened across the East Village and lower Manhattan, while street corners became meeting places for artists to build alternative shows and open spaces for community interaction. Among the many notable spaces and galleries were the Fusion Arts Museum, FUN, Gracie Mansion, Emerging Collectors, ABC No Rio, Jim C, Freddy the Dreamer, the Ground Zero Galleries, and Alice Hurwitz Gallery. Tompkins Square Park also played a crucial role, hosting solstice festivals and sculpture gardens on Rivington and Stanton Streets, Avenue B, and beyond. Street artists like Lady Pink and Futura 2000 transformed the grimy subway lines into open canvases, while Saint Mark’s Place thrived with colorful shops and vegetarian restaurants like Yaffa’s Café and Spring Street Restaurant.

As Tanella Boni noted in her keynote address at the 1st WHC in 2017: “The arts have an essential role in the preservation of the humanity of the human.” Artists, she argued, have a responsibility not only to create but also to influence, provoke, and propose. The women artists of the East Village embraced this responsibility, leaving an indelible mark on society.

ACKER VOICES

REWRITING BRITANNICA ON ME

by **Richard Kostelanetz**

In 1999, I was surprised to discover that the website Britannica.com had an individual entry on me. Having succumbed to the left-field competition of Wikipedia and NNDB.com, among others, the venerable encyclopedia company was no longer publishing thick multi-volumed books that had been the gold standard for more than two centuries. Rather than stand pat, Britannica decided to survive as an Internet presence with new entries.

The reason for my surprise was that, simply, though my work in various fields had been recognized here and there, I lacked the advantages of a regular publisher or an institutional affiliation, both of which have publicity departments skilled at packaging cultural figures for large audiences. Another reason for surprise is that I hear about negative opinions of me or my work—opinions that rarely appear in print; but, once my name became canonical, slights don’t count. If anything, they become inadvertent certification.

Since I can’t find the original text of the entry on me, I quote below the current unsigned version that has been updated, though it remains substantially the same.

Richard Kostelanetz (born May 14, 1940, New York, New York, U.S.) is an American writer, artist, critic, and editor of the avant-garde whose

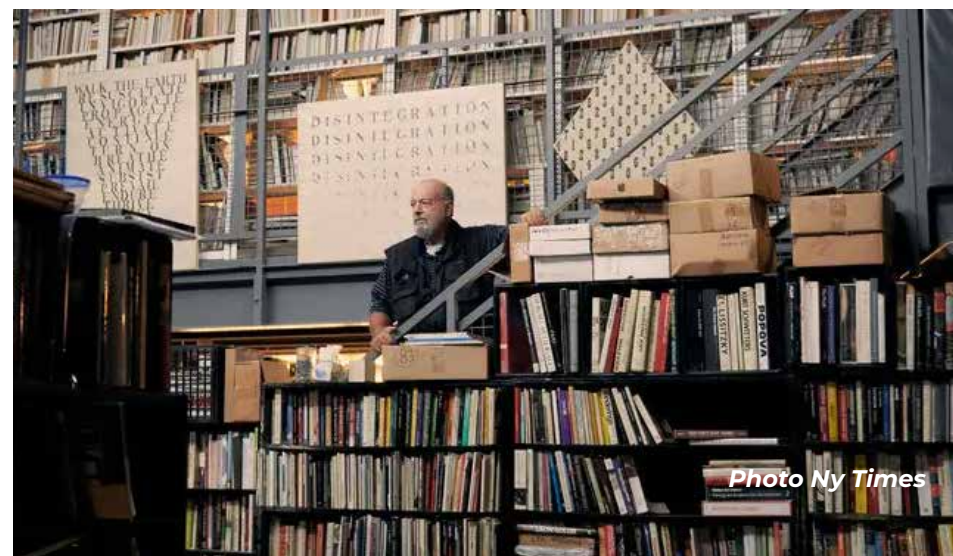


Photo Ny Times

work spans many fields.

Kostelanetz attended Brown University (B.A., 1962), Columbia University (M.A., 1966), and King's College, London. He served as visiting professor or guest artist at a variety of institutions and lectured widely.

In 1971, employing a radically formalist approach, Kostelanetz produced the novel *In the Beginning*, which consists of the alphabet, in single- and double-letter combinations, unfolding over 30 pages. Most of his other literary work, often printed in limited editions at small presses, also challenges the reader in unconventional ways.

Kostelanetz's nonfiction work *The End of Intelligent Writing: Literary Politics in America* (1974) charged the New York literary and publishing establishment with inhibiting the publishing and promotion of works by innovative younger authors.

His "visual poetry" consists of arrangements of words on a page, using such devices as linking language and sequence, punning, alliteration, and parallelism to achieve effects that resonate with broader artistic movements such as Constructivism and Minimalism.

Among his other works are *Recyclings: A Literary Autobiography* (1974), *Politics in the African-American Novel* (1991), *On Innovative Art(ist)s* (1992), *A Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes* (2nd ed., 2000), *Soho: The Rise and Fall of an Artists' Colony* (2003), and *Artists' SoHo: 49 Episodes of Intimate History* (2015).

His films include *A Berlin Lost* (1984) and *Berlin Sche-Einena Jother* (1988), both with Martin Koerber. Kostelanetz issued many recordings and audiocassettes on his own label and edited or wrote works on musicians such as B.B. King, Philip Glass, John Cage, and Aaron Copland.

From an old acquaintance, a prominent professor then on Britannica's advisory board, I learned that the criterion for an individual's inclusion around the year 2000 was, simply, WHAT WILL LAST. Since I thought of much of my own work as potentially classic, that entry made me glad to think that its strengths recognized by people I didn't know (and still don't know). In Britannica entries about people whose works I knew, I noticed that whatever was featured, selecting from a corpus, was indeed the strongest and thus most likely to "last." Apart from recognizing me, these anonymous Britannica scribes have been perceptive.

That criterion prompted me to search around the year 2000 the Britannica website for names of individuals whose work, in my judgment, did not belong. I recall finding only two. One of them was the poet and sometime literary editor Reed Whitemore (1919-2012), who's today probably best remembered as James J. Angleton's co-conspirator at literary Yale circa 1940; the other's name I've forgotten.

At that time, I made and even published a separate list, quite long, of individuals whom I judged produced works "that will last" (some of whom were included in later Britannicas). In the future I hope that my biographer, can retrieve from the company's archives any internal records of debates over their decision to include me—yes, surprise, me.

By the year 2000, my name had been recognized in other encyclopedias, some of them general and others specialized (e.g., poetry, fiction, music, art) with entries varying in scope and quality. Nonetheless, none of them are as inclusive as Britannica's, which has the additional virtue of being free of error. (The closest is nndb.com, which I venture has fewer fans: "Executive summary: Prodigious avant-garde artist and author." After acknowledging indisputable facts about gender, ethnicity, nationality, education, and parentage, [nndb](http://nndb.com) then lists a few dozen titles produced before 2007. Where [nndb](http://nndb.com) found this list or how they put it together I can't imagine.)

Nonetheless again, since the Britannica bio is incomplete (and I refuse to write a conventional autobiography that Clayton Patterson asked for), I thought to annotate it.

The few facts in the first paragraph are 100% correct.

The second is good, though it might have added that I went to London on a Fulbright grant, when it was judged to be the most desirable and thus the most competitive destination. Indeed, my wife at the time also scored London, but at the Courtauld, making us the first couple in a while to score London; but Anne Kostelanetz (now Mellor) has disappeared from my biographies as I have from hers.

This Britannica summary of my education doesn't mention that my degrees were not in literature or writing, as nearly all literary writers are nowadays, but in American civilization at Brown and American history at Columbia. Nor does it mention why I didn't complete the doctorate for which I'd received several remunerative fellowships. Nothing here explains why I didn't become a professor, unlike my sometime wife and other close friends from the early 1960.

For the third paragraph, the anonymous Britannica scribe makes the unusual move of putting my creative writing before my critical work, which has been more familiar. He or she then begins with a truly obscure example that was minimally published in a negligible edition, to no publicity and no memorable reviews. The fact that someone connected to Britannica discovered it at all impresses me; the notion that anyone judicious thought that it might "last" knocks me out. The second sentence here is absolutely true.

Rather than continuing here with my creative work, the Britannica entry saves it for the fifth paragraph, which is largely accurate. What's missing is the term Book Art, aka "Artist's Books," which is to say a bound volume whose page presentations are significantly different from those in traditional books. In my case, Book Art represents a continuing effort, perhaps unique, to discover other ways of presenting poetic texts or literary forms, which I've also done in audio, video, and holography. I'd like to think that I've been the most inventivewriter of poetry and fiction, surely in America, perhaps everywhere. (On this score, an encyclopedia published in England in the 1990s ranks me with the French writer Georges Perec. Thanks, Peter Parker, for noticing.)

Otherwise, the characterization of my creative efforts is essentially accurate, if somewhat insufficient. Note no mention of such familiar literary epithets as "lyric" and "prose poetry," among other familiar

touchstones, because much of it is beyond rubrics. The reference to esthetic Constructivism implies an exploration of radical formalism, which separates me from 99% of the other poets currently publishing.

The fourth paragraph focuses upon my most influential book of literary history/criticism, which is no less forgotten fifty years later than it was twenty-five years ago. Indeed, Josh Lambert, a young scholar-critic recently teaching at Wellesley College, devoted a whole book to examining one of my theses.

While mentioning the suppression of younger writers, which was more true in the early 1970s, this entry ignores the book's opening chapters, which offer an interpretation of literary politics in America that hasn't been refuted. Indeed, around the year 2020 I reprinted it under the original edition's sub-title, *Literary Politics in America*.

The sixth paragraph is a hodge-podge briefly touching upon several endeavors. *Recyclings* (1974) is the first of several volumes of alternative autobiography, as one recurring interest has been structurally different history, beginning with my own life. *Recyclings* in particular also explores non-syntactic prose that is nonetheless coherent.

Politics cleans up my M.A. thesis (1966, documenting the history of ideas in literature as revealed in novels by James Weldon Johnson, W. E. B. DuBois, Richard Wright, and Ralph Ellison and learned much from it, say in understanding my alma mater in *Brown University Reconsidered* (2012). I did Black Studies before that that term became academically popular. My college yearbook (1962) tells me that I was secretary-treasurer of the university chapter of the NAACP.

If graduate school aims to train the student's mind in a certain way, I believe that I still think like an historian, more particularly like an intellectual historian, yet more particularly as an historian interested in arts and literature. As I said before, I'm probably the youngest American artist/writer not to have any degrees in writing, studio art, or literature. What I don't know or never learned how to do in art and writing is enormous.

On *Innovative Art(ist)s* collects occasional writings in visual art, especially in work between two traditional categories, such as Book Art.

By the year 2000, my name had been recognized in other encyclopedias, some of them general and others specialized (e.g., poetry, fiction, music, art) with entries varying in scope and quality.

In the last respect, it descends from my *Metamorphosis in the Arts* (1980), which is a critical history of the 1960s, mostly in America. My *Dictionary* began as glosses on my enthusiasms in all the arts, whose second edition was much larger than its first. Inexplicably, the anonymous scribe doesn't mention the third volume (2019), which is significantly different from the second; or *Later Entries* (c. 2020), a slimmer volume with new material that would belong in a fourth edition. Anyone reading it carefully can recognize that it was written by an historian familiar with all the arts.

After residing for more than a century in the esthetic hothouse/artists' colony that was the SoHo district in Lower Manhattan, I wrote "an intimate history" that tries to mix personal experience with cultural history and some arts criticism. For the second edition, published one dozen years later, I heavily rewrote the earlier text, exploiting an advantage of digital storage, but by 2015 from the perspective of a former resident.

Britannica's last paragraph skips through three different kinds of work. The first is film, though acknowledging only two of our films about Berlin and thus failing to note that Martin Koerber and I made six films about the great Jewish cemetery of Berlin with the same footage, but in six languages, each with a different original soundtrack with different groups of ex-Berliners. Isn't that the sort of feat worth acknowledging in Britannica?

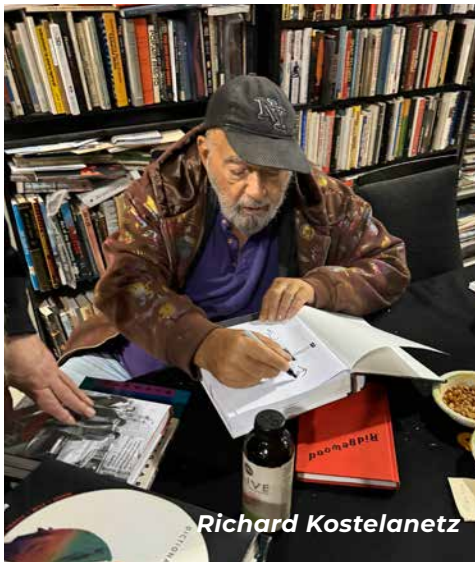
Were the Britannica entry longer, its writer might have acknowledged another film, the four-hour *Epiphanies*, which explores the exhaustive experience of the experience of story both visually and aurally. There's no mention of my video art, mostly with language and/or literary forms, nearly all of it unique as it was in being produced without a camera.

The next sentence acknowledges my audio/radio art that gained enough distinction to be mentioned in histories of contemporary music and broadcast as *Akustische Kunst* over Westdeutscher Rundfunk in the 1990s.



Inclusive though this entry aspires to be, it's not inclusive enough. There's no mention of my work with words in holography or an MIT Media Lab kinetic installation, which is to say an oeuvre produced that makes me unique among name writers in America. No mention either of my visual art, made mostly with words, that has been exhibited around the world. An early retrospective, *Wordsand*, toured several university galleries between 1977 and 1981.

Though I never became a professor, I've taught occasionally, at best with creative courses that



Richard Kostelanetz

challenge students to progress to higher levels, perhaps accounting for why perhaps 15% of them have published or exhibited. I've also sponsored project-centered internships; so that upon work done with me, several alumni have established successful careers.

While the opening characterization of me says "editor," nothing further is said about anthologies of the literary/esthetic avant-garde: contemporary esthetics, major essays of literary criticism, text-sound texts, poetry, fiction, and scripts. Some of these have been honored for establishing radical possibilities that few have moved beyond.

There's no mention of *Assembling*, which was during the 1970s an annual experiment, unquestionably avant-garde, in non-authoritarian compiling of "otherwise unpublishable" work. Though it had imitators, mostly short-lived, *Assembling Magazines* became the title of a book about the new medium that was published in Germany but written in Hungarian and English.

The final sentence acknowledges my continuing interest in avant-garde music(ian)s, not only the four mentioned there but also in Nicolas Slonimsky and Virgil Thomson. Some of my stronger writings on music were collected as *On Innovative Music(ian)s* (1989).

Shouldn't the Britannica scribe(s) have mentioned that I've tried to do what no one else could, or at least better than anyone else could? That accounts not only for why much of my work has been initially unacceptable but also for why too much of my life has been wasted trying to get cultural authorities to accept what they could not pigeon-hole. Nevertheless, more than once I've refused something offered to me because I could identify someone else who could do it better.

Much of my work I want to be audacious and funny; perhaps this brief autobiography is.

While Britannica acknowledges "avant-garde," which has been a principle important to me from the beginning, odd, at least to people who've known me, is no mention at all of New York City, where I was born and raised, where I have resided for all my life, which is a recurring subject in my art and writing (even implicitly of the Berlin films), where I expect to die, joining my parents and paternal grandparents in a cemetery less than one mile away from where I currently live.

Until recently, I couldn't imagine writing an essay like this; I wasn't old enough.

ACKER VOICES

LES GRAFFITI

BY MARK PELLICI



Duke9 LES Graffiti 1970. Since the very beginning of the Modern Graffiti Era, the Lower East Side of Manhattan has played a key role. The Lower East Side used to be a shopping paradise. Store owners would always crowd the sidewalks with their wares. On Canal Street a lot of the stores sold spray paint and would pile cases of it with their other merchandise.

When a lot of the early Wall Writers started to do pieces on the trains, many of them would go to Canal Street to 'rack up' paint. It was very easy to score. A lot of them would go straight to the abandoned City Hall Station and piece in the afternoon and nighttime train layups.

They had all been there and left their tags SUPER STRUT TASS, STAY HIGH 149, SUPER KOOL 223, MIKE 171, ACE 137, STAR 3, COMET, BLADE, SHARK 77, AFX 2, KILLER, DIZZY 1, PISTOL, FLINT 707, ALL JIVE 161, STAFF 161, PIT 163d, WILDCAT, LOLLYPOP, PIPER 1, CLIFF 159, JESTER 1, JACE 2, 'A' TRAIN, 7UP, FDT 56, HOY 56, CANO 707, etc.. It was like a museum of all the first generation graffiti bombers.

By about 1972, the City began urging the shops on the Lower East Side to stop leaving spray paint out on their street displays. Maybe they thought it would be the end of large scale graffiti bombing on trains. All it meant was that writers would have to find other places to

rack up paint.

Also that year the City Council and the Mayor passed a law that said if a teenager was in possession of spray paint or markers they could be automatically arrested. A lot of big writers were getting caught riding the train with their paint on their way to a yard or layup. And they didn't just arrest you in those days - they would beat yoSthe ,lly as well. There were many horror stories of beat downs the cops gave to teenage graffiti writers. I myself was badly beaten 4 times by the cops when I was writing from age 13 to 15.

A lot of great early subway writers came from the L.E.S.. Two of the biggest were AFX2 and CANO 707. They had some really great layups to choose from. The most popular was The Bowery and Canal Street. This was a very long layup that strung subway cars back to back in the early afternoon and late nights all the way to the abandoned City Hall Station.

All the top writers would compete to be 'King of the Line'. King of the Line meant one thing in those days: whoever had the most pieces on a line. It could only be one writer at a time, so we would sit in the stations counting who had the most pieces on each train.

When I first started piecing on trains in 1974, I was 13 years old. By the end of that summer I was King of the E, F, EE, and GG Lines. I used to live a block from Jamaica Ave. and would look at the graffiti on the J Trains as they would ride by. I was hitting the IND lines and they didn't change very much with the BMTs. I wanted to hit the Js but the J Yard was known for being real hot, and I didn't like the elevated layups much. I knew that the Bowery was an RR Layup. The RRs would often switch to J Trains.

My first stop was Pearl Paints. I racked about four or five cans of spray paint. I waited on the platform at the Bowery Station till things got quiet, then ran into the tunnel. The farther I got into the tunnel, the darker it got, and I noticed that all of the light bulbs were gone. A flashlight was always standard equipment for writers. I jumped on to the tracks and started walking near the train. I thought that since there were no lights it would be hard for the cops to creep up on me.

Soon after I started to meet other writers. The first writers that I met were EARL, STEVE-61, and MINGO. They told me about the Writers Bench (WHAT IS THIS BENCH?) and said all the other writers wanted to meet me. So they took me to the bench. There were about twenty writers there. They were shocked when they met me. Most of them were black and they didn't expect that duke9 was a 13 year old white boy with long hair and bell bottoms.

I lived right by the E and F layup at Van Wycke Blvd. in Kew Gardens. I used to love to hit that layup on Sunday morning with my partner FLASH. FLASH and I grew up together on the same block. One Sunday morning we noticed that some other writers had been down there bombing a few hours before us, AFX 2 and BROTHER LOVE 333. The next Sunday we saw an AFX piece down there and when I touched it, it was still wet.

The next Sunday we were determined to get there early enough to

meet AFX. Once there, we saw four other kids. One kid was Chinese, one was black, one was white, and one was Hispanic. I walked up to the Chinese guy first and asked him what he writes. He said something really fast and when I asked the others, they also answered fast. At first I thought they were toys (WHAT'S A TOY?), but when the Chinese kid asked me what I write and I told him I was duke9 and my boy was FLASH, he laughed, and said they wanted to meet up with us.

Then he told me he was AFX, and the others were TERO, PINTO aka DP2, MOVIN2 aka TI 149. AFX was one of the first generation L.E.S. writers. The year before an anti-graffiti TV commercial featured an AFX whole car, and whole car by one of his partners who wrote LAW passing by on the elevated tracks while complaining that graffiti cost the city of New York 3 million dollars a year to clean off. The AFX whole car read, 'AFX TOO BUSTING ASS EXPRESS', and the other said, 'THE LAW EXPRESS.'

I told him about my experiences in the Bowery layup and how there were no light bulbs down there. He told me he took them all out so cops couldn't sneak up on him. He told me about his boy CANO 707, and BOMB 1 who was also one of the first generation of L.E.S. writers. He said that things got too hot and CANO had to quit.

After we finished all our paint AFX asked me if I wanted to go to 9th Avenue in Brooklyn with them, and do a top-to-bottom-whole car on the D Line. I said I was game. We went to some local paint stores by Jamaica Ave. and each one of us got enough paint to do top-to-bottoms. The train was parked right in the station, and the station was pretty deserted. We each did a top-to-bottom. It read AFX, DUKE, TERO, PINTO. TI 149 was only doing insides that day. Even after they cleaned the windows that whole car ran a long time. One day two years later when I was going out to eat in Chinatown with my aunt and uncle and they asked me if I was staying out of trouble, and I said yes. I heard a train coming by on the Bridge I looked up and it was that whole car.

We began to meet with AFX and his boys every Sunday morning in Van Wycke Layup. AFX taught us how to do a throw-up, a piece with a light fill in from a fat cap with a quick outline. He said this was a

When I first started piecing on trains in 1974, I was 13 years old. By the end of that summer I was King of the E, F, EE, and GG Lines.

good way to 'get up' fast. Every week, we after we were finished in Van Wycke, we would go to a different part of the city, rack up more paint, and hit another Layup, like The Bowery, the 175th Street AA Layup, 45th Street in Brooklyn, or 75th Avenue in Kew Gardens.

One week they didn't show up and I wondered what happened to them. When I got home I called AFX and asked him what happened. He told me the cops busted him in the Bowery Layup. They beat him quite badly and spray painted his face and arms. He told me that his dad came to get him and that he promised him he would never write again. I never saw or heard from AFX after that.

Another big writer from the Lower East Side was LEE. I first met LEE at the Writers Bench at 149th Street and the Grand Concourse. We were both 13 years old. He had just did his 'Classic Car' piece. Now, you might wonder what 2 thirteen year old boys were doing so far from our homes during school hours, but to be a writer you had to do some traveling a lot of time. LEE went on to do many legendary whole cars, plus many walls around the Lower East Side, including his famous ALLEN BOYS masterpiece on Allen Street.

(April 1975) One day, another writer, UNCLE JOHN 178 with whom I partnered with a lot, came to my apartment on 191st and Hillside Ave. I wasn't home, so he waited in my room for me. Before he left, he found a silver scrap can and did a UJ outline on the side of my building.

When I got home, I saw the outline and gave him a call. He told me he had lots of cans of his favorite color 'school bus yellow'. We could go to the abandoned City Hall Station on Easter Sunday morning and do a top-to-bottom whole car with the yellow for the letters and get some cans of red and white paint for a checkerboard background.

We met at his apartment on Austin Street the next day and then went to Pearl Paints on Canal Street and a few other stores to get the rest of the paint we needed. We couldn't find enough white but since we had a lot of silver we would use that for the checkerboard instead of the white.

When we got back to his apartment we smoked some good weed. He said a guy was coming over to buy \$50 worth of weed in a little while. He was going to give him some other weed that wasn't as good, and, if the guy asked me, to tell him it was the good weed. The guy came over shortly, got the weed and everything went smoothly.

I asked JOHN if we should start heading to the City Hall soon he said it was too early. He had to take a quick trip to the Lower East Side for something first. We started walking to Queens Blvd. to catch a cab. On the way, an old lady from his neighborhood asked if he could drop off an envelope with her donation at the church. JOHN said he would be happy to. He took the envelope and when we got around the block he opened it. There was a ten dollar bill in it. He put it in his pocket and said, "This will help."

When we got to Queens Blvd. we stopped a cab. He asked the cab driver not to turn on the meter and that he would just give him the ten dollar bill. When we got to our destination of East Houston and El-

dridge Street, we walked to a bodega on Eldridge Street. Since he had \$50. the dealer said he could have 6 dime bags. As we left the store the dealer told us to be careful of S.W.A.T. because they had been seen around the neighborhood. We replied that we would certainly be avoiding them. When we got back to Houston Street, we jumped into another cab. JOHN made a similar offer to not use the meter, and the cab driver drove us back to Queens.

When we got to JOHN'S apartment he asked me if I wanted to try some, but I said no. He mainlined 5 of the bags and passed out for a while. I smoked some of his weed, played some albums, and practiced the letters for our piece. When he woke up, he said we were ready to go. So we got on the subway and road the train to City Hall. We went down the staircase and started looking for a clean subway car.

The piece came out great. The letters were school bus yellow with a black outline and 3D, a white cloud and the rest of the car we painted in silver and red checkerboard. We went back to City Hall Layup a couple of other times with another partner, TEAR 2. One of those times I did the whole car with the witch character that ended up being used for the money train. Luckily there is a picture of that still around.

1976. My friend IZ THE WIZ lived on 7th St. between Avenue C and D. at Covenant House. I would throw some pebbles at the back window and he would climb down. We started walking down Avenue C when he said he was cold and wanted some more socks. We stopped in all the stores where IZ stole like a kleptomaniac. He would just grab everything in front of him and put it in his pockets, not even checking if anyone was looking. He was the same when we were tagging around the neighborhood. He would tag everything that wasn't moving and not even look if any cops were around. DEAN aka KO had a lot of pieces around the L.E.S. Some were way up high and he must have had to climb on scaffolding to do them.

That was the last time that I saw the Lower East Side pretty much intact. After the 1977 blackout, many businesses and buildings were burned out. After that, the Lower East Side descended into an abyss. Local writers like the TMBs were doing a lot of meetups and bombing. The L.E.S. was kind of an island unto its own since most subway lines didn't pass through much of it.

A lot of the graffiti was done by local ghetto taggers, which carried with it an ominous tone. A lot of it was done to mark drug territories and local drug 'brand names' like RED STAR, ZORRO SLEEPO, and many others. Also a lot of graffiti was done for what were considered to be terrorist groups like the FALN, FSLN, and others. Yanquee Junkee was tagged a lot on some of the drug blocks. On East Second Street a very large mural that read TOXIC JUNKIE was done.

Many murals were done to honor local fallen gang members. The time of birth till the time of death often attested to the very short lives that they lived. Many were barely 16 years old. It was a common practice to use underage kids for the drug trade in those days since they could not be charged as adults.

There was a lot of punk rock graffiti and postering done. Some was

by early Skinhead bands like MURPHY'S LAW and the CRO-MAGS, and writers like BADFR, ZEPHYR, REVOLT, SAMO, SAIN TOP, CAVS, IKE, PEO, WEO, CISCO 1 CL2, ASOA, RK2, DRUNK DRIVING, and many more.

In 1980 when I was on the subway I saw a very young kid sniffing a paper bag full of glue. He couldn't have been more than 13, or 14. I noticed he had paint on his sneakers and asked him what he wrote. He said he writes EL3. He belonged to one of the most prolific and legendary graffiti crews that formed exclusively on the Lower East Side, T.N.S.: THEY NEVER STOP. Members included SPAR, LA 2, LUS ONE, RICH 2, SEC, SOE, LED 2, FIN 56, DN, DC, REVEAL, PR, JOCK, LUCK, VFR, SNIPER, LEC 1, BK ONE, BYE, LON, RO 2, SE 3, REN, and more. T.N.S. had a lot of the subway lines in the city, and most of the blocks on the L.E.S. Their leader EL3 was able

to bridge the gap between rival groups of writers from Alphabet City all the way to the Alfred E. Smith Houses. A tenement building at 199 Henry Street was their headquarters.

In 1981 Patti Astor and Bill Stelling opened the Fun Gallery at 229 East 11th Street for \$175. per month. At the end of the year they relocated to 254 East 10th Street. They bought together some of the most talented and prolific writers from all over the city, like DONDI, FUTURA

2000, FAB 5 FREDDY, LEE, LADY PINK, KENNY SHARF, JEAN MICHAEL BASQUAIT, KIETH HARING and many more. They were also filming the movie 'WILD STYLE'. A huge mural mostly painted by LEE QUIONES was done for some of the movie scenes at the East River Park amphitheater. It remained there for many years afterward.

In Chinatown the local graffiti would usually designate the local gangs with colorful names like GHOST SHADOWS, GREEN DRAGONS, BLACK EAGLES. Their handstyle was good and they often drew illustrations with their tags. These gangs were constantly at war and among the most violent in the country. When some Chinese restaurants were machine gunned for not paying protection to the right gangs, the authorities suspected the GHOST SHADOWS. The authorities had so much difficulty infiltrating them that they called in the

By 1983 the Lower East Side, especially Alphabet City became a total war zone. Long lines of junkies waiting to buy drugs became the norm.



C.I.A. to finally make a breakthrough. Members like Iggy, Bryan, and others were arrested.

In 1982 I made friends with Bryan and Iggy when I lived at the Washington Square Hotel on the NW corner of Washington Square Park. His room was down the hall. He was being indicted on some pretty heavy charges, and he told me he was probably going to prison for a while. Other gang members would often come over to his room to free base. They would always have one guy standing by the outside door, guarding, and another standing by the inside door when they hung out.

DRUG WARS

By 1983 the Lower East Side, especially Alphabet City became a total war zone. Long lines of junkies waiting to buy drugs became the norm. It was also like cowboys and Indians. The punk rockers were the cowboys and the Puerto Ricans were the Indians, and the cowboys were always getting scalped. Many of the street lights were shot out so the streets were often very dark at night. They were always pulling bodies out of the abandoned buildings of white kids that disappeared while down there trying buy drugs. There were often large shootouts between rival drug gangs as well. There were a lot of hole in the wall spots to cop drugs from. Some were on the top floor of some abandoned buildings, and some were at ground level. I always smoked a lot of weed and the best places to buy were in Alphabet City from these kind of spots. The tag I would say that became the most prominent in Alphabet City and other parts of the L.E.S. was 'BLUE TIPS RULES'. Blue tips are what they used to call syringes because the pastic tip on the needles used to be blue.

I was heavily into the punk music scene in those days, and would spend most of my free time in the local punk clubs and dives. I would often run into a friend from grammar school named John. We had attended a Ramones Show and a few other punk shows together recently. He knew the punk scene and drug scene on the L.E.S. very well. He had a weakness for the heroine.

When I was still living at the Washington Square Hotel in 1983 he asked me if he could crash on my floor for the night. I said okay. The next day he told me he was going to see his dealer and if I wanted anything. I said I was okay. That evening when he returned he had a big shopping bag full of all kinds of drugs. Pills, acid, micro dots, pounds of weed, pounds of hashish and thousands of dollars in cash. John counted everything and estimated there was about six thousand dollars worth of drugs, and about six thousand dollars in cash. He told me that he robbed his dealer. He said the guy owed it to him anyway since he got him so many customers. When I asked him, "don't you think he might come looking for you." He answered that he wasn't worried. He took all the hundred dollar bills and rolled ten together and hid the rolls in his clothes. When we decided to go out I told him not to leave his bag in my room because the maid might find it. So he took the bag with him. When we got to 8th Street he pulled out some orange sunshine acid and we both took some. We decided to stop in at Flip Jean's on 8th street to look at the latest punk fashions. When we got to the door the guard told John that he had to check the bag. So John gave him the bag, and the guard gave him a number. We looked around the shop but didn't find anything we liked. John handed the guard the number and the guard handed him back his bag. Next we stopped into Trash and Vaudeville and again John checked the bag with security. We didn't buy anything there either and again John reclaimed his bag of 'goodies'. John told me he wanted to go to 14th Street for something.

There he bought a very large gravity knife with the word 'Silencer' written on the blade. Since we were starting to feel the acid we decided to go to the movies, and see 'RETURN OF THE JEDI' which was just premiering. When we got to the theater there was a very long line. John walked up to the head usher and showed him what was in the bag and asked him what he needed. The usher picked some things out and allowed us to go into the theater first. He also told the person at the concession stand to give us anything we wanted. We sat down to watch the film, and by that time the acid was really hitting us. The space ships were flying off the screen and all around the audience, and movie theater. Afterwards John told me he knew this great spot in Alphabet City to buy cocaine. When we got there he made a phone call to a dealer and the dealers mother told him that he was in jail. So John asked the dealers mother if she had anything and she said no. John said he knew another spot nearby on E. 4th Street by Avenue C that was always dependable. He went into a building with the dealer, and came out with the drugs. We walked over to a parking lot by Avenue B, and 6th Street to take some bumps.

John said he knew a place where we could hang out and feel safe

that was nearby. So we walked up 7th Street and Avenue A, to an after-hours club called A7. We both knew the doorman. His name was Ray B. He was in the band 'WARZONE'. He was glad to see us and let us in right away. The Bad Brains were doing one of their legendary five hour jams that night, and into the morning. John put the bag down on a table and I put my Walkman down next to it and we went up a little closer to see them jam. A punk rocker walked over to me and told me that I should be more careful where I leave my Walkman that a friend of his got his stolen like that. Then he lifted his jacket to show a knife that he was carrying in a sheath on his belt. In those days almost everyone in the L.E.S would carry a knife. I told him not to worry and mind his own business. The Bad Brains jammed until after dawn, and when it was over we left and went to sit with some other punks on one of the stoops on Saint Marks Place. John gave each one of them a hit of acid and they shared some of their beer with us. We went back to the Hotel and rested.

The next evening we went out again and took a lot more hallucinogenics. We stopped in again at Flip Jeans on East 8th Street. I asked John if he was afraid the guards might steal his bag when he checked it. He answered, "He didn't care because that was not who he was." We stopped in a few more shops

on St. Marks Place but again we didn't buy anything. That evening we decided to walk around the Village and talk to other punks. We felt that 1983 was the last year of the original punk rock movement from the '70's. We ran into these two girls on Bleecker Street, and were asking them what were their thoughts. But after John showed them what was in the bag they started bugging us and kept following us around until John gave them some pills.

Everytime we would meet some people John would give them something from the bag. We decided to go to the St. Marks Cinema for the midnight showing of Woodstock. The highlight of the film was when Jimi Hendrix playing The Star Spangled Banner at the end. When the film was over they turned on the lights. John kept looking around on the floor. When I asked him why he said, "Sometimes people drop money or other valuables in the theater in the dark. I thought to myself, 'Why would you worry about that when you have so much money.' I began to feel very sick and began throwing up some nasty green slime. John told me that sometimes they cut the drugs with strychnine, and that was what was probably making me





sick. I continued vomiting uncontrollably. And John walked me back to the Hotel. I continued throwing up there. John took his bag and told me he has to go somewhere, and would come back. He came by the next day but I wasn't around because I went to the hospital. When my Mom came to visit me in the hospital she asked me, "What were you and John doing? Sniffing angel dust, and smoking acid?" After that my speech was slurred and I was seeing trails for a year.

I asked around the neighborhood if anyone had seen John. Someone told me they saw him walking around Washington Square Park with no shoes, and his feet all bloody. When I finally contacted him he told me he fell asleep in one of the local parks and when he woke up the bag of 'goodies' was gone.

So he freaked out and went to visit some friends of our in SOHO, and went up to the roof of their building and threatened to jump off. They called the police and the fire department and a local cop that knew him talked him out of jumping. We never hung out together again. And I only saw him a few more times in the Village.

After that I moved to Stanton Street. One day I ran into MIN 1 and when I told him what happened he laughed. He was going around recruiting other Lower East Side writers to join his crew 'RTW' which stood for 'Rolling Thunder Writers.' Other L.E.S writers like EL 3, and RICH aka RH had already joined. He asked me to join and of course I said yes. We took a tag together with his yellow opaque pentel marker. After we took the tag he gave me the marker, and I started putting up RTW everywhere I went.

One night when I went to the Ritz to dance I met this girl and she invited me back to her apartment. She lived on E.3rd Street between Avenue B, and C. When we got to her block I realized it was one of the most notorious in Alphabetland.

Most of the street lights had been shot out, and it was very dark. There

were hundreds of people out on that block lining up to buy drugs. Some were filling their syringes from puddles of water in the street and sticking it into there gangrene limbs. She told me she had been dragged into one of the abandoned buildings and was attacked. We became friends and I moved in with her.

OPERATION PRESSURE POINT

The Lower East Side of Manhattan had become a national disgrace. The Reagan Administration had pledged to give federal funds to the NYPD and other law enforcement groups to battle the problem. On January 1st, 1984 they began. They closed off all of the blocks in Alphabet City, and only allowed people to pass through if they could prove that they lived there. They loaded up busses with a lot of the people that were on the streets and took them away. They decided that since 4th Street between Avenue B, and C was mostly abandoned that they would use it for a helipad. They blocked it off, and for three months helicopters were taking off and landing. My room was in the back of the building and it felt like and sounded like the helicopter were in my room.

Operation Pressure Point permanently changed the L.E.S., and also changed the graffiti scene. One morning when we were walking down East Third Street we noticed that all the new sapling trees that they had planted were either snapped or burned, and many of the plate glass windows were broken and upside-down cocktail glasses were spray painted everywhere. We both laughed because we knew it was Missing Foundation. Missing Foundation became the most prolific tag in Downtown Manhattan. A lot of other new 'political' graffiti like 'Death to Amerikkka, and 'Ron Sells Crack.' Also a lot of posters from the Yuppies with a fist smashing a syringe that read POT HEADS, 'People apposed to Heroin and Hard Drugs.'

CHICO had murals on almost every block. Also artist William Hambleton had his shadow figures all over, and people kept adding things on like faces and arrows through the head. Next a group of street artists and writers were emerging from 'The Rivington School'. Some were putting up a symbol that was a circle with an arrow in the middle that meant 'It is always six o'clock '. And other weird messages. Some were with paint, markers, and posters. There was MONTY CANSTON the 'King of Self Promotion', KAREN BLACK, NICK ZEDD and many more. Also a lot of anti-gentrification graffiti began to take on a more ominous tone. Like 'LIVEEVIL', and PARTY'S OVER, THIS IS GERMANY 1933. Someone wrote on the local grocery store on 4th Street 'STEAL FOOD', MUG A YUPPIE, GENTRIFICATION IS GENOCIDE, GENTRIFICATION IS CLASS WAR FIGHT BACK! WE WILL NOT ACT CIVILIZED IN THIS FUCKING CITY. I felt that this type of graffiti was brilliant and was having a very good effect on the local zeitgeist. It was waking people up about the real estate moguls and the sickening gap between the rich and the poor.

One day when I was still on East Third Street, a guy started a fight with me in front my building. I knocked him silly and he began staggering around. Some of the local homeboys came from across the

street laughing and said that the guy had to pay me now since I got him high.

I had a feeling they were writers so I told them I was a writer, and I asked them if they wrote. That was the first time I met DAST. He and his boys had tags all over Alphabet City. He was telling me about his new graffiti crew called 'LK' short for LATIN KINGS. We became friends that day and continue to be friends this day.

I had a feeling that something was up. That 'The writing was on the walls' literally. During the summer in 1988 I picked up a newspaper and read that there had been a disturbance between punk rockers and the police in Tompkins Square Park over a planned curfew, and that they were going to have another protest in the Park next Saturday, I planned to be there. I took a tag with a gold marker on the electric company the night before the protest with a message for the NYPD that I would rather not mention now. That tag appears in Clayton's long video of that night.

It seemed the stage had been set, and 100 cops came to make sure there was not a repeat of last week when some cops were injured. The local graffiti and postering had prepared the way for people to make a stand against the curfew in Tompkins Square Park. About 200 people showed up to protest the curfew. First we marched around the Park a few times. One of the other marchers asked me for a cigarette and I said, "You look like you are into this," and he answered that he was. I gave him a cigarette and I asked him if he would like some firecrackers, too. He said, "Yes." I gave him some firecrackers with his cigarette and we began lighting and throwing them. He was Adam Nodelmen aka Adam Missing. He was the bass player for the band MISSING FOUNDATION. Some other people were also throwing large M80 firecrackers in the direction of the police.

When it was almost time for the curfew a lot of people gathered at the entrances. I stayed in the park near a large garage barrel filled with empty beer bottles. There was another guy waiting by the barrel of bottles also. He had long blond hair and a beard. I rolled a joint and asked him if he wanted to smoke and he said, "Yes." That was the first time I met Daniel Rakowitz. We waited till midnight, and as soon as it was midnight, the cops began beating protesters. I recognized one of the first people they started beating. It was Crazy Jimmy. Daniel and I started rapidly throwing bottles at the cops. I didn't have very good aim and kept missing, but Daniel's aim was spot on and he hit his mark with every bottle he threw.

The police underestimated the frustration and resentment that had been brewing for a long time. A lot of police were still beating suspects in the precincts regularly, and there was a lot of racism as well. So what happens when 100 people fight 200? The 100 get fucked up, and that was exactly what happened. The police tried to charge the protesters on horseback. People just stood aside and hurled almost full 40oz. beer bottles at them and nearly knocked them off their horses. At this point, the police called a citywide code 1085, "Police were down and injured. All available units to come to Tompkins Square Park." At that point police cars started arriving at the Park from all over the city.

As the police were arriving they were covering and removing their badges and indiscriminately beating anyone that they could catch.

Mostly they were beating innocent bystanders who didn't know that they should run. I went back to the store front I lived in and changed my clothes. When I got back to 7th Street and Avenue A the cops were beating a punk rocker with a large green mohawk by the 7A Restaurant. Some people were just sitting in the outdoor Cafe eating and drinking. I hopped over the fence into the Cafe and started throwing the glasses with their drinks at the cops. They stopped beating the punk rocker and pointed to me. I hopped back over the fence and took off. The cops were so angry they went into the restaurant and dragged the manager out by her hair. She ended up getting a quarter million dollar settlement from the city over that. Every time she would see me after that she would just smile.

The police kept trying to set up a skirmish line on Avenue A, by 6th Street but it kept changing. This battle went on for six hours, and amazingly enough throughout the entire night, not even one news van showed up. No ABC, no NBC, no CBS, no CNN. A NY Post Reporter and a NY Times Reporter showed up and were beaten by the police when they didn't run fast enough. And when an amateur video photographer tried to film he was beaten by the police and also had his camera broken. But one local photographer, Clayton Patterson who was quite experienced at filming slam-pits at CBGB'S, calmly managed with his wife Elsa to film all of the beatings.

At 6 A.M. when the park curfew was over the police left. We marched across the Park right to the Christodora House. It had been a symbol of the gentrification around the Park. We took a police barricade and smashed it through the window. This sent the doorman running away. Then we tore the phone out and took a ficus tree that was in the lobby and planted it in the Park.

8- 8- 88

I went back to my place on 1st Street by Avenue A. When I got home I checked all of the TV News and there wasn't a thing about the riot. Later on I went to the Newsstand to check the papers but there was nothing. I checked the Sunday Evening News and again there wasn't a word. Later on in the evening there was a report of a News Conference. The next day on Monday the police riot was the top story on all the World Wide Headlines. The protest started Saturday night August 6th, and wasn't reported until the following Monday. It is very unusual for such a major occurrence in Lower Manhattan to go unreported like that.

Local activists put up flyers around the Park for a meeting at CHARAS. A lot of people showed up, and we made plans for more protests against the Washington Square Park curfew as well. We also made plans to go out postering and doing graffiti for the event. We decided to have a march, too. We started off in Tompkins Park, with a few dozen people and by the time we got to the West Village we numbered almost a thousand. We started having regular planning meetings, and continued to do a lot of graffiti, and postering. We

also made plans to go to the local community board meeting. A lot of us showed up, and people were drinking beers, smoking weed, and lighting firecrackers.

A core group of us began meeting at 9 Bleecker Street, which was the Yippie Headquarters. Jerry the Peddler, John the communist, Daniel, Maria, Cybel, Adam Missing, Kenny Toglia, Don Yip, Pieman Arron K, Laurie, Allen, Chris Flash, Linda, Joe, Moogie Klingman, Cassandra, and many more. From there we would often go out posterizing and doing graffiti. Often we would smoke a lot of weed, and drink some beer until late in the evening before going out. One of our favorite topics of conversation when we smoked weed was the Yippie Magic, and the Yippie Curse which were strangely potent. As Halloween approached we decided to have a 'Halloween Smoke In', in Washington Square Park. Dana Beal was the proprietor of 9 Bleecker Street. He also had a printing press in his basement. We made up lots of posters and I also bought along some orange day glow spray paint.

As we were posterizing for the Halloween Smoke -In, I would highlight the posters and draw pentacles on the sidewalk with day glow orange spray paint, and depending on what angle you were looking at them from they could appear as something else. I felt that they could unlock some of the Yippie Magic. In those days, we were all still hanging out with Daniel Rakowitz. He was very helpful with posterizing and he always had a lot of weed to share. One night when I ran into Daniel by Saint Marks Place he told me he wanted to take a tag in the wet cement of the stairway of the building Curtis Slilwa had just moved into. He took a stick and wrote 'CURTIS SLEEZE BALL' in the wet cement. That tag is still there 35 years later..

The Washington Square Park Arch which divides East and West for NYC was in very poor shape. It had a lot of tags and posters on it. It was a high risk spot but we were always sure to cover it well. Around Tompkins Square Park was also a highly patrolled area but we always made sure to also cover it well. We weren't the only ones out doing graffiti and posterizing. REVS, COST, XSOU, MARK EKO, SQUAT OR ROT, DMS, JERE, SMOG, FCEE, Dmize, COLT 45, and many others were also out contributing to the big mess. We would often meet musicians who were posterizing for their first gig at CBGB'S. They really looked up to us because we were everywhere. Some of them became very famous like 'NIRVANA', and 'THE RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS'.

One very cold night after we ran out of posters and all I had was a can of black spray paint I thought for a gag I would write 'MUG A YUPPIE' with a pentagram next to it. I tagged it on the Electric station on Avenue A, and E.6th Street. The next day a lot of the people in the neighborhood were talking about it. Some thought it was funny, and it got in the papers. I thought to myself, 'I did so many whole cars on subway trains and no one talked about it, and now I took this silly tag and people noticed?'

We continued our graffiti and posterizing campaign through the winter. In the spring when the Squat on East 8th Street burned down there was another disturbance around Tompkins Park that left several protesters and police injured, and hospitalized. That protest made the

front page the next day.

We were doing a lot of posterizing and graffiti for our Spring Marijuana Legalization March. On the day of the event we met up in Washington Square Park, and we gave out joints that we had rolled the night before. The march and rally came off well. Our graffiti and posterizing campaign bought a lot of people to our event.

ANARCHISTS AREN'T TALKING

One day some people from a local TV Station thought it would be a good idea to have us on their show called 'People Are Talking. So they sent a limousine first to the Anarchist Switchboard and then to some of the squats to pick up as many punks as they could. They decided to have ex New Jersey State Senator Anthony Imperioli to debate us. Most of the Punks had been up all night having an acid party. Anthony Imperioli was known for his vigilanteism during the Newark Riots. He was well known for making his infamous statement, "When the black panther comes the white hunter will be waiting." We knew we had to do something special for him. So while he was speaking I walked up to him and threw a black beret. When some of his security tried to grab me, it set off a rumble with the Punks. During the rumble I got right up on him and punched him in the face. The next day in the TV section of the Daily News there was an article, 'Anarchists aren't Talking.' They said that someone named MARK CHAOS had been allowed onto the set and started the trouble. That was where I first got that nickname. That was the last episode of People are Talking. The show was canceled permanently the next day.

We felt something needed to be done about McDonald's using Styrofoam containers. Also we thought it would be constructive to hand out vegan alternative sandwiches for people to try.

We chose the McDonald's on Broadway near 4th Street. Again we went on a graffiti and posterizing campaign to publicize and get support. The day of the event everything was going smoothly. There was a cop nearby who kept walking past us with his partner giving us the evil eye. Some how one of the garbage barrels caught fire. When he saw this he lost it and started beating and arresting one of our boys from the AWOL crew. We managed to unarrest our friend but then all hell started to break loose. Firey barricades went up blocking traffic on Broadway and somehow a brick got thrown through the McDonald's window. Someone mentioned that a call was made to McDonald's National Corporate Headquarters saying that the same thing will happen tomorrow at more than a thousand of their restaurants if they didn't stop using the styrofoam containers immediately. The next day they stopped using the styrofoam containers.

On July 6th 1989 we had a very large protest in Tompkins Square Park because the cops kept harassing people on food lines for having open beers. That turned into another riot that was the top news story, and made the front pages the next day. A picture on the front page of the NY POST the next day was of a punk rocker girl beating an undercover cop over his head with a two by four.

The rest of the summer went pretty uneventful except for the thing with Daniel Rakowitz. He supposedly made his cheating girlfriend

into soup and fed her to the homeless in Tompkins Square Park. This also made the front page, and top of the TV News Headlines.

(Sept. 1989) There was radical Priest who lived in our squat on E. 6th Street. We called him Father Frank. One day he bought Peter Missing over to give him his apartment. Frank introduced Peter to me since he knew we both liked to write graffiti. I asked Peter if he ever got caught and he said no, so I felt we could work together. We used to meet with the other MISSING FOUNDATION band members at Peter's apartment as well. Dave, Adam, Mark Ashwell, KJ, Jeremy, Bones, and the Ninjas, who were Puerto Rican kids from the projects that used to be their security. Everyone had a tag or a symbol that they were tagging or piecing. LIVE IN DIN, NIHILIST RESISTANCE MOVEMENT, BLACK RAIN, THE UPSIDE-DOWN COCKTAIL GLASS, THE CIRCLE STAR, and more. We also put up a lot of posters. We would break up into smaller groups so not to attract too much attention. Often we would stop up at Al Diaz's aka BOMB 1's apartment to meetup and drink more beer and smoke more weed before we hit the streets.

We decided to have a large metal jam in Tompkins Square Park. We chose the date and went on another graffiti and poster campaign. METAL JAM IN TOMPKINS SQUARE PARK. We were also telling people to bring metal to bang on. We wrote it and postered it everywhere. The night of the metal jam more than a hundred people showed up with all sorts of metal to make noise with. Most of them were local punks that lived in the nearby abandoned buildings. Some lit fires in their metal containers as they banged on them. The police backed away and let us finish and leave when we felt like it.

When we decided it would be a great idea to open an abandoned school on E.4th Street and convert it into a local community center, we began another graffiti and poster campaign. SAVE THE ABC COMMUNITY CENTER. Some local activists opened a Radical book store on St. Marks Place called Sabotage. We were doing some of our meetups there, and getting posters there, also. This time we went very heavy on the graffiti and poster campaign. We knew if enough people didn't show up on the day of the eviction we wouldn't have a chance of winning.

On the day of the eviction a lot of people started showing up early in the day. Some people barricaded themselves inside. Early on in the day I got arrested for throwing an egg at a cop. I told them I didn't know anything, and they let me go after they gave me a D.A.T. I went back to the protest and by this time it was late into the evening and I ran into Peter Missing.

The whole thing kind of spun out of control. There was a bonfire in the middle of East 4th Street between Avenue C, and D. Also more protesters and cops went to the hospital with injuries. The riot cops were assembling near Avenue C to push the protesters away from the front of the building. They began to penetrate our lines and push us back. Peter pulled out a can of black spray paint, and said this would be the perfect time to go tagging. So we started walking toward Avenue A tagging everything on the way. When we got to Avenue A we were tagging everything there as well. When we got to East 6th Street, we



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noticed a lot of yuppies eating and drinking in the outdoor café like they didn't have a care in the world. This made Peter angry and he began spray painting their hamburgers and drinks that they were holding in their hands to have. We continued walking down 6th Street toward our Squat. We noticed that a police car was parked in front of our building. Someone dropped about 50 bricks down on it from our roof. It looked like King Kong walked by and stepped on it. We found it kind of funny. But when we saw a line of riot cops with shields coming down the block, we weren't laughing much. We turned off the lights and waited for the outcome. When the cops got to the front door, they ran into Kenny who explained to them some kids got on the roof and went down the back fire escape. This explanation satisfied the riot cops and they left. We watched ourselves on the news that night, and the next day we made the front pages again.

A lot of writers were coming from different parts of the City to tag the Lower East Side. JAMESTOP, SANE SMITH, MQ, SAINTOP, and many others.. A lot of new local kids were coming of age and starting new crews like 501. They included, FOGS, GOOBER, KED, NEVS, and more. Most people were still doing tags, and when Bones, Peter, and I began doing throwup style pieces with our symbols, it caused quite a stir. I was putting circle star pieces all over. Sometimes they would tilt a little and people would see pentagrams. Some Christians began following us around and putting crosses over my work. People would tell me to fix it but I never did because I felt it added something, and I knew they would never be able to keep up with me, but they got quite a few.

SPY VS. SPY

We had some meetings and decided we were going to totally outdo anything we did before. We were going to promote and stage a three day concert in the Tompkins Park Bandshell culminating on MAY 1st. 1990. The name of it would be RESIST TO EXIST. This time we printed up the most posters we ever did, and would do the most graffiti yet to promote and publicize our event. Again we would smoke a lot of weed as we prepared to go out late at night to poster. We covered all the areas around Union Square, Tompkins Park, Washington Square, St. Marks Place, Every block in Alphabet City, and all the way down to the Brooklyn Bridge, and beyond. We often would do big pieces with our symbols to accompany the posters.

We interviewed bands and chose the hottest underground punk bands in the city. For the closing band on the last day we decided to have SPY VS. SPY. Baby Monroe was the lead singer. The first day of the festival went off very smoothly, and so did the second. Both days were very well attended. On the last day we decided to have a march leaving from Tompkins Park to Union Square and back. We gathered as many more people along the way as we could.

Everything was going smoothly and people really liked SPY VS. SPY. But as they were finishing their last song it started to go over the limit for the sound permit which was 9 P.M. Kenny and I felt that the cops might rush the stage and injure the musicians. So we stood by the top of the steps to the stage so the band could finish peacefully. But when the cops started pushing their way up the stairs Kenny slipped down the stairs and the cops surrounded him and were beating him bloody. This incensed the crowd and when we tried to unarrest Kenny the cops dragged him away and put him in the back of a patrol car and drove away. After that all hell broke loose, and a full scale riot ensued. Everytime the crowd would move the cops would give orders to try and head us off. So when we said loudly we were going to St. Marks Place all the cops started to that destination. But instead we all turned around and ran to the Christodora to vent our rage. The cops moved too slow and by the time they got there the front door and lobby were destroyed. The cops were trying to grab people to arrest, and we kept fighting back and unarresting them.

As the night went on all the TV News showed up and they were covering the riot live. There were a lot of arrests and injuries. Towards the end there wasn't many of us left and we decided to march up St. Marks Place. By the time we got to the Bowery it looked like Godzilla had been on a rampage. The cops were waiting for us at the Bowery but for some reason they didn't do anything when we got there. The final tally was 29 protesters injured and 29 cops injured.

When we got back to our squat to watch the T.V. News it was the top story. The next day the riot made the front page of every newspaper. The lawyers got Kenny, Jerry, Don, John, and Laurie out on bail. They were all facing the worse charges. After that the Mayor had Tompkins Park 'Closed for renovations.' This further infuriated people. When they put up a sign in front of the Park explaining their plans they knew it would be a target for activists. So they parked a police car in front of it 24-7. Kenny and I decided we were going to hit it together. We

knew from going out postering and graffitiing late a night that whenever we would see a cop car on stakeout that the cops would always doze off at about 3 A.M. So after we finished our rounds of postering and graffiti we waited by the front of the park to watch the police. At 3A.M. they both dozed off. We took turns climbing up on the fence to hit the sign. I did a MUG A YUPPIE tag with a pentagram, and Kenny wrote, LIGHT MY FIRE. with an anarchy symbol. The next day it made the news. (Many years later a picture of that sign appeared on the last episode of Anthony Bourdain on the Lower East Side on CNN. Unfortunately Anthony passed away before the episode was aired.)

When they buffed the tags about 2 weeks later Adam Missing and I went back and we hit it again. This time we tagged 'SHINING PATH.' That was another thing we used to like to write. Again, it made the newspapers. After that, the police parked a mobile command center with cameras in front of the Park and sign 24- 7. People still came by and threw paint bombs at it.

The closing of the Park caused a huge wave of graffiti, postering and vandalism. A lot of windows of Yuppie establishments were getting smashed or blown out with firecrackers. One night when Peter Missing and I were out on our bicycles with our spray cans piecing we ran into an acquaintance from the Park who told us he had left a rather large firecracker on the windowsill of a newly established Yuppie Restaurant on 2nd Avenue and it never went off. So Peter, and I rode our bikes down the street to have a look see. When we got to the window we saw the large firecracker just sitting there. When we got up close to have a better look it exploded in our faces. The glass showered down like a water fall. When I looked at Peter's face it was all black and he told me mine was too.

THE POPE SMOKES DOPE.

Another very interesting character was Micky Cesar aka the 'Pope of Pot'. Some of us worked for his weed delivery service in Manhattan. He also used to hold large smoke-ins in the Park. Micky used to also come to all of our protests, and riots, and he was usually one of the first people the cops would bust. Judges, cops, DA's hated him because he was so outspoken. He was even shot one time by rivals. He used to like to come to the smoke-ins with his pope hat and outfit and proclaim loudly that he was "THE POPE!"

Mickey had an office in Chinatown on Walker Street near Mott Street. That's where he would answer his telephone and pack up his weed. We held a May Pot parade that year and I made a cool poster for it. We decided to put up a lot of posters and did a lot of graffiti for it. A lot of people showed up for the event. It was a complete success.

One day Micky told us he was getting a new 1-800 number. It was 1-800-WANT POT. When he went on the Howard Stern Show and announced it, we went from about 30 deliveries a day to 300 a day. We decided since we were having so much success that we would have a big Halloween Smoke-In that year. So everyone pitched in and we went on another large graffitiing and postering campaign. This time we had even more success than we had in May. It was like a dream.

About a week or so after my birthday in November I wasn't feeling too well so I didn't go in to work. I slept most of the day but can you imagine my surprise when I turned on the 5 o'clock News and the top story is the cops raiding my place of work. They got everything and everyone. Adam, Dave, Jeremy, The Pope, Booze, Jed, Ayla, Lauren, Red, Jeremy, Hawk, Pierre, and the rest. The next day it made all the NYC front pages, 'POPE OF POT GETS DISCONNECTED.'

We continued going out late at night to do pieces, and put up posters. When it was clear that we were going to go to war in Iraq we began an anti-war graffiti and postering campaign. Jeremy's favorite slogan was 'WORLD PEACE IS DEAD'. We were preparing for a large anti-war march for the first night of the war. A lot of students from the New School also joined us. The night that the war started we went on a rampage. We marched from Times Square to the UN. People made a lot of big bonfires with the police barricades. Some people were getting arrested but there was far too many of us for them. When John the Communist burned an American flag in front of the UN, an undercover cop that was watching him gave a most murderous and angry look.

We began to march Downtown and the students from the New School wanted to march across the Brooklyn Bridge. It was very late at night and very cold. I didn't think it was a good idea. But we had to go along with them. We started to march up the ramp and against the traffic. I went ahead of the march to have a look. That was when I saw the car coming. There wasn't much I could do to help, and the car plowed right into the marchers. Instead of slowing down, not knowing how deep the crowd was he began speeding up. People were getting hit so hard they looked like mannequins flying up in the air. Their shoes and clothes were also popping off. In the confusion, some people even fell off the Bridge. The next day there were pictures in the newspaper of people trashing the car. We continued our anti-war postering and graffiti campaign but the war just went on as scheduled.

Peter, Jeremy and myself kept up our graffiti and postering campaign. We often started near Tompkins Square Park and found ourselves down by the World Trade Centers. From there we would take a taxi back to our building.

Tompkins Square Park eventually reopened in 1991 rather quietly and with little fanfare. On Memorial Day 1991 our friend PLANT TREES was holding a concert in the Park when another riot broke out because cops beat a guy for waiting on line for food with an open beer. This would be the last time we would make a stand in the streets. We held down Avenue A between 7th Street and St. Marks Place rather well. When they tried to launch a line of riot cops into us they had to turn back because there wasn't enough of them and too many bottles were raining down on them. As the cops continued to get reinforcements we also got reinforced. Some people went to the bottle recycling center, and bought a lot of the bottles back to Avenue A. We had hundreds of bottles that we lined up in the middle of the street. There was also a very large bonfire in the middle of Avenue A.

The riot cops began to line up again. There was one cop with 4 stars on his shoulders leading. I walked up to meet him. He said we should

get out of the street so we don't get hurt. I said, "You and your people should get out of the street." Then he told me to be careful because the mob was getting ready to throw bottles. I laughed and said, "It isn't me they are aiming for." Right after that, the 4 star cop got hit in his shoulder with a bottle. And again the cops had to flee the merciless wall of bottles.

After that you can see a lot more cops arriving by 10th Street. While all this was going on, some people started looting a small store. They broke the window and opened the door. Someone lit a fire in the back of the store and I put it out. Some people put lots of hairspray cans into the large bonfire in the middle of Avenue A and they began to explode. A middle aged Ukrainian woman who lived in the building came out and started pleading in her heavy accent with one of the black guys from Tent City not to burn down their building. He kept reassuring her that they wouldn't, but she kept carrying on. When he told her to get off the street before she gets hurt, she became even more agitated. So he went from behind her and put his arms around her waist and carried her away as she continued yelling.

People went back and got even more bottles from the recycling center. This time we had the most bottles that we had all night. The riot cops started lining up in the largest numbers they had all night. It was obvious that we wouldn't be able to hold out. Some punks decided that they would hold their ground and go hand to hand with the cops no matter what.

As the lines of riot cops started moving toward us, Peter Missing yelled, "Don't throw any bottles until you can see the whites of their eyes!" Everyone kept their cool and waited until the cops got real close. A huge barrage of bottles landed on the riot cops, but this time they just kept coming. Peter and I went in Tompkins Park to avoid arrest. As I was looking at the bonfire in the middle of Avenue A, I heard a huge BOOM! KRACK! and saw a large plume of grey smoke. A bolt of lightning hit the middle of Avenue A right by the bonfire. Rain started pouring down. Some people were still fighting in the middle of the street with the cops. That night many protesters and police went to the hospital.

Peter and I went back to my apartment to watch the news. Again it was the top story. The TV News got a shot of some undercover cops walking passed the bonfire ducking as the hairspray cans were exploding.

This time the news coverage was bigger than ever. It made all the front pages for the next few days. And the top story on all the TV News. The Mayor decided to close Tompkins Park again for more 'renovations' which included demolishing the Bandshell.

This really made the activists and anarchists more angry than ever. It set off the biggest wave of graffiti, postering and vandalism yet. Some of the slogans that were put up a lot were, 'SAVE

In 1992 two TV Shows, A Current Affair and Hard Copy, decided to do a feature story about some of the graffiti on the Lower East Side and the Daniel Rackowitz case. They tried to make it sound like some

of Daniel's neighbors, Randy and Crazy Dave, had something to do with it. They also tried to make it sound like they were on the run. They featured some of my circle stars in their report. They tried to make it sound like there was a group of people putting up the Circle Stars because there were so many. They couldn't understand one writer could be very prolific. The truth was that Randy and Dave were not on the run and when they were questioned by the authorities nothing new was learned. They ended the report by zeroing in on one of my circle stars with an anarchy symbol in the middle and hate written in it. They said, "They are definitely sending a message of hate."

When Tompkins Park opened again we had another concert. We put up a lot of posters and graffiti to promote it. Thousands of people showed up. We also continued our marijuana legalization marches. By now the cops really had us pegged, and we couldn't fight with them publicly like we used too.

In February 1993 when I was making a weed delivery down at South End Avenue I saw a lot of smoke rising up from one of the underground parking lots. When I went up to the apartment of the customer, I told them to look out the window. First we saw a fire truck, then an ambulance. Then from every direction every kind of emergency vehicle coming at once. It was like an emergency vehicle traffic jam. When I called the next customer who worked in Tower 1, he said I couldn't come up. He came down told me someone set off a bomb and killed 6 people.

That year we went all out to have a huge event in the Tompkins Park. I used to deliver weed to Allen Ginsberg a lot. I always misspelled his first name in my book so if the cops got it they wouldn't know who it was. I asked him if he would like to read a poem at our concert to commemorate the 5th Anniversary of the Tompkins Park Riot. He said of course. He was very nice and always very low key. So we put his name on our posters and had 10,000 printed. On the day of the concert thousands of people came. But when it was time for Allen to read his poetry, all of a sudden a huge bum rush of yuppies pushed up to the front of the crowd to hear him.

Peter Missing left NYC to live in Germany that year. And once he left a lot of people that were involved in our movement started to lose their focus. For me, after that it never had the energy that it had before. It made me feel sad. There were still many more battles that needed to be fought. And I must say Peter was by and far the best fighter we had. We continued having our concerts in Tompkins Square Park several times a year. Always doing major postering of downtown to let people know. The amount of attendants at our concerts were larger than ever, but there was never another outbreak of violence.

Artist like A. CHARLES were doing better murals, and CHICO was greatly improving his pieces as well on the L.E.S. Then there was EARS-NOT, and the IRAK crew that were invading the downtown surface big time. There were also local punks from around the L.E.S, doing a lot of tagging like KRYPT, RAVE, NRM, URBAN INDIANS, and many more. Also people tagging up their squat house like DOS BLOCKOS, PHEOTUS HOUSE. Which both unfortunately burned down.

One time at a protest around Tompkins Park, the kid that wrote URBAN INDIANS kept throwing large firecrackers at the cops and riding away on his bicycle. He was pretty fast and got away twice. But on the third time the cops had a scooter waiting for him. He couldn't out run the scooter. When they caught him, the cops beat him so bad in the back of the police van that he easily beat the case.

Jeremy NRM, and KRYPT both died from heroin overdoses, and Frankie aka RAVE was shot and killed by rivals.

When it was announced that all the squats on East 13th Street were going to be evicted we began another big postering and graffiti campaign to gain support to stop the evictions. Also to gain support to defend the buildings. One of the most prolific political graffiti writers and potsterers on the L.E.S, 'John the Communist.' He was also facing eviction. John posted many of his posters all around downtown. Many others also joined him. When the day of the eviction came the squatters barricaded the doors. The police showed up with a tank. I tried to stand in front of the tank but it tried to mow me down. I got out of the way just in time so not to get hit. The people in the buildings put up a magnificent fight but were overpowered by the NYPD in the end. That was pretty much the end of the era of major political postering and graffiti on the Lower East Side. Especially since John the communist quit and went back to Allentown.

Graffiti writers were paying more attention to the surfaces. And a lot were piecing on the Lower East Side. The spots near Tower Records and Broadway were getting killed. You had the rise of the Andre the Giant posse with posters and stencils. This is a laundry list of many of the writers that began hanging out near the cube in Astor Place in the late nineties. GESHU, WAK STF, REHAB, SACER, KSER, GLACER, SETUP, AREA, SEMZ, KENT, FANTA, SEMEN NEKST, ARTZ, CINIK. Most of them belonged to the IRAK Crew.

Another crew from down on Avenue D and 6th Street was called 'THE VIOLATORS' They were made up mostly of locals from the projects and Avenue D. Also there was the 333 Crew with writers like BOOZE, and others who were locals from the Lower East Side. Peter Missing would occasionally swing through downtown and take some new tags. But never anything like before.

THE BANDSHELL, 'NEVER FORGIVE NEVER FORGET THE REVENGE IS COMING', 'PLAN IT FOR PANIC', 'OPEN UP THE PARK', and more. Also some were taking spray paint and just painting a long black line down a whole block of buildings. One group paid special attention to all the cars near the 9th Precinct on 5th Street. It got so bad that no one wanted to park their car on that block. We also met up with other big writers like IZ THE WIZ, SAR, QUIK, CAVS, SANE SMITH, and more. We had symbols painted on almost every block from 42nd Street down to the Battery, from the West Side to the East River. Also more writers from all parts of the City were hitting a lot more surfaces due to the 'Cities Clean Train Movement.' Writers that were all city like JOZ, EASY, MISS 17, CLAW, MQ, and others were getting up on the Lower East Side surface also. Most writers were still doing tags and outlines, and not so many fill-ins. I Kinged downtown Manhattan with the

most filled in pieces.

There was this guy named Deppermann that had for years plastered and graffitied all around downtown with his nutty conspiracy theories. He would make such a huge mess and I wondered if the Vandal Squad would go after him. But nobody ever bothered him. One day when he started putting on his posters, 'AIDS IS GERM WARFARE BY THE US GOVERNMENT,' The FBI broke down his door and arrested him.

9/10/01. If you keep the 9, and add the 10 and the 1 it equals 11. Also if you keep the 9, and lose the two zeros it still says 911.

With the many famous and not so famous writers that had visited me, I always had them take a tag on the door before they left. When the door ran out of room, I would have them tag other spots.

When I was going to a party in Detroit, some drugs were found in my car, and my car was impounded for several months. Some of the party goers were nice enough to give me their numbers so that they could show me around and help me pick up my car when I returned. One of them introduced me to a friend that had a driver's license and offered to help me drive back if I would show her a little bit of NYC. She seemed okay and had some straight Christian friends that she introduced me to. We started driving back and halfway along the way we stopped at my mother's house upstate for a night. I got up to go to the bathroom and decided to take a look in her bag to make sure she didn't have anything illegal. When I reached in the first thing I found was a black plastic knife. I reached in a little deeper and found several more, and a box cutter. I figured being from Detroit and going to NYC it made her feel safer.

When we arrived in NYC I took her to the Empire State Building. The next day we were going to go to the World Trade Center. I overslept and she said it was okay, she was going to catch a flight back to Detroit that night. I asked her if she wanted a ride to the airport. She said no, that she wanted to take the subway to the Port Authority and have a look around the city. Before she left I told her to take a tag on my wall. I had a silver marker and she tagged, Andrea 9/10/01. Later on that night she gave me a call and said she couldn't get any flights out of NYC for Detroit and was taking a bus to get a flight out of Boston in the morning.

The next morning I overslept again. I woke up for a few minutes when my building shook. But when it shook again I got up to have a look out the window. I thought maybe it was a truck accident out on East Houston Street. I was on the top floor and had a perfect view of the World Trade Towers from my window. I saw them both on fire. I knew right away that it was not an accident. I went to the roof to take a better look. In what I felt was a most surreal moment, two supersonic jet fighters started to buzz the sky over Downtown Manhattan, and over my head. The sound of them was terrifying, and the sight of them very strange.

I always used to put my TV in front of my window so I could see the view of the Towers as I watched TV. That day the same picture on the

TV was outside my window. My friend Kieth who used to write BADGER MISSING came over with some of his friends from Stuyvesant Town. He knew I had a great view. We were doing lines and smoking some very strong weed. We began to hear the ground rumbling and all of a sudden one of the towers collapsed. The ground continued rumblings and the second tower collapsed. We couldn't believe it. I almost felt as if I had just died. Outside, people were coming from downtown in every direction. We decided to go to Canal Street and see if we could help look for survivors. We drove to Canal Street playing Nostrum's Brilliant loudly from the stereo. When we got there a lot of very official military officers were standing around. These guys looked like the ones that would come out if an alien space ship just landed. They told us there wasn't anything that could be done for those people, and that they didn't want anymore people to get hurt. I believe that only 2 survivors were pulled out of there.

After that all of downtown Manhattan became eerily still. I had a court date a couple of days later and was able to go to the site. There was the first and second banner that people were signing hanging on the fence. I had a marker so I took a big tag on it that said, 'Never forgive, never forget the revenge is coming.' The second banner had barely been written on yet so I tagged that one up even bigger. A couple of years later I got a call from BADGER MISSING. He told me he was going to die from HIV. That was the last I ever heard from him.

Some very talented artists from TATS CREW did some amazing murals in Alphabet City to commemorate the tragedy. Also other groups like IRAK continued dominating the Lower East Side Graffiti Scene. Many Lower East Side Galleries were starting to exclusively showing graffiti art as well.

In 2005 when Peter Missing was staying with me for a while he told me he had the perfect girl for me, and that he would bring her over to meet me soon. Every time the doorbell rang, I opened the door to see if she was coming. Finally he bought her up to meet me. I asked her if she would consider being my girlfriend and she said yes. When I told her I was duke, she said she would be dutchess. We had a baby on 16 June 06, or 16-6-6.

JAMESTOP was getting spaces and doing shows with the TOP Crew and other Crews like the EX VANDALS. One of the shows was at Webster Hall that featured STAY HIGH 149, aka VOICE OF THE GHETTO, WICKED GARY EXPERIENCED VANDALS, LAVA, BAMA AMRYL, SNAKE 1, CHECKER 170, DUKE9, and many more. Also Clayton Patterson invited a lot of the local veteran writers from TNS to decorate the big wall on East Houston Street. A lot of them participated. Writers like SOE, LA 2, SPAR, and many more. When I STAY HIGH passed away, JAMESTOP held a memorial service on the L.E.S that many prominent writers attended.

Many very beautiful street art pieces have been put up all over the L.E.S. But you still had a lot of graffiti writers killing the downtown surfaces with throwup style pieces. Writers with strange names like HACKULA, SUCKYBAT, and others, with many catching spots that are very high up known as heaven spots. Al Diaz, aka BOMB 1, aka SAMO

also has become very active, with graffiti, posterage, and gallery shows on the L.E.S.

During the covid lockdown times, graffiti really hit a saturation point all over the city. A lot of writers took advantage of the lockdown to become very active. After the lockdown was over, The Village Works in collaboration with Freddie Alva and Queens Graffiti Legends held an art show and opening party for the second edition of Queens Graffiti Legends. About 500 people came through the gallery on East Third Street. Earlier this year at the HOWL Gallery, Al Diaz held an opening for his show that documented the times and history of graffiti in NYC. More than a thousand people came through.

In 2021 a group of activists that were trying to save CHARAS COMMUNITY CENTER did some SAVE CHARAS pieces on the outside of the old P.S. 64. Also a group of very skilled street artists did a beautiful mural on the East 10th Street side of the building that depicted a lot of the class war and gentrification struggles that took place in the neighborhood. Unfortunately, when the city decided to fortify the building against trespassers, a lot of it was ruined.

So there you have it, over fifty years of Graffiti History on the Lower East Side. From the humble beginnings of teenage writers taking advantage of spray paint cases being left out in front of shop displays on Canal Street to large gallery openings and amazing street art done by adults today. This artform is destined to be one of the biggest art forms in the world for the 21st century and beyond.

Wildstyle graffiti art started in the streets of NYC and spread to every corner of the globe. I'm sure in the future as people spread out onto other planets it will follow, because someone will always want to say, "I was here."

Graffiti Art is celebrated in so many parts of the world, but in its birthplace of NYC writers are still mistreated. Maybe now is the time when we can start to celebrate this artform in a more positive way.

HOW I CAME TO THE RIVINGTON SCHOOL

by Gloria McLean



I came into the downtown art scene as a dancer seeking to escape the limitations of my dance training, the studio, and the proscenium stage. As I saw the artists breaking boundaries, I wanted to take part in this radical freedom. Rivington School in particular represented to me the concept that creation and destruction are often part of the same thing.

My arrival to The Rivington School happened directly after I met Ken Hiratsuka through our mutual participation in the 1985 Summer Solstice Celebration, an expansive multi-artist and multi-disciplinary event in Central Park directed by choreographer/event maker Marilyn Wood in connection Charlie Morrow's New Wilderness Foundation which had started the solstice events in years prior. My dance was a spiral marked on the ground by white flour, and embodied by my company of five dancers along with 5 musicians led by composer Rip Hayman of Ear Magazine (and Ear Inn) fame. Ken was enabled by

Marilyn Wood to obtain, move, and then carve a boulder for the event. His carving began with a spiral flowing into his famous “continuous line” carving. We like to say that our spirals intercepted each other and thus I was introduced to the Rivington School, the stone was re-located to the corner of Rivington and Forsyth, and became the seed for the NoSeNo Sculpture Garden. This story is documented in the book “Rivington School: 80’s New York Underground” (ed. Istvan Kantor)

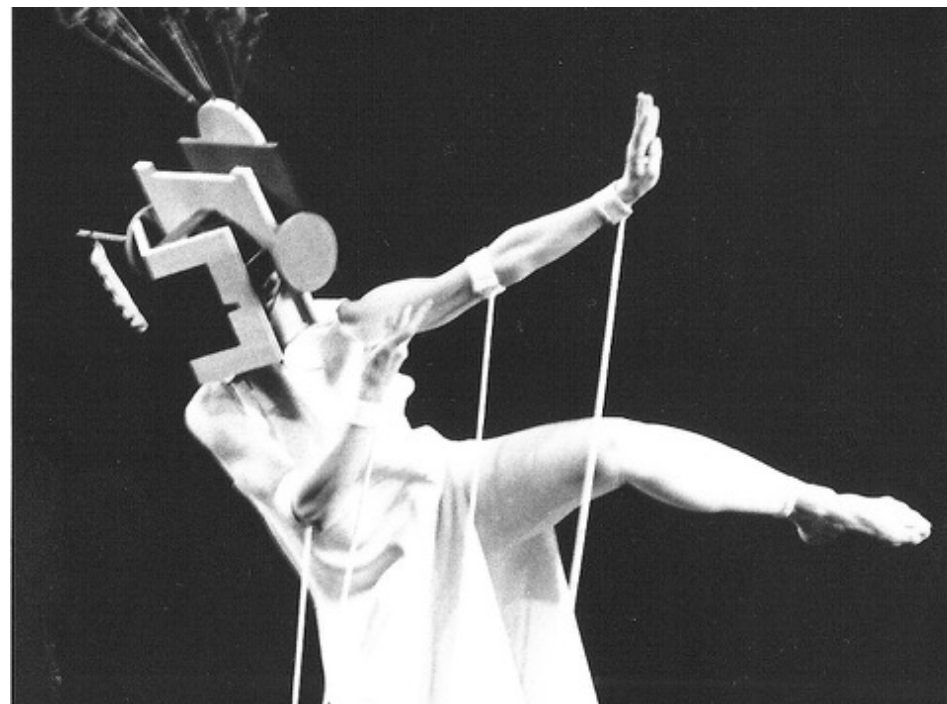
What is not documented is the earlier process that brought me into the art scene. As a dancer I was seeking my way. At some point I just wanted to get off of “metrical time” and into some other experience of time. I found this as I started to paint. I brought painting into my choreography first in 1980 with the creation of “Etude No. 5: Painting” in which dancers and musicians were all brought onto a very large canvas that covered the entire dancing space. We proceeded to “paint the dance and the music onto the canvas.” For me this was an exciting way to create action and record it all at once in a wonderful explosion of color, movement, and sound.

Soon I began to go to galleries. This led to meeting Sandro Dernini and being invited into the happenings taking place in the wild and open scene of the East Village and lower east side of the early 80’s. Notably I brought my company LIFEDANCE/Gloria McLean and Dancers to participate in the event “Goya Time: New York 1984”, produced by Sandro Dernini and performance artist Greta Sarfaty who performed as Goya’s La Maja. We worked with the great jazz conductor Butch Morris, members of the Open Theater, and many independent artists staging action and choreography embodying Goya’s paintings and spirit.

Following my introduction to The Rivington School in 1985 June through Ken’s sculpture, I became excited by the freedom of art action that was animating the three adjacent galleries of Rivington Street as well as the many galleries and performance spaces that were active at that time. For me, it led to making works beyond the proscenium, works that could only take place there, works I called Primary Process pieces that were not about developing dance phrases



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in the studio but could simple emerge from my imagination. There were countless events, shows and performances at the three galleries of Rivington Street – NoSeNo, Freddy the Dreamer, and NADA, along with Fusion Arts on Stanton Street, Now Gallery on 9th Street, the well-documented ABC No Rio, Emerging Collector Gallery on 2nd

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Avenue, popup happenings, and many related events such as the one below at NY Open Center.

A few of the pieces I created at the time show some of the overlaps of activity in this vibrant scene where events were happening on a daily basis:

1) "One Line Tape Piece," in the massive art happening of Cuando at 2nd Avenue and Houston Street, in June 1985, with hundreds of independent artists—Ken created a oneline 3-d drawing with duct tape covering the walls of a gallery and descending into the unused swimming pool; I danced in the design and then began to "erase" is with my body movement until the line had become a jacket of tape covering my body as I rolled into the empty pool.

2) "Zero Waste" created by the Street Artists Show at NoSeNo - I painted my body black and Ken covered my black leotard with a white line, also wearing Linus Coraggios' "Chastity Belt" a heavy metal thing around my hips and then danced so that the belt would fall, the line would be pulled off and I would disappear into blackness.

3) "Child of Tree" on the spring equinox of 1986 we performed at the New York Open Center on Spring Street: Charlie Morrow, Don Cherry, Simone Forti, Gloria McLean, Bill Duesing and Ken Hiratsuka who was outside on the sidewalk carving and his sound mic'd into the room where we improvised also to John Cage's "Child of Tree." This carving remains 83 Spring Street though the Open Center has moved.

4) Arleen Schloss event at Linz Art Electronica in Austria in 1986 June attended by many of the Rivington School crowd (see film about Arleen's work). Following Arleen's performance I had been invited to take part in Marilyn Wood's large scale City-As-Celebration "Sommer-nachtstraum" event in Berlin 1986, along with Paolo Buggiani, fire artist, who was also an important artist in the NY downtown scene. We danced in streets, escalators, fountains all through Berlin.

5) The All night Dream Event at Fusion Arts on Stanton Street inspired me to create the first version of Blind Prosperity which I later developed for the stage in 1987-88. Paolo Buggiani was also a part of this as he drove his small VW bug along the streets ON FIRE by way of his special filament technique and uncanny ability to skirt the fire department who would always arrive just as the controlled burning of the frame around the VW would go out.

My experience with Rivington School and related artists was a great inspiration to my continued dance work allowing me to bring to the stage and other spaces a sense of risk-taking, wholistic inclusion, and of incorporating many different media and actions into my dance choreography. I continue to work in a collaborative way with dancers, artists, musicians, activists, film makers and writers both in New York City and at the Squid Farm studios that I share with sculptor Ken Hiratsuka in Andes, NY.

JEE "HITMAN" SANCHEZ

BY JOSE "COCHISE" QUILES

I first met Jee Sanchez at the Outlaw Art Museum while Clayton Patterson was away on a wildstyle & Tattoo Fest tour in Austria to meet with his friend Jochen "Fcking" Auer the founder of this fascinating and humongous event that takes place yearly in Austria.

My part was to take care of Artist, Elsa Rensaa, Clayton's wife, while he was away. One afternoon, some old friends of mine stopped by the museum to say hello and Jee just happened to be among them. I was introduced to him by Manny, the former Vice president of the Satan's Sinners Nomads Club, of which I was president back in the early 1990s.

Now, Jee Sanchez's name rung bells, that is, his name was known throughout the neighborhood as a force to be reckoned with and as a drug dealer on the Lower East Side back in the 1970s and 80s. But, we had never met until that afternoon.

Jee, once belonged to a notorious clique known as the Hitmen Squad that were situated on 12th Street between Avenues A and B in Manhattan's Alphabet City, on the Lower East Side. Jee also ran with the infamous "Black Spades gang" from the South Bronx, the "Royal Javelins" from Pitt Street and the "Dukes" from Brooklyn back in the day and more recently appeared in the documentary, "Rubble Kings," by Shan Nicholson. The film depicts NYC gang culture in the 1970s and its influence on the birth of Hip Hop.

The first thing I noticed about Jee was his leather vest which was obviously decked out with several outlaw biker embroidered patches and his tattoos. One tattoo in particular stood out above all. It was of a menacing skull sporting a confederate "rebel" cap which of course is a symbol of outlaw street gang and biker cultures. I found out later through an interview that Clayton Patterson had conducted with Jee that back in the 1980s Jee Sanchez, had this tattoo done by none other than Tattoo Artist, Bob Roberts.

Back in the late 1970s to early 1980s Tattoo Artist, Bob Roberts, had an apartment on third Avenue and 20th Street on the West Side of Manhattan and because tattooing was illegal at that particular time Bob was doing all his inkwork through his apartment. Bob had started tattooing in 1973 and studied under Bob Shaw and Colonel Bill Todd two legendary icons in the tattoo world for three years. In time he would work under Cliff Raven for a couple of years and after that he worked beneath Ed Hardy for three years.

Moreover, it was Bob Roberts, who helped, Brian Setzer and Jim Phantom of the Stray Cats designed the “Cat’s head” logo for the band. Bob Roberts was also into the New Wave bands of the period and loved playing the sousaphone.

Sadly, during the 1980s gunmen, perhaps Crack heads or heroin Junkies broke into Bob Roberts apartment several times in an attempt to rob the tattoo artist of his earnings. This action caused the legendary tattoo artist to flee to Los Angeles where he has prospered ever since.

Documentarian Clayton Patterson, who was also the president of the Tattoo Society Of New York City at the time, once asked Jee Sanchez if he had anything to do with what happened to Bob Roberts and the hold-up attempts but Jee denied ever taking part in any of the hold-ups.

Well, personally, I’m not surprised with what happened to Tattoo Artist, Bob Roberts, New York City, specifically the Lower East Side in the 1980s was more dangerous than in the 1970s in my opinion. Crack had changed the entire face of the city.

The crack epidemic had caused an increased in violent crimes throughout the city it affected everyone everywhere. Homicides were at near-record highs. Infact, NYC had become the murder capital of the world -- shit was out of control!

The NYPD was overwhelmed with with all the crime and the city’s financial problems only made matters worse (Plus, there was police corruption within the NYPD like the most corrupt cop, Michael Dowd, who considered himself both a cop and a gangster. He was eventually



caught in one of the most shocking NYPD corruption scandal to rock 1980s New York City. Corrupt cops were everywhere.)

Infact, the streets were literally littered with crack vials, dirty syringes and pieces of shattered car windows where crack heads and or heroin Junkies had stolen cassette tape decks and other items left in the car to sell. There were also wheelless abandoned cars throughout the Lower East Side where the wheels were bricked away speedily and sold to a chop shop - a place where stolen vehicles are dismantled so that the parts can be sold or used to repair other vehicles - to satisfy the addict’s addiction to the monsters called crack and heroin.

On the Lower East Side most Bodegas, especially on Avenue C, sold cocaine on the down low while heroin was sold on street corners or on the many abandoned buildings found throughout Alphabet City.

Speaking of abandoned buildings, according to Jee Sanchez, Thom deVita, a speed junkie and local tattoo artist, who once operated a tattoo parlor inside an old dilapidated building on 4th Street in Avenue B, was known for doing inkwork on neighborhood gangbangers including Chinese gangsters like the Ghost Shadows, Flying Dragons and the like for thirty bucks a pop. Jee said that he never trusted deVita’s work nor liked his style of tattooing.

But what many don’t know about deVita is that he eventually gave up his drug habit and was known for continuously running his semi public gallery on the Lower East Side exhibiting his handcrafted wooden flashes that mesmerized the hearts of those who came to him for inkwork. Thom deVita opened his Lower East Side studio the day tattooing became illegal in New York City back in 1961 due to a Hepatitis B breakout. It wasn’t legal again until 1997.

Furthermore, for those who don’t know, Herbert Waide Hemphill Jr. Had invited Thom deVita, Ed Hardy and other tattoo artists to exhibit their art in the Folk Art Museum Of New York City back in 1971. Today, Thom deVita is recognized as a legendary figure in the tattoo world who established one of the most unique styles in tattooing.

But as far as the rest of the Lower East Side story goes, homelessness became a serious problem during the 1980s, especially during the

Homicides were at near-record highs. Infact, NYC had become the murder capital of the world -- shit was out of control!

last two of Edward Koch's three terms as mayor (1978-1990). Unfortunately, things hasn't change much when it comes to the homeless situation in New York City.

Moreover, street gangs and mobsters such as the Allen Street Boys, Can't Be Stop Crew, the Hitmen Squad, the Wild Boys, the Die Hard Crew, Ghost Shadows (who were affiliated with the On Leong Tong), Flying Dragons (who were affiliated with the Hip Sing Tong), White Tigers gang, who adopted white clothing to match the name of their set, BTK - "Born To Kill," Vietnamese gangsters from Canal Street, Fuk Ching (who were regarded as one of the most powerful Chinese gangs had originally emerged in NYC in the mid-1980s) and the Italian Cosa Nostra, all these gangs ruled and controlled the streets of the Lower East Side, Chinatown, Little Italy and abroad in one form or another.

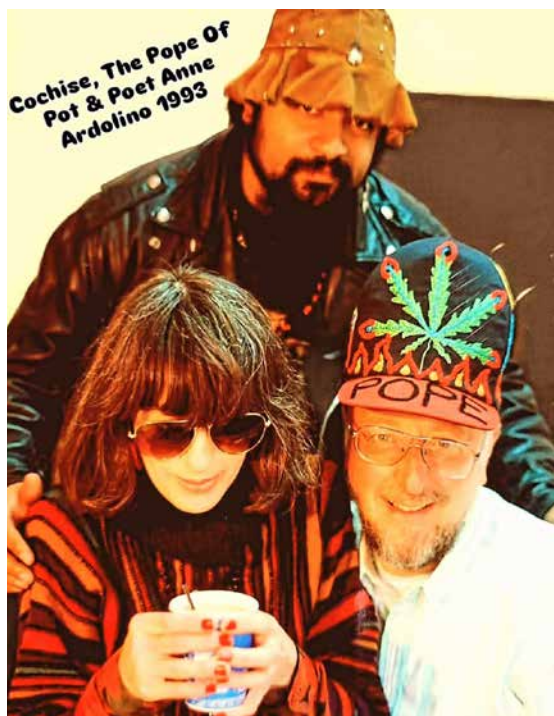
Yes, New York City, specifically the Lower East Side, was grim, gritty and dangerous.

In the process of time, Mickey Cesar, a gay Jewish man and self annointed Pope Of Pot, Who dreamed up a whole new way to sell Marijuana in the 1970s in Amsterdam arrived on the Lower East Side in the 1980s.

When Mickey "Pope Of Pot" Cesar decended upon the Lower East Side he opened his first Marijuana business on 1st. Avenue between first and second streets.

According to Clayton Patterson, who was a personal friend of Mickey Cesar, he stated that, "Another point of recognition for the "Pope Of Pot," was how he built the delivery service into a full fledged delivery business. His place was like a bookie's joint with six people manning the phones. All the customers had to do was dial "1-800-Want Pot" and there would be like ten bike messengers to fill street orders." Cesar ran an astounding \$40,000-a-day operation and according to some that was gangster loot back than.

Eventually, Mickey Cesar, would move his Marijuana



operation to Avenue B between 10th and 11th Streets in Alphabet City on the Lower East Side and the money would start pouring in again like milk and honey from the weed sales but whether Mickey knew it or not, the new area of his operation was a hardcore heroin spot runned by the notorious Hitmen Squad gang who were in constant warfare with another drug crew known as the Allen Street Boys.

Not long afterwards, a couple members of the Hitmen Squad tried to extort Mickey Cesar but to no avail the Pope Of Pot wasn't having it and he was not about to let a couple of Puerto Rican ruffians muscle in on his Marijuana operation so he stood his ground and for that the Pope Of Pot was shot five times but miraculously survived. A week or so later after the shooting, Cesar told Clayton Patterson, that after he was shot he looked down on his body and saw what resembled oil mingled with blood oozing out of his body. Jokingly, he said, "I looked like a greasy chicken."

But as soon as Mickey Cesar recovered from his wounds he went right back to his Marijuana operation without any fear and no one made a move on him after that. Perhaps a sign of respect for not ratting out the gang.

However, Mickey "Pope Of Pot" Cesar would eventually fall and serve several stints in prison for his Marijuana dealings. But, Cesar insisted that he was the spiritual leader of the Church Of Realized Fantasies and he was simply dispensing its sacrament, ganja.

Sadly, on Febuary 1995, Mickey Cesar, the self proclaimed "Pope Of Pot," died of liver cancer and not from a gangster's bullet. Before his death he lived briefly with Clayton Patterson and Elsa Rensaa at the Outlaw Art Museum on Essex Street. The rest of course is Lower East Side history.

Interestingly enough, just before Mickey Cesar's death, Documentarian Clayton Patterson, asked Jee Sanchez if he was involved in the shooting of Mickey Cesar, the Pope Of Pot and without any hesitations whatsoever Jee looked Clayton in the eyes and confessed that he was there. But, when Clayton asked Jee to go to the hospital to visit Mickey before he died and make his peace with him, Jee Sanchez declined and said no and that was that.

As I recall, there was another thing I had remembered about Jee Sanchez that afternoon when I first met him at the Outlaw Art Museum that I never forgot and that was his grim reaper tattoo which obviously represented death or more precisely, "The Angel Of Death." Perhaps, Azrael, the angel of death who separates souls from their bodies when our time here is up. Who knows? Rest in peace Mickey Cesar.

GOOD FORTUNE

by Zach Lau



I've had the good fortune of eating lamb at a variety of restaurants around NYC. I've had Crown Rack of Lamb at the Old Homestead, Cote d'Agneau at Le Grand Boucherie, and Lamb with preserved bean curd at East Harbor Seafood Palace. All of these dishes are delicious and wonderful in their own distinct way. The main difference amongst all these fine dishes of lamb is price. The

Crown Rack of Lamb and Cote d'Agneau are comparable at about \$70 each with a side of potato in some form. The lamb with preserved bean curd is about \$22 with a bowl of white rice. Which begs the question, "Why the huge difference in price?" The answer to that question lies in the market expectation of culture. Ask 10 people and 10 people will say \$70 is a bargain at a French Restaurant. The same cost for 1 dish at a Chinese Restaurant? Haberdashery!

Prima Facie, the French and Old style American Restaurants have a 250% profit margin advantage over the Chinese Restaurant, and yet, while 80% of all restaurants fail within 5 years of opening in NYC, I have yet to see 1 Chinese Restaurant close for economic reasons within my past 10 years of eating in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens Chinatown. Immigrant Culture and mentality is one of preservation, perseverance, and survival. Chinatown started with only Mott Street. Over time, they were able to expand because they were given cheap real estate and left alone. The Lower East Side at the time, was looked upon as a haven for crime, drugs, and prostitution. Chinese immigrants were able to purchase the real estate at a reasonable price. Through their perseverance, the real estate was preserved, and the community was able to expand and build. Chinese grocery stores, jewelry stores, bakeries, and banks sprang up in Chinatown. All doing business in Chinese with Chinese and amongst the Chinese.

Today, Manhattan Chinatown is considered some of the most expensive and recession proof real estate in America. In fact, Flushing Chinatown real estate is one of the few places on planet earth that actually increased in price during covid. To me, this is an interesting and inspiring piece of my cultural heritage.

WHO AM I?

by Chi Lau



I was recently asked by my longtime friend and sometime collaborator, Mr. Clayton Patterson, to answer the question, "Who Am I?" Leave it to Clayton to pose a three-word question that has plagued religion and philosophy for two millennia—plus, he wanted it under 400 words. Ever the maximalist. Love you, Clayton!

I am the youngest son of two Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong. A father, husband, and business owner. Of course, these are only relative

terms, inviting the reader to define me in relation to others. As the youngest son of Asian immigrants, I am beholden to elderly parents who sacrificed their best years for me. As a husband, I have a wife to care for. As a father, I have two sons to educate into happy, responsible humans. As a business owner, I must pay taxes, solve problems, and keep the well full for 20 people to feed their families.

A veritable worry list worthy of a eulogy. Fortunately, or unfortunately, that's not how I see myself. And with exception to a short list of people, I've never really cared how others view me. This disregard for societal expectations has made me one of the happiest members among my very Chinese siblings.

The most important theme in my life is independence. As the youngest son, I was pampered despite a tight family budget but expected to excel in school and succeed in a few trades (doctor, lawyer, or engineer). As a husband, I married a woman from an Arabian culture, yet we still enjoy bacon in our house. As a parent, I teach my sons to work for freedom, not money. Just today, I took them to work with me, and in the middle of the day, we took a trip to Connecticut. As long as the sausage gets made, nobody cares. As a business owner, I try to improve life for my employees. ILG Mechanical gives cash Christmas bonuses, PTO, and helps employees obtain citizenship. Single parents can work from home when childcare isn't available.

My love of independence comes from growing up in the LES. Not to romanticize crime, but drug dealing and prostitution were often ways of earning outside the system. Graffiti was the freedom to express art and gain fame. The cash and barter economy of the '80s and '90s obviated taxation on local, state, and federal levels. A code of conduct preceded laws, and we (Blacks, Dominicans, Asians, and Puerto Ricans) got along because we all lived outside the system.

THE RS FOLK TALE

by Istvan Kantor aka Monty Cantsin



Photo: Clayton Patterson

The 1st RS Garden was initiated in October 1985 and bulldozed down in November, 1987. Shortly after a 2nd Garden was created nearby on Forsyth street which got demolished in 1992. In 1994 Ray Kelly and Tovey Halleck initiated a 3rd RS Garden on 6th street close to ave B which struggled through a few years and ended in 1997. Meanwhile Linus Coraggio's Gas Station was also demolished in 1995. The Rivington School became homeless but it didn't completely vanished. It survived through different group exhibitions and performances in New York, Japan, Italy, Korea, Québec.... Most importantly the Mars bar turned into a main meeting place for RS artists and also provided space for exhibitions, performance and music events. It closed down in July / 2011. Toyo Tsuchiya remained active organizer of smaller scale events wherever a possibility opened up. In 2010 FA-Q aka Kevin Wendall died at age 55 and a memorial exhibition of his paintings opened at Gallery Onetwentyeight located at 128 Rivington

Street on Jan 1st 2011. In the same year in July the Mars Bar closed down.

Though for quite a long time I was absent from the scene due to the fact that I had difficulties to cross the US border because of my criminal records, but starting 2011 I found my ways across the border and started working on the Rivington School book with Toyo. Meanwhile I also co-organized a couple of RS exhibitions in cooperation with Shalom Neuman at Shalom's gallery at 57 Stanton street. Also the Vander Plas gallery opened on Orchard street with a show by Toyo's art and performances. I spent more working days in the LES doing preparation for the RS book. Not having trouble to pass the border I became more audacious again and on Aug 20, 2014 I created an intervention at the Jeff Koons retrospective at the Whitney Museum in the form of a blood action - I splashed my blood on the wall behind Koons' Silver Bunny- for which I got arrested and I found myself in a mental asylum for a short and intense time. Two years later through my contact with a British publishing company, Black Dog, my plans reached the realization stage of the Rivington School book which was published in December /2016. I wasn't able to attend the book launching as I got arrested at the US border when I tried to cross it on a bus from Toronto.

They searched and investigated me and my partner in crime Blattella Germanica for several hours and then deported us back to Canada. The RS book was launched at HOWL!, a gallery that was RS friendly and produced a retrospective exhibition of Toyo's work, during which they also hosted the RS book launching. But all the launching events I planned to take place at HOWL! were cancelled. The RS book was quite well done but it was only printed in a couple of hundred copies and a month later the publishing company Black Dog went bankrupt. Soon afterwards Toyo also suddenly died. It took me several years of fighting to force the remaining administration of Black Dog to send me the digital master of the finished RS book which I finally received on a USB and I published the book in collaboration with AUTONOMEDIA in 2020. Ray Kelly the founder of the Rivington School recently passed away his death marking the very end of the RS. Thus the memory of the Rivington School survives as a book.

INDEPENDENT THEATER: A PERSONAL HISTORY

by Barbara Kahn (Acker Awardee 2017)



Independent theater (aka Indy or Off-Off Broadway or not-for-profit theater) places no restrictions on its artists. I first explored the Manhattan Theater Scene and discovered Off-Off Broadway shortly after its birth at the legendary Caffe Cino in Greenwich Village. The Cino and all the subsequent independent theaters were interconnected. They shared actors, directors, props and costumes.

Playwrights and directors often attended the productions of their colleagues. After I was cast in my first role, I never had to audition for the others that followed. La MaMa E.T.C. (Experimental Theater Club) opened after the Cino. The Playwrights Workshop Club and other theaters quickly followed, including Theater for the New City in 1971. Sam Shepard, Ted Harris, Tom Eyen, Rochelle Owens, John Guare, Bob Heide and other playwrights were some of the many who saw their

early work produced Off-Off Broadway, directed by Robert Dahdah, Tom O'Horgan, Ron Link or others. The many many actors who performed in their plays include Jacque Lynn Colton, Lucy Silvay, Ray Hagen, Marilyn Roberts, Allen Garfield and myself. The common denominator of all the Indy, OOB theaters was maintaining their independence while being part of the community. If any theater needed a pbooked withiece of furniture or a costume, another theater that had it quickly offered to lend it to them.

My very first play, co-written with Ray Hagen, was produced by Ellen Stewart at La MaMa, booked with just a phone call from Ray asking on our behalf. Ellen introduced each performance. "Welcome to La MaMa E.T.C., dedicated to the playwright and all aspects of the theater." I stopped putting on makeup or costume to listen every time. When La MaMa reopened after being closed during a dispute with Actors Equity, Tom Eyen wrote a musical called "Give My Regards to Off-Off Broadway," directed by Ron Link. It was a satire written with affection, and I was thrilled to be in the cast.

Director Bob Dahdah was my mentor and good friend. He introduced me to Crystal Field at Theater for the New City (TNC). TNC presents 30-40 new American plays every season. Their building, with its four performance spaces, is accessible to people of every mobility status. Ticket prices remain affordable to most, with free ticket programs offered to local senior centers. TNC presented my play *Pen Pals* in 1994. Crystal said to me, "You'll see with each production that your work gets deeper and deeper." And I knew that I was now a member of the TNC family. TNC is truly a family. A core group of us have remained in our theater home, others moved on to television or Hollywood, and still others subsequently joined us. Thanks to Crystal and TNC, I have a body of work that has brought me recognition with an Acker Award and others, including a 2024 Village Preservation Award.

Like all of us at TNC, I have control in casting, choosing designers and tech support, as well as in the content of my plays. How would I summarize this wonderful trust given me? It's independence. Independent Theater.

Barbara Kahn, January 2025
<https://performingartslegacy.org/kahn/>

THE STORY OF DANNY DIABLO

BY JOSE “COCHISE” QUILES

Danny Diablo, aka Lord Ezechiel, born Dan Singer, on December 20, 1971, is a New York native hardcore punk, hip hop vocalist from Queens New York and a founding member of the hardcore bands “Crown Of Thornz” and “Skarhead.”

The group Skarhead is considered the originators of thugcore music, a subgenre of hardcore punk with all its relentless breakdowns and throw downs - read posturing - which gained Danny Diablo much success on the New York Hardcore Scene. He also helped found the band “Icepick”, a metal core band formed In 1996.

Danny Diablo was born in Harlem, New York and is the son of a Brooklyn born Polish-Jewish Police Sergeant and a Puerto Rican Home-maker mother from the East River Houses. He is an accomplished artist, Graffiti writer since 1985 and is considered one of the Legendary figures in the Graffiti scene. As a creative in the Graffiti world his art on canvasses are constantly on demand by his fans and gallerists.



His recent showing titled “The Queens Graffiti Legends” - a group show - took place at the Village Works NYC in the East Village and was attended by several popular personalities in the art, music and film industry such as Actor Peter Green, Stigma aka “The Godfather Of Hardcore,” his lovely wife, that’s constantly by his side and members of his crew DMS. Danny Diablo is also an actor, a model in the clothing industry and his image has also graced the cover of Trade Magazine.

As I stated above Danny Diablo is also a member of the infamous DMS Crew (Doc Marten Skinheads). Infact, his body, from the crown of his head to the lowest parts of his body, bare the inkwork of that crew’s tattoos and symbolism. Some of his tattoos were done by Baba Austin of “Vintage Tattoo Art Parlor” from York Boulevard in Highland Park in Los Angeles including Rich Fie, of RD Tattoo in Queens, New York. Rich Fie is a tattooist specializing in the world famous NYC style of tattooing and other tattoo artists et cetera.

The members of the New York City’s DMS Crew prefer to be thought of as a family. This family has been around for over 30 years and they are still growing strong along with the popularity of New York Hardcore bands associated with DMS.

Let me pause for a moment and try to describe, if possible, some of Danny Diablo’s ink work on his back. On the top there’s a five pointed crown with the words “Lord Ezech” emblazoned under the crown. In the middle of his back, there is the Juggernaut, a fictional character appearing in Marvel Comics which is also the name of a song made famous by Danny Diablo and The Crown Of Thornz and along with the Juggernaut, the images of the Incredible Hulk and the Thing, of the Fantastic Four, also by Marvel comics, stand to the right and left of the Juggernaut and on the bottom of his back the initials DMS NYC along with the menacing face of a Pitt bull in gray ink can be clearly seen. Perhaps symbols of powerful and overwhelming forces describing the growing popularity of DMS’s influence around the world. Danny Diablo’s other tattoos includes tribal tattoos, Skulls, face of a red devil and the word, “Vexed” from “Mentally Vexed,” another song that was made popular by him and the Crown Of Thornz band. Plus many other tattoos that adorn his body.

There are just too many tattoos on Danny Diablo’s body to cover for this story. Why do people go back for more tattoos in general? I suppose people get tattoos for various reasons: for attention, self-expression, artistic freedom, rebellion, reminders of spiritual/cultural traditions, sexual motivation, addiction, identification with a group or even drunken impulsiveness. Perhaps is all of the above for Danny Diablo. In any case, he is happy with who he is --Lord Ezech the red devil (as many fans lovingly call him) !

It has been said, that originally, the Doc Marten Skinheads Crew of

NYC, started in the Jackson Heights neighborhood of Queens, New York City and has since spread to other areas in the city and around the world. I can recall back in the 1980s to early 1990s seeing members of the DMS Crew on the Lower East Side/East Village hanging out in the Pyramid Club, a popular night club.

The Pyramid Club helped define the East Village drag, gay, punk and art scenes of the 1980s. The club was located at 101 Avenue A. Infact, Nirvana and the Red Hot Chili Peppers played their first New York City concerts there. Hardcore bands like Jimmy Gestapo's Murphy's Law and Raybeez's Warzone were a constant presence there and were the ones who worked security at the spot. The Pyramid Club is no longer functional it has closed its doors for good after 41 years on April of 2021. I have even seen members of DMS chasing neo-nazi skinheads away from the neighborhood near Tompkins Square Park (1980s) who were roaming about looking for trouble. Now that was a welcomed sight to behold.

Now, Accordingly, in 1994, Danny Diablo formed the critically acclaimed NYHC Band "Crown Of Thornz" along with former breakdown guitarist Mike Dijan and Shelter Bassist Franklyn Rhi and drummer Dimi, Belting out emotionally charged lyrics of introspection, pain and anger.

Danny Diablo and the band went on to release their debut EP "Train Yard Blues" in 1995 on Equal Vision Records which was a dedication to his younger brother whose life ended tragically the year prior. The following year the Crown Of Thornz released "Mentally Vexed" a jam that had hardcore fans as far as Europe and Japan in a frenzy.

In 1998 Crown Of Thornz broke up as a band and Danny Diablo went on to set a new and unique trend with his street blend of hardcore, metal, Hip Hop and punk, thus founding a new music genre called, "Thugcore," with the band Skarhead.

In 2013 Danny Diablo was presented with the coveted Acker Award in the category of music. He attended the ceremony with his young son, Dillinger Moses Singer, the one thing in his life that he is proud of

The group Skarhead is considered the originators of thugcore music, a subgenre of hardcore punk with all its relentless breakdowns and throw downs

and adores with all heart.

The Acker Awards are a tribute to members of the Avant-garde arts community who have made an outstanding contributions in their discipline in defiance of convention, or else served their fellow writers and artists in outstanding ways.

The Acker Award was created by Documentarian, Clayton Patterson who states, "As the

tide of gentrification and the money it brings in its wake continues to wash away the creative culture that made the Lower East Side a world-renowned artistic center, I feel the need to somehow save, at least, an impression of what made the Lower East Side such a creative force."

Each year according to Clayton Patterson a recipient receives a commemorative box that contains original artworks and mementos created by some of the 40 winners.

Now, some of Danny Diablo's studio albums include: Thug 4 Life (2007), International Hardcore Superstar (2009), The Blood Of Eden (2012), Dollar Make Sense (2016), and Diablo's Way Mixtape (2019) et cetera.

Today, Danny Diablo aka Lord Ezech despite the hardship and tragedies that has befallen him in the past, continues to move mountains in the music, art and business world and like King David, who defeated Goliath, Lord Ezech continuous to remove any obstacles out of his way that would attempt to disrupt his life. with his wife, whom he calls my Queen, Alexandra Rose and son by his side and the DMS Crew ready for action Danny Diablo remains undefeated in spirit, soul, body and in the hardcore/Thugcore music scene ! "El Hefe" forever !



ECO ART IN THE L.E.S: **INDIVIDUALISM AND THE** **LOST SPIRIT OF L.E.S. ART**

by **Richard (VR333) Rivera**

In the mid-1980s, Manhattan's Lower East Side (LES) was undergoing a radical transformation. While the city's gentrification process was beginning to take root, the area was still deeply imbued with a sense of resistance, creativity, and experimentation that had defined the neighborhood since the early 20th century. Amid this shifting urban landscape, a group of artists, known as the No Se No collective, took over a neglected lot on the corner of Rivington and Forsyth streets, turning it into a vibrant, chaotic, and highly distinctive mostly metallic sculpture garden. This informal, makeshift art space was more than just a collection of discarded objects and sculptures; it was an act of rebellion, a statement of individualism, and a staple of LES art.

For me, as an artist who grew up in the area, the No Se No sculpture garden embodied a particular utopian vision of urban life. The lot, which looked like a dystopian junkyard or a set from a Mad Max film, was more than just an eyesore in the urban landscape; it was a living, breathing artwork that reflected the grit of the LES and the creative energy of its inhabitants. Over time, the lot became a microcosm of the intersection between art, activism, and environmentalism—an embodiment of eco-art that redefined the potential of urban spaces and what it means to be an artist in the modern city.

In this essay, I will explore the significance of the No Se No sculpture garden within the context of individualism in art, its role as a form of eco-art, and the broader cultural and social implications of this grassroots artistic movement in the Lower East Side during the 1980s. Through the lens of this art collective, we will examine the changing dynamics of urban spaces, the relationship between art and environmental consciousness, and the resilience of creative expression in the face of gentrification and social change.

The Lower East Side, historically one of the most diverse and marginalized areas in New York City, has always been a neighborhood that celebrated individualism, counterculture, and the avant-garde. From the early 1900s, the LES was a melting pot of immigrant communi-

ties—Jewish, Italian, Polish, and later Puerto Rican, Chinese, and other groups that brought with them their own cultural identities and traditions. By the mid-20th century, the area had earned a reputation as a hub of bohemian creativity, attracting artists, musicians, writers, and radicals worldwide. The post-World War II era saw the rise of the Beat Generation and, later, the punk rock movement, both rooted in a spirit of rebellion, nonconformity, and artistic freedom.

In the 1980s, as the city grappled with economic decline, the LES remained a haven for creative expression and subcultural experimentation. Rent was still relatively affordable, and the abandoned warehouses, vacant lots, and underused buildings offered ideal spaces for artists to work outside the mainstream art world. This made the LES a natural incubator for alternative art forms—art that wasn't bound by gallery conventions or commercial interests but rather a reflection of the artist's immediate surroundings and social realities. In this fertile ground of artistic freedom, the No Se No collective emerged, using the urban environment as both a medium and a canvas.

In 1985, the No Se No collective (named after a Spanish phrase meaning “I don't know”) took over the empty lot on Rivington and Forsyth, transforming it into a chaotic and meticulously crafted outdoor sculpture garden. The space was a collage of objects and materials, ranging from discarded furniture and car parts to old tools, scrap metal, and even tires. What might have been seen as urban blight or garbage was reimagined as art, with each piece telling a story about the city's history, its people, and the act of creation itself.

The sculpture garden was not just a place to display individual works of art, but a site of communal expression and collaboration. It was constantly evolving, with new pieces being added and old ones being modified or removed, reflecting the transient nature of both the art and the city it inhabited. The artists behind No Se No were not interested in creating static, gallery-bound works of art, but rather in the process of constant redefinition, transformation, and rebellion against the dominant cultural norms. The garden itself was a living, breathing artwork—an ever-changing testament to the power of creative individualism.

This approach to art is deeply tied to the idea of individualism, a concept that is central to the history of the Lower East Side. The artists of No Se No did not seek permission or approval from any institutional authority to claim the space. They took ownership of the lot, both literally and metaphorically, using it as a canvas to create their own vision of what art could be in a rapidly changing urban environment. The very act of transforming a derelict lot into an art space was a radical statement of autonomy, a rejection of the commercialized art world and a refusal to conform to the expectations of mainstream society.



While the No Se No sculpture garden can be understood as a celebration of individualism, it also has deep connections to the emerging eco-art movement of the 1980s. Eco-art, or environmental art, emerged as a response to growing concerns about environmental degradation, pollution, and the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. It sought to address environmental issues through creative means, often by engaging with the natural world and creating art that was rooted in ecological principles.

The No Se No sculpture garden can be seen as an early example of eco-art within the urban context. The artists of the collective didn't just reuse discarded materials—they reimagined them as part of a larger environmental and social narrative. By taking objects that were typically seen as waste and turning them into art, they were challenging the very concept of waste itself. The sculpture garden became a site where the distinction between nature, society, and art began to blur, where the urban landscape was seen not just as a space to inhabit, but as a space to engage with and transform.

In this sense, the sculpture garden was both a commentary on urban decay and a celebration of creative reuse. It was a rejection of the disposable culture that dominated much of 1980s America and a call for a more sustainable, resourceful way of living. The work of No Se No can be understood as an act of environmental reclamation, where the

artists took control of the urban environment and used it to create something new and meaningful. This act of reclamation was not just about physical materials, but about reclaiming a sense of agency, a sense of connection to the city and to the environment itself.

The No Se No sculpture garden was characterized by a spirit of creativity and autonomy; however, by the mid-1980s, gentrification was beginning to reshape the Lower East Side. The area started attracting young professionals, artists, and entrepreneurs who were drawn to its gritty charm and the potential for profit from its underdeveloped properties. In 1989, the lot located at the corner of Rivington and Forsyth was sold, ultimately leading to the demolition of the sculpture garden to make way for new development.

The demolition of the sculpture garden marked the beginning of an end for the LES I remember. It was a symbol of the relentless forces of gentrification that were sweeping through the city, erasing the cultural and artistic spaces that had made the neighborhood unique. The loss of the sculpture garden was not just the loss of a physical space, but the loss of a particular vision of the city—one that embraced creativity, individualism, and environmental consciousness in the face of social and economic change.

Yet, even in its demolition, the No Se No sculpture garden remained an enduring symbol of the power of art to resist, reclaim, and redefine. The artists who had created the garden were not just individuals expressing themselves—they were part of a larger cultural movement that sought to challenge the dominant forces of urban development and preserve the spirit of the city.

The No Se No sculpture garden was a microcosm of the spirit of the Lower East Side in the 1980s—a place where individualism, creativity, and activism converged to create something new, exciting, and rebellious. It was an expression of love for the city, a rejection of the status quo, and a testament to the power of art to reclaim and transform space. As an artist, I see in the garden's chaotic, ever-evolving landscape a reflection of my own creative process—a process that is always in flux, always questioning, and always seeking new ways to engage with the world around me.

In the end, the legacy of the No Se No sculpture garden is not just in its physical remains, but in the spirit it embodied—an unflinching celebration of individualism, a radical approach to eco-art, and a reminder that the city itself is an ever-changing work of art, shaped by the people who inhabit it. As an artist, I truly feel this expressed individualism and love of the city.

With Love,
Richard (VR333) Rivera

333 ORIGINS

by Richard Rivera

We see many servants of God, such as priests and pastors, maintain a steadfast mindset despite facing persistent challenges from malevolent thoughts. They strive to uphold the virtues of goodness as perceived by society. However, understanding the realities that transpire behind stained glass and closed doors reveals a different narrative. Many are aware of the issues that arise within religious institutions, yet a significant number continue to exhibit reverence and faith toward these priests and religious leaders. So, as 333, we must look at the origins of these beliefs from the esoteric to the familiar.

Now, where was I? Oh yes, 333 had a hierarchy with CEEK being the president, and he allowed me to be the Vice President, and pretty much everyone had the power to “push” people down with the crew. In other words, one can tell another to put 333 as their crew name. This is how we became all-city as everyone was down with the triple three



team. We consciously chose not to engage in the conflicts or rivalries that defined some of the dynamics among various graffiti crews, such as the 501 and Smith Boyz (SBB), as well as the RFC and WON crew. People were hurt and in some cases lives taken away on days such as Halloween and Thanksgiving which are days where those remember.

If you know you essentially know. These rivalries, often rooted in territorialism, pride, and ego, were simply distractions from a deeper purpose. We consciously chose not to engage in the conflicts or rivalries that defined some of the dynamics among various graffiti crews, such as the 501 and Smith Boyz (SBB), as well as the RFC and WON crew. People were hurt and in some cases lives taken away on days such as Halloween and Thanksgiving which are days where those remember. If you know you essentially know. These rivalries, often rooted in territorialism, pride, and ego, were simply distractions from a deeper purpose.

333 represented a path of transcendence, one that sought harmony, understanding, and the dismantling of the false barriers that divide us. We came to recognize that these disputes were illusions and temporary constructs that only served to foster division rather than unity in our

community. Being from the biggest melting pot of our times, we understood that all individuals, regardless of their affiliations, are intrinsically interconnected. From psychological and even quantum perspectives, every thought, action, and intention indeed ripples through the collective consciousness, shaping the world around us.

In choosing these 333 paths, we were able to forge a global community that transcended geographic, cultural, and social boundaries. Through 333, we created a space where sentiments such as expression and mutual respect flourished. But more than just a network, 333 has had a profound, life-altering impact. It has literally saved lives, offering a lifeline to those who might otherwise have fallen into dark places with no initial way out. For many, 333 has been a source of hope, a reminder that there is always a path toward light and connection, no matter how deep the shadows may seem. We are a beacon to good and positive energy.

The power of 333 is real. It's a force that has not only transformed individual lives but also a reminder that, at the core, we are all part of something greater thus something beyond the confines of ego and conflict, reaching toward a future built on understanding, love, and shared purpose.

During the origins of 333, our block of Broome and Eldridge Street, like many others in the Lower East Side (LES), was a mix of races that had no particular racism that existed. In fact we said racist joke to each other that would get us dismissed from a job or an academic institution. Guess we were/are built different and very comfortable with

our skin.

The 333 neighborhood also encompassed illicit drug dealers who exercised considerable influence over the streets and perpetuated a semblance of order and safety, allowing us the privilege of traversing the area freely at all hours of the day. Contrary to the negative portrayals often depicted in films and the perceptions held by suburban residents, there existed a palpable structure, an unarticulated code of survival that contributed to maintaining equilibrium. It was within this context that I discovered my own path.

I spent a significant amount of time hanging out around Essex Street by Grand, an area that was, in many ways, both a playground and a proving ground. Here, I was immersed in the urban landscape and involved in other aspects of personal development. I was a Boy Scout, a martial artist, and an all-around sports enthusiast. These disciplines taught me focus, resilience, and respect, further shaping my perspective as I navigated the streets. At the same time, I was also frequenting other parts of the LES, from Smith Street, to play baseball and flag football to various corners of the neighborhood, which offered a broader, more diverse view of the world I was becoming part of.

Though I had been tagging since I was 11, it wasn't until the early '90s that I indeed became immersed in graffiti culture. That's when I started efficiently using spray cans to tag my name, VIPER and/or VR, and began embracing the deeper identity of graffiti. The streets of the LES were a canvas, and I was part of an artistic burgeoning movement defining itself in unique and powerful ways. At that time, graffiti was more than just an art form; it was a language, a rebellion, and a statement.

As a teenager, I was fortunate enough to connect with other writers who shared this passion. These were my peers, individuals like HECK, RIC5, ASH, HITS, SONER, JAE, SHOCKER, JERM, ESAY, and many others who, like me, were carving their names into the urban landscape. Individuals gathered from various locations within the Lower East Side,

If you know you essentially know. These rivalries, often rooted in territorialism, pride, and ego, were simply distractions from a deeper purpose.



ranging from Campos to Smith, and established a connection not only through our passion for the craft but also through our collective experiences of growing up in one of New York City's most vibrant yet turbulent neighborhoods.

The Lower East Side (LES) graffiti scene during the '90s was far more than just an act of tagging; it was a dynamic, evolving social ecosystem. Complex networks of social connections shape human interactions within a community, and in the case of the graffiti community, those connections were both immediate as well as far-reaching. We didn't merely inscribe our names on walls; we engaged in a deeper, almost unconscious process of imprinting our identities and experiences on each other's lives. This created a unique form of social bonding that transcended the physical act of graffiti, weaving a fabric of interconnectedness and mutual understanding. 333 was part of this artistic consciousness.

From a psychological standpoint, graffiti writing served as a form of personal expression and a method of social communication. Each piece, whether a tag, throw-up, or mural, was a statement that conveyed more than just aesthetic intention; it was a message, a challenge, or a declaration of presence. The constant evolution of graffiti in the LES mirrored the adaptive nature of social communities: ever-changing, responsive to external forces, and constantly redefining itself through the interaction of its members.

On a broader level, 333 played a central role in this community's cohesion and collective identity. It acted as a unifying force that brought together writers from diverse backgrounds and locations across New York City and potentially the world. The concept of 333, in its essence, was akin to a social network, creating an inclusive and harmonious space where different individuals could come together, share experi-

ences, and maintain peace. It mirrored the diplomatic nature of organizations like the United Nations, where disparate voices could coexist and collaborate under a common framework of respect and mutual understanding (lets make heaven on earth).

The cohesion among 333 members was remarkable in that it seemed to defy the typical rivalries and territorialism that often permeate sub-cultures. To the best of my knowledge, conflicts among 333 members were minimal, as the community operated on the principles of peace, love, and mutual support. Of course, we weren't always physically together, and as with any large social group, misunderstandings could arise. But fundamentally, 333 was an ecosystem in which collective values were prioritized, emphasizing elevating one another rather than tearing each other down.

On a personal level, I had my own experiences with conflict, mostly stemming from those who you may or may not know. Graffiti, after all, is often about placement, and tagging in the "wrong" place at the "wrong" time could lead to unintended consequences. However, my personal approach to life was not aligned with the more aggressive aspects of the gangs and thug mentality that sometimes accompanied the street scene. Instead, I was more drawn to my identity's intellectual, artistic, and romantic aspects in women. 333 also consists of swag and, in my teenage case, a penchant for refined fashion (I had a particular fondness for non-chaps Ralph Lauren).

Once I hit 18, I was able to hit up the clubs, and that's where we caught the most tags since we were mostly hitting up Esso's, The Velvet, Webster Hall, and every club associated with the Baird Jones guest pass that was like leaves littering the streets of Manhattan. 333 was at its peak and continued to make people feel like they were and are part of a family. Not the crime boss type, but just a group of happy-go-lucky people with positive energy. Eventually, the crew diminished as we got older and became adults. Don't get me wrong, we still catch tags and continue to write 333. I traveled around this small rock and always caught my VR333 wherever I could. Especially in countries such as Europe, which have legal graffiti walls.

As you are undoubtedly aware, the number 333 has transcended into the spiritual realm, a phenomenon in which I began to engage prior to its acknowledgment as an "Angel Number." It symbolizes a positive indication and serves as a reminder of one's connection to something greater. What that higher being is, that's a mystery imbedded in our consciousness.

In essence, being 333 isn't about achieving perfection in a traditional sense; it's about recognizing the potential within oneself to rise above struggles, to make conscious choices, and to be a force for good in the world. It's about growth through challenges, choosing to act in alignment with the highest good, and embracing the transformation that

comes with the journey toward becoming the best version of oneself. I've personally witnessed how the energy of 333 has helped people who were on the brink of suicide or struggling with heavy drug use break free from those destructive mindsets. Many of them found a shift after hearing me speak about my own life and my connection with 333. To some, these numbers are just numbers, but for those who are open to the message, they become a powerful reminder to "choose the right path."

Throughout my childhood, I experienced the absence of parental figures and siblings, my non-blood related family resided on the streets of the Lower East Side. I consider myself fortunate to have encountered various mentors, including those who were like fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters who were deeply engaged in street activities, whether selling narcotics, serving as law enforcement officers, or simply individuals experiencing homelessness who offered me guidance.

The world I inhabit today is significantly shaped by listening to people. I want to make it clear that 333 is not a cult or a religion it's simply a way of life, a mindset that encourages a deeper connection with the universe and a divine understanding of ourselves. It's about spiritual awareness, not about following a set of doctrines or rules.

Through my travels, I've encountered a stark reality: many people, unfortunately, seem to be deeply disconnected from doing good, both for themselves and for their families. It can be disheartening to see this, and it takes a toll, especially when you come across individuals who drain your energy what some refer to as "energy vampires." These people are often not interested in changing or bettering themselves, and I've learned that trying to help them can sometimes do more harm than good.

I've made the mistake in the past of thinking I could help everyone, only to end up hurt or drained in the process. Now, I've become more conscious of the kind of people I engage with, particularly in these circles. While it's hard to accept, I've realized that sometimes the best thing you can do for someone who isn't ready to change is to wish them well and move on with your own life.

At the end of the day, these experiences both the painful and the uplifting are valuable lessons. Life has a way of teaching us through trial and error, and I'm grateful for the wisdom that's come from it. It's a blessing to grow through these challenges and become more discerning and compassionate in the process.

"So, what does 333 mean to you?" This is a question I asked on our 333 group one day, and I wanted to share a couple of comments made by our group:

Wally Krauser: "Called me back to God and his Church. I pray to God that he continues to guide me and he does. He has taken me to the Catholic Church where the truth flows from springs like a golden fountain."

Kenny Torres: "Spiritual aspect of conscious awareness in relation to how one conducts themselves throughout their lives."

Sarah Watt: "A frequency in life."

Jessie Ann Harwood: "Well considering the number has spoke to me since birth and still does on a daily my dob 3/3/83 3:33am it feels kind of like its coded in my DNA lol."

I'm confident that, before reading these words, you have likely been impacted by 333 in some form. It's not just a tag or a symbol; it's a concept that resonates deeply with many people worldwide. While it may not have affected everyone 100%, I believe that 99% of people who encounter it understand its significance, whether they consciously recognize it or not. And what about that remaining 1%? Perhaps they don't yet fully grasp its meaning, but over time, they may realize the transformative energy and unifying power encapsulated in those three digits.

When you search the internet for "333," you'll find many references and interpretations from people across the globe. From spiritual meanings to numerological significance to connections with art, culture, and identity, 333 has taken on a life of its own. This proliferation of global recognition is a testament to the universal resonance of the symbol. Through time and persistence, what began as a small, localized idea in the Lower East Side has expanded into something that holds weight and recognition worldwide.

We have successfully integrated the number 333 into the tapestry of global culture. Though seemingly simple, this numeral has emerged as a profound symbol, representing not merely a graffiti collective or a territorial assertion but rather a philosophy, a common purpose, and a sense of unity that transcends geographical boundaries. As a community, we have imbued these digits with significance, and through our collective endeavors, we have ensured that 333 is recognized in a manner that surpasses any individual or specific location. What's remarkable is that this recognition is far beyond what we could have imagined in the late '80s.

Back then, when CEEK first proposed forming a crew around 333 or, alternatively, "Half Evil" the concept was still in its infancy. It was merely an idea, a sketch in the mind of a few individuals, a symbol that could have easily remained confined to a small circle in the Lower East Side. But over the years, through dedication, art, and cultural influence, 333 grew into something far exceeding its humble beginnings. It became

more than just a crew name it became a symbol of creative resistance, unity, and transcendence.

The evolution of 333 reflects the power of grassroots movements and the ability of art and culture to break through barriers. From the LES's walls to the globe's far reaches, 333 was "Made in LES," but its impact was never meant to stay confined. It represents a piece of history, a moment when art, identity, and community converged in a way that changed lives and left a lasting imprint on culture. And now, those three numbers live on, a testament to the legacy of the Lower East Side and its role in shaping the global cultural landscape. 333 will always be more than just graffiti it is an enduring symbol of transformation and unity. At this time, we are maintaining the 333 vibes in our walks of life, and you will be aware that 333 is also looking back at you. It's more than just some random numbers put together. These numbers change lives and enhance your spiritual well-being. It's about self-love, respect, and efforts to make this world a better place.

Anyone with an understanding of any type of religion can see that all our holy books, such as the Bible, Quran, Torah, and Dianetics, all have some portion of a good versus evil on earth as it says it once was beyond our world. Speaking of which, don't deny the fact that we are not alone in this ever-expanding universe. Perhaps you have other beliefs, I will explain what 333 means to me!

Life is all about making choices and exercising our "free will" to live it as we see fit. Not everyone will think or act the same, and that's okay it's not my place to criticize how others choose to live. If you seek advice, I'm happy to share my thoughts, but ultimately, the decisions are yours.

Look, I'm not a savior, and I'm not here to pretend I have all the answers. My goal is to offer a positive response to the negativity that seems to be taking over the world. We're all under pressure to succeed, and in the midst of that, we often forget to check in on our own behaviors and values. Having worked in competitive fields like the military, real estate, finance, and sports, I've seen firsthand what people are willing to do to reach the top. Sometimes, in the pursuit of success, people lose their humility and morals along the way. I witnessed this as a young person and came to realize something: "It sucks to win."

What I mean by that is that success can go to your head. When you reach the top, you might start seeing yourself as superior, looking down on others, and forgetting where you came from. It's easy to lose sight of your identity before the accolades and achievements. The key is remembering your roots and staying grounded, no matter where life takes you. Indeed, achieving balance entails harmonizing various aspects of one's life to attain goals and aspire to reach new heights while simultaneously maintaining an awareness of one's origins, the journey undertaken, and the commitment to enhancing life for one-



self and the greater cosmos. I refer to the cosmos as I believe in existence beyond the 7,926 equatorial miles that comprise our planet. I believe humanity has exhibited significant advancement in the past, mainly as we have grown more spiritually attuned to the cosmos. This unity is a principal reason for my strong advocacy of the 333 initiative lifestyle.

This type of life can put us back to the way our ancestors respected this planet and how they were able to survive great floods such as the one that occurred over ~5000 years ago in Mesopotamia or present-day Iraq (Woolley et al., 1965, Vol. IV, pl.7 3). My point is that we

have forgotten how to live in tune with nature and have further drifted apart from our personal selves. We need to be reminded that we are not just living to work, but we need to work on living. Yes, we have bills to pay and mouths to feed, but have you looked at your meaning of life? What is it that makes you want to wake up the next day?

These are the kinds of questions worth asking yourself. Perhaps reflecting on what 333 stands for could help guide you on this incredible journey we call life. I'm not just part of the 333 lifestyle; I am a living example of what it means to embody it. I grew up in the Lower East Side, without parental guidance, deep in poverty. Yet, somehow, I made it out of "the hood" and transformed my life. I love going back to see how much has changed and wow, the changes are striking. Whether for better or for worse is another conversation, but it's undeniable: things have evolved.

Now, I'm not here to dive into any Marxist ideologies but trust me when I say this: 333 is not about chasing after a purely capitalistic dream. It's not about being broke or living with nothing to lose. No, we're about working hard, saving, and enjoying the rewards of that hard work. It's about finding balance and maximizing the opportunities we create while staying grounded and authentic to what matters in your positive lifestyle. 333 is a mindset that allows you to thrive, not just survive.

Happiness has always been associated with being 333. It was never meant to be evil, although it was founded on half-evil concepts. We know, especially as adults, we know the raw concept of evil -vs.- good. So, knowing that evil is bad, why go in that direction? You failed to believe in yourself, which is part of being reasonable. We shouldn't want to do something wicked; instead, we should find a solution to a problem.

The story of 333 is a tapestry woven from art, spirituality, and collective identity, intertwining themes of resilience, morality, and the search for purpose. While the graffiti scene may seem far removed from the mainstream, it echoes timeless truths about the human experience and our fundamental need for connection, understanding, and forgiveness. By peeling back the layers of this narrative, we uncover the transformative power of subcultures, revealing how they shape lives and inspire growth. The essence of 333 is a poignant reminder that beyond the numbers, the art, and the community lies the profound capacity to redefine our own stories. It guides us toward personal enlightenment and collective harmony, encouraging us to create meaningful change, both within ourselves and the world around us.

Be well and be 333.

Very Truly Yours,
Richard (VR333) Rivera

THE RIVINGTON SCHOOL

by Tobey Crockett PhD

“**A**ll power to the imagination,” was the slogan in 1968 in Paris. “Imagination is a faculty of perception,” a Sufi aphorism from the 11th century. “For a seed to achieve its greatest expression, it must come completely undone. The shell cracks, its insides come out and everything changes. To someone who doesn’t understand growth, it would look like complete destruction.”

Cynthia Ocelli In the early 80s, Beauty was everywhere, the streets screaming with delight and decay. Just walking downtown was an art experience, art everywhere, at all heights, the strident colors blaring from swaths of graffiti, paintings on paper wheat pasted to the bricks from amorphous groups like Avant, shadowy figures lurking in ex-



Photo: Clayton Patterson

pressive explosions of black paint by Richard Hambleton. Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring, the Collab collective, and many more brilliant artists grew up like weeds from the cracks of the moribund culture scene at this time. Briefly emerging from an anarchic stew of primordial aesthetic influences and often coalescing into various unauthorized guerilla exhibitions in abandoned and undervalued locations throughout the city, but most especially on the Lower East Side (LES), these artists saw the potential for true freedom where no one else could imagine anything more impossible. The power of imagination was truly liberating and seemed revolutionary, for a brief but glorious moment in time.

Culture, in the sense of creating new life forms by providing microorganisms with the nutrients needed for growth, was a deep ethos for the multidisciplinary artists of this period, and like the primordial seas from which all life on Earth has emerged, there were many spontaneous collisions, hybrids, and forgotten offshoots. One such vital force of nature found expression amongst the women artists who lived within this fertile community. It was a time of fomenting, fermenting, and vigorous cross fertilization. The women artists of the Rivington Street community did not join together in an organized collective with a manifesto, but they nonetheless knew one another, supported each other, and often gave opportunities for wider collaboration than has previously been noted. Especially under the aegis of such feminist pioneers as Arleen Schloss, Gloria McLean, and Maggie Reilly, to name a few, numerous women seized the reins of their own expressive vehicles and took off - sometimes for parts unknown, sometimes to dizzying heights.

The 2025 WARS exhibition upcoming in Paris will allow audiences to appreciate for the first time the interwoven network of relationships which contributed to the dynamic art scene of the 80s on the Lower East Side and beyond. All of which would have been impossible without the nutrient rich environment these women cultivated together and separately. Art history owes this loosely joined cadre of creators another deeper look.

IMPROV-ING THE FUTURE: DANCING IN COMMUNITY

by Laura Pettibone Wright



Dance artists naturally create broad community. From large, well-funded ballet companies to independent dance makers, the nature of the beast requires person-to-person networks to both produce and apprehend the art form. Dance makers collaborate with dancers, musicians, and design artists to fulfill their theatrical intent, sparking creative dialogue and inquiry. They reach out to the community to find space to perform in and audiences to watch. My interest here is to look at independent dance makers past and present working in modern/contemporary dance forms: what elements help to create the heat needed to produce new art? And how has the scene changed in the last 50 years?

The medium itself is extremely personal: human bodies in intimate relationship to each other. Dancers live and breathe their art together as they train, practice, and explore. Great respect is passed

through dance lineages: teachers-masters-elders and their students-apprentices-acolytes, knowledge shared from body to body, generation to generation, through hours of shared sweat, non-verbal osmosis, coaching, and repetition. But there is also the generation (creation) of change: new dancers influence current works and move ideas forward; dancers become avant garde makers who break away and turn ideas upside down.

For choreographers, dancers are the paint and the clay as well as their inspiration. Dancers become finely attuned to the choreographers' style, focus, intention. They become the choreographers' memory, holding on to newly invented movement details as the choreographer forges ahead. In the space of creation, words are less important than body-to-body transmission – how/why to do a movement, to connect/disconnect in time and space, and to keep the ideas alive and fresh.

Dance makers need physical space and time with bodies regardless of style or scale. Everything from the kind of clothes and shoes you have, to the surface of the floor and the temperature and dimensions of the room contribute to-- even determine -- the construction of movement. And it takes time to learn the movement sequences and spatial relationships or to polish the energy dynamics and fine-tune the rhythms together. Dance is not notated like music; details need to be shown and worked out as a group.

The flowering of post-modern dance in the 1970s in New York City saw the rejection of many tenets of past dance forms that required large stages, elaborate designs, and lots of money. Instead, dancers and performance artists gathered in Soho, the East Village, and LES where they found large, inexpensive spaces where they could live, work, and perform. They also found/founded community organizations that became gathering places for these dancers like Judson Memorial Church, St. Marks Church in-the-Bowery/Danspace, and PS 122 Community Space. Performance events were often self-funded, dancers worked practically for free, musicians and artists collaborated in the same all-in vein. Everyone worked side gigs to pay rent: waiting tables, posing for art classes, teaching dance classes. Importantly, dance writers and journalists had broad access to print media like the Village Voice to preview and review the new forms and explain the ideas behind the often strange and unsettling movement experiments.

In this way, choreographers could keep a consistent (small) company roster and a dedicated studio. Like-minded dancers trained together under a consistent aesthetic and kinesthetic umbrella to develop a unity of physical intention.

The studio itself produced income for dancers who taught classes to the broader public between rehearsals. With a stable, independent studio, a geographic community could grow: the bookstore on the corner with a garden in the back where they let the dancers rest and read, the little shop that hired dancers very flexibly part-time, the bar that stayed open until the wee hours of the morning when rehearsal finally broke up and the dancers needed to eat and let off

stream. And vice versa – these shop keepers and workers and others in the neighborhood became the audience base (indeed, the bar in one case closed for opening night so all could attend). Some went on to fame, if not fortune, continuing in a larger scale but perhaps losing their edginess. A few remain in their Soho lofts, holding on to cheap leases if not wholly owning their space, still hosting gritty showings of new choreography. Others became vagabonds—moving from space to space but continuing to gather dancers and audiences.

How is it for dance creators and performers now? Perhaps most difficult for young dance artists in New York City is the cost of living – the amount of time working for rent and food leaves little time and energy for training, creating, and performing.

Most of them find shares in Brooklyn or Queens, within walking distance to a subway lifeline to Manhattan, where many of big studios still exist. But the

choreographer must hire a pick-up company for each event and rent a studio for a few hours at \$50/hour (or find time to apply for grant after grant for subsidies). Either way, they are faced with imperative to create now, for x-number of hours, which is often the best way to squelch deeply new ideas. The dancers train at various places, rather than together, rehearse at geographically dispersed rentals, and race from work to class to rehearsal to work.

There are dozens of small organizations, including many of the early ones mentioned above, that support dance with less expensive space for classes, rehearsal, and performance. New venues continue to pop up: Kestrels in Brooklyn an equally simple, affordable rehearsal and performance space to the PS 122 of the 1970s (and in an equally sketchy area). But they, too, are always on a shoestring budget; they are dependent on various government and private grants, but at least

The academic overflow of NYU and the New School into the neighborhood has raised prices and inserted laptops and intellectual diatribes into the cafés but has also brought audiences and income — and healthy aesthetic backlash.



are doing that work for the artists. Organizers are focused on providing opportunities for all kinds of dance and dancers: street and social, informal showings and formal stagings, topics around gender/social justice and pure abstract physicality.

This spreads a wide net to many hands grasping (gasping) for help, but perhaps less intense, concentrated heat for deep invention and authenticity. Print outlets have mostly disappeared; those that exist provide space for positive reviews but not for aesthetic manifestos and philosophical critiques. They have been replaced by apps that speak to smaller subsets of the dance-making and dance-going population with less opportunity for crossover to a wider audience.

And yet, the drive to create exists. In many ways, the East Village and LES are still hubs of creativity: it is on the lampposts and sidewalks and community gardens. Slightly grubby, small venues there still produce astonishing art-- as well as nonsense.

The academic overflow of NYU and the New School into the neighborhood has raised prices and inserted laptops and intellectual diatribes into the cafés but has also brought audiences and income-- and healthy aesthetic backlash. Unpredictable, serendipitous, heart-breaking, fulfilling, waves of opportunity or fallowness flow through an artists' life regardless of talent or money. How much money or fame proves/disproves worth?

Artistic communities coalesce and disperse; writers and historians and archivists are left to weave the threads together in time. Then-- art continues regardless.

“MAVERICK” OF THE DANCE

by Laura Pettibone Wright

Erick Hawkins (1909–1994) was a pioneering American modern-dance choreographer and dancer. His legacy as an avant-garde artist holds a significant place in the history of modern dance, albeit one less travelled. He broke away from the forms and narratives of his contemporaries, choosing metaphor over abstraction, harmony over drama, and poetic direction over chance—which set him at odds with more popular, and better funded, choreographers.

Erick was born in Trinidad, Colorado, where Mexican cattlemen, European miners, and Jewish merchants created a bustling city on the Santa Fe Trail where the lands of the Plains Indians met those of the Pueblo Indians. A profound sense of place was imprinted on him here, creating a deep well of inspiration for his art.

Winning a scholarship to Harvard, Erick majored in the deeply intellectual field of Greek Classics. His passion for dance was ignited by performances by German dancers Harald Kreutzberg and Yvonne Georgi in New York City. When asked for advice, Kreutzberg cryptically told Erick to study ballet and then forget everything he knew. After studies with George Balanchine at the budding School of American Ballet and tours with Lincoln Kirstein’s Ballet Caravan, Hawkins’ career took off when he became the first man to dance with Martha Graham’s company.

Their mutual interests in mythology and Jungian psychology, and passionate romance, provided the basis for their decade-long collaborations which produced groundbreaking choreography. Their dramatic retelling of Greek myths and American narratives were accompanied by avant-garde sets and contemporary music, with Erick doing the bulk of the fund-raising and commission of the works. Erick and Martha married in 1948 but he left her troupe in 1951 to establish his own company, focusing on a unique aesthetic vision inspired by Native American dance rituals, Japanese aesthetics, and Zen philosophy. Turning away from the heightened and often negative emotions of Martha’s dramas, Erick sought to choreograph dances that celebrated life in all its forms: the “suchness” of a pine tree (as in his dance *8 Clear Places*) as well as the “nowness” of human experience (as in *Here and Now*, with *Watchers*). His works aimed to connect dancers and audiences alike with a sense of inner peace and transcendence. Ironically, this about-face brought about black balling by Martha’s protectors and donors. They saw Erick as a traitor and left him without resources to begin his career anew.

Erick’s studies of Eastern philosophies and arts brought him to conclude that art could and should be spiritually transformative, to both the audience and the artists. He rejected the value of splashing one’s personal dramas and neuroses across the stage and instead sought a holistic understanding of the human experience through movement. Erick’s choreography was also deeply rooted in a philosophy of natural movement: dance that was organic, flowing, and harmonious.

He believed in the intrinsic connection between mind and body, creating a dance technique that used imagery and kinesiology to find ease and beauty. This was a radical departure from both the extreme positions of ballet and the intense

contractions of Graham technique. Erick maintained a fiercely independent and innovative approach to his work, creating a unique aesthetic vision detached from both commercial pressures and mainstream trends. By forming his own dance company, Hawkins ensured that his work remained true to his artistic principles.

Erick collaborated with many innovative composers and visual artists, beginning with Lucia Dlugoszewski, a young pianist with radical ideas about timbre and duration who created many scores to his dances, performed on stage with the company, and became his lifelong partner. The use of unconventional scores and minimalist sets created a holistic theater experience that transcended traditional dance boundaries. Together, they created space for audiences to both see, feel, and hear with sensitivity, to know they were alive, sitting in a seat, and experiencing live, sensuous art. Erick commissioned dozens of scores from other composers for a small chamber orchestra that toured with the



Erick Hawkins



Erick Hawkins & Laura Pettibone Wright

dance company. Insisting on live music was an important choice aesthetically, but a difficult one financially. Keeping the company relatively small -- 9 dancers and 8 musicians -- for much of the company's lifespan kept them nimble enough to tour extensively throughout the US, as well as in Europe and Asia.

Critics had varied opinions about Erick Hawkins' choreography. Some praised his work for its fluidity and natural movement, describing it as "kinetic sculpture" and "metaphoric images of nature". They appreciated the serenity and simplicity of his pieces, which often evoked a sense of new discovery. However, others found his choreography to be overly simplistic or naive, especially when it came to his use of natural imagery.

Some critics felt that the high-flown rhetoric surrounding his work, often delivered by his wife and collaborator Lucia Dlugoszewski, overshadowed the actual dance. Despite the mixed reviews, Hawkins' innovative approach to dance and his emphasis on effortless movement left a lasting impact on audiences, dancers, artists, and critics alike.

WHO CARES? IT'S ONLY PORN!

By ©Vivian Forlander

One evening in 2023, an extraordinarily wealthy Alfonse LaMont and I were dining with Carla, another unaffluent friend of his, when over shrimp cocktails, Caesar salad, veal scallopine, and lobster fra diavolo, Carla, a feminist entrepreneur, questioned me. "How did you get into writing porn?" Finding it intrinsic to so much of what made me me, I settled my rump back into the booth's cushioned seat, and gathered my thoughts.

I suspected Alphonse wouldn't enjoy this topic. Afterall I was usurping our time together, since his paying for such a luscious meal should trump the conversational terrain. But Carla had asked me. So why would I even hesitate to answer?

My reasons for getting into writing porn had been, oddly enough, in line with Carla's feminist career in film, and I was surprised that I had never told her the story.

Not to deter Alphonse from the "shits and giggles" intent of our get together, I quickly formulated my account for brevity. I told Carla that many years before I was unhappy with my fictional voice, and writ-



(Left to right) Clayton Patterson, Ron Magliozzi, Ari Rousimoff, Vivian Forlander

ing porn gave me an opportunity to experiment with many different voices, publish, and get paid for it.

Wanting to develop the aura of an omniscient narrator, I created both male and female narrators.

I particularly enjoyed creating the male characters. I told Carla about how I relished bringing my fictional character from lust to conquest. Deriding my hubris that I could ever authentically create any man's lust, an annoyed Alphonse kept interrupting, saying "Who cares?"

Giving in, I changed the subject, and I indulged in the lavish meal that was Alphonse's treat. Who cares? It's only pornography.

For weeks after that dinner I ruminated on the "who cares" of Alphonse's question. I reflected on how I and so many other writers have received or are receiving money honing their writing skills, by writing under pseudonyms; even moreso today than back then, with the internet currently spawning so many ghost writers, authors of innumerable articles ranging from creating porn to ghostwriting expertise on computer literacy.

My foray into porn was, ironically enough, propelled by my dissatisfaction with the feminism of the moment. It was the early seventies, and I was fielding a kind of absurdity in my own gender identity. Like so many other women, my inner self was joining the club of "me toos" and feeling a victimization of simply being born female. A

whiny voice was cropping up in my fiction, and I did not like it. I wasn't trapped in a female body that yearned to be a man or even androgynous. I was what I was.

Philosophical feminism espoused that my feelings, my intellect, and my abilities could transcend my bodily reality. I could be whatever I strived to be. It was, and still is perplexing to me, the idea of saying, "I always knew I was a male trapped in a female body or I was really a male because I thought and felt like one." I could never fathom what that meant. I was what I was, deep in my soul gender neutral, exploring all the possibilities and options of achievements in a sexy female body with enormous breasts.

My foray into porn was, ironically enough, propelled by my dissatisfaction with the feminism of the moment.

The gender neutral thing had started already in puberty, when in just a few years I was transformed from a bullied neighborhood ugly duckling into a voluptuous sexy swan. The voices inside me were far behind catching up to my bodily reality.

In high school a guy named Mickey whispered to others his nickname for me. He called me Nipps or Nibbs, as a reference to my breasts. It was in fact that nickname which begot my first pseudonym.

A dear friend, Jaakov Kohn, the editor of EVO (the underground and irreverent newspaper, the East Village Other) and then later the Soho News, put me in touch with an editor of High Society. At Jaakov's urging, I submitted a story entitled, "The Art of It," written by none other than, Katie Nibbs.

Quite a few glossy triple X magazines had high budgets back then, enough so, that the authors and artists were paid quite well for what was enjoyable work. Some of my creative compatriots in the adult business were aspiring filmmakers, writers, and artists. All of them were grateful for the opportunity to earn money at what they enjoyed doing most, be it writing short stories, scripts, directing movies or videos, being behind the camera, or creating artwork.

One might ask how can executing a creative art in the realm of pornography satisfy someone's desire to practice their craft? Isn't the creation of any commercial pornography just throwing obscenities or dirty words on a sheet of paper or lewd images on a canvas?

I can only speak for myself. Ever since that fellow Mickey named me Nipps or Nibbs, I felt myself a third party to that sexy bombshell I had become. The changes of puberty happened so fast, I maintained a solid continuity with my former childhood self.

One afternoon, as a teen, I was taken aback when, my best friend, Alana, noticed the prominent "stars" blossoming underneath my tee shirt.

These newly sensitive configurations had not gone unnoticed by me, and I blushed when Alana mentioned them. I was further embarrassed when my Aunt Rose, who owned with my Aunt Jennie, a lingerie shop, told me I should come in for a bra fitting.

This new body of mine was hardly received with mirth by me. But that was not the case with many of my male fellow students in my new Junior High School. The same boys, who had bullied me, and their cronies, became suddenly flirtatious. When their advances were scoffed at by me, they reacted in the same way as they had in elementary school. When rejected by the cutest and most popular girl in the class, they spitefully pulled her ponytail. An act that, needless to say, was not graciously received!

This sudden desirability was new to me. Eventually, Nipps or Nibbs

became a far more welcome personna to me than the cootie queen I was just a few years prior. In some ways, I even felt more of a camaraderie with those boys than an adversary. Having heard my father's consistent chant to my little brother, "Be a man. Be a man," (though Freud would have called my yearnings "penis envy"), to me I possessed an envy of all the admirable traits boys could possess; bravery, self confidence, intelligence, etc. etc. As far as my father was concerned (My mother had died shortly before of lung cancer.), all those male qualities were biologically unavailable to my female self. I wanted to be one of those guys.

Writing porn afforded me an opportunity, and I relished it. I had an audience who was paying for the privilege of hearing my fictional stories, in whatever pseudonym I chose for that issue's byline. Granted. It was predominantly horny men with whom I shared my accounts in different personnas. But who was I to frown upon them? Give them what they desire. Like any other retail business, the customer is always right.

At first with the high budgeted glossy adult magazines, I had the opportunity of constructing stories and letting my imagination lead me in any direction. But gradually, as budgets got sparser, more speed and diversity of topics were required by my editors. I was given each month a laundry list to choose from, what I, as the fictional contributor, chose to write about. I only selected topics that were for me morally compatible, such as swinging, domanatrix fantasies, being with two women, having a leg fetish or a fetish (you guessed it) for large breasts.

Most of my stories were in the first person of a male writer. I did get a chuckle out of knowing that somewhere a guy reading my words would think the author was a likeminded fellow who shared his sexual fantasies, a dude just like himself. In truth it was I, the big boobed female who might very well be the object of that reader's desires.

Then there was the use of language. For fear of turning off the reader, the language had to be engrossing, without being outright gross. A constant bombardment of "fucks", "sucks", "pussies" and "dicks" was a definite turnoff in immersing the reader in an escapist sexual fantasy. Always thinking of new ways to express a sexual act or body part and not be boringly redundant was a part of creating a language that would insure that the reader would pay and grab this particular dirty magazine off the shelf on the newsstand.

Each time I created a new character (Hush, hush. These stories were supposed to be true to life submissions), I became that person, imagining an entire life beyond those few salacious revelations the author was sharing.

I had one cohort in creating these dirty stories. Her pseudonym as an



editor was Molly Bloom. In sync with her, I created Stephanie Dedalus, both names being versions of characters in James Joyce's novel "Ulysses".

Molly, a dropout doctoral candidate at NYU, was the editor and adult film reviewer for a group of xxx rated movie magazines. Since so much of the copy for these magazines was written by Molly herself, she decided to use other pseudonyms from that period of 19th Century English literature (her academic major). Her reviewers took on pseudonyms, such as W. Pater, O. Wilde, J. Ruskin, A.C. Doyle. All names from that period in English lit.

At our first meeting Molly was rather distant and curt. She sent me home with a stack of her magazines to peruse. I read all of the the reviews, with their carefully crafted scholarly prose and a searing irony, in the midst of the many blurry, horribly printed, explicit photos. Many of the adult films were awful, but some were quite good, such as Gerard Damiano's "Story of Joanna", featuring professional ballet dancer Terry Hall or Radley Metzger's (aka Henry Paris) "Barbara Broadcast".

I remarked to Molly. "Who are these reviewers?" and she replied with her sardonic sneer. "Who do you think?"

"They're all you?" I queried. A simple shoulders shrug gave me the answer.

Week after week, I wrote stories for the mostly male readership of the digest magazines I contributed to. As I went along, I created a style that would achieve its intended purpose. Yes, the stories had to be sexually arousing, sometimes in a crass way, but they also had to draw the reader into a vivid fantasyland. I achieved this by a balance of story

telling, crescendoing language of arousal to an ultimate climax.

I was careful not to use too much gratuitous vulgarity, interspersing the base language with lavish descriptions, drawing the reader into a vivid world of the fictional writer's experience.

This writing also acted as a form of therapy for me. In many ways I imbibed the characters I created. Sexually, I could take on the role of initiator or recipient, perhaps sadist or masochist, or just a joyful participant in whatever the experience was.

And the writing actually changed the way I related to the men in my life. When men I knew asked me questions about what it felt like to have very large breasts and how and when my body had changed, I answered with a frank response, as both the object and the objectifier.

Periodically, I lectured at a course in feminism at Barnard College, and with the primarily female audience, I asked the question, "How many of you have initiated phone contact with a guy you found attractive, and asked him out for a date?"

Both the professor, Barbara, and I were amazed to see only one hand go up in the room. It was the mid eighties and with all of the feminist rhetoric, women generally still did not feel compelled to be initiator in this fashion. I did. And there were indeed times I, just like my male counterparts, experienced the nasty sting of rejection.

In both Molly's and my fictional creations there was often a submerged humor and recognition for the cognoscenti. Molly once received a letter from a fellow in Harvard, who read one of her film reviews, laced with irony and esoteric references. "Who are you people?" he wrote, having read the edified language and esoteric references in the midst of the horrendously printed, purplish and blurry, sexually explicit images.

I believe these stories I and others wrote also provided a growing acceptance and tolerance for a wide diversity of sexual experiences. Many of those, which were considered taboo at the time, are part of the diverse sexual landscape today, including the widespread acceptance of homosexuality, bisexuality, multiple partners and the acceptance of living out one's own sexual fantasies.

Through my writing, I eventually became an activist. My authentic byline as Vivian Forlander appeared in op eds in the NY Times and The New York Daily News, where I spoke out against the zoning of adult businesses and took on the case of so many women, whose earnings depended on their patronage.

I was also head of distribution for Candida Royalle's company Femme, which made explicit films that would not offend women and could be appreciated for couple's viewing. Candice Vadala, aka Candida Royalle, was visionary and employed women who presented themselves, and still do, under, now often revered, pseudonyms. Candida's meticulously kept journals and artwork, are now a part of the Harvard

Archives.

For me, I later collaborated with the gifted filmmaker/painter Ari Rous-simoff on the film *Freaks Uncensored: A Human Sideshow*. Roussimoff researched and directed the film, and I produced it and wrote the screenplay." The film got rave reviews from Gary Dauphin in the *Village Voice* and a half page, shining review by critic Lawrence Van Gelder in the *Sunday New York Times*. The movie played to standing room only audiences at New York's Anthology Film Archives, and went on to receive an award by Movies Unlimited for one of the best documentaries of all times.

In writing the script, I had the opportunity to give literary voice to disabled and multi-talented people, who amazingly transcended their handicaps and became stars of the sideshow era. There was Karl Unthan, who was an armless sideshow performer and violin soloist at Carnegie Hall, and Jeannie Tomaini, a legless woman, married to Al Tomaini, a giant, both incredible performers and clever, successful entrepreneurs of the sideshow. For me, writing under my birth-given name was gratifying, but all those years of writing under pseudonyms was always so much fun and quite a learning experience!

Like me, there are thousands of people, with their unique stories, who are writing or have written under pseudonyms or are anonymously ghostwriting, either in years past or right now. Many may aspire to get an authentic byline, about which they can openly boast. But whether striving for recognition or just enjoying expressing their creativity, albeit in pornography or some other genre, somebody must care. Their readership is vast. There are loads of happy creators and paying customers out there. The many talented, but often unsung, authors, their reading public, and the people who employ them, they do indeed care.

AN IMAGINARY CONVERSATION WITH PETER CRAMER, MM SERRA, & JACK WATERS

by ©Vivian Forlander



JACK: One of the earliest conversations that MM Serra and I had back in the day was about community: Around Naked Eye Cinema and how it might fold into the community around the New American Cinema Group/The Film-Makers COOP; founded in 1961 NYC. In its beginning we described Naked Eye Cinema as an extension of No Rio's film program. Leslie Lowe had just come from the bay area into the work circle I knew around the Pyramid club that included Carl George, Brad and Brian Taylor, Kembra Pfahler, Samoa, and Gordon Kurtti among many others. Our entrée into the Pyramid's inner circle was largely around our friendship with Susan Brown and Ellen Forney who were downtown It girls for their incredible retro style of dressing and hair, and for their outrageous Texas vivacity.

At the Pyramid we met the drag community of Stephen Tashjian AKA Tabboo! John Kelly AKA Dagmar Onassis, Michael Norman AKA Tanya Ransom and Fred Nunnley, aka Betty Benoit. The latter queens often performed as a trio. Two immediate influences for me at No Ro were Bradley Eros and Aline Mare who performed as a duo. They called themselves The Erotic Psyche. They were technical and aesthetic mentors to us as well as being integral creative collabora-

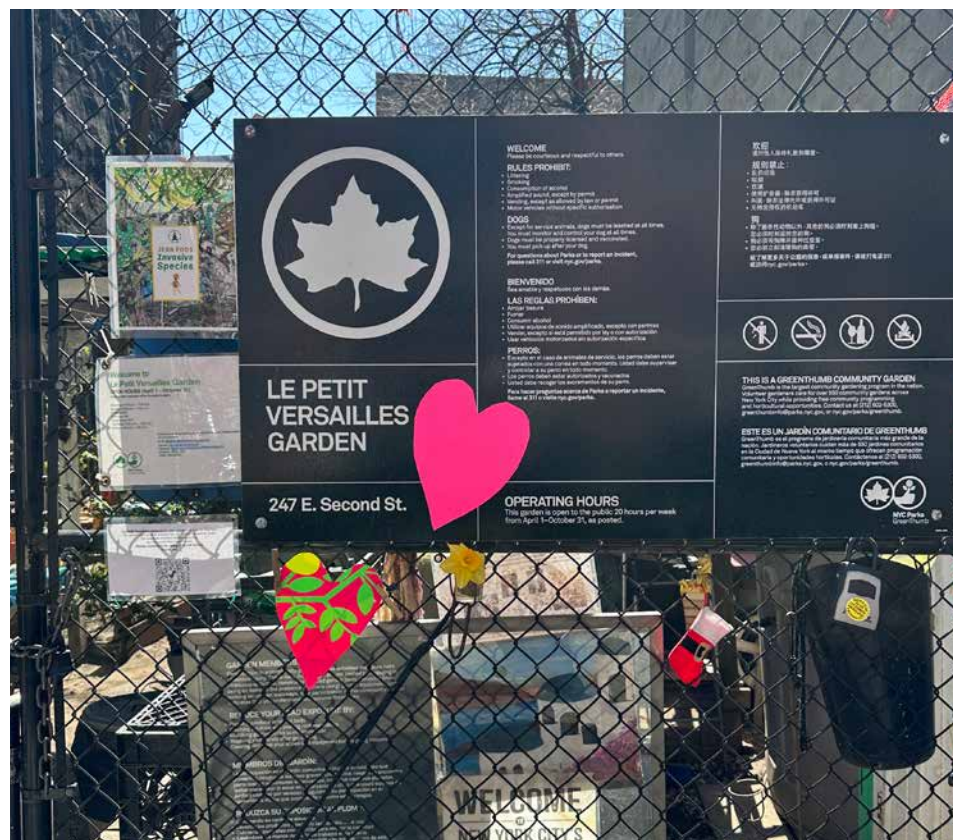
tors. They connected us, the new No Rio generation of artists to No Rio's CoLab origins. Both the Pyramid and No Rio were hole in the wall, TOTAL dumps. We frequented the Pyramid because we were broke and the drinks were at first cheap and then free once we became regular performers there. No Rio was a place we could make and show art. It then became our home when we were offered to live there in exchange for running the place. Nobody in their right minds would want to spend time in such divy places. The Pyramid always stank of rancid beer and cigarette smoke but we lit the place up with the scavenged glittery glam we found and the glad rags we wore as costumes.

MM: When I lived in L.A. in 1982 I joined a group called Lumina Independent Film and Video District Fusion with Fabrice Ziolkowski. The group included Todd Haynes and we were looking for space to show film. There was this amazing punk club called Lhasa. It was a multimedia club and a resource for artsy-punk, weird wave, and obscure bands. It was in this very dirty rough industrial area. You could pay an entrance fee and spend the night and see an eclectic program curated by Jean-Pierre Boccara showing punk new-wave bands, performance artists, cabaret acts, comedians, poets, art exhibitions, and film. It was the first group space, physical space and club that I joined where actually everyone was welcome. It was then that I came to the realization that we can all share our knowledge, whether it's poetry, dance, music, film.

When I moved to New York City in 1987, I met Jonas Mekas. I was excited to join and participate in the experimental community he founded with 22 other New York artists. In LA I had studied with Shirley Clark and the idea of having, distribution and having a mission of the artists working together for the common good, making films, distributing films, writing about films, archiving films, preservation of media, but also preforming, teaching, and digital and audio appealed to me. In 1990 I was asked to join the board of directors of FMC by Saul Levine. In visiting the office, I realized there were real organizational and administrative problems. I realized I had to write grants in order to keep the Coop alive and my first realization was I had to change the status of the Coop to a Non Profit (not business) so the foundation could have affordable rent.

I wanted the organization to survive; therefore I did not request a salary; I was volunteering and writing grants to try to raise funds to pay rent, keep royalties, and keep the foundation alive. In order to survive in the 20th century the organization had to accept new formats including VHS, DVD, streaming, and digital film. I made a list of what I felt was essential for the coop to survive and created a fundraising event with music and performance concerts every year, using local musicians such as John Zorn, Phil Glass, JG Thirlwell. Music is a vital part of the Avant Garde. As the executive director not only did I initiate the projects mentioned above I also collaborated with the Bowery Poetry Project, Anthology Film Archive, Millennium Film Archive, Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, and nu-

merous small galleries and important music venues like The Bowery Electric, Angel Orensanz Foundation, and the Living Theater. Another huge influence on my life and work was my friend and great inspiration Carolee Schneeman. Like others who have passed on she is an irreplaceable member of the community. My biggest to imbue their creative and social values into the hearts and minds of my students and protégés.



JW: I'm just thinking of how this all wraps, you know, I'm thinking of also the Living Theater as being part of the community. and you know, this idea of queer and sexual freedom, erotic cinema, and politics and how these often flow into each other.

MM: You two started a community garden. Le Petit Versailles. Jack and Leslie Lowe started Naked Eye Cinema whose participants were significantly made up of gay men and feminist women. And I thought especially in New York, one of the things is that the queer community was here and I felt welcomed in New York because of the Queer Community and all its diversity.

PMC: Food and art, cooking, and baking was where I was at back then

in addition to dancing studying classical ballet, performing with a downtown modern dance company, and all night clubbing. Around 1982 we created a performance collective we called P.O.O.L.. We started out performing concert dance. As we mixed into the downtown climate our work shifted towards cabaret, street performance, political agitation, ritualism, and media infused art installation. P.O.O.L.'s core group was dance trained. Joan Karlan, Brian Taylor, Jack Waters, and myself then performing as Peter Francis. Joan, who wasn't crazy about 3AM club performances, was soon replaced by Christa Gamper. Our home base was the Pyramid Club where we described ourselves as the resident dance company, a decade before Richard Move did his Martha Graham impersonations on the club circuit. We were kind of a pick up company that added dancers and performers as we went along. Some of these included Adrian Saich, Brad Taylor (Brian's brother), Nancy Girl (née Barbera), Julie Lemburger, and many others. We performed at Danceteria, Club Armageddon in the West Village, and other clubs on a circuit that no longer exists. It was a vaudeville atmosphere where classical music, standup comedy, gospel music, and rap could play on the same bill. When Jack and I became directors of ABC No Rio that became another home base. At No Rio we made a short lived stab at restauranting at No Rio called the Fountain Cafe centering around Becky Howland's circular fountain sculpture Brainwash installed in the back yard.

JW: What brings life to community is having a physical place to share in common. Plus food and drink. Then you can socialize. It creates a whole a whole gamut of human connections. AIDS was an irreversible turning point for community in a very decisive way. The eradication of a generation of artists resulted in a loss of leadership causing the absence of a collective memory that could have preserved a radicalism that all but disappeared.

PMC: You could say that the up side (if you want to call it that) was the emergence of an emboldened expression of Queerness that was a direct result of AIDS effect on gay men and their lesbian allies.

PMC: Queer Nation became the activist community you could say was the offspring/of ACT_UP. We reappropriated a word that was previously used as a pejorative...

JW: ...similarly to how Black militants in the '60s turned blackness around from a negative insult into a beautiful self identity making it possible today for Black Queer People With AIDS to be visible as communities of pride.

PMC: Do you remember when we installed an all Queer directorship at ABC No Rio?

JW: Yeah, that was around the early '90s when we had Jocelyn Taylor, now Jaguar Mary, as director of performance, George Town as visual

art director, and Dirk Hauska as director of film and general administrator.

PMC: That didn't last long because No Rio was under duress from our landlord, the City Of New York which refused to provide heat or make structural repairs.

JW: We were under the constant threat of eviction.

MM: It's a miracle that ABC No Rio not only survived but is now rebuilding the very structure that the City deliberately allowed to deteriorate.

PMC: Like the scores of squats in the neighborhood that were tear gassed evacuated, burned down and demolished by the same city of New York. Umbrella House is still going strong as is C-Squat and a handful of homesteads that made it through. Its important to cherish our victories scarce as there may seem to be.

PMC: True enough. It gives us strength to soldier on. Like the community gardens are a true blessing - hard as it is to maintain - and we couldn't if weren't part of a strong longstanding garden community that has each other's backs...

JW: ...for the most part.

MM: ...For the most part. (Laughs)

PMC: MM, talk about your community around 6th Street garden.

MM: The 6th Street and Avenue B Community Garden was founded 40 years ago as part of a progressive social movement to revitalize derelict neighborhoods and transform abandoned blocks filled with rubble into green spaces. Our garden consists of about 90 grave-sized individual plots, an event stage, a children's play area and farm, and a pond with 3 red aquatic slider turtles. The good news is in 2024, the New York State Council on the Arts awarded me the Individual Arts grant for "Turtles, Ponds, Community Gardens: Urban Ecosystems" for me to create a short film on urban ecosystems.

DOWNTOWN DAYS (EXCERPT FROM THE BASTARD HEIRS)

By Dorothy Friedman August



**DOWNTOWN DAYS (Excerpt from THE BASTARD HEIRS)
By Dorothy Friedman August**

The East Village in the 80's, (also called Lower East Side) is where I spent my adolescent 40's. If ever I belonged to a crowd it was here among artists and squatters, hippies and homeless. But despite gentrification, the spirit of rebellion and community still haunts the place. If I close my eyes I can see Seth Tobocman, Michael Carter, James Romberger, Marguerite Van Cooke, and other protesters, shouting "It's our park. Not your park," to the cops in riot gear on E 7th Street and Avenue A, Gary Azon spray painting a sheet of plastic, wrapping it around me like a dress, and whisking me off to a Halloween party at 8BC, a club on E. 8th Street between B and C, or Allen Ginsberg penning a poem on a tablecloth at Veselka and handing it to me. I can see art openings at storefront galleries, from Rivington to E. 14th Street, with people spilling out into the streets and sidewalks while sipping cheap wine out of paper cups.

I'm transported back to 1982 when I first arrived on the L.E.S., and

switched from grungy friendly women's bars like Bonnie & Clydes to trendy clubs like art galleries like ABC No Rio and The Pyramid Club. Shifted from hippie feminist to activist and anarchist. Hung out with Pedro Pietri who co-founded The Nuyorican Poets Cafe and David Wojnarowicz who let his guts and pain spill out onto the canvas. Wojnarowicz was one of the many artists for whom the personal and political merged. I was also inspired by other activists like Julian Beck and Allen Ginsberg who influenced my writing and thinking. Due to my encounter with Beck, co-founder of The Living Theater, I joined the theater located at a storefront on E3rd Street and Avenue B, and organized poetry readings with Gary Azon and workshops there from 1989-1992. Echoing the 60's it was a period passionate in its commitment to radical politics and community activism; rife with remarkable people, poetry and plays. The theater ensemble included powerhouses like Joanie Fritz, Tom Walker, Bobby Heiger and Lois Kagan Mingus, with Judith Malina and Hanon Reznikov at the helm. They presented both experimental and political plays that addressed issues such as public vs. private space, human responsibility and the plight of the homeless. One work, "The Body of God" stands out in which homeless people were invited to be part of the cast and shared food in the lobby's soup kitchen after the show. Gary Azon and I helped coordinate a benefit performance by Allen Ginsberg for the theater, as well as readings of new works by Kenneth Koch, John Farris, Herbert Huncke, Jackson MacLow, Penny Arcade and others.

In his pre-Bullet Space days John Farris might be found squatting in the basement beneath the theater and no one was turned away. At the center of everything was Judith Malina, spiritual leader and guru, who gave us hope despite the limitations of the system and gentrification eating up the neighborhood. and the belief that we could challenge and take back public space. I felt right at home at The Living Theater, where the only conformity was nonconformity, having lived with repressive parents in Brooklyn, and my consciousness expanded from being with homeless people in Tompkins Square Park's Tent City and with artists at storefront galleries and clubs, like Ground Zero and Civilian Warfare. I sometimes wrote about my experiences for The East Village Eye and DOWNTOWN, and organized readings at alternative spaces like ABC No Rio on Rivington Street (1986-89), such as a benefit for The African National Congress with Amiria Baraka and a poetry reading by children from the L.E.S. neighborhood.

From 1985-1997 Gary Azon wrote articles for DOWNTOWN, a neighborhood paper, including an art column called ART AROUND TOWN, which covered and photographed the art scene and politics of the community, including openings and articles on artists and performers like Keith Haring, Karen Finley, Annie Sprinkle, and the Tompkins Square Riots. I was Poetry Editor and selected poems for the poetry section. As poetry editor I coordinated three Year Of The Poet national poetry contests, one of which was won by Sapphires, author of PUSH. I also wrote articles, including "He Unzipped

The Tent," about Living Theater co-founder Julian Beck and a symposium at The St. Mark's Poetry Project. DOWNTOWN's publisher James Rensenbrink, was a leftist hippie, and his anarchistic credo established the paper's vision. Writers such as Sarah Ferguson with her sharp journalistic eye, David Kaufman, theater editor, and Steve The Folk Singer Witt, whose column The Folk Singer's Beat was published weekly, contributed to the standards and commitment set by James Rensenbrink. DOWNTOWN, a neighborhood paper, was distributed in the East Village weekly and was sometimes free. Tompkins Square Park and the plight of homeless people living there in makeshift tents (Tent City) was covered in the paper's Community Report.

In 1988 I camped out in Tompkins Square Park with homeless people and squatted with Gary Azon at ABC No Rio when we were evicted from our apartment in Carroll Gardens before the riots occurred. I was often out on the street documenting or in the park. Though I was a loner I carried the collective spirit in me. I met many other artists and activists like homeless artist John Ed-Crofts, Seth Tobocman, Larry Rivers, Bible Joe, and Clayton Patterson arrested for challenging the mayor's curfew who had his videotape of the Tompkins Square Park Riot confiscated by the police, and many others.

At the demonstration Gary Azon and I wore shields and helmets as we marched down St. Mark's Place to counter the police with their own shields raised, until they clubbed us with their night sticks and chased us down Avenue A. At the demonstration Gary gave me his coat and he went bare. As I sit at Veselka today more faces come back to me: Jack, a homeless man living in Tompkins Square Park who offered me a chair to sit down in what he called his "living room," which was beside the bandshell where punk rockers played loud defiant music on weekends and the homeless slept all week, and the woman in the park living in a tree who chanted "Birds are free to live in trees. Why not you and me." I see Allen Ginsberg walking through the park, Gary and I sitting on a bench in the park planning our next strategies, the police on the rooftop of the Wah Wah Hut across the street keeping us in view with their rifles. Until everything was confiscated, even our protest went underground. But part of us, that long line of pickets, dismantled and burned, we still carry in us.

On the surface the geography seems relatively unchanged, but the homeless people are gone as are the galleries. But I can still hear the agitators calling us to congregate; I still remember how we fought to preserve the neighborhood from gentrification. We were taller then, smarter and more engaged. It was a time when I truly belonged to a community. We were a family, the Lower East Side, responsible for one another, even as the police were beating us down and kicking us in the street. So I grabbed onto Gary Azon's arm and we flew up the street into the realms of possibility.

I ONCE KNEW A LADY GANGSTER

In Memoriam: The Life of Linda Twigg By Jerome Poynton



I've been asked to profile Linda Surace Twigg for a New York Acker memoriam. She was New York criminality in the female form. She aspired to, and became, a female gangster on the Lower East Side.

Linda was physically well formed, standing about 5'5", with a trim bust line. She was always meticulously dressed in Catholic schoolgirl outfits, always skirted one never saw Linda sporting a pair of slacks.

In writing of female criminality inside the Lower East Side literary community, I lean on four weapon poets: Linda Twigg, Anne Ardolino, Didi Doyle (a.k.a. Sharon Morill and Dee Dee Driscoll), and Anne Hanavan. Of the four, Linda was the killer she inspired murderers, she put actions into orbit, and murder was heavily favored over simple mayhem, drugs, and prostitution.

Linda never turned a trick but respected women who did. Mayhem was the specialty cake from Linda's kitchen. "One cunt hair is stronger than any man," she told me.

Like any professional, being a professional gangster requires baby steps, apprenticeships, and family.

Linda's father, in the movie version of her life, was a New Jersey driver for the Philly branch of the Italian mob. Saying "in the movie" gives me structural liberties with her life story. Truth bends and blends but doesn't break. Any similarity to Linda Twigg, the furniture maker, the silk screener, a licensed pilot, a licensed casino poker-chip manufacturer, an illegal pot dealer, is incidental to the real Linda Twigg.

While all the above are true, the real Linda I did not know. I'm not sure anyone did.

Or, I only knew the real Linda incidentally. The criminal Linda I knew very well. The business fronts she carried were lucrative. The father-daughter respect for the criminal life the scent of crime was more alluring for Linda than money or fame. Linda wanted your fear and was good at getting it with a schoolgirl smile and larcenous mind.

Linda Twigg could have made a million dollars selling shoelaces in a high-heeled world. The scent of crime was sweeter than the scent of new shoes.

Linda knew the MO of a mobster from watching and pining for her father's love, who she wanted to emulate and be successful where he was not. She was going to pay back any indignities her father felt as a mere chauffeur for accomplished mobsters. He was not let in on the real deal the smoke-filled inner circle. Linda would make up for this.

This fueled her carbon.

"Linda, why do you carry a gun?" poet Ilka Skobie asked. "You know you'll never use it." "I already have," Linda replied.

She had her legal business, she had her illegal business, and knew how to make fake walls to conceal one from the other. If there was a skill she was





lacking, she hired out to lunatic creatives, rogue police, and one credentialed telephone lineman to access building basements and private apartments. Her private security was street-poet Anne Ardolino, who, more often than not, had to protect Linda from Linda.

Why profile Linda? Is her being “Sexy” enough? Yes.

Sexy is enough. Linda Twigg was sexy. When she walked through a door, she read men like a psychic professional. Her husband, Billy Twigg, was Woodstock’s cocaine and weed dealer. Linda hooked up with him in the mid-70s, shortly after graduating from a New Jersey High School.

Billy had a wandering eye. Linda knew every sideways glance context, content, reputation, money in the corner pocket glances. She watched Billy betray her for cocaine-crazed Woodstock pussy.

Billy was finally busted, not for dealing, but for banging the Sheriff’s daughter or wife with Billy, it could have been both. He had “Jimmy Porter” charm lean, full head of greying hair, combed back and conversational.

Someone you could take home to meet daddy if your daddy was a wannabe mobster. Billy had the masculine sleaze highly sought after by the 20th-century femme fatales. And he had powder.
“Al Capone, step aside.”

Billy did his two years. Also for tax evasion: “My crime of record,” he said. “Two years for 200 thousand, not a bad salary.”

When he was paroled, it was into the arms of his loving wife, Linda, who had set up a carpentry shop and antique furniture restoration business in Manhattan on Third Avenue between 25th and 26th Street four combined Italianate brownstones giving Linda three of the four storefronts, the entire basement, and five independent ways to egress. Two back doors, two front doors, two side doors, and a basement elevator to the sidewalk in front appealed to Linda’s idea of choice.

Billy was paroled to Linda’s woodworking business. It was the occupation of her legal Jersey family members:

Jerome,
I do not know any of the circumstances of Billy Twigg or the Doubling Cube business. M Woodworking was not involved in any way with Linda or Bill or any of their entities, ever. I am unaware of anything about Billy Twigg’s furniture store or 348 Third Ave.

What I do know, Linda’s MOM nearly went broke, suffered much physical and emotional distress from Linda’s dependence on drugs. Plus, her psychological issues, which could not be addressed with the drug combination, put Linda in a bad place.

With that, it deteriorated her mother’s emotional state, well-being, and happiness. After Linda’s death, her MOM grieved but felt relieved knowing Linda was in the Catholic cemetery close to her home. Linda’s mother found happiness with the marriage of her son, grandchild, nieces, and nephews the last 15 years of her life without Linda worries before she herself passed away. Uncle Ed.

Linda would have been happy being in a Catholic cemetery. She was very Catholic, attended church regularly, and gave generously to the Catholic Worker on East 2nd Street. Her associations with the church enabled Linda. The church offered forgiveness and paperwork.

When Billy wandered away from Third Avenue, Linda relocated to the Lower East Side, but not before meeting Herbert Huncke, who shared a third-floor apartment with Stuyvesant High School English teacher R’lene Dahlberg.

After Billy left town, Linda purchased a license to manufacture legal poker chips for small casinos in Nevada and South Dakota. The name of her poker-chip company was The Doubling Cube.

“Jerry,” she said, “this is like printing money.”

THE EXTRA SPECIAL COFFEE CUPS OF ZITO

by Clayton Patterson

I needed something. I was stuck in one of those hard edge corners. What to do? Looking up at the sky for a sign of hope all I could see was dark clouds rolling together. It was obvious a storm was brewing. This storm had nothing to do with the weather. Not the kind of storm. Instead the upheaval was inside my head. The imagined darkness was not seen but felt. The absence of light was caused by the lack of a solution for a problem. The problem. This is #10 NY ACKER Awards. This event had to be extra special. All the pieces were falling into place.



One piece I wanted to bring a little extra attention to was Zito's RIP Cups. Why? Because one of the main concentrations of my work is to try and bring attention to the independents. Over the years I have documented the effects of gentrification and come to realize it is destroying pieces of the ingredients that made America great.

No questions the immigrants brought new ideas, ways of seeing and doing things that added to the culture. Add in the cheap rent and the chance to live an affordable lifestyle was another component that helped percolate new ideas. Original ideas were developed. Out of this came many independent small businesses. Independent creators. So much of independent ways of survival has been wiped out by the take over of the international corporations that are eating up all the ways an independent can survive. The independents are the ones who pulled themselves up by the bootstraps.

Zvito is not an immigrant, but he is an independent. A man who needs to stand on his own two feet. To work for himself. To keep his American Dream alive.

When I created the NY ACKERS I came to Zito for help. I admired his artistic integrity, style and sense of independence. As Zito started to think of ways to help he developed a new way of working and making money. He came up with the discarded coffee cup portraits. What is more American than the coffee cup? Discarded, recycling, employment, independence.

Over the years Zito has created many RIP coffee cup portraits. This ceremony is #10. To me a landmark event. How to thank Zito for his help, and bring attention to his coffee cup portraits? In the NY ACKER Awards case his art is the memorial cups. However, his coffee cup portraits can be of anyone living or dead. This is an inexpensive way to get a portrait done by Zito, people need to know they make wonderful gifts. More unique than a photo. Maybe instead of a poster of a famous person why not a framed hand drawn cup by Zito?

Ann Adrolino

1944 – 2014

by Jerome Poynton



Female poet as bodyguard wouldn't be your first choice unless you were a real gangster.

Linda Twigg was as real as lightning. She understood, as Frank Sinatra understood, protection comes in many different colors and metallic black handguns may be the least effective.

On collection calls Anne Lombardo Ardolino (1944 – 2014) was the bodyguard of choice for Linda Surace Twigg (1955 – 1996). Linda was a

Lower East Side gangster with a penchant for poetry and Anne Ardolino was a sex-worker poet with a penchant for peace.

Anne knew how to protect Linda from Linda; from one Italian to another. Anne knew how to put her foot in the door to stop Linda's rage of shrapnel from a pursed .45. "Pay what you owe," Anne said to the debtor. That brought clarity to the moment. Anne had a way of bringing clarity to moments: Asshole all pink and wrinkled puckered as if for a kiss ah but don't be fooled Linda was Anne's best friend, until she wasn't, but would be again. Anne was with her to the end until she could no longer protect Linda from self-immolation.

Anton Van Dalen

1938 – 2024

by Jeffrey Cyphers Wright



Born in Holland in 1938, Anton Van Dalen witnessed the horrors of war before immigrating to New York's East Village in the late 1960s. Here, he developed a personalized iconography around the shifting fortunes of the neighborhood as it declined before becoming gentrified.

Anton's bold, poster-like vstyle, depicted abandoned cars, sex workers and guard dogs as symbols of social injustice. While creating his own work he was also an assistant to the artist and cartoonist Saul Steinberg.

toonist Saul Steinberg.

Van Dalen's commitment to civic responsibility was central to his practice. He participated in demonstrations to save the community gardens and squats. He created graphic signs depicting a hammer and a rose to assist efforts at neighborhood self-determination.

His work also portrays pertinent, genial aspects of the East Village such as the pigeon coop on top of his building. This same building became a canvas for Van Dalen to share his style and his message. The word PEACE—proclaimed in yard-high letters—still spans the building on Avenue A.

Anton is represented by PPOW Gallery. His work is in the permanent collections of the Whitney, MoMA, and the Brooklyn Museum, and was recently featured prominently at the Drawing Center in connection with the the artist KAWS's collection. He is quoted in the New York blog EV Grieve: "Began documenting my street surroundings by 1975 I came to realize I had to embrace wholeheartedly, with pencil in hand, my streets with their raw emotions."

Soft spoken, supportive, and wise, he left a body of work that will forever define a time and place.

David Crocker

Canadian born David Crocker came to NYC and graduated from Carnegie Mellon.

He started his adventure at the Pyramid Club working for a mere twenty-five dollars a night. His tenure lasted over a decade, making him a shining fixture.

He was the lighting director, an MC, a king and queen and a true prince. He was marvelously bratty, wildly intelligent, and even through his darkness his light shone through. As an artist he could invent a lighting scheme with little-to-no equipment.

David added the final details on many of the weird acts and theatre pieces at the Pyramid, often working with no budget, found objects, street purchases and sheer imagination. "He got the visual irony of all of it...anti theater-theater" ~ Greg Reeves. He was in a rock band with Samoa and other Pyramid Luminaries called Balls. David was a brilliant MC and he was the one who introduced Nirvana at their premiere NYC gig. Like many of us, he struggled with demons. We lost him long ago and he continues to be missed.



Dondi

1961 – 1998

by Dillon Edlin

Like many writers Donald Joseph White began his career under a different moniker: Naco. Quickly replacing this with something more personal he chose a nickname bestowed to him by his parents and his career as Dondi quickly flourished.

His technical and creative prowess became a blueprint that many writers were able to adopt but never quite replicate. Incorporating an array of different styles his output was balanced between complex wildstyle pieces and more legible ones wanting the general public to be able to read his name.

By 1977 he had joined The Odd Partners (TOP) and the following year branched off on his own to form the Crazy Inside Artists (CIA) recruiting friends such as Crash Duro Rasta and Doc. Dondi's aspirations towards bringing graffiti to a wider audience were finally realized in 1983 with his appearances in both Style wars and Wild Style.

Throughout the decade he was a trailblazer in capturing a global audience and made history as the first graffiti writer to have a solo museum exhibition in Germany. His artwork found the eyes of many notable artists across various subcultures leading to collaborations with Malcolm McLaren and the Rock Steady Crew amongst others. Responsible for some of the most iconic works in graffiti history Dondi is remembered as a unique talented dedicated and inspiring artist.



Eddie Boros

1932 – 2007

Eddie Boros was born in New York on November 27, 1932, and died April 27th, 2007.

He was the middle son of two Hungarian immigrants, a house painter and a seamstress. Boros is most well known for creating the "Tower of Toys" that was located in New York City's East Village. Boros served in the army during the Korean War but because of his pacifism he was assigned to tree planting.

He began building his tower out of scrap wood in 1985 after installing wood sculptures randomly around the community garden.

In 1994 PBS aired a documentary about the tower on their stations. Over time, the tower grew to a height of 65 feet. Covered with a variety of toys, the tower appeared in the opening for the TV program NYPD Blue and also appeared in the musical Rent. Boros died at the age of 74 while recuperating from having both legs amputated above the knee.

He died at Mary Immaculate Hospital after his relatives allegedly found him to be malnourished at the VA hospital. Part of the 12th Annual Lower East Side Festival for the Arts was dedicated to Eddie Boros's memory.



Erick Hawkins

1909-1994

Choreographer Erick Hawkins was born in Trinidad, Colorado, a city shaped by Mexican cattlemen, European miners, and Jewish merchants on the Santa Fe Trail. It was also where Plains Indians met the Hopi, leaving a lasting impression that inspired his art. The son of a struggling inventor, Erick lacked mechanical skill and even struggled with his bicycle. His mother, a homemaker, had little sense of beauty, which he discovered through Ladies' Home Journal. Embarrassed by his home, he found solace in intellectual pursuits and his sisters. A guiding mantra: "Believe your senses."

As poverty worsened, Erick shuttled between Los Angeles and San Francisco, enduring the Spanish Flu epidemic without school or role models. In Kansas City for high school, he immersed himself in reading and recitals. At Harvard, he studied Greek and Latin but struggled financially, berating himself for chocolate cravings. Open about his homosexuality, he also pursued relationships with women.

The Depression forced him to New York City, where exposure to dance led him to study with Harald Kreutzberg in Germany. Returning, he danced with Balanchine and Martha Graham's company, choreographing roles before forming his own troupe. Resented by some, he rejected theatrical pretense, drawing inspiration from RH Blyth and FSC Northrup. Works like 8 Clear Places divided critics but inspired others. Collaborating with contemporary artists, he emphasized live music and effortless movement. Despite financial struggles, he transformed audiences kinesthetically, adhering to his principles.



Francisco “Pancho” Ramos

Also, on the green spaces side. Francisco “Pancho” Ramos, who passed in 2023? Pancho helped save the former 9C Community Garden, which now bears his name.

He organized the community and fought in City Hall when Giuliani wanted to put it up for redevelopment. Originally, the garden was started by another Puerto Rican named Nim García, who ended up using part of it as his own garage; a very interesting story for another time. Pancho’s obituary reads: “Francisco “Pancho” Ramos was a beloved father, grandfather, brother, uncle, friend, and community garden activist, “jack of all trades,” woodworker, metalworker, inventor, handyman, and community chef, dies on Thursday, June 2nd at age 85 after complications from a recent surgery. Pancho’s compassion, craftiness, and friendship will be missed dearly by community members, friends, and family, and we will never forget his commitment to preserving Puerto Rican culture, heritage, and contributions to New York City.”



Gary Indiana

1950 – 2024

by ©Jeffrey Cyphers Wright

Fearless and honest, Gary Indian (born Gary Hoisington), epitomized the dizzying successes and excesses of the booming East Village of the 80s. Hearing the brilliant author and critic talk was like listening to Truman Capote.

Gary endured bullying in his hometown in Derry, New Hampshire before leaving at 16. In Los Angeles he began using the name Gary Indiana before moving to New York’s East Village. In the 80’s he wrote and acted in a dozen plays performed at such hotspots as the Mudd Club and Club 57. A Coupla White Faggots Sitting Around Talking was filmed by Michel Auder. One of his own videos was included in the 2014 Whitney Biennial.



To pay the bills early on, Gary contributed essays to Artforum and Art in America. He was the Village Voice art critic from 1985 to 1988, known for acid takedowns of the artworld elites. Indeed, he wrote a note to himself to “be bitchy.” He was clear-eyed in his depictions of devastation and survival. His opus is a classic crime trilogy partly based on the murderer of Gianni Versace: Resentment; Three Month Fever: The Andrew Cunana Story; and Depraved Indifference, reprinted by Semiotext(e). The horror/comedy novel Rent Boy from 1987 was also just reissued.

Gary Indiana focused on vanishing love and exposing the jaded, degraded symptoms of the “Spectacle Society.” The Guardian described him as “one of the most important chroniclers of the modern psyche.” Rare and touching footage (by Jim C) of a young Gary in an intoxicated, forlorn rant recently resurfaced in the film Make Me Famous.

Iz The Wiz

1958 – 2009

by ©Dillon Edlin

Michael Martin, best known as Iz the Wiz, is one of the most prolific and prominent graffiti writers of all time, with a decades spanning career that took him all-city he developed an artistic style and that brought him recognition across all subway lines and beyond. Beginning in 1972 he graduated to trains the following year and by 1975 was known as Ike 327.

Inspired by the musical The Wiz, Ike 327 was replaced with Iz the Wiz or simply Iz. Adopting a shorter name allowed Iz to paint throwups with remarkable speed and cover even more ground across boroughs. With his full name he could paint whole cars and alongside his partner Caz and The Master Blasters (TMB). Having mastered various styles, he found inspiration following Futura 2000's 1980 "Break Car" and began experimenting with artistic styles and methods which included using two cans at once to paint fill-ins.

Throughout the following decades Iz the Wiz would find recognition outside of the trains with a feature in the films Wild Style and Style Wars as well as a gallery career which lasted throughout his life. He was an important figure in the establishment of the Phun Factory/ 5 Pointz, one of the most important landmarks in graffiti. His involvement saw the recruitment of hundreds of graffiti writers who traveled from across the globe for a spot on the wall which would remain a mark of prestige until its demolition in 2013. Holding a spot in history, Iz the Wiz is remembered as one of the most dedicated, consistent, and artistically proficient writers of all time.



Joanne Ziprin

1919 – 1994

Joanne Ziprin was born Joanne Eash in Minnesota in 1919 and left home early to pursue a career in Los Angeles. A fiercely original and independent spirit—with a striking beauty and radiant intelligence that inspired some of her family to speculate that she was an extraterrestrial—she had by the 1940s become a sought-after model (under the name of Condé) and clothing designer.

A close friend of Lena Horne, whose wardrobe she created in collaboration with the artist Edmund Kara, Joanne became an intimate of some of the most prominent jazz musicians of the day (Charlie Parker was the godfather of her eldest son, and Thelonious Monk was a regular visitor).

Never a self-publicist, Joanne was obliged to reduce her creative output by the birth of four children between 1954 and 1963. Her major collaboration with Harry Smith on his Film No. 13: Oz (ca. 1961–1962), for which she executed elaborate scenic cut-outs, was cut short by the failure of production, and the surviving footage has not been widely seen.

Joanne moved her four children to Berkeley. They initially lived there with Timothy and Rosemary Leary (the latter was a modeling friend), and Joanne was instrumental in running the Holding Together benefits for Leary's legal defense at that time. In the 1970s and 1980s Joanne opened and operated two boutiques, The Grove and MARS, in Berkeley. For them she designed clothing, including a collection of Tibetan-inspired fashions, some of which were made from fabric that she marbled herself by hand. The boutiques also carried antique rugs, furniture, jewelry and objets d'art that she collected. She also continued producing photographs, though most of her effects were destroyed in the tragic Oakland firestorm of 1991. Joanne Ziprin passed away in 1994.



Kate Hellenbrand

1943 - 2022

ZITO'S MEMORIAL CUPS



by Shane Enholm

These awards have become a significant part of NYC art, and they always pay homage to tattooing. I won a few years back, but the sad part is that as time moves forward, we lose big pillars of tattooing who cut their teeth in New York. Bob Roberts, Kate Hellenbrand, and Mike Rollo Banks all honed their craft in the Big Apple, and sadly, they are gone now.

But we want you to remember: they all tattooed in NYC before planting their flags elsewhere. Mike and Kate were a couple, and Mike photographed Thom Devita getting his Coleman-style back piece from Huck Spaulding. That moment inspired Mike, and in turn, Kate, who earned her nickname working at Goodtime Charlie's because she "shanghaied" customers.

Bob is closest to me; he was a musician who played with The Heartbreakers in NYC. In fact, when he was tattooing a pin-up on Johnny Thunders, it hurt so badly that Johnny asked Bob to leave the head off the design. Clayton has done so much for this art form, even as it becomes mainstream.

So, when you're paying homage to the award winners this year, let's nod our heads to Bob, Kate, and Mike—and especially to Clayton. You see, as we get called home, there are no characters quite like us to replace what's lost.

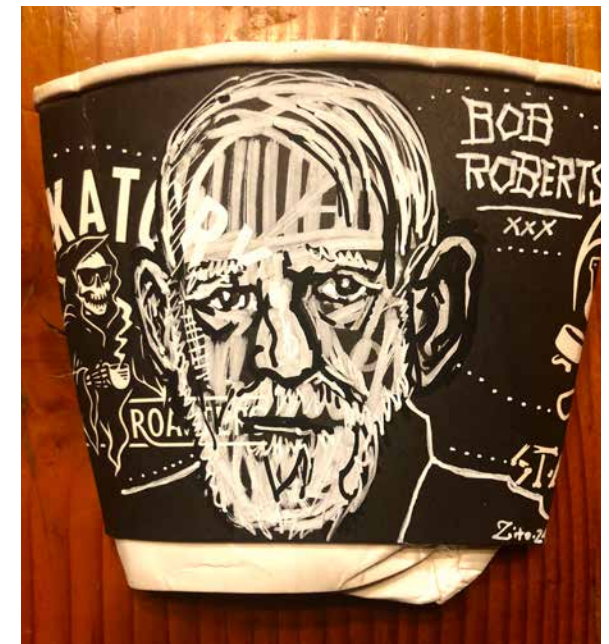
Mike Malone

1942 - 2007



Bob Roberts

1946 - 2022



Michael London Berube

1957 – 2024

Michael London Berube, from upstate New York found his way to the wilds of the East Village and the Pyramid Club in the early 80s where he performed as Michael London, and the beautiful Audrey White. He was kind, talented, funny and smart as hell. His performances dazzled.

His record, Measured In Inches, recorded as Michael London has over 99,000 views on youtube and is somewhat of a cult hit. After his performance career, he received his BFA summa cum laude in 2007 and his MFA in 2010, both from Hunter College where he went on to have an illustrious career as a beloved faculty member teaching art.

Michael Berube's own art has been featured in a number of exhibitions, particularly at a space provided by The Church of St. Paul the Apostle on the Upper West Side. He was an extremely prolific visual artist, as well as a curator, and educator. He was a huge dog lover and is survived by his dear dog Shadow. His absence weighs heavily on our community and he is greatly missed.



Norberto Cruz II

Born April 1, 1952 in New York City to Eva Robert Ramos and step-father, Jorge Ramos, Norberto Cruz II was recognized as a musical prodigy during his childhood. His parents nurtured his talent by providing him a piano and esteemed tutors.

He attended the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, and by the age of 15, he was already touring internationally with Latin bands & musicians, the likes of Ralph Robles and Joe Cuba. Norberto Cruz II was a gifted pianist, arranger & composer. Also, the son of Norberto Cruz Sr. that co-started the company Latin Percussion.

He was the Woodsmith who built the original congas that started it all. Although, he did not get much credit as a youth behind the shadows of famous Latin music icons such as Larry Harlow he was responsible for much of their arrangements and original compositions. He eventually joined the Joe Cuba band for approximately 15 years, into his adulthood. When not on tour with leading salsa stars, Norberto composed his own music.

Norberto was married to Luz Marina Rodriguez 1982-1988, and is survived by sons, Norberto Cruz III, Gabriel Cruz and step-son, Abran Maldonado. He was a loving father, son and husband. Norberto met an untimely death on January 13, For vinyl collectors of Latin music of the boogaloo and salsa eras, you can find Norberto Cruz II in the credits of Joe Cuba and Ralph Robles albums as composer as well as pianist such as in the 1979 vinyl: You can also listen to his unique, smooth, style of piano virtuosity.



Patti Astor

1950 – 2024

by Craige Walters

Patti Astor, born Patricia Titchener on March 17, 1950, in Cincinnati, Ohio, was a driving force in New York's underground art and nightlife scene. She arrived in the city at 18 to study dance at Barnard College but was quickly drawn toward activism, joining the Students for a Democratic Society.

By the mid-1970s, She was an East Village icon, to later be recognized as the "Queen of the Downtown Scene."

Astor made her mark as an accomplished actress, starring in many "beyond low-budget" films, including Amos Poe's *Underground U.S.A.* (1980) and later in Charlie Ahearn's *Wild Style* (1983) – the groundbreaking film that brought hip-hop to the big screen. She has been credited with bridging the worlds of punk, hip-hop, and graffiti, uniting them at a time when their paths were beginning to collide.

In 1981, she and Bill Stelling opened the Fun Gallery, a groundbreaking space that helped bring street art into the mainstream. The gallery showcased early works by Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring, Dondi, and Futura 2000, giving a platform to graffiti artists in the fine art world.

When Fun Gallery closed in 1985, a casualty of East Village gentrification, Astor relocated to Los Angeles, continuing her creative pursuits as a writer, producer, and actress, including a role in *Assault of the Killer Bimbos* (1988).

Patti Astor passed away on April 9, 2024, at the age of 74 in Hermosa Beach, California. She was a visionary who championed artists and left an undeniable imprint on art, film, and counterculture.



Paul Lai

1934 – 2023

by Zachary Lau

Paul Kok Hung Lai, born October 15th, 1934, passed away at 88 years of age, on Tuesday, June 6th, 2023 at Albany Medical center.

He was a well respected and successful businessman, owned a restaurant in Albany, and served as an advisor for Governor Mario M. Cuomo. He was one of the first to hold an important post at the time. He shattered a glass ceiling for Asian Americans. His story has all the substance of an immigrant success story.



And now for the shadow of Paul Lai's story. Paul Lai was first charged in December of 1993 for racketeering and conspiracy, which involved gambling, extortion, and a murder. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 1996 after admitting to conspiring to murder two gangsters, as part of his plea agreement.

He was closely involved with illegal gambling rings in Chinatown and was part of the notorious tung On gang. This is all part of Chinatown's history. Legal, legitimate businesses, which, under normal operating conditions, do not need to be influenced by illegal enterprises, however, based upon location, environment, and people, these places were forced to deal with street gangs and illegal activities in order to be competitive. Both the substance and shadow of the story is a reflection of this.

Pedro Pietri

1944 – 2004



El Reverendo Pedro Pietri (1944-2004) was a Nuyorican interdisciplinary artist, poet, performer, conceptualist, playwright, screenwriter, cultural, and AIDS activist.

He was one of the founders of the Nuyorican Poets Café and the DIY collective Latin Insomniacs Motorcycle Club (Without Motorcycles.) He was also the co-director of El Puerto Rican Embassy. His sui generis work moves freely between gritty urban realities and the absurd, between diasporic and Puerto Rican nationalist formations, between life and death, English and Spanish, NYC-Puerto Rican streets and his own intricate mindscapes.

Phase 2

1955 – 2019

by ©Dillon Edlin

A Prolific writer and innovator, Lonny “Phase 2” Wood was one of the first Bronx writers to hit the trains and left an artistic mark on graffiti and the world at large that is still felt to this day. Like many Bronx writers of the first generation, he was a student at Dewitt Clinton High School and would regularly cut class to mingle with other writers at the Bedford Park subway yard. His approach to writing was intellectual, viewing graffiti as a unique form of art that allows writers to both explore and expand the boundaries of the world.



As an artist Phase 2 opened a new door with his introduction of bubble letters, expanding horizons from the previously dominant stick lettering. This new style was only part of the array of contributions Phase 2 made to the art form. His practice fostered community development, not least exemplified by the establishment of the Writer’s Bench, a place where writers gathered and socialized amongst themselves. For those he viewed as qualified he ran the crew The Independants (INDs), including writers such as Riff 170, Billy 167, P’nut 2, Ale 1, and Jester 1.

In his constant drive to expand boundaries he eventually helped organize the International Graffiti Times, the first graffiti magazine. Over time his work evolved towards abstraction and complexity, ever continuing his path to expand the limits of graffiti.

Ray Kelly

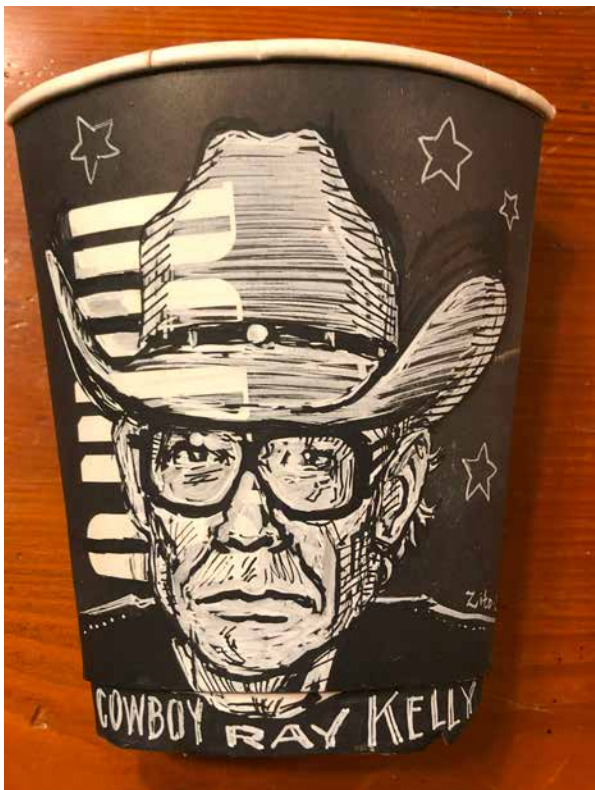
1945 - 2024

by Monty Catsin

Ray Kelly's was a rough, heavy-weight, METAL-PHYSICAL world. The Rivington School Sculpture Garden was a monument to the "art is life / life is art" concept, a collectively created sculptural installation masterminded and supervised by Cowboy Ray.

A pioneer of social street art, somewhat analogous to that of Joseph Beuys who is best known for his social sculpture concept and ecological activism, The Cowboy as a metal-physical poet employed a junk-art and scrap-mental narrative. His was a city in corrosion, a world in ruins, one of the world's biggest cities NYC reduced to scrap.

Taking over an abandoned lot full of garbage in NYC's Lower East Side without a gunshot was The Cowboy's masterpiece. The big difference between them is that while Beuys expressed himself through theoretical talks The Cowboy communicated through silent voicing, but the basic and most visible difference between Joseph and Ray was the style of their hats Wool Trilby Hat vs Cowboy Hat.



Richie Perez

1944 - 2007

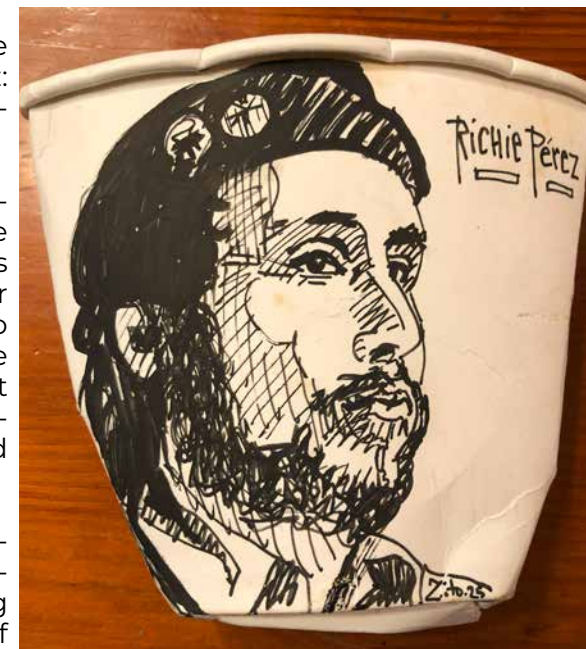
The Young Lords and the Legacy of Richie Pérez: Radical Activism for Justice.

Amid the social upheaval of 1960s America, the Young Lords emerged as a revolutionary force for Puerto Rican and Latino civil rights. Central to the Young Lords' impact was Richie Pérez, a Bronx-born organizer who joined in 1969.

Pérez framed police brutality as systemic oppression, campaigning against the NYPD's use of deadly "flak jacket" bullets in Puerto Rican neighborhoods. His intersectional analysis connected race, class, and U.S. colonialism, emphasizing solidarity across movements. After the Young Lords dissolved in the 1970s, Pérez continued organizing through groups like the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights and the Community Justice Center, advocating for labor rights and police accountability while mentoring new activists.

Pérez's legacy lies in his unwavering commitment to justice that bridged local and global struggles. He understood Puerto Rican liberation as inseparable from dismantling racism, imperialism, and economic exploitation.

Today, the Young Lords' model—pairing grassroots service with radical defiance—remains a blueprint for movements pursuing racial equity and decolonization. Their story challenges us to envision liberation as a collective, uncompromising project, rooted in courage and solidarity, that addresses both immediate needs and the systems perpetuating injustice. As activism renews in the 21st century, their legacy reminds us that true dignity demands relentless pursuit of equity for all.



Roberto Nazario

1947 – 2020

by Lisa Kaplam & Irene Packer-Halsey

To the memory of Rabbit, who inspired a movement for the revival of the spirit and the physical condition of Loisiada! A neighborhood that he and Bimbo Rivas named, and whose soul could not be extinguished no matter how many fires and police raids threatened its strong Nuyorican heritage. Thank you Rabbit - you are not forgotten here.

Lisa Kaplam

As I knew him, was a never-ending inspiration! He was a brother to me and my husband in every sense! A joy in the lives of so many! From the streets of NYC in Loisaída, to the hills of Mayaguez and throughout Boriken, to the halls of Congress in WDC, to the inner city of Baltimore, and in hundreds and hundreds of communities throughout the U.S., Roberto was a catalyst of change and a champion of justice. His determination and persistence will never be forgotten. Most of all he loved his family and he loved being Puerto Rican! My heartfelt sympathy! RIP!

Irene Packer-Halsey



Sheba Ziprin

by © Micheal Caspar

Born in November 1900 in Safed, in the Beirut Vilayet of the Ottoman Empire (today Tsfat, Israel), Sheba Ziprin immigrated to the Lower East Side with her family at a young age. One of sixteen families in a decrepit tenement, she expressed creativity through theater, costume design, and later photography. She finished high school at sixteen and married lawyer Nathan Ziprin two years later.

After her marriage ended and her toddler daughter Vita died, Sheba supported her two young sons, Lionel and Jordan. In

1934, NYCHA head Langdon Post invited her to join the organization. She conducted surveys for early developments like First Houses on the Lower East Side and Williamsburg Houses in Brooklyn. Drawing from her tenement life and housing activism exposure at a 1933 Henry Street Settlement memorial, she found the work thrilling. She pursued housing surveys while studying sociology at NYU at night.

Sheba organized Bury the Slums rallies, including one in Washington, and spoke frequently at union halls, social workers' retreats, neighborhood councils, and houses of worship, advocating for slum dwellers. In 1940, after passing civil service exams, she became a NYCHA publicist and tour guide, promoting public housing's community benefits. Over decades, she managed projects across all five boroughs, including Williamsburg Houses, Vladeck Houses, Melrose Houses, Markham Gardens, and Queensbridge Houses, the largest public housing project in North America. She also oversaw Quonset hut encampments for World War II veterans and their families



Stay High 149

1950 - 2012

At 20 years old, Wayne "Stay High 149" Roberts was already considered old for a writer and an adult by the law when he began in 1970. Nevertheless, he stands alone as one of the most iconic and skilled writers of all time. His tag and character "The Smoker" (borrowed from the TV show "The Saint") have influenced countless writers and leaves no question as to why; the fluidity and perfection of his hand-writing set a standard that challenged writers from all over.



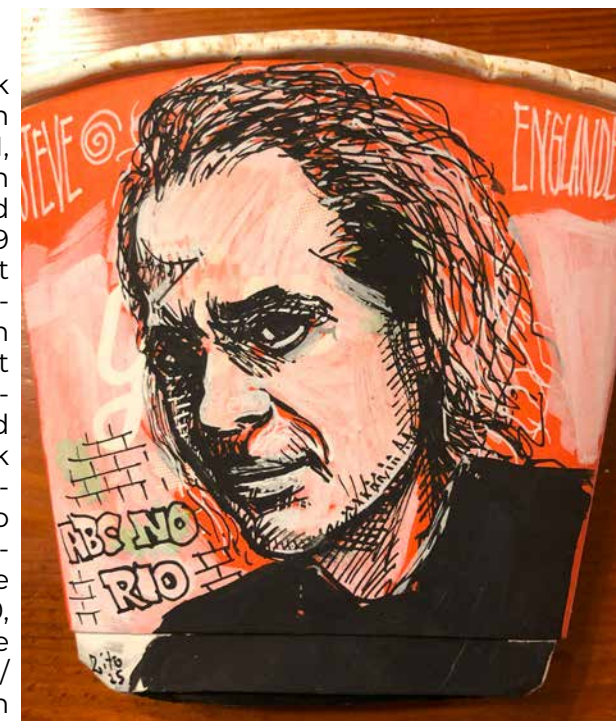
Beyond being known amongst writers, his name became so prominent across the city that the mainstream had no choice but to notice it, making him one of the earliest writers to be known to the general public and the media. In 1973, after having his face published in an article by the New York Magazine and a subsequent arrest he adopted the lengthy name "Voice of the Ghetto".

Not only was he a gifted writer, but also a technological innovator. Utilizing multiple colors of ink he created markers that allowed him to use an array of hues within a single stroke, a technique that added dimension and depth to what was formerly quite static. He continued his career until 1975 when he suddenly vanished, keeping a low profile away from graffiti until being rediscovered in 2000. Upon his resurfacing he was met with a flurry of writers who idolized him; after so many years he finally saw the scale of his impact and influence.

Steven Mark Englander

1961 - 2024

Steven Mark Englander was born in Chicago on June 11, 1961, and grew up in Racine, Wis. He moved to New York City in 1979 to attend film school at NYU. During the mid-to-late '80s, Steven was active in anarchist groups like the Anarchist Switchboard and the Libertarian Book Club. He became involved with ABC No Rio, drawn to Matthew Courtney's Wide Open Cabaret. In 1990, he oversaw the space during the Seven Days/Ten Years exhibition in Hamburg, Germany, when then-director Lou Acierno was away. Upon Lou's return, they became co-directors until resigning in 1991. Steven returned to No Rio in 1994, helping fight eviction efforts and continuing its collectivist ethos with squatter allies.



Around that time, Mr. Englander met Victoria Law, a writer who served with him on No Rio's board in the mid-to-late-'90s and became his longtime partner. After years of negotiations, the city sold them the building in 2006. By summer 2024, construction began on a new building for ABC No Rio. This progress reflects Steven Englander's enduring dedication, along with hundreds of volunteers committed to No Rio's mission. Days before his death, Mr. Englander expressed solace that the new building ensured No Rio would live on, stating, "I'm going to die, but the project is going to be finished."

This bio was written by Peter Cramer using interviews by Liza Kirwin for the Archives of American Art and the New York Times obituary by Colin Moynihan.

Tracy 168

1958 – 2023

by ©Dillon Edlin

Growing up in the Bronx allowed Michael “Tracy 168” Tracy easy access to the nearby Bedford Park 4 yard in the early 1970’s, getting into the game as graffiti was still developing.

His early start would prove to be monumental as his career would later shape the landscape of graffiti, most notably the development and introduction of Wild Style.

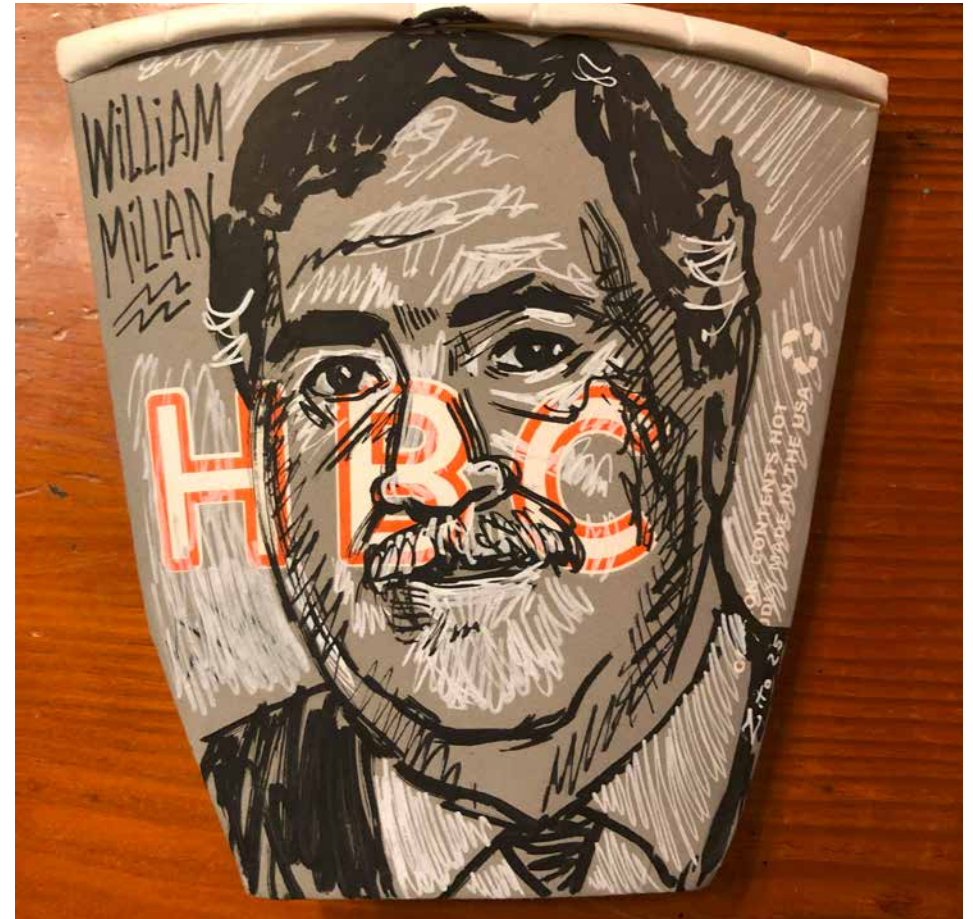
He took direct action in mentoring other writers and embraced Wild Style as more than just art, but a way of life. By 1974 he had his own crew, Wanted, and had a reputation as a top competitor who would travel across boroughs for battle. Not long after he would found the Wild Style (WS) crew and would continue his career on the trains until 1977 after an appearance in the Daily News where he offered advertisements on the sides of subway trains for \$25 each.

Tracy 168’s career continued after his retirement from the subway and he became one of the first graffiti writers to paint commercial murals, bringing his honed senses for color, lettering, and characters to local businesses. This independent practice lasted throughout his life as he continued to work as an artist and appear in galleries. Across the world Tracy 168 is synonymous with Wild Style; he embodied the rebellious and dedicated discipline which has taken on a life of its own.



William Milan

2024



William Millan A notable musician from Loisaida who recently passed was . Daso happened to honor Millán during his New Village Festival last year. His wife and children are still with us. This is from the CUNY Center for Puerto Rican studies archives: William Millán was born in New York City and grew up in the Loisaida neighborhood in Manhattan. He was an arranger, guitarist and musical director performing and recording with various groups including his own ensemble, the salsa band Conjunto Saoco. In his late twenties Millán changed careers and worked as a social worker in New York City for 35 years. Source: "Twas the Spirit of Loisaida by William Millan (2019)"

Lionel Ziprin

1924 – 2009

Lionel Ziprin was a born-again Hasidic Jew whose past was anchored in the artistic movements of the '50s and '60s. As a child, he was plagued by epilepsy and rheumatic fever, after which he had visions, such as seeing the Bible come to life in his grandfather's house. Later, he would translate these visions, along with his thoughts and worldly experiences, into his poetry. Ziprin walked with the likes of Thelonious Monk, Charlie "Bird" Parker, Allen Ginsberg, Bruce Conner, and SF poet laureate Jack Hirschman.

His apartment was a destination for the greatest underground artists of his time. He married a woman named Johanna, so famous for her beauty that her vision was immortalized by Bob Dylan in "Visions of Johanna." The couple had four children.

A poet, adviser, comic book writer, greeting card maker, and underground film actor.

The dichotomy of Lionel's religious convictions paired with his past bohemian lifestyle gave him a unique language. It may have been what made his fantastic world so understandable and vibrant. He walked a line of reality and fantasy as only a true mystic would, and more often than not stayed on that line for the entire conversation.

Lionel passed away on Sunday, March 15, 2009. By nightfall, his coffin was on a plane to Israel to be buried in Tsfad, home of the mystics, alongside his mother, grandmother, and grandfather, the great Rabbi Naftali Zvi Margolies Abulafia.

As he wrote in the poem Sentential Metaphrastic, 1965-1971: "Existence inhibits, but does not inhibit me. I am like a flame leaping from the side of one's head. Nothing inside is hidden."



TEAM



Meet the Acker Award staff.

ORGANIZER

Christopher Heffernan

Christopher Heffernan was born in New York's Hudson Valley and has traveled much throughout the United States and alternatively lived in New Orleans and New York City. He is a poet and fiction writer with two books of poetry, *Rag Water*, published by Fly By Night Press, and (laughter) published by Fomite Press.

His short stories, poetry and art criticism have been published in many magazines and journals throughout the country. Christopher has a long standing love of the visual arts and uses painting and drawing to break through what can't be put into words as he assists in curating exhibitions in the East Village and Lower East Side, swimming in the deep end of what is new and growing in Outsider art, Street art, and those who defy category.



RIP CUPS

Antony Zito

Antony Zito is a portrait and mural painter who earns his living making art. He has a natural talent for capturing a likeness and his main focus is portraiture. When the cost of rent fell after 9/11, Zito opened a small gallery on Ludlow Street. He worked night and day filling the space with mountains of artwork and hosting monthly exhibitions with neighborhood artists. Zito Studio Gallery became a staple in the community and cemented his reputation as a portrait painter and curator.



"There was nothing more satisfying to me," says Zito, "than rolling over to my shop on Ludlow, unlocking the door, putting on a record, and sweeping the sidewalk in front of my spot. I used to bring a dozen paintings out and lean them against the wall of the parking garage next door. Everybody who passed by would know something was happening there," he laughs, "though most of 'em couldn't imagine what."

Zito's gallery was a vibrant neighborhood space where people of all kinds would pop in. He never kept specific hours but he painted anyone who was willing to sit. Zito amassed an enormous body of art - portraits on found objects of many Lower East Siders.

It is precisely this kind of place, a neighborhood shop open to all people, that the "new" New York has made extinct. The early 2000s was the last time that an artist working out a dream could still rent a storefront and interact with the neighborhood in such a way. Zito Studio Gallery became a valued and reliable hub of homegrown culture.

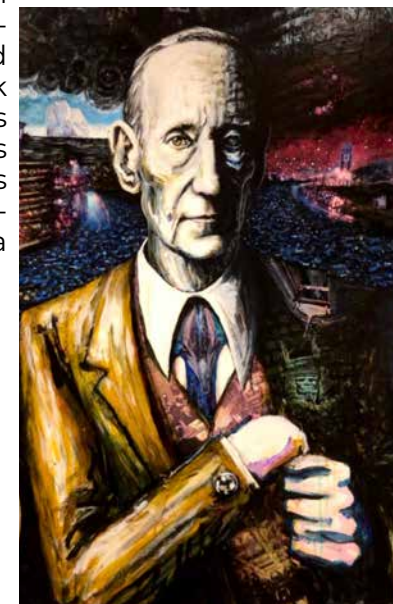
Zito has a knack for creating an accurate and emotive depiction of someone, in such a way that the portrait contains the stuff of a living, breathing being. As a viewer we are forced to ponder the nature of this person, what they are thinking and feeling, like voyeurs into the window of their existence.

Living in New York in the 90s, Zito became intrigued by the interesting trash he found on the curb every day. Since he couldn't afford canvas, he painted on this discarded junk which had a history of its own, bringing an adjacent narrative to the portrait.

When Clayton Patterson asked him to contribute artwork to the Acker Awards, Zito came up with the idea of painting portraits on the crushed, paper coffee cups he saw on every corner. He saw this as the ultimate "canvas" to portray the fast-paced life of the average NYer. It was stained, trampled on, and on its way to the landfill - until Zito intervened and gave it a new life. Since 2016, he has been contributing 40 original portraits on coffee cups to the Acker Awards.



There is not a better person available to create a family heirloom portrait that will be treasured for generations. Whether it's painted on a found object or a traditional canvas, his work evokes a depth of emotion that exists beyond the average portrait. See his work at www.zitogallery.com and visit his Etsy shop, Coffee Cup Portraits, to commission a small affordable piece from a photo.



To book Zito for commissions please scan QR code



www.zitogallery.com/

COVER ARTIST

Ari Roussimoff

Ari Roussimoff, a critically acclaimed painter and film director, is regarded as one of the most prolific and creative artists of his generation. His paintings, which explore Russian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Symbolic, and Masonic themes, have earned widespread acclaim and have been showcased in over 100 exhibitions worldwide. In 2021, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York acquired his surreal art film "SHADOWS IN THE CITY" (1991) for its permanent collection and is preserving it as part of film and art history.

Roussimoff's work has been exhibited at prestigious venues such as the Eduard Nakhamkin Fine Arts Galleries, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bucharest Museum, Nicholas Roerich Museum, Chancellor Robert R. Livingston Masonic Library and Museum, Pace University's Peter Fingesten Gallery, Anthology Film Archives, and many others. His talent has been praised by modern art masters Marc Chagall and Oskar Kokoschka, and as a teenager, he was invited to lunch with Salvador Dali and his wife Gala.

In addition to painting, Roussimoff has made a name for himself as a filmmaker. His 1991 surrealist horror film "SHADOWS IN THE CITY" marked his debut as a feature director. He later won the Phantom of the Movies' award for Best Documentary of 1999 for "FREAKS UNCENSORED," which was hailed as one of the 100 best documentaries of all time by the Facets Movie Lovers Video Guide.

Roussimoff's diverse career includes designing sets for Broadway, creating costumes, performing art, hosting a three-part music program on MTV, and appearing in a non-singing role at the Metropolitan Opera. A captivating speaker, he frequently lectures at colleges, universities, and cultural institutions across Europe and America. Having lived and worked in cities like Zurich, Amsterdam, New York, Los Angeles, and Miami Beach, Roussimoff seamlessly blends his passions for painting and filmmaking. He approaches each painting as an adventure, constantly evolving as an artist.



LAYOUT & DESIGN

John Gagliano

John is an Art Director and Painter born in Floral Park, NY. He spent a lot of time grinding through his early years as a bike messenger and working at NYC-OTB (Off Track Betting), pulling creative inspiration from these side hustles while going to school at FIT.



After school, he started selling paintings and pursuing commercial illustration, landing early opportunities in BlackBook Magazine, The Fader, and other influential publications.

From there, he stumbled into illustration and design roles at Vice & Warner Music Group, honing his ability of artistic expression with strategic drug use and drinking under the BQE.

In 2014, he co-founded Overthrow New York with Joseph Goodwin, a counterculture boxing club that held down Bleecker Street for over a decade. As Art and Creative Director, he designed much of the brand's artwork and apparel that were as thoughtfully constructed as they were impactful. In 2024, Overthrow collaborated with Everlast and Punk Magazine ty, showcased at Dover Street Market Now, John is painting a new series for a show in May 2025 and starting his own agency.

PRODUCER

James Muscarella

NYC based filmmaker Jim Muscarella has been active in art culture for 35 years. Primarily a documentary producer, Jim has been gathering creatives in many ways including art curation, live events and musical performances.

In 2005, he founded the E.Vil City Film Fest, a multi day independent arts festival that grew from the backrooms of small neighborhood venues to institutions like Anthology Film Archives & The Knitting Factory. E.Vil City produced live events, art shows, concerts, panels and awards ceremonies & supported filmmakers from around the globe screening hundreds of films in its tenure.

Jim continues to work as a producer, EP and 1st assistant director on nation-

al commercial campaigns, music videos, short & feature films and television promos.

In 2022, along with artist Mike Mills, he co-curated “Just for Fun, starring Patti Astor,” a 20 artist group show that spanned a 40 year period of New York artists. It became the last NY exhibition Astor was involved with before her 2024 passing. Jim has been a driving force in the community through his support of the underground & relationships with filmmakers, artists, comedians & musicians. He has continued to be active in the film programming world, supporting independent & mentoring upcoming filmmakers.

Jim is also the producer of an upcoming feature film, which follows the lives of Joe Coleman & Whitney Ward, “How Dark, My Love” is directed by Scott Gracheff and slated for release in 2025. See Jim's Acker Award on page 33.

POSTER ARTIST

Ray Felix

Ray Felix is an author and self publisher born in New York City. Felix's comics include, “Bronx Heroes®: Runaway Slave”, “The Greatest Hero Black Power®”, “Bronx Heroes in Trumpland”, “Enter: The Roach™” and “A World Without Superheroes®”. Ray Felix is also the Founder of the community based organization, Bronx Heroes Comic Con®, which promotes literacy and education through the practice of reading and creating comics.

Felix has Freelanced with off Broadway productions such as “The Monkey King” from Great Small Works (2006), Cathay: Tale of 3 cities in China(2007) with director Ping Chong and designer Stephen Kaplan. In addition, “Generation Buy” (2010) with writer/ Director Phillip Saruaci jr. and he worked on the Comic TV adaption of the Bronxnet Emmy Award Winning show, “Bronx Flavor”, starring Justin Fornal. Ray Felix's film credits include “A Wonderful Christmas: Feliz Navidad” (2005) released by Lionsgate Pictures, “The Culinary Adventures of Baron Ambrosia” (2011), “Baron Ambrosia must Die” (2012), Oxygen Channel's series, “Killision Course”, Ep2.(2017).

Felix's artwork has appeared in the Seth MacFarlane film, “Ted 2” (2016) and Netflix's Original Series, “Best, Worst, Summer Ever” (2018). Felix's work has appeared in Netflix “Best, Worst, Weekend Ever”. Ray Felix is the winner of numerous awards and grants such a “BRIO- Bronx Recognizes Its Own, 2002, CAG Award- Community Arts Grant 2011-



2016,(NYSCA), New York State Council on the Arts in 2011 -2016, The Sherman Foundation, New York Community Trust award, The National Endowment for the Arts, Bloomberg Philanthropies, and the Lambert Foundation of Tides Foundation for 2011. Felix was also awarded a “Citation of Merit” by The Bronx Borough President, Rubin Diaz Jr. in 2013, for his community based work and teaching at risk LGBTQ youth. He was also awarded “A Certification of Appreciation” by the Mayor of New Jersey, Brian P. Stack and the Board of Commissions in 2009, for paintings in a 9/11 tribute.

EDITOR

Sara Swinwood

Sarah Swinwood is a writer, translator and educator from Montreal, Canada with an extensive background in song-writing and comedy. She teaches creative practice to emerging artists and at-risk youth, connecting pioneers of the downtown New York City art scene to a larger audience. Swinwood has been working with Clayton Patterson in order to continue bringing forward his story and to preserve his legacy so that young up and coming champions of the underdog can take a page from his book. Combining the wisdom of spiritual elders with the fresh, brilliant voices of the youth is part of Sarah's mission. She graduated with an MFA in nonfiction writing and literary translation from Columbia University in 2023 and is currently completing her first book of personal essays. Sarah has been editing bios for the Acker Awards since 2024.



EDITOR

Ripley Soprano

The culture that resides in the cracks and crevices, the ones that Adams and his cronies, ICE, the cops, the status quo tries to erase, the ones everyone steals from and pretends to be but secretly despises—will not be silenced. The city that once embraced our wildest dreams, our most rebellious acts, is still here! Big ups and love to Clayton, and all those who know, love, respect and seek to learn the history of what makes outlaw culture so everlasting. It's been my utmost pleasure to support the editing! - Ripley Soprano

EDITOR

Sandra Cranswick

Sandra Cranswick is a freelance artist, who works in both commercial and fine art, and who moonlights as a proofreader and copy

INTERN

Zachary Lau

My journey with Clayton began at my 2022 pop-up art gallery photography show, where I displayed photos of my family's Tribal Artifacts collection. Nervous as an amateur photographer, I was especially anxious when the legendary Lower East Side photographer Clayton Patterson arrived. My father introduced us, and I gave him a tour of the gallery. Clayton offered advice on improving my craft, marking the start of a mentor-student relationship. We exchanged contact information, and soon after, I visited his place for conversations that evolved into walks, meetings, and event collaborations.

Clayton became an invaluable teacher, sharing insights on gentrification, life in the Lower East Side, hard work, vision, and art. His remarkable ability to explain complex ideas inspired constant growth. Eventually, I had the privilege of collaborating with him on a Louis Vuitton pop-up window display on Madison Avenue. The setup merged my Tribal Artifact collection with Clayton's art, featuring rare skulls, a striking poster titled "Clayton Patterson Underground Documentarian NYC," and his unique embroidery designs.

This experience taught me creativity, vision, and dedication while showcasing Lower East Side culture in Madison Avenue's refined environment. It proved that art from the LES could achieve museum-quality elevation, a testament to the power of collaboration between a teacher and student.



POSTER PRINTING

Joseph Rovegno

A self-taught visual artist born and based in New York. In 2020 he founded LOOK PUBLISHING, as a way to self-publish his one world, as well as other artists. He is also a cofounder and the Creative Director of LAAMS, a conceptual retail space/art collective in the Lower East Side

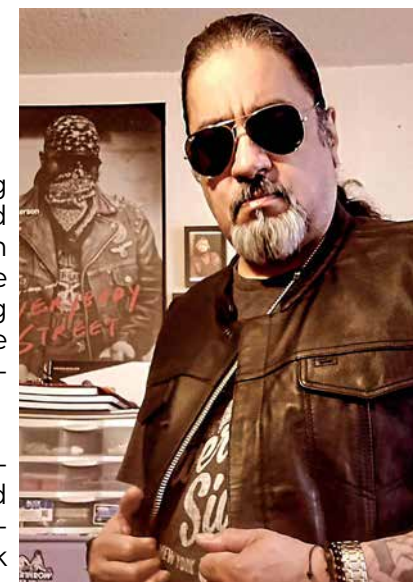


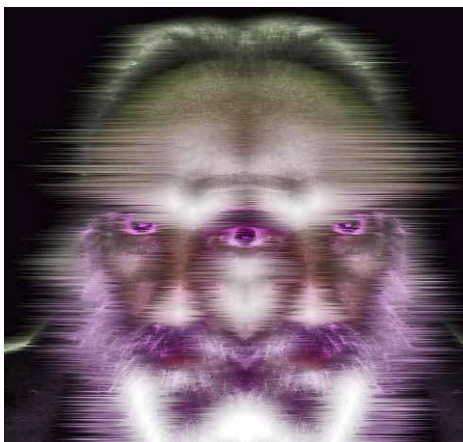
SUPPORTER

Jose "Cochise" Quiles

Jose "Cochise" Quiles is a former Gang member turned artist, writer and youth advocate. While serving time in a New York State Penitentiary Cochise earned his G.E.D, two peer Counseling Certificates from the University of the State of New York the Education department.

With the help of Documentarian Clayton Patterson, his wife Elsa Rensaa and other writers Cochise was able to complete his life story in the form of a book which was published in 2015 titled, "The Street Gangs Of The Lower East Side" an anthology on Lower East Side Street gangs of the 1970s and 80s. In 2013 Cochise was presented with the coveted Acker Award for Avant-Garde Excellence in the arts. Thanks to Documentarian Clayton Patterson and his wife Artist Elsa Rensaa.





POSTER

Ernest Gusella

Born in Calgary Alberta Canada 83 years ago, Ernest Gusella began life as an avid reader and early artist who skipped the eighth grade and graduated high school at sixteen. He went on to study at the University of Idaho devouring courses and lettering in track but health issues found him back in Al-

berta where he picked up a guitar and started studying painting at the Alberta College of Art. Having left the program before its completion, Ernest eventually found himself studying at the San Francisco Art Institute where he received the gold medal award for painting and free graduate tuition. After completing his graduate studies he came to New York in the spring of 1969 where he did commercial art before beginning to do paint contracting out of the Village Voice.

He then taught photography at the University of New Haven, art history at The New School, and film making and drawing at Rutgers. After becoming ill from pouring fiberglass in 1971, Ernest took on video as an art form, and taught video as art until a suggestion from Nam June Paik helped Gusella focus on his craft and within a short time in the late '70's he had accumulated many gigs and ended up in eight major museums and collections. This success brought many grants including one from the NEA and a Guggenheim. Through his video art Ernest began traveling all over the world very regularly for many years, working on and completing many projects, and eventually spent much time in India where he and his wife bought crafts and fabrics from poor women, ex-prostitutes, Muslims, tribals, and others and would eventually open a store in downtown Cumberland, Maryland that was open until 2020, having closed due to Covid. He has had many different teaching jobs teaching digital arts throughout the years at places such as SUNY Buffalo, the northeast Indian state of Manipur, the University of South Florida in Tampa, and the George Soros Open Foundation to name a few.

Ernest Gusella was also a Fulbright scholar to the grad media department at Jamia Millia Islamia University in New Delhi. To his credit he has also recorded two records and seven CDs and has nearly 100 recent original songs under his name on Youtube, Spotify, and other outlets. As he continues to roll on through life, Ernest has video work in a number of permanent collections in Japan, Canada, New York, Europe, etc. and largely ignores the NY art scene since leaving... because, as he feels, there are more interesting places in the world which are not based on hype and PR.

Clayton Patterson, Where do I start?

By Wesley Wood

The Big Idea: The Tattoo Society of New York And it was open to ALL, with or without a tattoo. Anybody could come! What an idea!

I treasure the "Anchor" 1988 card Clayton gave me in 1989. The Tattoo Society of New York created links that never could have happened. Links that changed our lives, including running monthly meetings with the help of Elsa Rensaa, his support, and inspiration.

Equally BIG, when I received a fax that the City Council had already prepared a bill to make tattooing a legal activity, the Legalization of Tattooing in NYC 1997-98, was the BIGGEST EVENT.

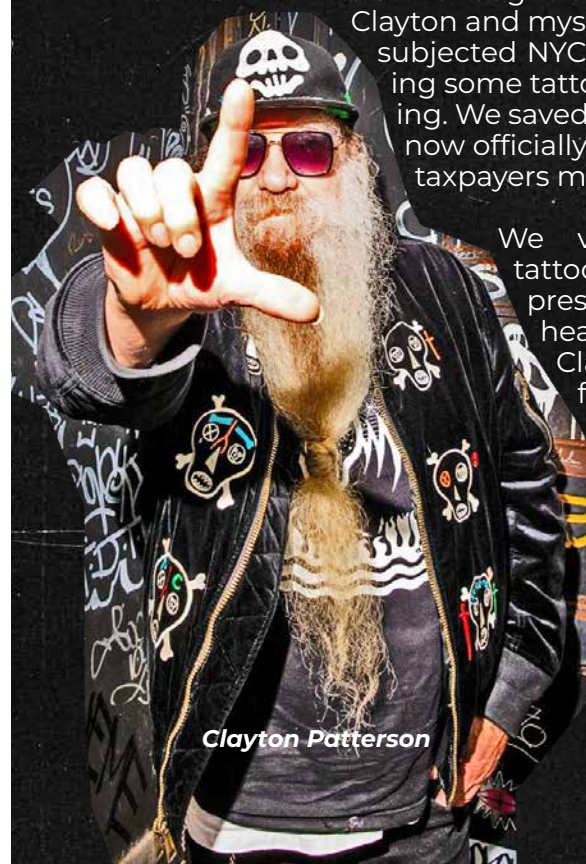
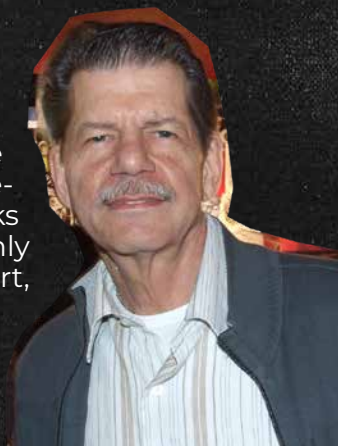
Clayton and I, along with artists Maya and Daren, were voted (and re-voted) to represent the tattoo needs and suggestions of NYC and its environs. We fought off an attempted coup to disqualify

Clayton and myself, which, if successful, would have subjected NYC to extensive regulations, authorizing some tattooists to have power over all tattooing. We saved a free and open tattoo culture that now officially belonged to the people and saved taxpayers millions in useless enforcement.

We visited tattooists. Demonstrated tattoo machine use at NYC DHMH. Made presentations before NYC department heads.

Clayton had access to and support from City Councilperson Kathryn Freed. We saved tattooists and taxpayers in NYC tons of money.

We're talking millions. The first NYC Tattoo Convention, run by Steve Bonge and Butch Garcia, joined by Wes Wood by invitation, was made possible by Clayton, who managed and coordinated the events for the next decade.



Clayton Patterson

PAST NY ACKER AWARDS

ACKER RECIPIENTS 2013

EDITORIAL: Ron Kolm and Jim Feast
WRITERS: Richard Kostelanetz, Peter Lamborn Wilson, John Straus-



baugh, Eddy Portnoy, Rami Shamir

POETRY: Bob Holman, Steve Dalachinsky, Eileen Myles, Jim Brodey, Patricia Smith, Harry Nudel, Lionel Ziprin (Posthumous), Dorothy Friedman August, Konstantin K.Kosminsky

FICTION: Carl Watson, John Farris, Janus Eidus

THEATER: Judith Malina(The Living Theater), Crystal Field (Theater For The New City), Taylor Mead, Augusto Machado, Mark "Hapi Phace" Rizzo, Stephen "Tabboo!" Tashjian, SUNPK (Peter Kwaloff), James "Ethyl" Eichelberger

BIOGRAPHY: C.Carr

ART: Boris Lurie (Posthumous), John

Evans, Jose "Cochise" Quiles, Elsa Rensaa, Dash Snow (Posthumous), Jerry Pagane, Anthony Dominguez, Peter Missing, Joe Coleman, Spider Webb Joey "SEMZ" McCarthy, Fly

PUBLISHERS: Dan Simon (SEVEN STORIES PRESS), Jim Fleming (AUTONOMEDIA)

PHOTOGRAPHY: Ira Cohen, Alice O'Malley, Paula Grimaldi-Reardon

PERFORMANCE: Tuli Kupferburg, Valery Oisteanu, Carol "Red Ed" Braddock, Steve Ben Israel

VIDEO: Nelson Sullivan, Fred Jordan

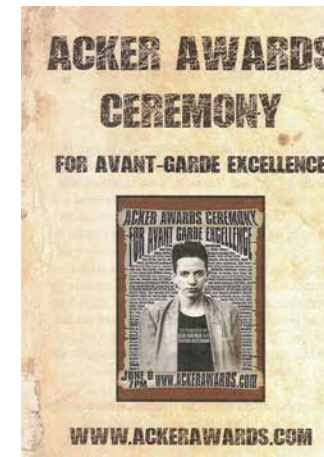
FILM: Nick Zedd, Howard Guttenplan (Millennium Film Workshop), MM Serra (FILMMAKERS COOP), Michael Sladek

COMMUNITY SUPPORT: Patricia Parker (VISION FESTIVAL), Klara Palotai, Jody Weiner, Monica Ponomarev, Lia Gangitano, - Westley "Wes" Wood - Joseph "Cuz" Camarata, Lucien Bahaj

BUILDING PRESERVATION AWARD: Angel Orensanz

MUSIC: Danny "Lord Ezec" Singer, James "Jimmy G." Drescher, William Parker, Lach Anti-Folk, Ramond "Raybeez" Barbieri (Posthumous), Joey Semz (Joe McCarthy), Freddy "Madball" Cricien

ACKER RECIPIENTS 2014



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT: Marc Levin independent film

CONCEPTUAL AND PERFORMANCE ART: Sur Rodney Sur & Geoffrey Hendricks, Kembra Pfahler

VISUAL ART: Jim Power, Boris Lurie, Dietmar Kirves, Ed F Higgins III, Arleen Schloss, Mac McGill. Helen Oliver Adelson, Bill Hiene, Julius Klein, Phoebe Legere

MUSIC: Matthew Shipp, Phoebe Lege-re, Gary Lucas, Mark Birnbaum

CULTURAL ICON AND PERFORMANCE ARTIST: Candy Darling

ART SPACE DEVELOPMENT: Jack Waters, Peter Cramer

JOURNALISM: Sarah Ferguson

COMMUNITY ART: Anton Van

Dalen.

TATTOO: Tom DeVita

ART CRITICISM: Erik LaPrade

FILM: Marc Levin, Bradley Eros, Coleen Fitzgibbon

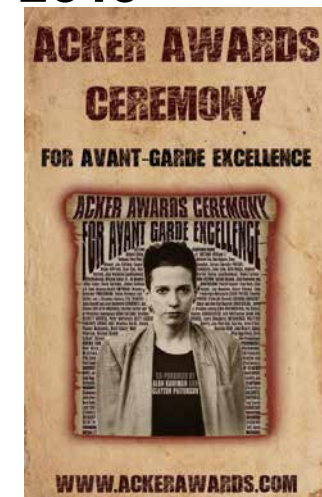
PHOTOGRAPHY: Gail Thacker, Bruce Meisler

EDITORIAL: Romy Ashby

SCULPTURE: Tom Otterness

THEATER: Robert Hiede, John Gilman, Edgar Oliver

THEATER DESIGN: Helen Oliver ACKER RECIPIENTS 2016



Lifetime Achievement - Arturo Vega

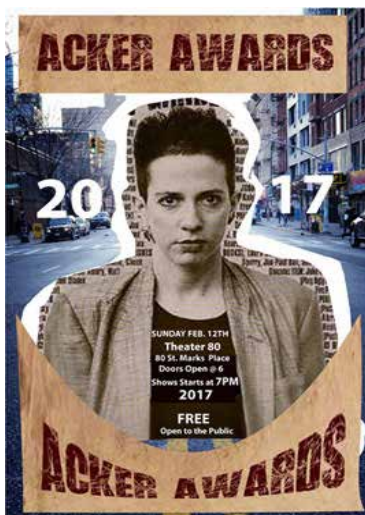
Art Criticism - Anthony Harden-Guest
Cartoon Illustrator/Punk Historian - John Holmstrom

Community Gardens and Art

Shows - Carolyn Ratcliffe

Community Medical Doctor - Dr. David Ores, M.D.

ACKER RECIPIENTS 2017



MC - Phoebe Legere –

Presenter producer Clayton Patterson

Memorial Cups Zito

Candy Daring Activism Award - Sur Rodney Sur.

2016 Video Of Ceremony - Nancy Wolfe, Ethan Minsker,

2016 Animation of ACKER Box – Ethan Minsker

Cartoon Illustrator - Natania Nunubi-uznez

Activist Playwright - Sarah Schulman

Art & Science of Boxing – Carlito Castillo

Tattooing - Friday Jones, Michelle

Myles,

Theater Actor - Mari-Claire Charba, Marilyn Roberts, Barbara Kahn, Lois Kayan Mingus, Charles Schick, Regina Bartkoff

Music - Felice Rosser, Cheryl Pyle, Eden Brower & John Heneghan

Community News – Lincoln Anderson Lucky Lawler

Art - Charles Mingus 3rd, Theresa Byrnes, Lucky Lawler, Leslie Lowe, Victoria Alexander, Agathe Snow, Zen Browne, Jane Dickerson, Istvan Kantor.

Writer - Jennifer Blowdryer, Shelley Marlow, Magie Dominic

Sexual Evolutionary. - Veronica Vera..

Feminist Porn Genre - Candida Royal

Photography - Toyo Tsuchiya, Jackie Ruden,

Performance Art Collective Organizer - Mary Campbell and Viv Vassar,

Community Support – Wendy Scripps

Science - Carter Emmart

A Trans Media Storyteller
Countess Alex

Video - Anne Hanavan

Composer Producer - Keith Patchel

Journalism - Alice Torbush, Chris Flash, Leonard Abrams.

Cultural Facilitator - Brian “Hattie” Butterick

Filmmaking - Sara Driver

Folklore - Steve Zeitlin

Music - Chris Rael, Samoa Moriki

Photography - David Godlis, Marcia Resnick, Q. Sakamaki, Stanley Stellar, Robert Butcher, Kate Simon

Performance - Penny Arcade

Poetry - Eliot Katz

Tattoo History - Michael McCabe

Tattoo Art - Nick Bubash, Mike Bakaty

Writer - Puma Perl

Visionaries & Creative Inspirers - Dick Zigon, Rev. Richard Ryler, Shiv Mirabito, Zia Ziprin

Video - Pat Ivers, Emily Armstrong

Visual Art - Antony Zito, Curt Hoppe, Ethan Minsker, James Romberger, Marguerite Van Cook

POSTHOMOUS AWARDS

Michael Cesar

Vali Myers

Snuky Tate

Dean Johnson

Lincoln Christopher Caplan

Carlucci Bencivenga

Hank Penza

Valerie Caris Blitz

John Evans

Frenchy

Jack Smith

Patrick Geoffrois

Hilly Kristal

Chloe Dzubilo

William “Bill” Rice

Gregory Corso

Allen Ginsberg

Fred Rothbell Mista

Gerard Little

Florynce “Flo” Kennedy

Bittman “Bimbo” Rivas

Raymond “Raybeez” Barbieri

Taylor Mead

Spider Webb

Dee Dee Ramone

Joey Ramone

Wendy Wild

Rockets Redglare

Grady Alexis

Linda Twigg

Marty Matz

Martin Wong

Denis Charles

José Rivera

Tuli Kupferberg

Yuri Kapralov

Jorge Brandon

Baba Raúl Cañizares 09

Ethyl Eichelberger

Holly Woodlawn

Emile de Antonio

Quentin Crisp

ACKER RECIPIENTS

20 **ACKER** 18
AWARDS NYC



2018

MC

Kembra Pfahler

Box

Steve Ellis

Bio-booklet design

Andrij Borys

Pre-show entertainment

Keith Patchel & his Venus Ensemble & special guest poet Bob Holman

Lifetime Achievement

Philly Abe – Leslie Sternbergh, Adam Alexander

Community Activist

Eugene Fedorko AIDS service – Kate Huh – Jim Fouratt “CULTURALINSTIGATOR” Gardens)

Community support, venue

Lorcan & Gennie Otway

Writer

Deborah Pintonelli - Julie Patton - Chavisa Woods - Susan Sherman lesbian writer, memoirist - Edward “Eak” Arrocha & sideshow performer & historian Publisher Jeffrey Cyphers Wright & writer, Tod Lippy & magazine design, Foxy Kidd & avant-garde Goodie magazine

Theater

Roman Primitive Albear (aka primitive luna), director & video - Rolando Vega, Custom **design & performance** – Jaguar Mary X, performance.

Art

Shan Elhome painting & tattooing - Sally Young - Chris Tanner – Joanne Pagano Weber & art director for Alternative New Year’s Reading - Emma Griffins tattooing & art - Kasoundra Kasoundra collage & illustrator & life model

Poetry

Bruce Weber, curator & Alternative New Year’s Reading - Betty LaRoe

Music

Ruby Lynn Reyner - Perry Masco, aka PeeWee - Kathryn Bloss folk musician & community support

Film

ACKER RECIPIENTS 2019

LIFE TIME ACHIEVE- MENT:

Crystal Fields [Theater for the New City]. Jan Herman [editor, writer, blogger]

CANDY DARLING AWARD:

Cynthia Carr [writer, historian, intellectual]. Presented by Ruby Lynn Reyner. CONTRIBUTION TO DOWNTOWN THEATER PRODUCTION [making everything happen]: Lori Seid presented by Alice O'Malley.

ART:

Alexandra Rojas, Brigitte Engler, Carol Ann Braddock, Linus Coraggio, Mimi Gross, Andrew Castrucci [gallery], Marty Martin [community support].

THEATER:

Susana Cook [playwright], Vit Horejs [puppetry & producer], Melba LaRose.

PERFORMANCE:

John Kelly & art, Bina Sharif, Anne Lobst, Lucy Sexton Dan-cenoise.



FILM:

Larry Fessington [director & producer], Beck Underwood [producer & animation], Tessa Huges [Free-land & curator], Jacob Burckhardt, Tom Jarmusch.

VENUE:

Erez Ziv [theater], Trigger Smith [music], Liberrad Guerra [culture creative director].

HISTORIC PRESERVATION:

Andrew Berman.

COVER:

Rolando Vega.

MUSIC:

Chris Iconicide & documenting, Jesse Malin & venue, Joff Wilson & mentor, Power Malu & community support, Johnny Velardi & art, curator.

WRITER:

Bonnie Sue Stein [writer/producer], David Herskovits [writer/publisher], Michael Carter, Brian Belovitch, Lee Ann Brown [Poetry], Carlo McCormick [historian].

PHOTOGRAPHY:

Efrain Gonzalez.

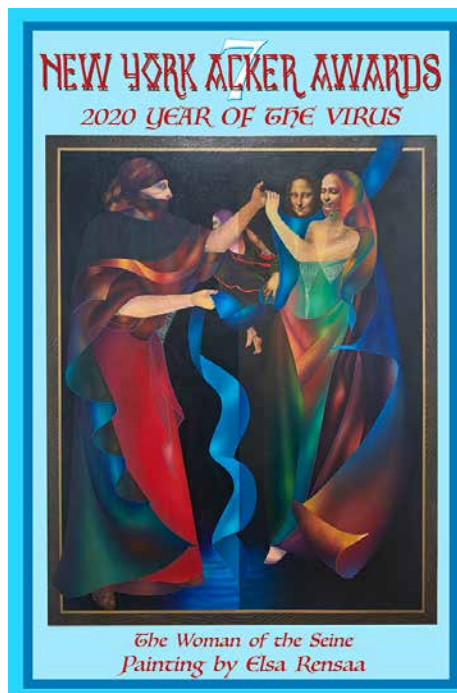
COMMUNITY SUPPORT:

Lilah Mejia.

JEWELRY:

Spencer Fujimoto [skateboarding community].

ACKER RECIPIENTS 2020



Candy Darling Award — Julian Voloj

Purple Heart Award — M.M. Serra

Poetry — Claudio Marte
New forms of digital documentation — Alessandra Zeka

Painting — Elsa Rensaa, Ei-Leen Doster and Stephen Lack

Community Activism and Photography — Andre Cirilo

Health fitness — Saes aka Michael Halpern, Coss Marte. docx

Performance — David Huber-

man and Jorge Clar

Songwriter — Emily Duff and Joe Sztabnik

Musician — Dina Regine, Gass Wild, and Susan Rakowski

Jazz — Eric Paulin

Show Organizer and host — Frank Wood, Matthew Hupert and Tom Clark

Political Activism/Feminist — Fran Luck

Dancer — Gina Healy

Publisher — Jane Ormerod, Peter Carlaftes and Kat Georges

Photography — Johan Vipper

Video — Mitch Corber and Nina Sobell

Printed Matter — Venus Max Schumann

Tattooing — Mehail Bakaty

Archivist — Mehdi Matin

Biography — Nhi Chung

Memoirist — Nicca Ray

Poetry — Louise Landes Levi

Storyteller — Phillip Giambri

ACKER RECIPIENTS 2023

Marja Samsom performance art

Lyn Pentecost community organizing

Pepe Flores music

Sebastian Mekas film archivist

Bob Krasner photography

Juan Carlos Pinto artist

Ed Litvak neighborhood news

Traven Rice film making

Dietmar Busse painting

Betty Yu film making

Don Arrington theatre

Gary Cruz film making

William Rosario film making

Ari Roussimoff painting

Reverend Billy and Savitri D community activists

Stuart Ginsberg Film making

Julian Voloj graphic novels

Javi T (Javi Torress) photography

Alan W. Moore art historian

Robert Goldman aka Bobby G painting

Adrián Viajero Román multi disciplinary arts

Paul Tschinkel art documentarian

Molly Garfinkel director of city lore

Jason McLean artist

Angel Ruben Rodriguez artist

Joey Goodwin and John Gagliano sportswear fashion/physical fitness

Jason Sapan holograms

Pam Enz theatrical performances

Heather Litteer actress

David "Daso" Soto community organizer

Lele Saveri community organizer/networker/EMT

Lorcan Otway and Geneie Otway theatre 80

Riki Colon dance/choreography

Luigi Cazzaniga and Ilka Scobie (Ilka-poetry, Luigi-film maker/sculpture)

Julie Hair, Bloody Rich aka Richard Hutchins music

Master Wan Chi Ming preserver of culture

HONOREE

Casa Adela (Maritza Lopez and Luis Rivera) community tribute



In 2009, Coss Marte was sent to jail as the ringleader of a multi-million dollar drug operation. He was also grossly overweight and warned by his physician that his current lifestyle, if left unchecked, would likely kill him.

Faced with this grim prognosis, Coss started to get in shape using the tools he had -- his prison cell and his own body weight. Within six months he lost 70 pounds and replicated his successful formula of body weight exercises with 20 other inmates. Then he launched CONBODY, a prison style bootcamp that has

gained over 70,000+ clients and has hired 100+ formerly incarcerated individuals to teach fitness classes. Since the launch of his company he's been featured in over 200 major media outlets such as NBC, CNN, The New York Times, Men's Health and has been a 4 time TED Talk Speaker. He's also authored his book, CONBODY.

Today Coss co-founded a non-profit organization called Second Chance Studios, which trains and helps employ formerly incarcerated individuals to become experts in audio engineering, video production, and podcasting.

In addition, he launched CONBUD, which is hiring formerly incarcerated individuals that have been affected by the war on drugs to build a personal and impactful presence in the cannabis market in New York State through a dispensary that has opened under the NYS conditional licensing program.

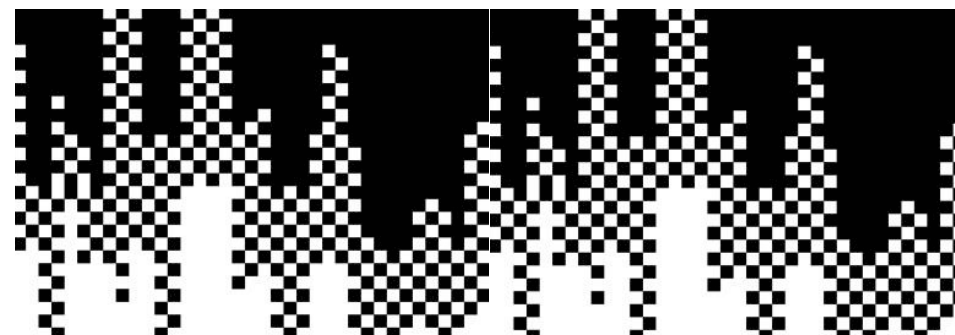
THEATER FOR THE NEW CITY

Theater for the New City is a unique four-theater complex now in its 53rd year. Dedicated to producing works by established and emerging playwrights, it supports small developmental theater companies experimenting with new forms. It also expands accessibility and enhances cultural dialogue through community programs. Its core values emphasize innovation, accessibility, nurturing new playwrights, bridging artists and communities, creating non-commercial spaces for new visions, and engaging underserved youth in theater arts for creativity and empowerment.

Founded in 1971, TNC has been a launching point for many notable artists, including Sam Shepard, Charles Busch, Maria Irene Fornes, Moises Kaufman, Tim Robbins, and Adrien Brody. Under Crystal Field's leadership as Artistic and Executive Director, TNC maintains deep community ties through affordable ticket prices and free events like The Lower East Side Festival of the Arts, Summer Street Theater, and the Village Halloween Costume Ball.

Through its Resident Theater Program, TNC produces 20-30 new American plays annually, offering a forum for both new and mid-career writers to experiment and grow. Notable productions include Sam Shepard's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Buried Child*, Romulus Linney's *Gint* (the first U.S. play accepted into Norway's Ibsen Festival), Ron De-astro's *Hiroshima* (featuring music by Yoko Ono and winner of the 1997 Kennedy Center Award), and Charles Busch's *The Divine Sister*, which sold out at TNC before moving Off-Broadway in 2010. For emerging writers, TNC's Emerging Theater Program commissions and produces 10 plays yearly.

TNC's Annual Summer Street Theater, written and directed by Crystal Field, tours free performances across 13 locations in NYC's five boroughs. Begun in the early 1970s, it embodies grassroots ideals, raising social awareness and fostering civic dialogue to inspire understanding beyond community boundaries. It reaches an estimated 25,000 people each summer.



Thom deVita (1932 -2018)
 "Only the good die young"

The above phrase is often misunderstood. What it means is:
 When a person dies at any age, no matter how old, they've
 died to soon.

deVita was good. He was good in all significant aspects of life
 and great in many. As a good husband, friend, teacher and artist,
 he was honest, with a spiritual guidance. His life became
 singular and his art visionary.

I met him 49 years ago when I went to his LES studio to get a
 tattoo and we were friends from that day on.

Suffering extreme adversity in his formative years, from events
 that would destroy the average person, he instead, channeled
 them into enlightened, positive life energies.

Known primarily for his 30+ years of tattooing, he helped fuel
 the tattoo renaissance. Later in his life he recieved the coveted
 Acker Award and was propelled onto the world stage through
 Vice Video's film series "Tattoo Age"

He was a true original who worked from the gut and a Magician
 who changed the way we see.

Nick Bubash, Pittsburgh Pa. 2019

GOTHA
 Velvet Touch M
 TATTOO

Uranian Press

For name's sake, Uranus, planetary ruler of the Aquarian Age
 is contained in the logotype up. Revolutionary Uranus was first felt
 at the time of the Declaration of Independence; with its American
 attitude on a free press. Not until the Censors were abolished by
 the English Revolution of 1688 was there truly Liberty of the Press.
 Writing on the terms as adopted in this country, and the difference
 between liberty & license, T. Paine states in The American Citizen
 1806, that abolition of the office of Govt. Imprimeur made
 printing "free from prior restraint", with responsibility for printed
 matter lying on the press, public, & in case of prosecution, a jury of
 the country. Highly developed mechanization of printing methods
 has flooded our materialistic society with a monstrous amount of
 popular printed matter, consisting in great part of meretricious
 mercantilism, & scurrilous vanity; which is not saved from mediocrity
 by technological proficiency. The same failings are apparent in the
 Graphic Art field, where the cult of the faultless tech. seldom sustains
 imaginative power; while the Art presses are only too often concerned
 with a pedantic preciousness. Methinks the case sadder, as the
 creative artist should know the difference between liberty & license.
 Who among the emasculated plate polishers could call himself peer
 of the popular artist Posada, & how many art presses follow the Socialist
 sentiments of Wm. Morris, who preferred plainness, even rudeness, to corrupt
 or insincere forms of graphic art. It is again the age of the Outlaw
 press, the Bandit, & Fugitive press, with Underground activity that
 shall Accelerate the Age; as truly, "these are the times that
 try men's Souls" publisher - N.Y.C. '62

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NY ACKER AWARDS

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