

Corpus



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Corpus

An HIV Prevention Publication

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a collaboration

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Foreword

We were skeptical at first, when the co-editors of *Corpus* began planning this third issue around the theme of *pageantry*. The very first thing we did was to look the word up in the dictionary.

Pageantry (noun): 1) scenic shows or spectacles, taken collectively; a rich and spectacular ceremony or procession; splendor. 2) an elaborate representation of scenes from history, etc.

Synonyms: appearance, array, bravado, demonstration, display, drag, exhibitionism, exposition, fanfare, flamboyance, flashiness, flourish, fuss, glamour, grandstand play, luster, manifestation, magnificence, majesty, occurrence, parade, performance, pomp, pretending, radiance, shine, showing, splendor and view.

As we discussed the multiple options for synonyms, we were drawing connections to how we experience being lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. We acknowledged the beautifully diverse ways we are *present* in and *show* ourselves to the world. We pondered our smart and complicated *performances* of gender, race, and class through the sex that we have. We worried that our HIV prevention efforts were not as varied as the word *pageantry* would suggest they need to be. And together, we imagined communities of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender folk lovingly nudging each other to *show* up for social change. A world without

Prólogo

Al principio estábamos escépticos, cuando los co-editores de *Corpus* empezaron a planificar esta tercera edición en torno al tema de *pageantry* (la palabra en español que capta el espíritu de esta palabra en inglés es espectáculo). La primera cosa que hicimos fue ver la definición de la palabra en el diccionario.

Espectáculo: m 1) Acción o conjunto de acciones que se presentan ante el público para divertirlo o entretenerlo; 2) Cosa o conjunto de cosas que se ofrecen a la vista, capaces de provocar reacciones.

Sinónimos: cuadro, representación, escena, gala, demostración, visión, número, desfile, función, exhibición, ceremonia, diversión

Mientras discutíamos sobre las múltiples opciones de los sinónimos, hacíamos conexiones a nuestras experiencias como lesbianas, gay, bisexuales y transgéneros. Nosotros reconocimos las diversas y hermosas maneras en que estamos *presentes* y nos *mostramos* al mundo. Nosotros ponderamos sobre nuestras listas y complicadas maneras de *representación* del sexo, raza y clase social a través de las relaciones sexuales que tenemos. Nos preocupamos porque los esfuerzos de prevención del VIH no han sido igual de diversos que la palabra espectáculo sugiere que deberían ser. Y juntos, nos imaginamos comunidades de gente lesbiana, gay, bisexual y transgénero codeándose suavemente para *presentarse* al cambio social. Un

HIV/AIDS requires this of us because poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia and stigma continue to fuel the epidemic. This issue of *Corpus* reminds us that at the forefront of our HIV prevention efforts must be an open questioning of the ways we each *show* up.

It is in this spirit that we proudly announce the formation of *The Institute for Gay Men's Health (the Institute)*. *The Institute* is a bold collaboration between AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA) and Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), whose mission is to strategically address HIV/AIDS by recasting prevention within a broader health and wellness agenda. APLA and GMHC have joined forces; will pool resources and share talent in an effort to support and sustain a nationally-coordinated, locally-driven and more nuanced discussion about HIV prevention, sexuality and gay men. This issue of *Corpus* represents one example of *showing up*. We hope it incites others to do the same. Enjoy.

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mundo sin VIH/SIDA requiere de esto de nuestra parte porque la pobreza, el racismo, el sexismo, la homofobia y el estigma continúan alimentando la epidemia. Esta edición de *Corpus* nos recuerda que al frente de nuestros esfuerzos de prevención debe existir un cuestionamiento sobre las maneras en que cada uno de nosotros nos *presentamos*.

Este es el espíritu con el que orgullosamente anunciamos la formación del Instituto para la Salud de Hombres Gay (El Instituto). El Instituto es una colaboración entre AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA) y Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), cuya misión es de atender estratégicamente el VIH/SIDA, al reconstruir la prevención dentro de una agenda más amplia sobre salud y bienestar. APLA y GMHC han unido sus fuerzas, unirán sus recursos y compartirán el talento en un esfuerzo para apoyar y sostener una discusión matizada, coordinada nacionalmente y conducida localmente para la prevención del VIH, la sexualidad y los hombres gay. Esta edición de *Corpus* representa un ejemplo de estar *presente*. Esperamos que esto incite a otros a hacer lo mismo. Que lo disfruten.

Introduction

Patrick “Pato” Hebert

HIV is such a patient, persistent creature. It’s well traveled. It knows its way around our neighborhoods and bodies. It’s out there, and in here, so cleverly doing its thing. It can leave us capsized in its stealthy wake. This is partly because our AIDS service programs often fail to engage communities in the fluid creation of experience. Our efforts must do more than pass on facts, because data, no matter how rapidly it moves, is not the same as wisdom.

The information era is teaching us that knowledge is all too easily hidden, forgotten and squelched. Truncated messages are generated by fewer sources and distributed over wider territories. This media vacuum can make it difficult for us to share dynamic, original ideas across space and time. Yet at its best, HIV prevention stretches us beyond the silence of our fears. It pushes us into new understandings of gender, desire, aesthetics, and language. I’m as convinced as ever that we must create such possibilities together, publicly, and with great purpose.

This third installment of *Corpus* has challenged my notions of fantasy and friendship, danger and dedication. As this publication took shape, gay marriage swept across the country. I found myself unexpectedly inspired by the images of joyful commitment streaming through

Introducción

Patrick “Pato” Hebert

El VIH es una criatura bien paciente y persistente. Es experimentado. Conoce su camino en nuestros vecindarios y cuerpos. Está allá afuera y aquí dentro, haciendo lo suyo inteligentemente. Nos puede dejar volcados en su despertar a hurtadillas. En parte, esto es porque los programas de servicios de SIDA a menudo no logran involucrar a las comunidades en la fluida creación de experiencias. Nuestros esfuerzos deben hacer más que sólo pasar hechos, porque los datos, sin importar cuán rápido se muevan, no son lo mismo que sabiduría.

La era de la información nos está enseñando que el conocimiento es fácilmente apabullado, escondido y olvidado. Se generan mensajes truncados con pocos recursos y se distribuyen en un amplio territorio. Este vacío en los medios puede dificultar que nosotros compartamos ideas originales y dinámicas a través del espacio y el tiempo. Sin embargo, lo mejor que ha podido hacer la prevención del VIH es prolongarnos más allá del silencio de nuestros miedos. Nos empuja a nuevos entendimientos sobre sexo, deseo, estética y lenguaje. Estoy más convencido que nunca que debemos crear dichas posibilidades juntos, públicamente y con un gran propósito.

Esta tercera entrega de *Corpus* ha retado mi noción sobre la fantasía y la amistad, el peligro y la dedicación. Mientras que esta publicación tomaba vida, las bodas gay se hacían sentir en todo el país.

newspapers, television and the web. Gay marriage is not my particular political priority, but I was deeply moved to see so many happy, ordinary couples. Compared to the airbrushed models in mainstream queer advertisements and press, these couples were refreshingly familiar. I especially loved seeing pictures of the triumphant pairs as they emerged onto the steps of San Francisco City Hall. They celebrated the symbolic power of their union during those first *public* moments as married couples. As millions of people debated such images, the pageant of beaming newlyweds affirmed and expanded our very concept of marriage.

It's that kind of repositioning that makes queerness so special, and HIV prevention so tricky. Given the dizzying array of possibilities, how do we know what to prioritize? How do we name our risks and work to alleviate them, without sacrificing the most cherished parts of ourselves? *Corpus* aims to be a space where we can ponder these needs and challenges, inspired by the example of Gloria Anzaldúa, the trailblazing Chicana lesbian author who passed away earlier this year. Anzaldúa influenced writers, teachers, queers and independent thinkers worldwide. *Corpus* is supremely indebted to her bravery and brilliance. Her considerable legacy serves as a guidepost in the borderlands of our troubled times. In 1987 she wrote:

La facultad is the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. It is an

Me encontré inesperadamente inspirado por las imágenes del jubiloso compromiso que fluía en los periódicos, televisión y el Internet. El matrimonio gay no es mi agenda política en particular, pero me conmovió ver tantas parejas comunes felices. Comparadas a los modelos arreglados con pincel en los anuncios para gente gay y la prensa, estas parejas eran refrescantemente conocidas. Me encantó, en especial, ver las fotografías de las parejas triunfadoras al momento que aparecían en las gradas del ayuntamiento de la ciudad de San Francisco. Ellas se deleitaban on el poder simbólico de su unión durante esos primeros momentos *públicos* como parejas casadas. Mientras millones de personas debatían sobre esas imágenes, el desfile espectacular de los destellantes recién casados afirmaron y expandieron nuestro concepto sobre el matrimonio.

Ese tipo de re-postulación hace que *queerness* sea tan especial y la prevención del VIH tan engañosa. Dado la vertiginosa gama de posibilidades, ¿cómo sabemos qué debemos priorizar? ¿Cómo denominamos nuestros riesgos y trabajamos para aliviarlos sin sacrificar nuestras partes más apreciadas? *Corpus* busca ser un espacio en el cual podamos ponderar sobre estas necesidades y retos, inspirado por el ejemplo de Gloria Anzaldúa, la autora chicana lesbiana pionera que falleció a principios de este año. Anzaldúa influyó a escritores, maestros, pensadores maricones e independientes en todo el mundo. *Corpus* está en deuda suprema con su valor y brillantez. Su considerable legado sirve como una guía en las fronteras de nuestros tiempos difíciles. En 1987, ella escribió:

instant “sensing,” a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning . . . Fear develops the proximity sense aspect of la facultad. But there is a deeper sensing that is another aspect of this faculty. It is anything that causes a break in one’s habitual grounding, causes the depths to open up, causes a shift in perception. This shift in perception deepens the way we see concrete objects and people, the senses become so acute and piercing that we can see through things, view events in depth, a piercing that reaches the underworld (the realm of the soul). As we plunge vertically, the break, with its accompanying new seeing, makes us pay attention to the soul, and we are thus carried into awareness—an experiencing of soul (Self).

Anzaldúa’s writing resonated this past summer as I absorbed the news of the Abu Ghraib prison horror. Once again human beings had been reduced to mere bodies for torture and sexualized torment. The unfolding indignity reminded me of the dangers of secrecy and the importance of ethics. It also confirmed the potency of images. With the proper platform, simple digital snapshots have the power to change public perception of reality and justice. *Corpus* is a collective claim to such power. In the hands of contributing artists, painted fairytales reveal truths, digital self-portraits become magic portals, and leaves collect the fallen poetry of personal ads.

<<La facultad es la capacidad de ver en los fenómenos de la superficie, el significado de las realidades más profundas, ver la estructura más profunda debajo de la superficie. Es una “sensación” instantánea, una rápida percepción a la que se llega sin razonamiento conciente... El miedo desarrolla el aspecto del sentido de proximidad de la facultad. Pero hay un sentimiento más profundo que es otro aspecto de esta facultad. Es todo lo que causa un rompimiento de nuestro terreno habitual; causa las profundidades para abrirse, causa un cambio en la percepción. Este cambio en la percepción profundiza la manera en que vemos objetos y personas concretas; los sentidos se vuelven agudos y penetrantes que podemos ver a través de las cosas, revisar eventos en profundidad, tan penetrante que podemos alcanzar el otro mundo (el reino del alma). Al sumergirnos verticalmente, el rompimiento, con la compañía de su nuevo mirar, nos hace poner atención al alma, y por lo tanto nos lleva a la concienciación—una experiencia del alma (Uno mismo).>>

La escritura de Anzaldúa resonó este verano pasado, mientras yo absorbía las noticias del escándalo de la prisión en Abu Ghraib. Una vez más, los seres humanos habían sido reducidos a vasallos, meros cuerpos para la tortura y el tormento sexual. La indignidad descubierta me recordó de los peligros de los secretos y la importancia de la ética. También confirmó la

This issue of *Corpus* was developed with writer Laurence Padua, who was intrigued by the notion of pageantry from the start of the editing process. He understands pageantry as the connections that can form through interaction. Pageantry is a reciprocal process. It is the creative celebration that ensues when we present/experience our multiple genders, voices, fashions and cravings. We queers create our pageants while watching television and reading against the grain of the pop culture we help to generate. We code pageantry with our friends during two-way text messaging. We enact pageantry while inventing movements on dance floors and discovering sensations in sex clubs. We marvel at pageantry while watching our lovers get out of bed to go to the bathroom. And we revel in the daily pageantry of breaking bread with our chosen families. In all this pageantry,

potencia de las imágenes. Con una plataforma apropiada, unas simples fotografías de cámara digital tienen el poder de cambiar la percepción pública de la realidad y la justicia. *Corpus* es una afirmación colectiva de dicho poder. En las manos de los artistas colaboradores, los cuentos de hadas ilustrados revelan verdades, los autorretratos digitales se convierten en portales mágicos y las hojas colectan la poesía que se cae de los anuncios personales.

Esta edición de *Corpus* fue desarrollada por el escritor Laurence Padua, quien estaba intrigado sobre la noción del término “espectáculo” desde el principio del proceso de edición. Él entiende el espectáculo como la conexión que puede formarse a través de la interacción. El espectáculo es un proceso recíproco. Es la celebración creativa que sobreviene cuando nosotros presentamos / experimentamos nuestras múltiples sexualidades, voces, costumbres y antojos. Nosotros, los maricones, creamos nuestros espectáculos cuando vemos televisión y leemos en contra de la semilla de la cultura popular que ayudamos a generar. Nosotros codificamos el espectáculo con nuestros amigos durante los mensajes de texto de doble sentido. Nosotros promulgamos el espectáculo mientras inventamos movimientos en la pista de baile y descubrimos sensaciones en los clubes de sexo. Nos maravillamos ante el espectáculo al ver a nuestros amantes levantarse de la cama para ir al baño. Nos deleitamos con el espectáculo diario al compartir el pan con nuestras familias escogidas. En todo este espectáculo, nosotros estamos utilizando esas facultades de las que escribió Anzaldúa, toda nuestra sabiduría sensorial para expresar significados profundamente impregnados.

Laurence Angeleo Padua, “Untitled,” 2003, digital photograph, 3” x 4”



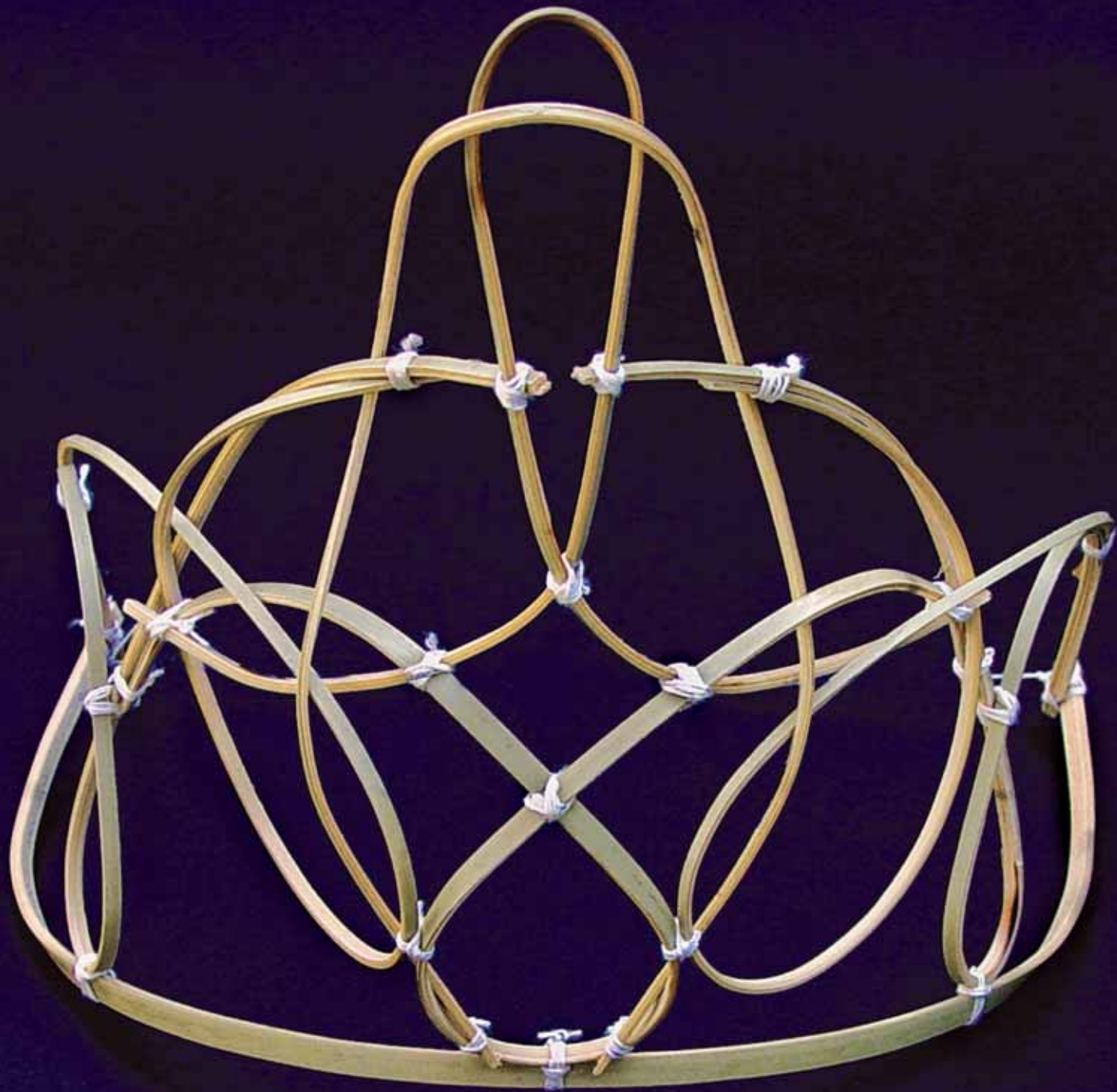
we are using those faculties Anzaldúa wrote about, all of our sensory wisdom to express deeply imbedded meanings.

Historically, pageantry has been central to our rituals of cruising and drag. These traditions are ever-expanding. As an ex-lover told me over fish tacos, “I don’t do drag anymore. I live it!” Internet chatrooms are the new tea rooms, with seemingly everyone performing some kind of imagined self. Pageantry allows us to inhabit varying roles as we give meaning to our conversations about HIV and AIDS. We can conjure characters full of possibility by dressing up (or down) and looking at ourselves. We can look at others who are looking at themselves. We can look at others who are looking at us. And we can be free to do this together.

This shared experience invigorates HIV prevention with enchanting potential. Although our reading experience may be quite personal, even private, *Corpus* is nevertheless a very public pageant. The public space of the page is where contributors courageously share their vulnerabilities and visions, thereby encouraging us to engage. As readers, we might enjoy what we see, but all this flesh and fucking also gets under our skin and enters into the realm of the soul. *Corpus* aims to be more than gratuitous spectacle. It seeks to pull back the curtain and invite us to the stage. Here we might remember and reimagine what matters most, all while having a bit of fun in the spotlight.

Historicamente, el espectáculo ha sido central en nuestros rituales de búsqueda y para “vestirnos”. Como me lo dijo un ex-amante mientras comíamos tacos de pescado, “Ya no me visto más. ¡Lo vivo!” Los cuartos de conversación en el Internet son los nuevos espacios de té, con la apariencia de que todos están actuando algún tipo de autoimagen. El espectáculo nos permite habitar roles variantes, mientras le damos significado a nuestras conversaciones sobre el VIH y SIDA. Nosotros podemos conjurar personajes llenos de posibilidades al vestirnos elegantemente (o lo contrario) y vernos a nosotros mismos. Podemos ver a otros que se están mirando. Podemos ver a otros que nos están mirando. Y podemos tener la libertad de hacerlo juntos.

Esta experiencia compartida revitaliza la prevención del VIH con un potencial encantador. Aunque nuestra experiencia con la lectura puede ser muy personal, y hasta privada, no obstante, *Corpus* es un espectáculo muy público. El espacio público de la página es donde los contribuidores valientemente comparten sus vulnerabilidades y visiones, de esta manera, animándonos a que participemos. Como lectores, quizá disfrutemos lo que vemos, pero toda esta carne y cogidas, también se nos mete debajo de la piel y entra en el reino del alma. *Corpus* aspira a más que un espectáculo gratuito. Busca halar la cortina y nos invita al escenario. Aquí quizá podremos recordar y re-imaginar lo más importante, todo esto al mismo tiempo que tenemos un poco de diversión en el escenario.



Teresita's Blood

Horacio N. Roque Ramírez

March 24, 2001

It's me, Horacio, your mother! You're neglecting your mother. I was waiting for you. And I know you probably couldn't make it. I'm over here at Hermanos de Luna y Sol. Leave a message for Sergio. I don't know what you're up to. The watermelons are going down. Okay. Good bye.

Teresita's voice on my answering machine was always loaded. This time, in English, in a serious tone and calling me from San Francisco's Mission Neighborhood Health Center, she was reminding me that I had failed her yet again. She knew the intricacies of language and emotions. In Spanish, she could be loud and crass, obnoxious and outrageous. But in English, that's when she meant business. She was serious now, barely joking about her "watermelons," giving me options to return her message. Mother had called, and her queer son had missed the cry.

Teresita was living with AIDS when she called me, a year and four months before her death on July, 2002. She had been a long-term survivor, benefiting somewhat from 1990s pharmaceutical promises. But she had also been a victim and survivor for much longer than that, six decades of the queer life of a transgender Latina. Born Alberto in 1940 in Los Angeles, pushed out of her blood family and bashed constantly by the police, young Alberto become Alberta and turned Teresita. She grew to be the live ranchera singer fighting through and through: to be queer n loud n bilingual n an artist. Though pushed and bashed, she remained with us, as hungry for life as ever. Now, in 2001, her liver and kidneys slowly beginning to fail, her condition growing worse and her testicles swollen with fluid, Teresita was getting closer to her end. The watermelons would go down, but never completely.



I met Teresita in 1994, when I left for San Francisco from L.A., with the pretense of going to UC Berkeley, but mainly because I had to leave behind the heterosexual history I stopped pretending to live in 1991. San Francisco was supposed to be the queer Mecca, and so I left, a young gay Latino desperate to become queer, similar reasons of geography and sexile that marked Teresita's departure in 1958. Luckily, I landed in the middle of a queer Latino renaissance in the making, in the bodies of Proyecto ContraSIDA Por Vida. But I also landed in the historical shadow of Teresita, who, sitting on one of the sofas of this HIV agency in the Mission, smiled and flirted and joked and dazzled all us younger queers with her Teresita Tales of transgender survival. For a fag born in the age of AIDS and its ravages, and hungry for historical roots of queer Latino-anything, history began and ended with Teresita. She was all the evidence I needed then.

La Sangre de Teresita

Horacio N. Roque Ramírez

24 de marzo, 2001.

Soy yo, Horacio, ¡tu mamá! Estás descuidando a tu madre. Te estaba esperando. Y yo sé que tal vez no pudiste llegar. Estoy aquí en Hermanos de Luna y Sol. Déjame un mensaje con Sergio. Yo no sé que estás haciendo estos días. Las sandías se están achicando. Okay. Adiós.

La voz de Teresita en mi máquina contestadora siempre estaba cargada. En esta ocasión, en inglés, con un tono serio, me llamaba desde el Mission Neighborhood Health Center, en San Francisco y me estaba recordando que nuevamente yo le había fallado. Ella conocía la complejidad del idioma y de las emociones. En español, ella podía ser gritona, pesada, ofensiva y escandalosa. Pero en inglés, entonces hablaba en serio. Esta vez estaba hablando con esa seriedad, a penas bromeando sobre sus “sandías” y dándome opciones para regresarle el mensaje. La madre había llamado y su hijo maricón no había escuchado su voz.

Teresita estaba viviendo con SIDA cuando me llamó, un año y cuatro meses antes de su muerte en julio del 2002. Ella había sido una sobreviviente de muchos años, sacándole un poco de provecho a las promesas farmacéuticas de los 90s. Pero ella había sido una víctima y una sobreviviente por mucho tiempo, seis décadas de la vida de ambiente de una transgénero latina. Nacida con el nombre de Alberto en 1940 en Los Ángeles, echada a la calle por su familia de sangre, golpeada constantemente en las calles por la policía, el jovencito Alberto se convirtió en Alberta y después en Teresita. Ella creció para convertirse en la singular cantante de rancheras en vivo, siempre luchando y luchando por ser del ambiente y gritona y bilingüe; y una artista que esperaba respeto. Aunque fue golpeada y atacada, ella continuaba con nosotros, con las mismas ansias por vivir de siempre. Ahora en el 2001, con su hígado y sus riñones que lentamente empezaron a fallarle, su condición empeoraba y sus testículos se hinchaban con fluido, Teresita se acercaba a su final. Las sandías se achicarían, pero no por completo.

Conocí a Teresita en 1994 cuando me fui de Los Ángeles a San Francisco, con la pretensión de ir a estudiar a Berkeley, en la Universidad de California, pero principalmente porque tenía que dejar atrás la historia heterosexual que dejé de vivir en 1991. Supuestamente San Francisco era la Meca maricona, así que me fui, un joven latino gay desesperado por hacerse maricón, razones similares de geografía y exilio que marcaron la salida de Teresita hacia la misma ciudad en 1958. Por suerte, aterricé en medio de un renacimiento maricón latino en proceso, en los cuerpos y el trabajo de la agencia, Proyecto ContraSIDA Por Vida. Pero también caí bajo la sombra histórica de Teresita, quien, sentada en uno de los sofás de esta agencia del VIH en el Distrito de la Misión, sonreía y



From that moment on I happily walked in the shadow of Teresita, more concerned with the intricacies of her life than the latest queer theory academic publications. Teresita was a walking archive, and a talking one, a dizzying narrative of live Lola Beltrán rancheras dipped in queer specificity of 1950s L.A. bars, 1970s gay hippie drug spins, and 1980s viral madness. And she cared back for me too, because I, Teresita knew, gave a fuck about queer historical memory and erasure, and could not let go of Alberta Navaerez' voice in the middle of the assimilationist noise around us. So I recorded hours of oral history with Teresita, which began of course with her live songs as she demanded — and wound their way around her mother and her siblings and the art of passing as a woman at a bar in Stockton, next to the fields, and worked their way to San Francisco's Mission District when she made history with other revolutionary perverts of the streets like Ookie la Tigresa, in queer and straight worlds alike. I held on tight to all this historical debris, trying not to let any of it spill yet again onto our dustbins of silence.

And yet, in all our years of travel and walking tours of the city, Teresita never got *my* own name right. Back in 1995, when we were just beginning to record, her messages in my answering machine said "Ignacio." When I'd see her in person, she'd realize she'd fucked up, but still could not quite get it, to the very end. Often it was "oooRAHcio," part playfulness, I think, part the occasional persistent error of an illiterate artist who could nevertheless remember lyrics quite well. But it was fine with me. Correcting your elders is tricky, and even though it annoyed me, I also enjoyed too much being part of Teresita's spelling of my own life. I had too much respect for her existence to bother correcting an irrelevant detail.

coqueteaba y bromeaba, y nos deslumbraba a toda la mariconería joven con sus “Cuentos de Teresita” acerca de la sobre vivencia de una transgénero. Para un maricón que nació en los tiempos del SIDA y sus tempestades, y con el hambre de raíces históricas mariconas latinas de las que fuesen, la historia comenzaba y terminaba con Teresita. Ella era toda la evidencia que yo necesitaba para entonces.

Desde ese momento felizmente caminé bajo la sombra de Teresita, más interesado con los detalles de su vida que con las últimas teorías académicas sobre la sexualidad maricona. Teresita era un archivo andante y hablante, una narrativa histórica que atarantaba con su canto en vivo de rancheras de Lola Beltrán sumergida en las particularidades mariconas en los bares de Los Ángeles de los años 50, las vueltas drogadas con los hippies de los 70 y la locura viral de los 80. En los 90, aunque fuese un poco tarde, ya era hora de empezar a analizar toda esa historia. Pero yo también le importaba a ella porque Teresita sabía que a mí me importaba la memoria histórica maricona y cómo es borrada. Ella sabía que yo no podía dejar ir la voz de Alberta Nevaerez en medio de todo esa cultura gay sin sentido histórico a nuestro alrededor. Y por eso grabé horas de historia oral con Teresita, la cual por supuesto empezó con sus canciones en vivo—cómo ella lo exigía—y continuó con las figuras de su madre y sus hermanos, y el arte de poder hacerse pasar como mujer en una barra en Stockton, California, a la par de los campos de cultivo. Y siguió está historia hacia el Distrito latino de la Misión en San Francisco donde ella hizo historia con otras locas revolucionarias en las calles, como Ookie la Tigresa, dentro de mundos gays y heteros por igual. Yo agarré con fuerza todos estos escombros históricos de Teresita, tratando de no permitir que ningún pedazo fuera a terminar de nuevo en el basurero de nuestros silencios.

Y sin embargo, en todos nuestros años de viaje y caminatas por la ciudad recontando estos cuentos, Teresita nunca pudo pronunciar mi *propio* nombre. En 1995, cuando a penas empezábamos a grabar, sus mensajes en mi máquina decían “Ignacio.” Cuando la veía en persona, se daba cuenta que se había equivocado, pero todavía sin lograr pronunciarlo bien. A veces me decía “uRAcio,” en parte juegos de ella, pienso, en parte el error persistente de una artista analfabeta que sin embargo siempre recordaba la letra de las canciones muy bien. Pero a mí no me importaba. Corregir a las personas mayores es difícil. Y aunque me molestaba, a la vez disfrutaba demasiado ser parte de la narración de mi vida por Teresita. Le tenía demasiado respeto a su existencia para darle importancia a un detalle irrelevante.

Teresita hizo que yo quisiera escribir e investigar la historia latina gay, ayudar a crear todos esos archivos de risa, dolor y camuflaje sexual; los de las marimachas y las femeninas y los de los maricones y los chicos jugando por sus propias sobre vivencias dentro de nuestras propias comunidades. Y por eso durante años les dejé mensajes y les regresé llamadas telefónicas y hostigué y entrevisté a mucha gente para que me permitieran ser aquella persona con quién podían compartir sus memorias del deseo, como Teresita lo hizo con las de su cuerpo. Y muchos aceptaron mi invitación. Esta iba a ser mi contribución al renacimiento maricón latino de San Francisco en los 90, en medio de tanta muerte y silencio.



Teresita made me want to write and research queer Latino lives, to help create all those records of laughter, and pain, and gender camouflage, of butches and fems and fags and boys playing with their own survival in our own communities. And so, for years I interviewed and left messages and returned phone calls and harassed other people to let me be the one with whom they could share their memories of desire, like Teresita's, like those of her body. And many agreed. This was to be my contribution to the queer Latino renaissance of 1990s San Francisco.

Eventually, queer and blood family histories connect, and relative closures must be made. My Bay Area queer escapade in pursuit of these histories too needed to end. And it has not been easy, to this very day, to have left that space behind.

My insomnias began in 2000, in the midst of completing the doctoral dissertation, living alone and single (by design), worrying incessantly about my 83-year-old father's health in Los Angeles, and my mother's in her late 60s. And, I was torn by the fact that while I could try to write about my queer community's histories, I was doing little about the end stages of theirs. Teresita's recorded voice, in my answering machine and in our joint oral history tapes, always threw me off, because she was a challenge for me to continue. But insomnias and nightmares of family loss forced me to write more and faster, to complete that stretch of the academic race, no longer able to deny the fact of the imminent return to L.A.

When I had to close my academic shop in the Bay Area at the end of summer 2001, my most challenging "good bye" was that with Teresita. And I used a kind of cheap shot to explain to her why I was leaving the Bay Area, not lying completely, but having to invoke my own blood family, my aging parents and the plain necessity for me to be closer to them at this stage. I was not stupid in my use of blood family as an excuse for leaving, because I knew that Teresita knew too well the queer value of the blood family, the one she had always wanted to have. The most ironic part of my explanation to her was the sullenness I felt for months after moving back to L.A., for leaving the largest queer familia I had ever known. I also knew Teresita would not live many more years after I left, despite my denial, and that my own mourning for her and for her memory that became a general queer Latino history needed to begin.

The proudest moment of my Ph.D. graduation was to have Teresita at my side, that legendary lady behaving quietly and respectfully, so unlike her best ranchera self, blending into the crowd of thousands at Berkeley's Greek Theatre, as we academic children in gowns paraded for the Latino community to behold and hope for. Afterwards, Teresita was the one who came along with my family to have dinner with us, the short car ride being long enough for her to blast her Lola voice with "Cucurrucucú Paloma," and for my parents to understand who she really was after all, why she mattered to me. This was the last serenade



Pero al final, las historias de nuestras familias de sangre se conectan con las gays y deberían existir cierres relativos a éstas. Mi aventura maricona en el Área de la Bahía, por los motivos de estas historias, también debían concluir. Y hasta este momento no ha sido nada fácil haber dejado ese espacio atrás.

Mis insomnios comenzaron en el 2000, mientras terminaba la tesis doctoral, viviendo solo y sin pareja (porque así lo decidí), preocupándome sin cesar por la salud de mi padre con sus 80 y pico de años y la de mi madre ya en sus 60 en Los Ángeles. Y estaba atormentado por el hecho que mientras podía intentar escribir las historias de mi comunidad gay, de su sobre vivencia, no estaba haciendo mucho sobre estas últimas etapas en las vidas de mis padres. La voz grabada de Teresita en mi máquina contestadora y en los cassettes de historia oral que hicimos juntos, siempre me despistaba porque significaba un reto para que pudiera seguir adelante. Pero los insomnios y las pesadillas por la idea de la pérdida de la familia me forzaron a escribir más y más rápido, para completar esta etapa de la carrera académica. Ya no podía negar la realidad del regreso inminente a Los Ángeles.

Cuando tuve que cerrar mi taller escolar en el Área de la Bahía al final del verano del 2001, el “adiós” más difícil fue con Teresita. Y utilicé una excusa media barata para explicarle por qué me iba del área. No era una mentira completamente, pero sí tuve que invocar a mi propia familia de sangre, mis padres ya mayores y la simple necesidad de estar más cerca a ellos en esta etapa. No fui tonto al usar la familia de sangre como una excusa para irme, porque yo sabía que Teresita conocía demasiado bien el valor maricón de nuestras familias de sangre, la que ella siempre había querido tener. Lo más irónico de mi explicación a ella fue la tristeza profunda que sentí durante meses después de haber regresado a Los Ángeles por haber dejado atrás la familia gay más grande que había conocido hasta entonces. También estaba conciente que Teresita no viviría muchos años más después de mi partida. A pesar de querer negarlo, mi propio luto por ella y por su memoria, la que se convirtió en una historia gay latina de todos, tenía que comenzar.

El momento más orgulloso para mí durante mi graduación del Ph.D. fue tener a Teresita a mí lado, esa dama legendaria comportándose callada y respetuosamente, tan distinta a su mejor acto como ranchera orgullosa. Ahí estaba ella sentada en medio de la muchedumbre de miles en el Greek Theatre de la universidad en Berkeley, mientras que nosotros los niños académicos en togas desfilábamos para que la comunidad latina nos admirara y tuviera esperanzas. Después de la ceremonia, Teresita fue la que se vino con mi familia a cenar. Ese corto viaje en carro duró lo suficiente para que ella estallara con su voz de Lola con su “Cucurrucucú Paloma” y para que mis padres entendieran quién realmente era ella, por qué ella era tan importante en mi historia. Esa fue la última serenata para este muchacho gay doctorado y su familia, a su regreso final a Los Ángeles. Yo podría haber manejado sin parar en ese instante, riéndome entre mis dientes sin saber exactamente qué diablos estaba ocurriendo en el carro, en ese momento, con esa voz rodeando a mis padres.



for the doctoral gay boy and his family, upon his eventual return to L.A. I could have just kept on driving, smiling through my teeth, unsure what the hell was going on in that car at that moment with that voice surrounding my parents.

Early July 2002

It was supposed to be just another trip back to the Bay Area, another attempt for me to pretend that I had not really moved back to L.A., that I had not left queer family behind a year before. Even though I knew she had been getting sicker and sicker, I am sure I somehow hoped Teresita would still recuperate. In 2002, AIDS deaths were simply not what they were in 1992, or 1982, and I conveniently relied on hope and some

denial. I had talked to her on the phone twice during that trip from my friend Luis' home in Berkeley, and she did not sound good. We had made arrangements for me to see her soon, and to take her around to see some friends and do errands related to her worsening condition.

Teresita's mouth took her to many places since she was a jotito in Los Angeles in the early 1940s. Hiding behind his family's radio and pretending that his already-strong voice was coming out of the music box, young Alberto shocked and intrigued his blood family. But it was Teresita's look that was mightier than her voice, actually. Yes, with her ranchera renditions she could make you laugh to tears or scream with sadness, or take you back to your country and your childhood in an instant. But her look could be even more menacing, accusatory, vengeful, and historical. When I went to see her at the Mission Hotel days before she died, her look was heavy and direct, no lyrical sounds from her mouth, only the penetrating stare of Teresita, held by Sergio, getting into my car for one last time. We went to North Beach, to leave the Mission and its foul state, to have a meal she could not digest nor enjoy. She died two days after.

When I told my parents that I would stay in the Bay another week to help with the arrangements with Teresita's death, they understood exactly what it meant for me to do this. Taking turns, they told me how sorry they felt, and reminded me how important it had been to be with Teresita the years that I could, and be close by in the days when she died. When we hung up I cried alone in my car, driving nowhere. I missed Teresita, and I knew that in those moments my parents knew what the queer loss of Teresita meant to me. And yet, I still don't know, and I am afraid to imagine, what Teresita's loss of blood family meant to her.



Principio de julio del 2002.

Supuestamente iba a ser simplemente otro viaje al Área de la Bahía, otro intento mío para pretender que realmente no había regresado a Los Ángeles y que no había dejado atrás una familia gay un año antes. Aunque sabía que ella se estaba enfermando más y más, estoy seguro que de alguna manera todavía tenía esperanzas que Teresita se recuperaría. En el 2002, las muertes por el SIDA simplemente ya no eran las de 1992 ó 1982. Convenientemente yo contaba con esta esperanza y un poco de negación. Había hablado con ella por teléfono dos veces en este viaje desde la casa de mi amigo Luis en Berkeley. Ya no se le escuchaba muy bien. Nos pusimos de acuerdo para que yo la viera pronto, visitáramos a unos amigos e hiciéramos mandados en relación a su condición que empeoraba.

La voz y la boca de Teresita la llevó muy lejos y a muchos lugares desde que era un jotito en Los Ángeles a principios de los años 40. Escondido detrás del radio de su familia y pretendiendo que su voz, ya fuerte, salía de esta caja de música, el pequeño Alberto escandalizaba e intrigaba a su familia de sangre. Pero era la mirada de Teresita la que realmente era más fuerte que su voz. Claro, con sus interpretaciones de rancheras nos podía hacer reír, llorar o hasta gritar de tristeza, de una manera en que nos trasladaba, a nuestros países y nuestra niñez, en un instante. Pero su mirada podía ser aún más: amenazadora, acusatoria, vengativa e histórica. Cuando la fui a ver al Mission Hotel días antes que falleciera, su mirada fue pesada y directa, sin ningún sonido lírico de su boca. Sólo era la mirada fija y penetrante de Teresita, sostenida de los brazos por Sergio, metiéndose a mi carro por una última vez. Fuimos a North Beach, para dejar atrás la Misión y su estado tan asqueroso para que ella almorzara comida que ya no podía digerir ni disfrutar. Teresita falleció dos días después.

Cuando les dije a mis padres que me iba a quedar en la Bahía otra semana más para ayudar con los arreglos con la muerte de Teresita, entendieron exactamente lo que significaba para mí. Turnándose, me dijeron los dos lo triste que se sentían y me recordaron lo importante que había sido estar con Teresita los años que pude y estar cerca en los días cuando murió. Cuando cerré el teléfono lloré solo en mi carro, mientras manejaba sin rumbo. Extrañaba a Teresita y sabía que en esos momentos mis padres sabían la pérdida gay que Teresita significaba para mí. Y sin embargo aún no sé, y me da miedo imaginarme, lo que significó para Teresita perder su familia de sangre.



Skin

Tyra Kreuk

This work is titled “Skin” because it’s about expressing yourself and being comfortable in your own skin.

It was 2 in the morning when I did most of these pictures. I couldn’t sleep that night. I was really bored and I didn’t want to watch TV. So I did these pictures all by myself using the timer on the camera. I decided to be a model for a night in my own room. I can do it all myself—I can keep posing, keep changing outfits. Every outfit has different moods, personalities, characteristics. I have different sides of myself I want to express. That’s why I have different images of me that came out from my own skin.



Seeing these pictures makes me see that I can be myself for the camera. And sometimes I’m a different person in front of the camera. It’s like acting, dressing up and being a character with a certain image and mood. But they’re all me. These characters just came from my head, things I’ve seen in fashion magazines, TV, real life. I just brought those out and expressed them. I can be a personality and represent it in front of the camera. I’m that character, and at the same time, I’m still me.

All images by Tyra Kreuk, “Untitled,” digital photographs, 2004





I wanted to express lots of different emotions. When I expressed anger, I just wanted to get it off my chest and express it to the camera. In a way it's like breaking the camera. I like the way the image with the white bra came out, even though my head is cut off. The tie image is kind of provocative. I used handcuffs in one picture because sometimes I feel like I can't really express myself. It's like someone is holding me back, not letting me be myself and do what I want to do. So I look sad. The handcuffs are showing that I can't be myself, but I'm still thinking. There is one picture of me without any make-up, natural looking, hair all wet from the shower. I felt like I could be myself in my house, just exposing myself without any extra color on my face. Sometimes the images look like such artwork that I can't believe I did that. I was the photographer and at the same time the model.







These pictures are for everyone. I can be myself in different ways by the way I present myself. I want to let people know that you don't have to be someone you don't want to be. You can be yourself and achieve your goals at the same time. You wanna be a model, you can be a model yourself in your own room. These pictures say to people that you can be whatever you want.







Why You Gagging?: An Interview with David McMillan and Kenny Irvin

Patrick “Pato” Hebert

Corpus shines the spotlight on David McMillan and Kenny Irvin, mother and grandmother of the House of Face. Originally inspired by the New York City house ball culture of the late 1980s, McMillan and Irvin mobilized their own cadre of creative individuals in Cleveland, Ohio. The group transgressed boundaries and invented new possibilities for expression and belonging. House of Face eventually came west and reconfigured itself on the shifting dance floors of Los Angeles. Most recently, McMillan has hosted the monthly party Sissy, a dazzling ensemble of performers that synthesizes original fashion, history lessons, soulful impersonations, live singing, concept art, transgender celebration and dynamic music. We caught up with McMillan and Irvin to find out more about the roots of their club magic and madness.

Pato: How did you get started?

David: In 1990 I was still kinda on the wire. I was going to clubs and hanging out, but, you know, I still had a girlfriend and I was still crossing over to the gay culture, which was still very frightening for me. In Cleveland we had clubs that were very bi and the parties were really amazing, beyond off the hook. I met all kinds of friends—gay, straight, boys, girls—and we all started hanging out together, coming from all directions of the city. We went to see the documentary, *Paris is Burning*. And we said, “Fuck it, that’s it, we’re starting our own house.” They were like, “Well, what are we gonna name it?” My nickname was Face, it was always Face.

Kenny: ‘Cause you were serving face.

D: And I just called people “face” all the time. So my friends said, “We’re gonna call it the ‘House of Face.’”

P: What brought people together?

D: Most definitely music. And fashion.

P: What was the music that was turning those parties out?

D: Adeva, Deee-Lite, ooh it was just so much! We even did the goth clubs back then, ‘cause they were just pumping and hitting it. We had Nine Inch Nails from Cleveland, so we



PHOTOS pp. 18-21: Patrick “Pato” Hebert
All others courtesy of House of Face Archive



were all over the place. Wherever there was a look or music to be matched, we gave you that look and we went to go party with that music. We got noticed as this group of people who would just come in and transform a whole party.

K: It had a lot to do with the fact that everybody was talented. Everybody was gifted with something. Fashion designers, artists, dancers, artists, fashion designers, hair designers. Everything was a package!

P: And what were you contributing to the mix Kenny?

K: Well, me being one of the older ones in the group, I was living really, really large.

D: And I was very, very afraid of him. When I was coming out of the closet, Kenny was way too gay for me. In the daytime! I was afraid of that, I really was. When we're afraid of things, it's because we're looking at ourselves. I would just shake my head and say, "That is really gay."

K: I was really theatrical, but I was well put together.

D: Always.

K: And it was an old school thing. See, I came from the '70s before the whole house thing took off. I would see David and David was so unusual. He was so beautiful and he had a lot of style and, like he said, he was straddling the fence. He never really wanted to deal with me, and I was like, "Calm down!" But he finally developed his self-image and he was something to be reckoned with.

P: Do you think that you were on some kind of fence, too?

K: Never! I think I came through the womb gay. If I was put in a closet, I learned how to drive a Mack truck very early. I ran the whole framework away. I came out homosexual.

P: Why were you guys in Cleveland?

D: That's where I was born and raised. We were both from Cleveland. That's my home, home. And no regrets, because there were times we had some really serious parties come through. That whole underground club scene basically came from the Midwest—Detroit, Chicago. You would have these parties run through your town and just wreak havoc. And it was real people who partied. It really

wasn't about having no celebrities there, even though celebrities would fly in and go.

K: By the time David came, we didn't have that many stars in the bars, and everything was alternative. He just fit right in. Everyone just loved David and the rest of us because we were so unusual. He was able to get to the club owners and the different people in Cleveland, and make it. They did trunk showings. Opened up for celebrities. Remember James Brown?

D: James Broooown.

K: Crystal Waters

D: Ziggy Marley, Ultra Naté.

K: Remember, Milli Vanilli? We did the Ohio Ballet.

D: We were trying to be a different role model, because our clubs were very segregated. It was very, "Whites were over here, and the blacks and Puerto Ricans over there." Asians was unheard of. But we had all these friends. The Puerto Ricans hung out together and the blacks hung out together, but we were mixed up and all together, bringing white, straight girls into the clubs, dressed to the nines. People were scratching their heads.

K: Actually, David and the group were allowing people to be way out there. You have to remember that I came out by the early '70s. I was a part of like the real, real serious kids.

D: He had our friend Trent who was like the number one Grace Jones impersonator in the world at that time, on every talk show. I came out and he met me and it was like a privilege, cause I knew who he was and he did my first fashion show. He did the makeup and everything and it was like, "Wow!" It was too much for me. I mean, he used to do all the fashion shows, Fashion Fair, which was pretty big for me back then. And the number one Sylvester impersonator...



K: Shawn, who grew up with me. We were the last ones to really be doing stuff in Cleveland, because we lived through the disco era. Disco really didn't last long. It came quick and ended fast.

P: Why did it end so quickly?

K: Because of the timing and because of the HIV epidemic. A lot of people started showing different things. In the '70s, we were really provocative.

D: We were really more from a funk town. You know, we had the Ohio Players, Bruce Collins, George Clinton, all that.

K: It was like everybody was a family. That was how the houses really formed in New York—everybody was a family. All the outcasts, all the people who weren't accepted came together. And a lot of us were not accepted because we were extraordinary. So we found each other. I was very happy when David finally stepped on the platform because there was nothing else going on. David was really a strong vehicle for circulating that energy.

D: I was really crazy. I would open Details magazine, look at the fashion, look at the parties, and say, "You know what, I don't care if I live in Cleveland. We gonna do this. We gonna make this outfit and I'm gonna wear it out!"

P: So you were sewing from the very beginning?

D: Pretty much from the beginning. I was in college at the time.

P: Where did you go to school?

D: At a local fashion college.

P: Was that tired for you, to be at a formal school in the day, and then cavorting about with the outrageous children at night?

D: No, not at all. It just kinda pumped me up even more you know, like, I'm at school, I'm working, I'm sewing. And later on, it got a little bad for me, cause I got to this point, I'm like in my third year of college, I was about to turn 21, and I had been "picked" as one of the top underground fashion

designers, unannounced to me. Just from people who seen me out in the clubs, and just all the fashion shows I did at 1:00 in the morning. I mean, we didn't plan anything. We would call people, and be like, "We're gonna do a fashion tonight. It's gonna be me and Kenny and bring the shoes and whatever. We're going on at 1:00 in the morning." You know, tell them where it is. That was what we were known for.

Once that happened, it just took me over to New York. We basically worked for the club Aqualung. The manager, Angela, and her husband, opened many doors for us. They said, "They're having the first ever style summit in New York and I want you to go." This was in 1991, at Lighthouse. Mind you, I had never flown before. I knew the massiveness of this party, because I had been reading about it in all the magazines. "And you want to take me to represent?" Cause at that time, I was a really clean teen. I'd barely had a cocktail. I was just happy to get dressed up and go out and party.

- K:** He was very, very straight laced. Very, traditional. But very talented. He didn't do drugs and stuff.
- D:** And I think it added to my strangeness, believe it or not. I knew that there were some parties that I didn't get picked to do or front. There were other people in my group, and I was oblivious. Then I realized that there was this whole drug connection that was going on, and I was like, "Hmmm, OK."

But I got to New York and I didn't have anything to wear, because going to the summit was very last minute that I was going to this thing. So my manager took me shopping at Patricia Fields. It had just opened up and I go to the dressing room, trying on my little outfits, wondering what was my look gonna be, trying to pull something together for this party. As I'm trying on my outfit, I see this guy checking me out in the dressing room. Lo and behold, it was Willy Ninja! I was like, "Oh my God!" I didn't know if the look was dirty, if it was good, or if it was like, "Who is this bitch?!" Later on, I figured it out, that it was "Who is this bitch?" but in a good way.

Through all the nervousness, I stuck it out, and I'm like, "I'm here for a reason." So I just threw myself in it, and they embraced me. I met a lot of background dancers for different houses, and I got to see what they were about and how it was a bit more of the dark side, things that I didn't want to be about. I realized, "OK, we're not about competitions, we're not about balls, but we are about talent and about creativity." 'Cause we believe as gay people, I don't care how you say it, we are the most visionary. We see things before other people see them. I'll believe this till the day I

die. If it were up to me, this whole House of Face thing would be on a larger level than what it is now. But I'm happy it is what it is, 'cause when I moved here to L.A., I was pretty much over it. We did everything possible in Cleveland, Ohio and I couldn't go any further.

P: You had outgrown it?

D: By '92 I had outgrown it.

P: Was there something painful about that? Or were you just ready to get out?

D: It was painful. You go through things, like your girlfriend stabs you in your back, yada, yada, yada. This is supposed to be your family and I was like, "Oh, we're going here?" I saw the whole club scene going somewhere else. It was becoming more butch, trade, hip-hop. I remember hip-house. That was fine by me. But the others were like, "Nnno, this isn't for me. This isn't my lifestyle." I understood it, but it was like, "Well, I gotta move." That was when I came to L.A.

P: Why L.A., and not New York, or Detroit, or Chicago?

D: I still wanted to pursue fashion and you couldn't go to Detroit to do that. New York, I was just over the snow. I'd rather be in a warmer climate, and I had an ex-girlfriend that lived out in L.A. and she was like, "Well, just come on!" So I got on the train for two days, three nights. Took the train, 'cause I didn't have much money.

P: Did your family see you off?

D: Yeah, my moms seen me off and my best friend did. I left for a reason, 'cause I lost my job, lost my boyfriend. My mom had already kicked me out, 'cause she didn't want to deal with me actually being in love with a guy. She could handle everything all the fashion, all the friends, everything. But when she really saw me with a guy that I was really serious about,



that was a little bit too much. I was 21, I was still in college. We had been there, kinda back and forth before. I said, “If you put me out this time, then when I move, I’m really gonna move. I just want you to know that.” She said, “Alright. Whatever you gotta do.” It took her some time to get used to it. She didn’t really talk to me for the next year after that.



- P:** So you get pegged as the underground genius of Cleveland, you get flown to the Limelight, you leave school, your mom kicks you out—all of this happened in the space of a few years? Then you come out west in '93, and you land in Orange County?
- D:** Yes, I was behind the Orange Curtain. Didn’t really care, because I was like, “OK, I’m in California!” I had no concept how far it was from L.A., didn’t know San Francisco was even further. I mean, I came from, “Hey let’s go to Detroit,” and three hours, you’re there. “Let’s go to Chicago,” five hours you’re there. Everything’s closer in the Midwest. But here, on a good day it took me almost two hours to get from Orange County to L.A.

I came to a point where I was like, “Fuck Face, I’m over it, I’m over them, ‘cause I want to take it to another level and they’re not listening to me. They’re doing all these other things.” I had to let that go. At that time, even Kenny had moved on. He was doing theatre. We kept in contact, we wrote letters. I couldn’t get the other people to write letters, let alone call me. It kinda hurt my feelings. But I got here and I went to a club called Tempo. I was really blown away!

- P:** What blew you away?
- D:** The whole thing. It was on a whole other level than a party in Cleveland. The boys were amazing. I would never look at a go-go dancer before that. There was so much eye candy. And I met a few kids from Extravaganzas and from other houses that were around at the time, and most of these kids were still around 17. That was another thing that blew me away in L.A., cause they’re like, “I’m 14.” Of course, me being who I was, I would always keep in touch with the younger ones, try to make sure that if they went out to the clubs, that at least they went to school the next day, that they were OK.
- P:** Why were you a mother hen like that?
- D:** ‘Cause people were like that to me.

P: What do you mean? What kind of people?

D: Just people in general. There were other gay people that treated me like that. I mean, your mom kicks you out of the house, you don't got no place to live. "You won't be out on the street, come crash at my house."

K: See the thing is, even though you lived in the neighborhood, you took care of yourself. You learned early to be responsible. I mean you went to work even if you've partied. So you took care of yourself, even though people took you in.

P: So you got to California and you saw all these youngsters. You got to know them, saw Tempo and it blew your mind.

D: Blowin' my mind. Then I met this beautiful, beautiful drag queen that worked up the street from the mall that I worked at. I really wasn't into that much.

P: You were a sissy, but not a drag queen?

D: Well, at the time, I guess you couldn't even really call me a sissy. I was something else. I didn't want to be labeled anything. If I had to pick and choose, I was always gay. No doubt about that. But so far as homosexual, heterosexual, I just wasn't into labels. At any rate, I met this beautiful drag queen, an extremely talented make up artist. He was 19. His name was Sutan/Roger and we bonded. This was in Orange County, in Costa Mesa.

It sparked something. I said, "I want you to be in House of Face." And she was like, "What's that?" I said, "It's kinda like *Paris is Burning*, Madonna's *Truth or Dare*." It was just me and her. I would dress her up. We would drive all the way from Costa Mesa to L.A. She couldn't get into the clubs, 'cause she was too young, and I was like, "Look at her! Are you sure you won't be able to let her in? Come on!" And she was 6'4", so that helped too. They were like, "Alright, alright. Come in." I ran into a couple of other friends that I met, 'cause I used to hang out in Riverside. I don't know why, but they were at Club VIP in Riverside. I don't know what they put in



the water in Riverside, but these children, they could dance their asses off! And there was no attitude. They just wanted to dance. That's how I picked up another couple of children.

For the longest time, there were only four members in the actual House of Face in L.A. At that time, there were other good kids in L.A. that were turning it on, like Barbarella, Arena on Fridays. It was totally different back then. Eventually we had to say, "OK, we can't just be House of Face. It has to mean something more." Then it came to me: "Fierce Ass Creative Energy." A kid says, "Why won't you let me be in the House of Face?" I'm not trying to be snooty, but we're pretty much like an agency. We'd say, "What's your talent? What can you do? We don't care if you can dance up a

storm, or work a party, that's really not it. I don't care if you look gorgeous, or who your last piece of trade was. What's your contribution?" It was about "Fierce Ass Creative Energy." We wanted to keep it going in that direction.



P: So talk to me about how the clubs changed.

K: Growing up as a child in the '60s and then going and being around so much energy, it was like a family. You had big brothers and sisters and mentors that kept you straight down. You could go out to clubs and stuff, have a good time, go home, go to work, to school, or whatever you did, then see those people again on the weekend when it was a party all over again. Half of the time, you didn't even know those people's last name. It was a family orientated thing. I would go everywhere, and I saw the whole thing change by 1982. Disco came to an end, the real glamorous parties came to a stop. It was just a lot different things that put the damper on it, along with HIV and AIDS. But David kept a fine line of sophistication with the House of Face.

D: You knew how to act. Whether you were old or young, you could mingle with a whole bunch of people.

P: Can you talk about how you viewed HIV at that time?

K: I can remember in the '70s when they were talking about something. I remember in the '80s, it was GRID, and people were talking about having GRID and ARC*, and we were trying to figure out what

* GRID: *Gay-Related Immunodeficiency Disease*, ARC: *AIDS-Related Complex*

this thing was. We were always educated about what it was at the time. But because a lot of people did look up to me, like they look up to David, I didn't tell anyone when I became positive. AIDS was a big hindrance to the club scene. When I came up, we had dungeons. David never had the chance to really get a hold of that.

D: Nooo. I got a peek at a dark room and I just—

K: David's not about that. Never was about that.

D: I wanted to come out, party with my friends, dress to the nines. And I did want a boyfriend. I wanted to get married. I wanted the white picket fence. I was going to meet this one guy, and that was going to be it for the rest of my life. And lo and behold, that never happened! But thank God, I had such fabulous friends, and my fabulous party lifestyle to make up for it.

P: Kenny, you say a lot of people looked up to you and you didn't want to tell them that you were positive. When was that?

K: I first started to talk about it in 1990.

P: Why did you start talking about it?

K: Because I needed to tell certain people. A lot of people would not stop their lives to try and be worried about me and take care of me. They always looked up to me because I always had a strong backbone. David too, because David would watch me and he never knew it. He finally came and told me a lot of things he got from me and I was like, "What?" because I always thought he was the strongest thing in the world. He is so serious and strong, but he was like, "I learned a lot from you." I couldn't believe that. But that's the way it was. We were a family. We became the best of friends. Even when everybody else went by the wayside, but me and David kept in touch and became even closer, like family family. That's what it's all about, the House of Face thing. What David was really interested in was an extended family. And I'm glad that you're talking to David because a large community of his family and friends are gone because of HIV and AIDS.

P: You've lost a lot of people?



D: Yeah I have. And oddly enough, I lost a straight cousin, when I just knew that I would be the first one to die from this disease. Don't know how I was gonna catch it, because I wasn't really having sex. But you know, if you were having sex, you would catch it, especially where I'm from. There were a lot of mean guys at the club that said, "Oh, he's too pretty. He ain't gonna make it to 25." 'Cause back then, that was the age they gave you till-25. At the same time, it was like, "Thank you for that," 'cause it kept me a little more safe. I was a bit of a prude. I'm not gonna lie. But I was always HIV literate.

P: So how did you tell him, Kenny?

K: I think someone else told him, and I think I finally told him over the phone.

D: All I remember is that I just found out about it two years ago.

K: I thought he knew.

D: I was like, "Since when?" I can understand his reasons, 100 percent.

K: I thought you knew. I was gone by then. I left town because I was really stressed out to go and work, 'cause that thing was doing something to my work. I didn't even think about getting some help until a few years later, because as far as support systems go, I was ready. I had a support system. I didn't need to go to a group. But I thought David knew, and then he started worrying about me, just like I expected.

P: Is that part of why you don't like to tell people?



K: No. The people who need to know, I tell. I don't need to walk around with a banner on my back. Even when I did prevention work and education, workshops and taskforce stuff, it wasn't my focus to walk into a room and say, "I am HIV positive." Even when I did interviews on the radio, I just addressed it on the education level. A lot of people probably know about my HIV status, and a lot of people don't know. It's not important to me, because I have my life to live. I explained that to David 'cause I thought he knew. He's been worried about me ever since.

D: I'm not worried, really. But you know, now I'm in the know, 'cause I swear up and down I have a few friends and something is up with them. I don't even know if it's HIV, per se, but I know something is going on. "Something is up with you. Tell me, so that when something happens, I will know how to act accordingly."

P: And what do you get back in response?

D: In response, well, that momma still claims it's nothing. If it's nothing, fine. Any type of illness is a big thing, and it kinda hurts me 'cause you're my friend. But I have to take it from a different perspective, 'cause I'm always wondering, "If I'm that person, what would I do?" I really don't know. I might tell everyone I'm closest to and around, but outside of that?

P: Have either of you changed your attitude about HIV over time? Like the way you think about it or don't think about it?

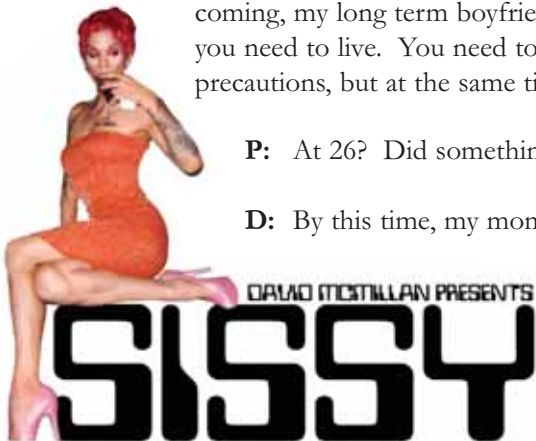
D: My attitude has changed about the facts. 'Cause I came out so petrified. I wore rubber clothes!

When I turned 26, I actually crossed a sexual border for myself, 'cause the husband wasn't coming, my long term boyfriend wasn't coming. I said, "You know what? You're young, you need to live. You need to experience this and you need to have faith in yourself. Take precautions, but at the same time, you need to go out there and you need to live."

P: At 26? Did something happen? What made you cross that border?

D: By this time, my mom had passed away and it was really fresh. It was only like a year.

P: You were living here and she passed away in Cleveland?



D: Yes, and I was trying to get settled here in California and things were looking better for me. I was still in Orange County and not having no kind of play. So I got into sex lines, the telephone. Meet a guy, straight, bi, whatever. Hook up, out the door. Kinda boosted things for me. And, once again, very safe and very cautious.

P: What about you, Kenny? Has your thinking about HIV changed over time?

K: There's more knowledge about it. That's the only thing that's changed for me. The whole HIV/AIDS situation has always been insane for me, and no matter how safe and careful you are, you can mess up. Sexually, it has put borders up. But I also believe there are so many things coming up to show that you can have safe, hot HIV sex. That was another thing to make me think about a mental block that keeps me from having sex, 'cause you don't want to give the virus to someone else, no matter how safe you are.

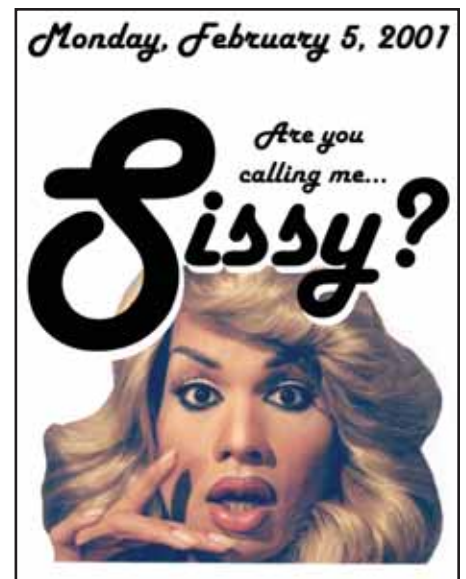
P: How about having sex with someone who is positive?

K: Same as having sex with someone who's not. You have to think about it. It kinda throws you off.

P: David, are you also a chat queen?

D: No. I tried it for a minute, a hot minute. Trust me, by the time I turned 26, I tried the phone, I liked the phone, I liked what I got, I was really lucky. I had regular partners, boom, boom, boom, this is what it is, in and out, motel lay. "Oh well, let's try sex clubs, a sex spa." And I went in, I did that and it was like, "Hmmm, this isn't for me." I think it's because I went to one of the nicer ones, but I was running into the same problem—no one I liked was really attracted to me 'cause of race. And it hurt my confidence, more than anything.

P: And you didn't want to go to any of the other spas that were more brown?



D: No, especially, 'cause then I would run into people I know. And you know, I could hook up with a few Europeans, and there were always people from out of town, that's for sure.

P: Why do you think that is?

D: They just have different attractions than the people here in L.A. Most guys here, even if they're white, they're mostly into Latino guys. Most Europeans are into black guys.

P: So I want to shift gears and talk about fashion.

D: I love fashion. I love a look. I love the chameleon aspect. You can be anything and anyone you want to be.

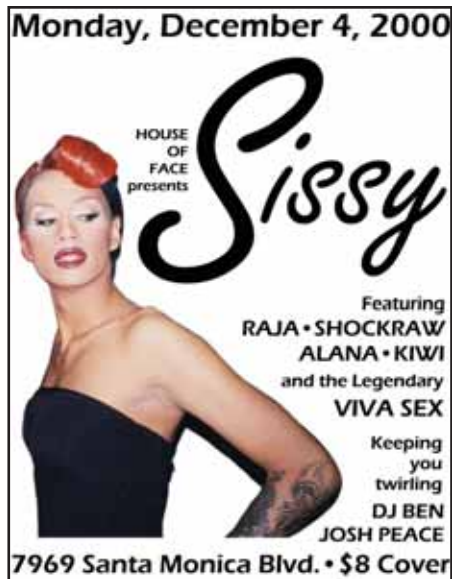
P: Where would you say your fashion sense comes from?

D: My mother. Straight out.

P: How does your mother live on in you?

D: My mother? Kenny knew my mother. He didn't even know my mother when she was a fashion queen. He knew her when she got into dyke dressing. Well, she got a little butch, and I was like, "Mom, dress up." But she gave me so much. She had me when she was 30. You gotta realize that. But right when I was born, she always made my clothes. And she and I had matching outfits. This was the '70s, so you know, we had *outfits!* You know, she had everything—the shoes, the wigs. I mean, it wasn't that she didn't have hair. That's just what they were doing. I grew up around this, so how could I not? She'd see something she liked, she would open up a magazine and go find a pattern or something.

P: Did she start you on the machine early on?



D: She didn't start me at all. It was just something I was always looking at.

P: How did you get started on the machine?

D: Well, my whole family sews. My grandmother worked at a cleaners. I would be at the cleaners and I would learn alterations and this and that. But by the time I was 16, 17, I was getting ready to graduate and I realized that I didn't know what the fuck I was gonna do.

P: So as an artist, how do you balance your vision being so far in the future while still wanting to be connected to people who are working at their own fashion pace in the present?

D: One frock at a time! It's a balance. One thing about fashion, it does trickle. Some things do take a long time, 'cause there's a lot of new children out there who are not living on this planet, at all. And I'm loving every single minute of it!

P: You were talking about how when you first moved here, you felt like the clubs were off the hook. That was back in the early '90s and now they're different. Can you talk about how they've changed?

D: Oh, somewhere down the line, things just fell off. I think it's the circuit thang, these huge, massive parties with guys taking their shirts off. It was cutting into my little scene. They were just taking over. The little house clubs that weren't even gay. It was about the music. I was so clueless. Once again, clean teen. I was a drunk by this time but you know, I was a clean teen, so I didn't know all the drugs. And music just got really bad—the remixes of old idols that I didn't care to hear. I was being forced this lifestyle that wasn't mine, even though I was gay. And it was just being crammed down my throat in West Hollywood.

I couldn't even go into the black clubs and get my release, because they had gone all hip-hop. Everyone wanted to look straight, and be hard, and keep it real. I was like, "Yeah, keep it real. You're gay. Be gay." But at the same time, I grew up in it, so it was like, "Forget it. I don't live in these neighborhoods anymore, because that's one of the things I moved away from in Cleveland." You know, you gotta dress one way just to



survive where you live. I get that and the whole hotness of that culture. “Oh, it’s like trade, he’ll fuck you down. That’s kind of hot.” They want a man who looks like a man. There’s nothing wrong with that also. But at the same time, someone who was kind of in between, kind of artsy, just was not being seen at this time. You were either a muscle queen or just trade. So it was like, “Well, where’s the medium?” Thank God I found a good club—The Men’s Room. That’s where I met you.



I still remember the first day I was there. It blew me away. It blew me away, one, because of the DJ, Tony Powell. And also because of the mix of people who were there. It was a little more glamorous. You had a little bit more of a higher profile. People that went there were people who were doing things, photographers, you know they had a little bit more of a creative type of crowd. It was mixed. You had some straights going there. But most of all, it was the music. ‘Cause no matter what happened to my day, oh, I’d just go there and release. And if you know me, you know when I’ve had a bad day. You’d just see me on the dance floor. “Oh, he must have had a tough one!”

- P:** Yeah, when I found Tony’s music and I found you guys dancing, it was like, “This is home. This is like the San Francisco that I was in.” And the music? I was done! I remember my first time too. I was like, “This is not Circus, this is not Boy Trade, this is not the bars, this is something else!” Men’s Room had its courtyard culture, its smoking culture, its WeHo moment. But then as you move deeper into the dance floor, as small as small as that space was, it became something very special.
- D:** That was another thing that I liked about it, people weren’t posing there. They went to dance. Even when they were socializing, it wasn’t about posing.

P: Men's Room was when I stopped going out to pick up. I was definitely there looking at boys, hoping maybe I would find somebody who would work me. Never happened. So I went for the music. That's when I started going out in t-shirts and jeans. I didn't care.

D: You didn't even need to worry about shade or anything. You'd just go. I loved it when my friends would say, "I haven't heard from you all week, but I knew that you would be here today. I knew that I would find you here on Thursday." Really, it was church. It was so religious for me. And I had to wean myself off. "Ok, I have to miss one Thursday of the month, just one." That was sometimes very hard for me to do.

P: Why did you have to wean yourself?

D: It was too much of a good thing. Guys would come to me and say, "You know what? You'll never find a boyfriend." I'd say, "You know what? I'm not looking for one, as you can obviously see. Someone thinks I'm hot, they wanna hook up, I'm here to dance. Even if I did have a boyfriend, I wouldn't want him to come with me. Because this is about me and the music and my friends that I get to meet, just from this place."

But then, Men's Room went down. It didn't happen anymore. And for me, I moved on. I kinda fell into the tranny culture. Not really being a drag queen myself or—

P: Why aren't you a drag queen? Someone who's into fashion and performance as much as you?

D: It's so many things. I don't do the whole make up thing. I don't do the whole role transformation from man to woman. I could put on some pumps and dance, or a dress or skirt. All that stuff is fine. You know, I like the weird mixture, 'cause I'm from that more glam side of it. But I'm not really a drag queen. It's like the glam boys, which I love. That scene is very pop. It's starting to



arrive, and kids are starting to dress up again, and give you a look, give you fashion. You know, make it themselves. I love that. 'Cause a lot of designers will tell you in a minute, "I get my inspiration from the children at the club." I do. I mean, look at Sex In The City. Patricia Fields is their head designer. They get most of it from the queens in the club.

P: You don't like dressing yourself, but you like to dress a queen? Why the difference?

D: 'Cause I live through them. I live through them wearing something that I made. It's not like I want to be woman, and it's not like I want to be a performer, *per se*. If I get something, if I get an inkling to do a show, then fine. Otherwise, it's just too rehearsed for me.

P: So you were hanging out with drag queens, but then that was your transition to transgender culture?

D: Most gay guys don't feel as comfortable hanging out in that lifestyle, because they don't really understand it. But where I came from, it was totally different. In Cleveland, everyone partied together. It wasn't that segregated. The transgender culture here in L.A. is far more segregated. But



in other places, it's a little more mixed.

Especially if you go to the black clubs—the black gays, lesbians and the transgenders,

they all party together. So in L.A. I got over it. I got over myself, and I had to take it to another level. Well, if you saw girls who had it, it's like being a modeling agency, you say, "Oh she got it! And I gotta tell her she got it, right now. So, five years from now, she'll know and she'll be on a whole 'nother level."

And once again, the music was better. The music was so much better. And there was posing, but it was a different kind of posing. It was a posing I like. I could see everything from every angle, from every side. The men that go there would be so hot. You'd be like, "My fucking God, where's my wig?" I just got into meeting the girls and getting to really know some of 'em.

P: How have those girls changed you?

D: They let my creativity live. They wore my fashions. And the girls that I know and hang around are extremely talented. They've been working for years. They've been in this business at least 15 to 20 years. And I can always respect a legend. I feel like, this life is all you have, and we need to make it as fabulous as we can until the day we die. Someone can tell your story later.

P: Who are those legends you're working with?

D: Well, one of them is Raja. Jasmine, Kiwi, RuPaul, Alana, Shockraw, so many. Flava, Viva Sex.

P: So you started hanging out at Peanuts with all these divas. Then what happened?

D: Actually at that time, I introduced one of my children who I met when he was 19, DJ Josh. I'm not trying to be rude, but I want my own DJ. And Josh, poor thing, has been working it ever since. But



it was the birth of *Sissy*, because that's what it all boils down to. The word alone is so degrading. You never want to be called a sissy. Sissy came from sisterhood, believe it or not. This is your sister. And I wanted to bring it back, to just have this place where we could live, and fall out, and prance, and just do whatever else we want to do. A place where people really aren't gonna care because they're not trying to look at you, judge you, or pick you up. Unless you're really looking hot that night! But that was the birth of *Sissy*. And here we are, four years later still doing it. It's cut back. I'm only gonna do it about 6 times a year. But it's still worth it, even if we're doing it for no one else but ourselves.

FIN





Untitled

Cirilo Domine

I am stuck with my romance with natural materials—lately, rubber tree leaves, seeds, grains and, of course, bamboo. Using these materials I see myself as a mistranslator.

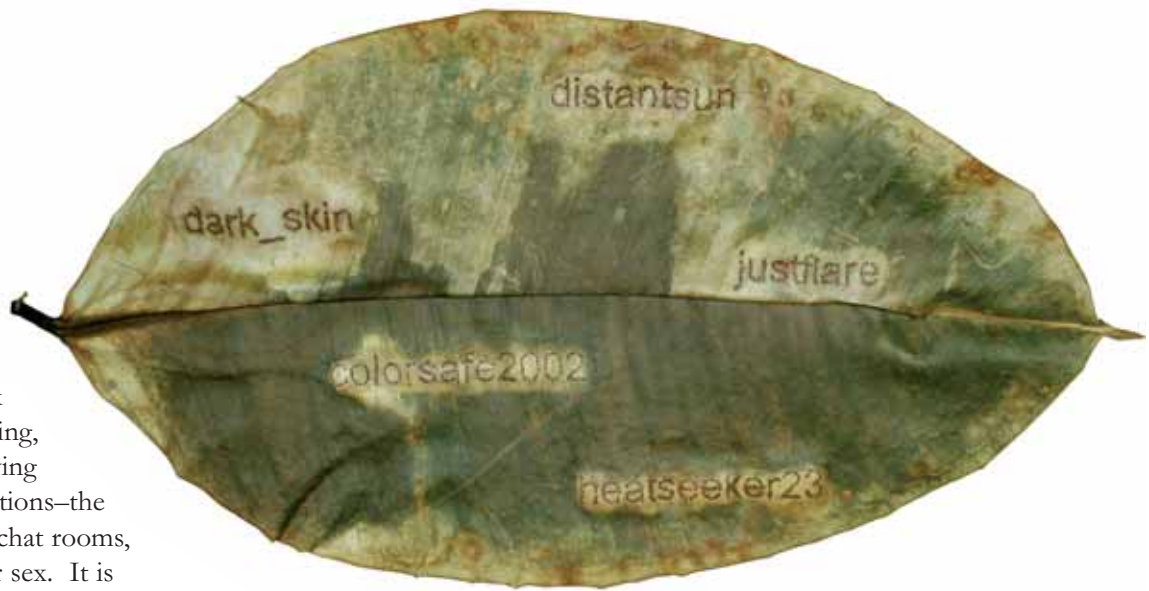
As gay men, we've heard all these labels – Bean Queen, Rice Queen, Curry Queen, Potato Queen. Campy, but really heartbreaking tags if you are a multi-grain-eating-queen like myself trying to survive in this racist country. It is in response to these labels placed on men who are attracted to other men of a specific race that I made the tiaras. I wanted to complicate things as they are in nature. This, my tiara, is mounted with Indian and French lentils, Japanese red azuki and black Cuban beans, green mung beans, brown, black, and white rice—all immigrant seeds that could potentially grow anywhere at anytime.

When I think of a crown I think of inheritance—a thing passed along from one queen to another. I wanted to create my own inheritance by making a tiara out of bamboo in honor of the conceptual inheritance that was passed along to me while growing up in the Philippines.



All works by Cirilo Domine, "Untitled," mixed media, 2004
Tiaras photographed by David Krantz and www.paxicoreview.com
Leaves photographed by Patrick "Pato" Hebert





The new body of work was made from observing, participating, and studying anonymous social situations—the personals, the internet chat rooms, and the phone lines for sex. It is overwhelming to see the sheer number of people interacting with each other. One after another, names appear in the chat rooms like a parade going in every direction. And there are beautiful and poetic insignias or screen names – that hint at race, desire, aspirations. And names that sound mysterious, ethereal or even spiritual. I tried to create a floating family tree of these screen names that I then tattooed on leaves. Embedded in an organic material these names interact like words in a poem. These leaves will eventually change, degrade, warp, bleed into each other, become dated, and turn brown. Time passing.







STOCKING CLEAN DRUG
SMALL GUYS ARE
TO HISPANIC FIT I WANT A MONTH FULL
TEACH ME EVERYTHING BLIND BLUE EYED GUY HAD
INTIMATE "CUT BIG MUSHROOM HEAD
SPONTANEOUS HOOK UPS STRAIGHT LONG TERM RELATIONSHIPS
ATHLETIC SWIMMERS SPONTANEOUS HOOK UPS
DATE & LONG TERM BEHIND SCENES OR STRAIGHT
MUTUAL 30. GROUPS FOR GREEK - COTTAGE
WATCH "PTRN 5'10" 165 LBS 3/4
5'10" 165 LBS 3/4 5'10" 165 LBS 3/4
DISEASE FRI
TIP

ASYLUMS (or Etudes from the Dark)

Laurence Angeleo Padua

Chapter One: Solitude Standing

AZRA

Against the whitewashed wall, one brumeliad stands brilliantly red, while another whispers its last breath away, the parent dying to give way for the child emerging from its side. Outside the window, the bougainvillea blooms orange fire, as the afternoon turns into night. And I'm wishing those tire sounds were crickets, those gun bursts, tree frogs. The night feels heavy.

Below my live space, my work space is heated by the kitchen from the restaurant downstairs, and its patrons that crowd into the tiny space at all hours of the day. Nicolas, the owner, a heavy-set man with a bushy mustache, runs the place like a third world dom. He sits at the end of the counter, which extends from the cash register next to the kitchen, all the way to the front, greeting each person who walks through the door with gusto. Mostly, it's men who sit at the counter, who on certain nights would surprise me from my sleep with their yells. Always, it would be a cheer - of victory or encouragement - for Mexico, winning or losing in the most recent soccer match.

Each day, before work, I take the dog out for a walk. It's always the same. Out the front door, where he manages always to hit the frame with his wagging tail, across the street to the patch of green in front of the firehouse, where he sniffs at the same spot, turns and lifts his leg. Two squirts, a wag of the tail. He leads me down the block, underneath the American Express billboard, where Baby crashes after a night of turning tricks. If she's awake, she offers a smile, a pipe, or, "How you doin?"

He runs around the corner, towards the Vietnamese market, finally to the small park where the signs shout their warning, "No dogs allowed!" This being Oakland.

This morning, I look up from the screen, and there he stands, tail wagging. He knows it's time. I rise from my chair, and my knees crack. "You better be quick about this."

"Sorry I'm late."

"s ok. No one else is here yet." Martin looks up from his terminal. "Girrrl, you look like shit!"

“You would, too, if you’ve been up all night.”

“He didn’t come home again?”

“Yeah, that. But I’ve also been up writing. Then BART was crazy again. You know how it is. A little rain and it screws up the entire system.”

“I don’t know why you put up with it. But hey, it’s not my business.”

“Yeah, right . . . like that ever stopped you before. But you’re right. I don’t know why I put up with it.”

“Listen, do you want my advice?”

“Do I have a choice?”

“Well, yeah.”

Do I really? Have a choice, I mean. I feel trapped in this cycle that keeps coming back. Not to me, but to him. To his needs, his life. God knows I’ve tried to leave, but something within always says, “Stay!” And I do. So I lose myself in poetry that speaks more eloquently about how I feel than I can ever do. To him. To my friends. Even to myself.

Outside, the rain’s slowing. But I wish it weren’t. I wish it would just keep on coming; become biblical. Just so I wouldn’t have to think. About what I left behind and what’s ahead. What I have unwittingly given up in order to be here, now. I wish for rain strong enough to wash away the street beneath my window, a torrent to drown this city, for a downpour strong enough to wash the grime from my soul, just so I can start anew.

In my dreams, I fly free. Without boundaries that bind even birds to territories. Without seasons that dictate the flight of the swallowtail. I fly alone above my world made small by the necessity to hide. Away from questions and self-awareness; far away from responsibilities, perceived, real. And sometimes, I want to do more than just fly, but the facility of floating, or riding the wind, or merely lying suspended keeps me from doing much more.

“So what did you do last night?”

“Nothing. Stayed home with the dog.”

“Did he . . . ”

“What?”

“ . . . come home?”

“No.”

Before lunch, I slip out without telling Martin. He’s sweet, really. Very sisterly. But sometimes, I need time away, even from family. Though the morning fog has not yet lifted, there’s a stream of joggers down the Embarcadero. I ease myself into their traffic, merging slowly so as not to impede any of them . Feeling cold, I button up my jacket, and stuff my hands in my pants pockets. I make it all the way down to the wharf: occasionally stepping aside to let joggers pass by. “Thanks.” “You’re welcome.” I watch their backs, as they maneuver through tourists, or each other.

As I get closer to the pier, the fog thins across the bay, the sun’s rays managing to break through in points over the bridge’s towers. Without histories, this city would be beautiful.

“Come out with me and Eddie tonight.”

“Can’t.”

“Why not? What do you gotta do? And girl, don’t say write.”

“Funny.

“C’mon. It’ll be fun. We’ll have cocktails at Romper Room or Gravity. Wherever you wanna go. C’mon. You know you need this.”

“Mmmmm. ..”

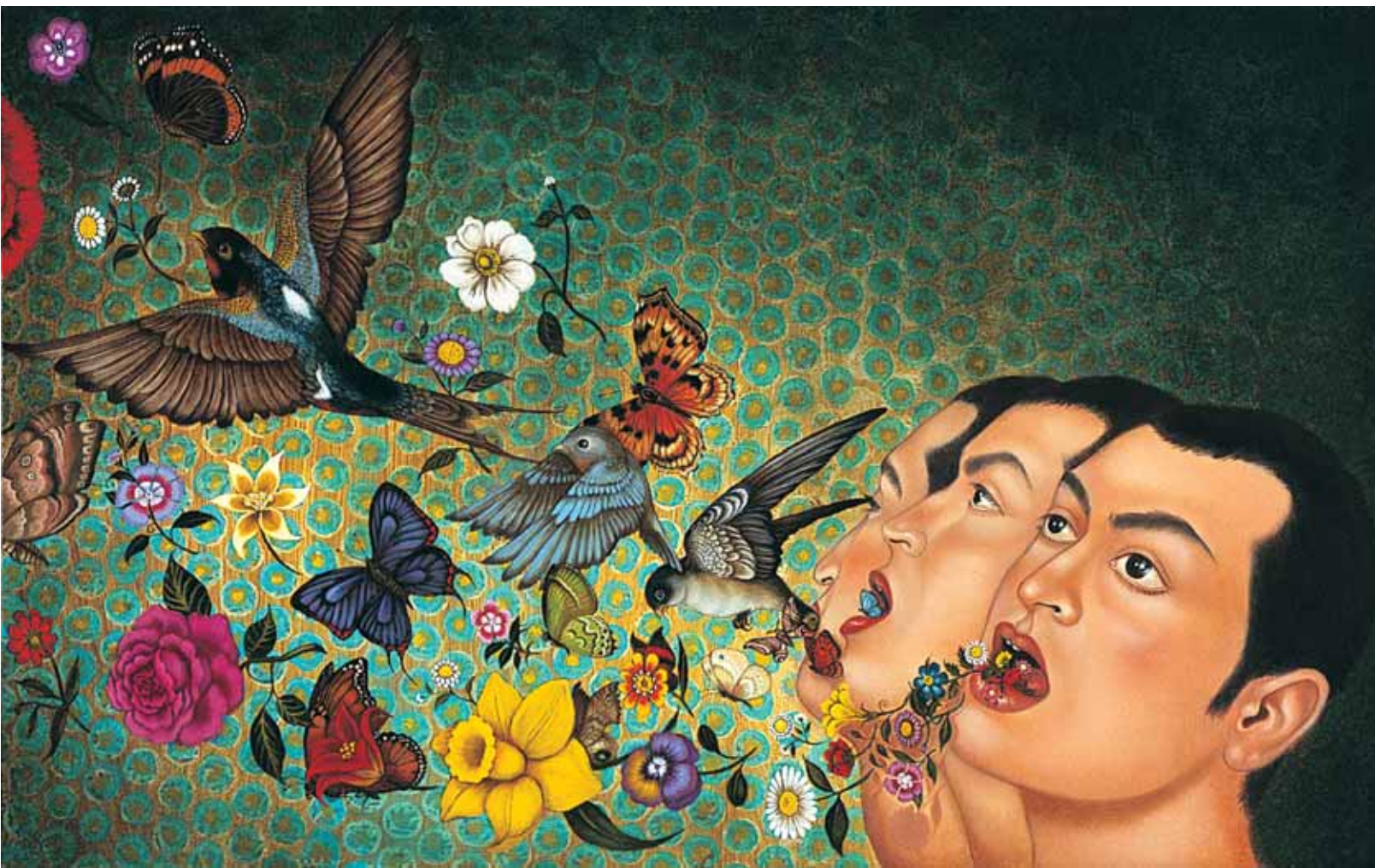
“C’mon. We’ll come pick you.”

Sometimes, I wish he never did come home. While the night passes more quickly without worry, doubt, or fear, I can fly more easily alone. Without having to disentangle. Arms, legs, sometimes words he says out loud in his sleep. Or my self from his. Because I’m starting to realize that I’m becoming like him. Another being, slowly becoming lost within multiple entanglements. Of desire. Naming. Belonging.



Patrick “Pato” Hebert, “Not Stirred” 2002, digital photograph, 3.5” x 2.75”





Tino Rodriguez, "La Voz del Poeta (Voice of the Poet)," 2002, Oil on wood, 12" x 40"

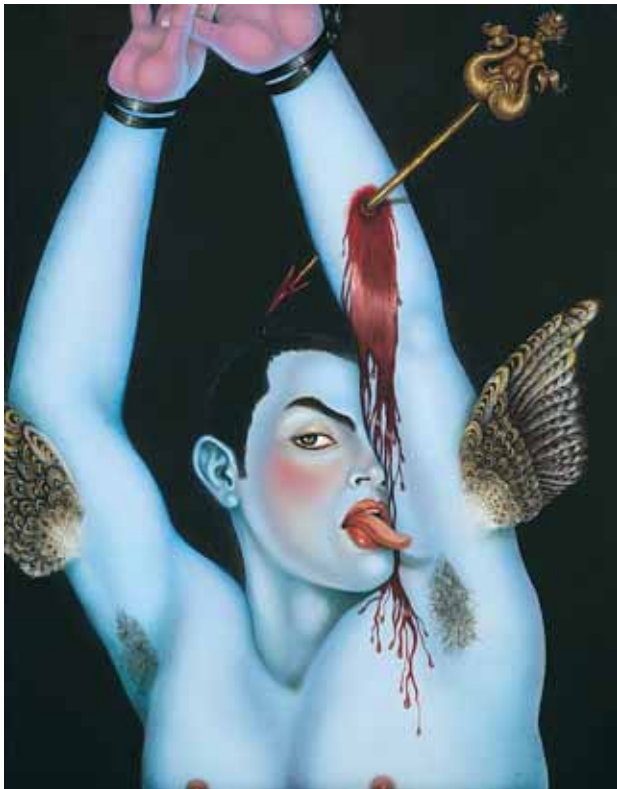
It's All Sooo Beautiful: The Paintings of Tino Rodriguez

Jaime Cortez

Something amazing happened to me when I was five years old. I was playing with an unspeakably cool nine year old. Her name was Cookie, so you will not be surprised to know that she was a bad girl. One afternoon, Cookie took a pencil and began drawing on the wall. I was shocked and said, "Youre gonna get in trouble, Cookie!" She said, "Shut up, punk." And I did. She drew a circle with a curving line that radiated outward from the center. She continued adding these lines, working her way around the circle. Before my eyes, a lead flower unfolded.

I was stunned by her gesture. The delicate strokes contained transgression, creation, transfiguration and ordered beauty. Years later, I figured out why the gesture was so important to me. In the moment before she created the image, there was nothing. Just a girl with a pencil and a blank expanse of wall. Moments later there was a flower. I understood that nothing springs forth from void. The flower had to have been somewhere before it ever got drawn. I had deduced that the flower was in Cookie all along. Maybe there were other flowers in her. She could have thousands of them filling her from toes to throat like a piñata.

Tino Rodriguez' painting, *The Voice of the Poet*, is a beautiful visual analogy for that childhood epiphany. The poet (Rodriguez himself) is depicted in triplicate. His mouths are open as if singing, and what a song it is. As in Aztec world scrolls, language undergoes alchemy, emerging from the speaker's mouth and congealing into a multicolored stream of orchids, pansies and passion flowers, hummingbirds, moths and monarch butterflies. A swallow is unswallowed from the poets throat and looks back, perhaps a bit shocked at the turn of events.



LEFT: "Zephyrus," 2002, Oil on wood, 14" x 11"

RIGHT: "Post-Coitum Tristese," 1997, Oil on wood, 17" x 17"





In post-everything 2004, some would find it easy to dismiss this work because it is a painting (unfashionable), pretty (suspect), fanciful (escapist) and highly skilled (craft-y). All of those qualities speak to me of *The Fag* and I love that. Seek out the beautiful and the exquisite, and you may well find *The Fag*. The same one who is seen by so many as sinful and inverted, practicing a diseased and foul sex, is the one who creates beauty for all to enjoy. Cultural ambivalence towards *The Fag* plays itself out constantly in our culture. *The Fag* works with manic energy to secure heterosexual unions and dwellings on network and cable makeover and home decorating programs. I have yet to see the designing men of these programs setting up a perfect queer union. Meanwhile, back in Washington D.C., the Supreme Court finally ruled in 2003 that adult gays and lesbians should not be criminalized for committing acts of consensual sex. In the same year as that groundbreaking ruling, the White House announced its intention to “defend” marriage as an exclusively male/female union. Pundits have warned that gay marriage will be a hot button issue and litmus test for the 2004 election. Do you now or have you ever supported gay marriage?

FACING PAGE: “Sooo Sweet,” 1999, Oil on wood, 11.75” x 11”
THIS PAGE: “Everlasting Machine of Desire,” 1998, Oil on wood, 9.5” x 13.5”



Ambivalence is the daily bread of thoughtful artists, and Rodriguez is not exempted from this. As a child raised in Mexico, he was nursed on the sublime brutality of Catholic imagery. Blood everywhere. Literal blood of pain and sacrifice. Metaphoric blood of purification and transcendence. Rodriguez extends this metaphoric understanding of blood to cum. Blood and cum are, of course, the fluids that gay men are taught to fear and avoid. In Tino's wooded fairylands, however, cum and blood flow in gorgeous excess, suffusing everything with the sense of our body fluids as mystical, nutritive and renewing. "We have so much shame about our bodies, our fluids," states the artist. "The body is this garden that has been cemented over. We have all these things to cover our body, hide its smells and fluids. But those fluids and smells are just signs that our bodies are working. Your piss is not going to smell like Chanel."

The blending of Catholic and pre-Columbian imagery is a key characteristic of Rodriguez work. There are jaguar men, references to Aztec and Olmec art and the butterflies and birds central to the region's mythologies. The history of Mexico informs his understanding of the role of painting in his life. "The Spaniards took or destroyed the pre-Columbian books, religion and ritual," he laments. "I remember realizing that Spanish is not the original language of Mexico. It was imposed. So Spanish is not my real language. Painting is my real language. Every time I speak it, it is my little rebellion."

The rebellion is complicated, of course, by the deeply European history of oil painting. Tino's images are painted with the exquisite techniques that were being perfected in Europe around the time of the new world conquests. Shades of Cranach, Breugel and Italian masters of the 16th century are all present as are the masterful Mexican women who painted in the 20th century. Through Leonora Carrington, Frida Kahlo and Remedios Varos, Rodriguez learned the power of the personal and the allure of intimacy. "You see their paintings and you can almost hear them whisper in your ear," he marvels.

Though traditional in his techniques, Rodriguez is thoroughly of our era in his eclectic consumption and re-interpretation of world mythologies and cultural symbols. In *Tlaloc's Paradise*, a central figure stands before a pre-Columbian depiction of the heavenly afterworld. He is bare but ablaze in ritual markings. His forehead is emblazoned with a delicate blue trident suggestive of Hindu devotional markings. His eyes are rimmed in blue like the villains of kabuki theater. Mendhi-like scales and paisleys form protective sleeves and gloves. A mighty Japanese carp tattoo girdles his midsection. A butterfly discreetly covers his mouth, as if holding back his secrets. *Tlaloc's Paradise* suggests an idiosyncratic and ineffably spiritual world that makes sense to the artist. "As a gay Latino, I've always felt like the other. What mattered to me, what I respected, was always different. I didn't want a wife and children. I wasn't expecting the same things as everyone else



around me. My art has been a process of digging and investigating to see what that means, of re-arranging the world according to my perceptions. It takes research. Its not just painting, its trying to understand mythology, fashion, theater. Everything is very ritualized.”

The use of painting as an interpretive act is central in Rodriguez’ art process. “I do not use my art to escape reality, but to put it on hold. Our world is violent, full of invasive communications which we race to process. My art is subconscious, but it is not a negation of this reality. It is a way of filtering it, a *coladera* (colander).”

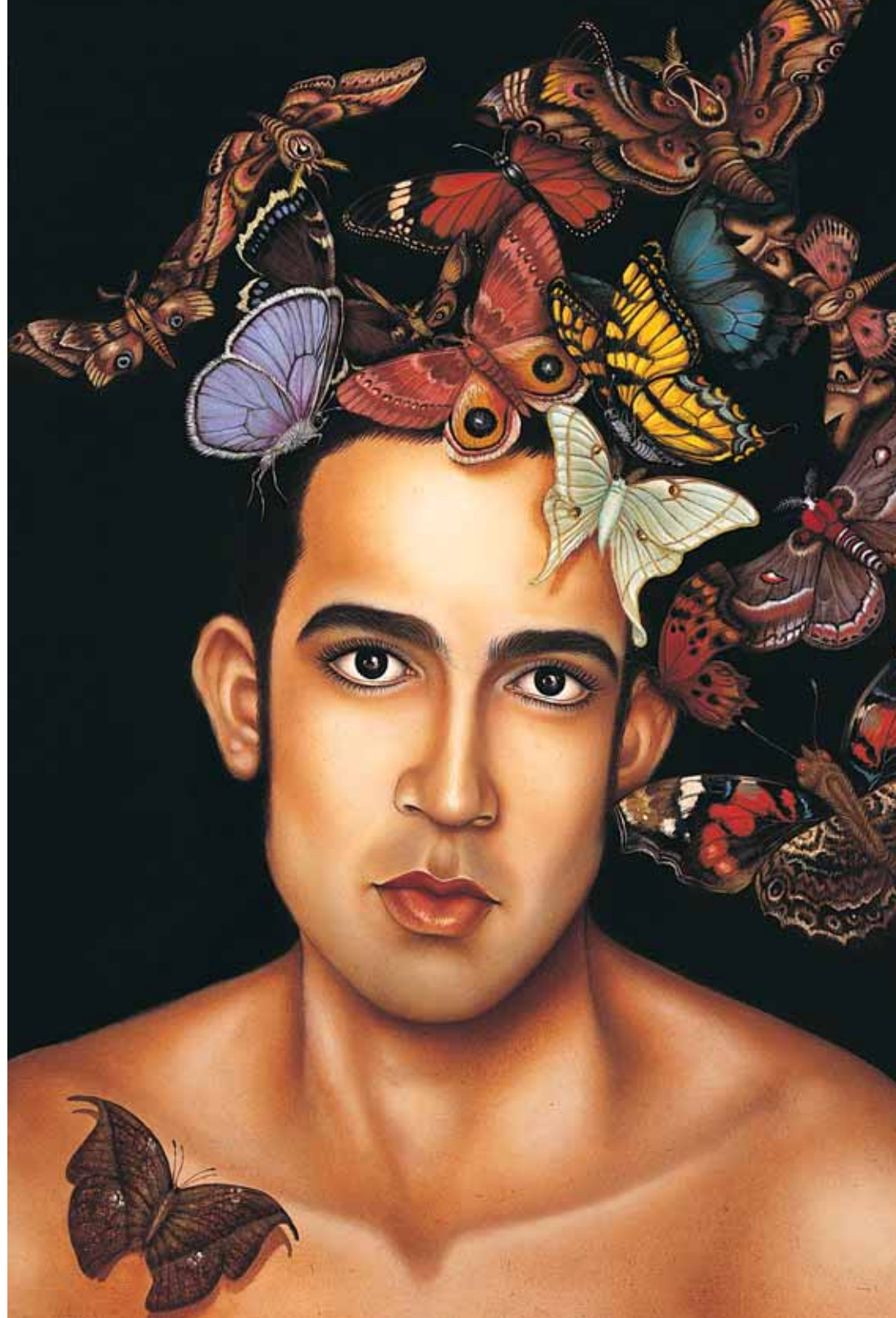
Rodriguez’ process of filtering our world is eccentric indeed. There are few overt signs of modernity save for a solitary UFO in *Oneiric Song*, but even that is strangely anachronistic. It resembles nothing so much as a great golden brooch encrusted with jewels. Most of his paintings are set in vaguely Victorian interiors, Italianate courtyards and twilight fairy gardens where everything threatens to transform into something else while you blink.

The primacy of transformation, both personal and esthetic, is perhaps the great underlying theme of the Rodriguez’ works. Butterflies, a cross-cultural symbol of transformation, are everywhere. But his fascination



with transformation is not naïve, because the images are too dark to be purely optimistic. Rather, they remind us that change is always in process, breaking things down and/or moving things forward or confounding us entirely, like some perverse butterfly wrapping itself into a cocoon while we wonder, “What next?”

FACING PAGE: "Oneiric Song (The Darkening Garden)," 2002, oil on wood, 20" x 24"
THIS PAGE: "Sweet Smells of Farewell," 2002, oil on wood, 18" x 12"





All the Creatures Were Stirring

Andrew Spieldenner

for F. D.

I was never one of those kids who rattled the box for a clue or tried to peer through loose wrapping paper corners. The gift was the same, whether uncovered a day early or not. I'd either: like it or not; have begged for it or not; would appreciate my refugee mother and working class father's ersatz interpretations of Christmas list wishes or not. Even celebrating the birth of Christ grows stale, year after year: putting up the same decorations and lights in the same places; wearing the same seasonally outrageous clothes; making the same recipes from the same combination of homemade touches and cans; singing the same songs; and watching the same repeated television specials and church services. The droning gets so loud, it drowns out the lessons of the Winter Solstice; the buzz of commerce so pervasive, mall after mall, that the only way to remember what it is to be human, connected, a community is to break open like overripe fruit and begin anew with someone else's handprint in yours.

2003 was a lean year for me and many of my friends, and the holidays held no promise of relief. It meant that we had to – yet again – defy the basic tenets of the American Dream: we would not stand apart and pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, we huddled together for warmth and food; we could not gauge happiness by a mountain of *things*, instead we forgave each other our glaring lack in purchases. Poverty altered the appearances of the holidays so completely, that I didn't realize Christmas Eve was upon us. 2003 would become known for me, not

Todas las criaturas eran bulliciosas

Andrew Spieldenner

Para F.D.

Yo nunca fui de esos niños que sacuden la caja para encontrar una pista, ni tampoco trataba de ver por los orificios de las esquinas de los regalos mal envueltos. El regalo era el mismo, ya sea que lo desarrollara un día antes o no. Una de dos: me iba a gustar o no; había rogado por el regalo o no; apreciaría o no las interpretaciones artificiales de la lista de deseos de navidad de mi madre refugiada y de mi padre de clase trabajadora. Hasta la celebración del nacimiento de Cristo se hace rancia, año tras año: colgar las mismas decoraciones y luces en los mismos lugares; ponerse las mismas y exageradas mudadas de temporada; hacer las mismas recetas de la misma combinación con sabores caseros y de latas; cantando las mismas canciones; y mirar los mismo especiales de televisión repetidos y servicios en la iglesia. El ronroneo se hace fuerte, ahoga las lecciones del solsticio de invierno; el penetrante zumbido del comercio, centro comercial tras centro comercial, que la única manera de recordar lo que es ser humano, conectado, una comunidad, es de abrirse como una fruta pasada de madura y empezar de nuevo con las huellas de otros en las tuyas.

El 2003 fue un año de escasez para mí y para bastantes de mis amigos, y las festividades no tuvieron promesas de alivio. Significó que nosotros tuvimos que—otra vez—desafiar los principios del Sueño Americano: no nos quedaríamos distanciados de nosotros mismos; nos apiñamos para el calor y la comida; no podíamos medir la felicidad con una montaña de cosas, en vez, nos perdonamos entre sí por nuestra deslumbrante carencia de compras. La pobreza alteró completamente la apariencia de las festividades, que no me di cuenta que la

for the opening of presents, but for the first time I fisted someone I actually like.

When I was a teenager, a few men paid me to slam my fist in their ass. Each provided long surgical gloves, and I'd lube up and start punching. I didn't know what to do; they didn't think to instruct the street hustler. The johns were always on a random and somewhat obscene assortment of liquor, powders and pills, screaming, "Harder!" "Faster!" with their asses up in the air. This violence was their fantasy; I looked away to the clocks or the porcelain foreign princess doll collections or the ice melting in the scotch or the straight porn. It was all blood and shit and over in ten minutes. Generally, they'd give me a bonus bag of coke. I would have to puke and scrub my arm in hot water three or four times before I could go anywhere.

Ten years later, I meet a formidable man, F.D., who gets me hard just thinking about touching him. His muscles writhe under a covering of tattoos. He's bald, black, with closely shaved beard and moustache. Pierced through his nipples, dick and the space between his balls and ass. He demands I fist him on our first encounter. The decade between That Me and This Me doesn't seem to stretch quite so far. I'm still at a loss. He isn't; he knows how to teach.

We smoke some crystal first. A friend is over too - K.T. another impressively built black man - and the three of us talk, dealing out the obligatory introductions between puffs on the glass pipe. We talk about the tattoos marking us. K.T. sneaks his interest in body piercing into the conversation. Soon, K.T. exits to the other room and I am left with my newfound friend and the daunting face of his desire between us.

Noche Buena estaba encima de nosotros. Recordaré el 2003, no por abrir regalos, sino por ser la primera vez que *fistie* (anglicismo: introducir el puño en el ano) a alguien que apreciaba.

Cuando era un jovencito, un par de hombres me pagaron para que bruscamente puñetease sus culos. Cada uno tenía enormes guantes quirúrgicos; yo les ponía lubricante y empezaba a dar puñetazos. Yo no sabía que hacer; ellos nunca pensaron en instruir a un puto callejero. Los *juanes* siempre estaban bajo una fortuita y obscena mezcla de licor, polvos y píldoras, gritando "más fuerte", "más rápido", con sus culos colgando en el aire. Esta violencia era su fantasía; yo miraba a otro lugar, a los relojes o la colección de muñecas de princesas extranjeras o al hielo que se derretía en el scotch o a las películas porno heteros. Todo era un montón de sangre y mierda que terminaba en 10 minutos. Por lo general, como bono, me daban una bolsa de coca. Usualmente, yo me iba y vomitaba y me lavaba el brazo con agua caliente antes de salir a cualquier lugar.

Diez años después, conozco a un hombre formidable, F.D., que me pone erecto con sólo pensar en tocarlo. Sus músculos se retuercen bajo una cubierta de tatuajes. Él es pelón, negro, con una barba y bigote cuidadosamente rasurados, con perforaciones de aretes en sus pezones, verga y el espacio entre los huevos y su culo. Él demanda que lo *fistee* en nuestro primer encuentro. La década entera Ese yo y Este yo no parece estirarse tanto. Yo todavía no sé que hacer. Él sí; él sabe cómo enseñar.

Fumamos un poco de cristal. Un amigo está de visita también—K.T.—, otro hombre negro impresionantemente musculoso; los tres charlamos durante un rato, negociando las presentaciones obligatorias entre los sorbos de humo de la pipa de vidrio. Hablamos sobre tatuajes que nos marcan. K.T. a hurtillas introduce en la conversación su interés por las

We smoke some more. We start talking about things we wanted to do in our lives. We strip down, licking at lips, nipples and groin. He mentions bondage; I find a rope. He secures it to the bed; I wrap it around his wrists. He lies there, pulling to make sure I'd gotten the knot right.

He wants me to put his piercing in. I'd met some Prince Alberts before, but this was new – finding the hole in his flesh, unscrewing the metal piercing, and pushing it in, pulling it out the other side, watching his skin work against the silver, feeling the drag of his dick as I push the heavy ring through. I get erect.

It's easier to put on his cock ring, wrapping it twice around his balls. Familiar territory, and the action lets me play with his dick and balls, getting lost in the licking and slurping. Luckily, he likes it that way.

Both of us look mischievously at the door. We know K.T. is too shy to take part with me around, but my new friend looks at me and says with perfect practicality, "Don't you think your friend wants to see my Prince Albert?" I smile and open the door. K.T. sits in the other room, trying to focus on the computer screen. He barely resists jumping up when he hears, "You want to see the ring?" All too-eager to see the Prince Albert, K.T. sliding the ring around and full of "Does THIS hurt?", "What's this feel like?", "How long did it take to heal?" while holding onto F.D.'s dick and ball sack.

F.D. wants to smoke more, but the ropes prevent simple access. Between the three of us, we manage. K.T. holds the glass pipe to the bound

perforaciones corporales. Al poco tiempo, K.T. salió a la otra habitación y me encontré a solas con mi nuevo amigo y su intimidante cara de deseo entre nosotros.

Fumamos un poco más. Comenzamos a hablar de las cosas que queríamos hacer en nuestras vidas. Nos desnudamos, lamiéndonos los labios, los pezones y las entrepiernas. Él menciona algo sobre cautiverio sexual; yo encuentro una soga. Él la asegura a la cama; yo la amarro a sus muñecas. El se acuesta allí, halándola para asegurarse que yo he amarrado bien el nudo.

El quiere que yo le ponga su arete. Yo había conocido algunos Príncipes Albertos antes, pero esto era algo nuevo—encontrar la perforación en su piel, destornillar el metal del arete, empujarlo hacia adentro, halarlo hasta el otro extremo, mirando su piel rozar la plata, sintiendo el arrastre de su verga *mientras* yo empujaba el pesado anillo. Me excitó.

Es más fácil ponerle la argolla en la verga, enrollándola dos veces alrededor de sus huevos. Es un territorio conocido, y me permite jugar con su verga y huevos, en donde me perdía lamiendo y sorbiendo. Por suerte, a él le gusta así.

Maliciosamente ambos miramos hacia la puerta. Sabemos que K.T. es demasiado tímido como para tomar parte conmigo, pero mi nuevo amigo me mira y dice, "¿no crees que a tu amigo le gustaría ver mi Príncipe Alberto?" Sonríe y abro la puerta. K.T. está en la otra habitación tratando de concentrarse en la pantalla de la computadora. A penas y puede resistir no saltar cuando escucha, "¿quieres ver al Príncipe Alberto?" Ansioso por ver al Príncipe Alberto, K.T. desliza el anillo por todos lados, lleno de preguntas como "¿ESTO te duele?", "¿cómo se siente esto?", "¿cuánto tardó para sanar?", mientras sostenía la verga y los huevos de F.D.

F.D.'s mouth, I suck on F.D.'s nipples, his six-pack, his nuts, his thighs, his long smooth feet and toes. K.T. leaves when he sees that we are proceeding to sex, but his curiosity is piqued.

I mess around with my newfound friend and prisoner, for awhile, getting comfortable with our positions. I fuck him, force him to suck my dick, pull on his piercings, worship his balls, lick him all over and use a dildo in his ass. I lose track of time until I need a pee break. We smoke more, and I go next door to ask K.T. to fill-in for a bit. This is new ground, and K.T.'s painful shyness prevents him from releasing the "Hallelujah" that crosses his face. This is what he wants and did not know to ask, had no idea that the rules of 'please' and 'thank you' could apply. I find other things to do for twenty minutes.

When I come back, K.T. glows in sweat. He towers over F.D.'s still-restrained body, trembling with the power he feels. I was ready for more; K.T. excuses himself. F.D. and I play until day comes up and we're still wired, and talking, kissing, fucking, sucking and licking. I hit him when I fuck him, my fist resounding loudly against his muscular chest. He asks for more, and I stand to let a dribble of piss land on him. He smiles.

K.T. comes in and out a few times to get more crystal and watch us. Eventually, he leaves on his own adventure. Then F.D. and I are alone. My prisoner/new friend looks at me, and asks, "So you ever fist anyone?" My embarrassment makes the silence stretch until I'm sure all my insecurities show. "Don't worry, I can talk you through it." I want him to see me as a wicked man of experience, not a fumbling and unsure kid. "Just do exactly

F.D. quiere fumar más, pero las sogas no le dan acceso. Entre los tres nos las arreglamos. Mientras que K.T. sostiene la pipa de vidrio en la boca de F.D., yo mamo sus pezones, su abdomen, sus huevos, sus piernas, sus suaves y largos pies y dedos. K.T. sale cuando ve que nosotros proseguimos a tener sexo, pero su curiosidad se despertó.

Yo jodo con mi nuevo amigo y prisionero por un rato, mientras nos acomodamos en nuestras posiciones. Lo cojo, lo obligo a que me mame la verga, le quito los aretes, admiro sus huevos, lamo todo su cuerpo y utilizo un dildo en su culo. No sé cuánto tiempo ha pasado, hasta que necesito un descanso para mear. Fumamos un poco más y me voy a la otra habitación para preguntarle a K.T. si él puede cubrirme un rato. Este es territorio nuevo y la dolorosa timidez de K.T. le impide soltar el "aleluya" que se le nota en la cara. Esto es lo que él quiere y no sabía cómo pedirlo, no tenía ni idea que la regla de 'por favor' y 'gracias' podrían aplicar. Yo me entretengo en otras cosas durante 20 minutos.

Cuando regreso, K.T. relumbra de sudor. Él se eleva sobre el restringido cuerpo de F.D., temblando con el poder que siente. Yo estaba listo para más; K.T. se retira. F.D. y yo jugamos hasta que amanece y todavía estamos excitados, hablando, besándonos, cogiendo, chapándonos, lamiéndonos. Lo golpeo mientras me lo cojo, mi puño resuena fuertemente en su pecho musculoso. El pide más, y yo me paro y le dejo caer un chorro de meada. El sonríe.

K.T. entra y sale un par de veces para agarrar cristal y vernos. A la larga se marcha a su propia aventura. Después F.D. y yo nos quedamos solos. El prisionero / nuevo amigos me mira y me pregunta, "¿alguna vez has *fistado* a alguien?" Mi vergüenza prolonga el silencio hasta que estoy seguro que todas mis inseguridades se

what I say.” I untie the rope. “We’ll go slow.” I find more lube and a towel. “I want you so bad.” We smoke some more; his cock ring snaps off and I remove his Prince Albert. We begin.

He pulls his legs back, all the way like he was in stirrups. He glistens, every muscle tight and gleaming. He breathes slowly. I begin with a few fingers of my left hand, opening him up and feeling my way around comfortably. Inside, he is a new space, welcoming my hand. He enjoys it; asks for more. I get the other fingers in next, pushing until all five are in, leaving the knuckles.

The first ring is hard. I have to reposition my hand until I have just the right angle. At some points, I don’t think it’ll go in at all. And then it does. He has me push my leg and right arm to help hold his legs back. He breathes carefully, deliberately. I move my finger tips inside him, and manage to get my whole hand in. I can feel his heartbeat surround my fist and I hold it there until my breath and his, my pulse and his, match.

We kiss. “Pull back slowly and push up slower.” I obey, wiggle my fingers to help get further up. His whole body shakes, like he’s cumming inside. His dick leaks precum, trickling against his leg, sliding down his crack. It tastes like gym sweat and orange rinds.

The second ring is harder. My left hand seems to hold up his 200-pounds all on its own. I pull back and push in. I wiggle my fingers. It is slow moving. My phone rings a few times; so does his. The sun came up, and the woman selling fresh tortillas announces her presence on my block. We barely notice.

muestran. “No te preocupes, yo te puedo instruir”. Yo quiero que me vea como un hombre travieso con experiencia y no como un chico inseguro y torpe. “Solamente haz exactamente lo que te digo”. Desamarro la soga. “Lo haremos despacio”. Yo encuentro más lubricante y una toalla. “Te deseo tanto”. Fumamos un poco más; su argolla en la verga se suelta y yo remuevo a su Príncipe Alberto. Empezamos.

Él hala sus piernas hacia atrás, como si estuviera en un estribo. Él reluce, cada músculo apretado y fulgurante. Él respira lentamente. Empiezo con unos cuantos dedos de mi mano izquierda, abriéndolo y sintiendo mi camino cómodamente. Adentro, él es un nuevo espacio, aceptando mi mano. A él le encanta y pide más. Después meto los otros dedos, empujando hasta que tengo los cinco dedos dentro, dejando de fuera los nudillos de los dedos.

El primer anillo es difícil. Tengo que posicionar mi mano nuevamente, hasta que logro el ángulo adecuado. En algunos momentos pienso que no entrará del todo. Y luego, sí entra. Me hace que le empuje sus piernas con mi pierna y mi brazo derecho para poder mantenerlas atrás. El respira cuidadosa y deliberadamente. Yo muevo las puntas de mis dedos dentro de él, y me las arreglo para introducir toda mi mano. Puedo sentir la palpitación de su corazón alrededor de mi puño y lo sostengo allí hasta que mi respiración y la suya, mi pulso y el suyo, concuerdan.

Nos besamos. “Hálala lentamente y empuja más despacio”. Le obedezco, meneo mis dedos para ayudarme a llegar más arriba. Todo su cuerpo se estremeció, como si estuviera acabando dentro de él mismo. Su verga goteó pre semen, deslizándose en su pierna, hasta la ranura de sus nalgas. Sabe a sudor de gimnasio y a corteza de naranja.

I stare at my hand lost in his hole, and I don't think any more will fit. His throbbing ass-cheeks feel like they're smashing my hand together. I don't know what to do. He smiles. "Wiggle around some more, then pull almost all the way out, then push in. Slow." And it works. More and more of me slithers up his anus. The second ring opens sudden and I am stunned by the heat of him, the pounding of his heart gripping my fist. He is all around me.

We lie there in each other for a second. We kiss. I almost start crying at the gift of this man heavy on my hand. I realize how precious this is. He shakes, asks for more. And I push on.

The third ring is like a wall. Every millimeter a struggle where we breathe in complete synchronicity, fully aware of the other, wrapped up so completely in this shared trip. It's like picking lychees all day in the Florida sun with your Mom. At first, it starts okay, then shame grows, frustration at the tedious labor and the stickiness coating your hands, the smell of it, wondering if anyone sees you, uncertain of your own skill and pissed to even worry about it: you crack bad jokes to hide the other feelings. Finally, you get to return home, where your Mom will have a bowl of fresh lychees chilled on the table the next day and you will happily devour them until the taste of them sickens you. He is that twenty-four hour stretch with my Mom picking lychees, that maddening, that refreshing, that alien from everyone else's day. I want to open him up.

At one point I prod in the wrong direction, by the littlest bit. His whole mass shifts and he nearly yells. "Careful! Whoa! Slow, Baby." He grits his teeth and tries to smile. I want to apologize but I

El segundo anillo es más difícil. Se siente como si por sí sola mi mano izquierda estuviera sosteniendo sus 200 libras de peso. Yo halo y empujo para adentro. Meneo mis dedos. Se mueve suavemente. Mi teléfono suena varias veces; y también el suyo. El sol sale y la mujer que vende tortillas frescas anuncia su presencia en mi cuadra. Apenas lo notamos.

Yo miro mi mano perdida en su hoyo y no pienso que algo más pueda entrar. Sus palpitantes nalgas se sienten como si estuvieran aplastando mi mano. No sé qué hacer. Él sonríe. "Menéate un poco más, después hala hacia fuera casi por completo; después para adentro. Despacio". Y funciona. Más y más de mí se desliza en su ano. El segundo anillo se abre de repente y me impacta su calor, el palpar de su corazón agarrando mi puño. Él está en todo mi alrededor.

Nos acostamos uno encima del otro por un momento. Nos besamos. Casi empiezo a llorar por el regalo del peso de este hombre en mi mano. Me doy cuenta de lo valioso que es esto. Él está estremecido, pidiendo más. Y yo empujo.

El tercer anillo es como una pared. Cada milímetro es una batalla en la que ambos respirábamos al mismo compás, completamente concientes uno del otro, envueltos completamente en esta aventura compartida. Es como cortar lychees (fruta) con tu mamá todo en día bajo el sol de la Florida. Al principio todo marcha bien; después crece la vergüenza y la frustración por el tedioso trabajo de la capa pegajosa recubriendo tus manos, su olor, preguntándote si alguien te ve, indeciso de tus propias habilidades y molesto por preocuparte: tú cuentas un mal chiste para encubrir los otros sentimientos. Finalmente, puedes regresar a casa, donde al siguiente día en la mañana tu mamá te dará un plato de lychees frías y tú felizmente las devorarás hasta que su sabor te enferme. Él es esa prolongación de 24 horas con mi mamá, cortando lychees,

know it's the wrong thing to do. I am an inch past my wrist in him and just noticing the danger permeating us.

The third ring takes a few tries. I wiggle the tips of my fingers, I pull back almost all the way and push in, relishing each moment where the weight and heat of him surround me. Finally he takes a deep breath and somehow my hand slides further in, and we stay there. His whole pulse shakes me, holds me halfway to my elbow. Never been more inside somebody. Had never been deeper.

It's like love, our version of giving birth. My fist deep in him, his legs up and back, heavy controlled breaths, life connecting us. And we stay there, on each other's breathing, both of us working together to keep him open. He trembles and moans.

I pull out. And we hold each other until unfamiliar juices and oozing push us to the shower. My left hand is numb from his throbbing, pinpricks of pain jabbing through every tiny bone with any movement. In the shower, he shoves me to my knees and baptizes my back with a hot stream of urine. He smiles at me, and I look down, grateful for him. He scrubs me, and I wash him. We're like new.

It's Christmas morning.

esa locura, eso refrescante, eso extraño en el día de los demás. Yo quiero abrirlo.

Por un momento empujo en la dirección equivocada por un poquito. Todo su masivo cuerpo se mueve y casi grita. “¡Cuidado! ¡Whoa! Despacio, baby”. Aprieta sus dientes y trata de sonreír. Quiero disculparme, pero sé que no es adecuado que lo haga. Más de una pulgada de mi muñeca está dentro de él y a penas me doy cuenta del peligro que nos penetra.

El tercer anillo toma un par de intentos. Meneo las puntas de mis dedos, halo el puño casi hasta afuera y empujo hacia adentro, disfrutando cada momento en que el peso de su cuerpo y su calor me rodeaban. Finalmente, él respira profundamente y de alguna manera mi mano entra aun más y nos quedamos allí. Todo su pulso me estremeció, me sostuvo desde la mitad de mi antebrazo. Nunca he estado tan adentro de alguien. Nunca tan adentro.

Es como el amor, nuestra versión de dar a luz. Mi puño profundamente dentro de él, sus piernas hacia arriba y hacia atrás, con una respiración pesada y controlada, la vida conectándonos. Y nos quedamos allí, en nuestros alientos, ambos trabajando juntos para mantenerlo a él abierto. Se estremece y gime.

Lo saco. Nos abrazamos hasta que rezumen jugos desconocidos y nos empujan a ir a la regadera. Toda mi mano izquierda está entumecida por sus punzadas, alfilerazos de dolor, pinchando cada pequeño hueso con el movimiento. El me empuja para que me arrodille en la regadera y bautiza mi espalda con un chorro de orina caliente. Me sonrío, y yo bajo la mirada con gratitud. Después él me estriega y yo lo enjabono. Estamos como nuevos.

Es la mañana de Navidad.

Anal Fundamentals

Ti D. Do, M.D., M.P.H.

*I don't want to move too fast
But can't resist your sexy ass,
So spread, spread for me.*
- Outkast

It goes like this: there was a time before the regulation of our desires when we had nothing but pleasure in that nether part of our bodies many of us get squeamish about now. You know, the anus, butt, cornhole, the winking star, the barking spider, and all those words they made you use when you were straight. By the time you had your first sexual experience with another guy, it was something more: the ass, culo, man-pussy, mangina, *l'en trai*. Many love it or leave it by this stage, because let's face it; this is where poo comes out. Consider this piece a medical re-introduction to your ass for both the anally naïve and for the ass masters out there.

For good anal hygiene, gay docs recommend just a simple cleaning around the outside with soap and warm water. Some guys wipe with tissue obsessively, which is a bad idea because you can get a little too firm and scratch off layers of skin. Enemas aren't always a good idea because you might accidentally leave some water inside, which could come gushing out at an inopportune moment. So it's better to instill just a small volume (less than a cup) and evacuate your lower rectum. Use plain water, as soaps and perfumes can irritate. Also, instead of using enemas, you can simply be aware of when you've had a bowel movement and use the 'rhythm' method to ensure cleanliness. Or if you like it dirty and spontaneous, forget about all this.

Officially speaking, the anus is the last two inches or so of your GI tract, formed by layers of skin filled with pleasurable nerve endings. Many guys like to hang out in this area, using their mouths to give their partners pleasure (rimming). Using a few well-manicured fingers down there during foreplay can go a long way in making your sex life hot, and no one says you have to penetrate to enjoy the wonders of the ass. But if you do decide to wander in through the back door, you'll find a sphincter muscle that surrounds the anus. It's a voluntary muscle you can tighten, whether it's to keep intruders out or to give your partner extra pleasure.

Fundamentos anales

Tti D. Do, M.D., M.PH.

*No quiero moverme muy rápido
Pero no puedo resistir tu culo sexy
Así que, abre, ábrelo para mí.*
- Outkast

Esto va así: había una vez, antes de las regulaciones de nuestros deseos, cuando sólo teníamos placer en la parte inferior de nuestro cuerpo que a algunos de nosotros nos da asco. Sabes, es el ano, nalgas, hoyo, la estrella que guiña, la araña que ladra y todas esas palabras que te hicieron utilizar cuando eras hetero. Cuando tuviste tu primera relación sexual con un hombre, fue algo más: el culo, vulva masculina. Muchos lo adoran o lo dejan en esta etapa porque, no nos engañemos, este es el lugar por donde sale la caca. Considera esta nota como una re-introducción médica a tu culo, para los novatos anales y para los maestros anales.

Para una buena higiene anal, los doctores gay recomiendan una simple limpieza alrededor, en el exterior, con jabón y agua caliente. Algunos hombres se limpian obsesivamente con papel, lo cual no es muy buena idea porque podrías hacerlo demasiado fuerte y rasgar capas de la piel. Los enemas no son buena idea porque accidentalmente puedes dejar agua allí dentro, lo cual podría salir sin aviso, en un momento inoportuno. Así que es mejor colocar un pequeño volumen (menos de una taza) y evacuar tu recto. Utiliza agua regular, ya que el jabón y los perfumes pueden irritar. También, en lugar de utilizar enemas, sólo tienes que estar al tanto de cuando fue que tuviste tu último movimiento intestinal y utiliza el método “rítmico” para asegurar que esté limpio. Pero si te gusta sucio y espontáneo, olvida todo esto.

Oficialmente hablando, el ano representa, más o menos, las últimas dos pulgadas de tu sistema gastrointestinal, formado con capas de piel llenas de terminaciones nerviosas que generan placer. A muchos hombres les gusta jugar en esta área, utilizando sus bocas para dar placer a sus parejas (beso negro). La utilización de los dedos (con una buena manicura) durante el juego puede llegar muy lejos allá abajo y hacer tu vida sexual súper excitante; nadie dice que tienes que penetrar para disfrutar las maravillas del culo. Pero si decides aventurarte a entrar por la puerta trasera, encontrarás un músculo llamada esfínter que recubre al ano. Es un músculo voluntario que tú puedes apretar, ya sea para mantener a intrusos fuera o para darle extra placer a tu pareja.

In just a bit further is an involuntary sphincter that your body controls. It's involved in keeping the mix of stool, gas, and liquids all separated. This o-ring is the gateway to the rectum. Trying to open it up too quickly causes a painful spasm known as the "ring of fire." Some people associate this pain with anal sex and feel anxious about sex because of bad experiences where their partner entered too deeply, too quickly. There's a trick to mastering this sphincter, by making it fatigue and relax. First you just *barely* insert a fairly large round object such as a cock (if available), sex toy, or a few fingers. We're talking *an inch* at most, with lots of lube and latex if there's the possibility of transmitting diseases. It's a good idea to let the bottom do this; if you're fucking, letting the bottom squat on top of the top's dick gives them good control over the situation, and more trust. As you insert the object, you'll notice some pressure and possibly pain from the sphincter clamping down. Hold the object still for a good 30 to 60 seconds – *don't force it* – while the muscle relaxes and the sensation of discomfort melts away. Then you can have sex without fear of excruciating pain, as the sphincter will no longer spasm.

Inside the rectum you'll find a world of fun. The prostate is full of ecstatic sensations; to find it, put your finger in as far as it will go (gently, with plenty of lube) and then press forward aiming for his belly button. It's a soft, curved organ about the size of a hacky sack and it likes to be massaged, so give it a rub for good measure. The skin lining the walls of the rectum doesn't experience pain, only the sensation of stretch, which can also be really pleasurable. It's easily torn, though, so using only blunt objects and lots of lube will ensure a safe experience. If you want to put objects longer than eight to ten inches all the way up there, you'll notice some resistance—this is the point where the sigmoid colon takes a turn to your right (if you're looking at someone's abdomen straight on). Not following this curve can lead to puncturing the colon and life-threatening infections or bleeding, but working with it can be fun. This bend is what one bottom-connoisseur describes as the "second door" to a kind of pleasure you'll never know until you walk through it.

Now that the anal anatomy is burned in you like a childhood memory, let me tell you about some fun human tricks. The first is the anal wink reflex. Rub the outer rim of the ass – no matter how hard he tries to stop it, his anus will wink back at you. Nudge, nudge. I always think of Chrissy from Three's Company giving Jack that sassy, sexy snaggletooth wink as they're planning their hijinks. The ass is also intimately linked to the sphincter in the bladder that stops you from peeing. Next time he's taking a leak, give him a soft poke in the butt and he'll stop peeing. Another way to get this reflex (called the bulbocavernosus reflex) to work is to squeeze the head of the penis and watch his anus wink at you. Last one: the cremaster reflex. The nerve that lets you feel what you feel along your inner thigh is for some strange reason connected to the muscle that raises and lowers the balls. Try stroking his inner thigh really

Un poco más adentro está un esfínter involuntario que tu cuerpo controla. Está involucrado en mantener separada la mezcla de caca, gas y líquidos. Este anillo-O es la puerta al recto. El intentar abrirlo demasiado rápido causa un dolor conocido como “anillo de fuego”. Algunas personas asocian este dolor con sexo anal y sienten ansiedad con el sexo porque, en el pasado, sus parejas dejaron malas experiencias al entrar demasiado profundo o demasiado rápido. Hay un truco para amaestrar este esfínter: se lo fatiga y se relaja. Primero, apenas introduce un poco un objeto más o menos grande y redondo, como una verga (si es que está disponible), juguetes sexuales o unos cuantos dedos. Estamos hablando de no más de una pulgada, con mucho lubricante y látex si hay posibilidades de transmisión de enfermedades. Es buena idea dejar que el pasivo haga esto; si tú estás penetrando, deja que el pasivo se monte en la verga, para que tenga más control de la situación y más confianza. Al introducir el objeto, te darás cuenta que hay algo de presión y posiblemente un poco de dolor debido al esfínter que se está apretando. Sostén el objeto sin moverlo durante unos 30 a 60 segundos—no lo forces—, mientras que el músculo se relaja y la sensación de incomodidad desaparece. Después podrás tener sexo sin miedo al dolor ya que el esfínter no se volverá a estrechar.

Dentro del recto encontrarás un mundo de diversión. La próstata está llena de sensaciones extáticas; para encontrarla, introduce tu dedo hasta donde llegue (suavemente, con mucho lubricante) y luego presiona hacia adelante, en dirección del ombligo. Es un órgano suave, curvado, del tamaño de una nuez y le gusta que le den masajes, así que dale una buena frotada al medirlo. La piel en las paredes del recto no experimentan ningún dolor, solo la sensación de estiramiento, lo cual también puede ser muy placentero. Sin embargo, puede ser fácilmente lastimado, así que se debe utilizar objetos romos y mucho lubricante para asegurarse de tener una experiencia segura. Si quieres introducir objetos con más de ocho o diez pulgadas de largo, notarás alguna resistencia—este es el punto donde el sigmoideo del colon tiene una curva hacia la derecha (si ves al abdomen de alguien directamente). Al no seguir esta curva, se puede causar una perforación del colon e infecciones graves o sangrado, pero al saber trabajarlo puede ser muy divertido. Esta curva es lo que un pasivo experto describe como “la segunda puerta” a un placer que conocerás solamente cuando hayas entrado por allí.

Ahora que la anatomía del ano se te ha quedado grabada como un recuerdo de infancia, permíteme contarte algunos divertidos trucos humanos. El primero es **el reflejo del guiño del ano**. Masajea la parte exterior del anillo del ano—sin importar que él trate desesperadamente de detenerlo, su ano te hará un guiño. Siempre pienso en Chrissy de “Tres son multitud”, cuando le guiña el ojo a Jack mientras planifican sus travesuras. El ano también está ligado al esfínter de la vesícula que te previene orinar. La próxima vez que él esté orinando, pícale las nalgas suavemente y verás que dejará de orinar. Otra manera

lightly – the testicle on that side will rise up. Do it over and over and you'll not only have a yo-yo-gonad, you'll be his cream master for life.

So if you want to get it on, you've got to get it in, the right way. And you've got to rethink this part of your body, whatever you want to call it, so that you can be comfortable enjoying it. They never taught us in medical school we could call it something sweet like *fundament*, or how to advise people on its love and care. *Fundament* comes from Latin, *fundus* meaning 'bottom'. Think: Fundamental rights, fund of knowledge, retirement funds, make-up foundation. Treat it right, fellas—your spice island, your rosebud, your brown berry, your dark star, your fifth point of contact. Set your mind free and your ass will follow.

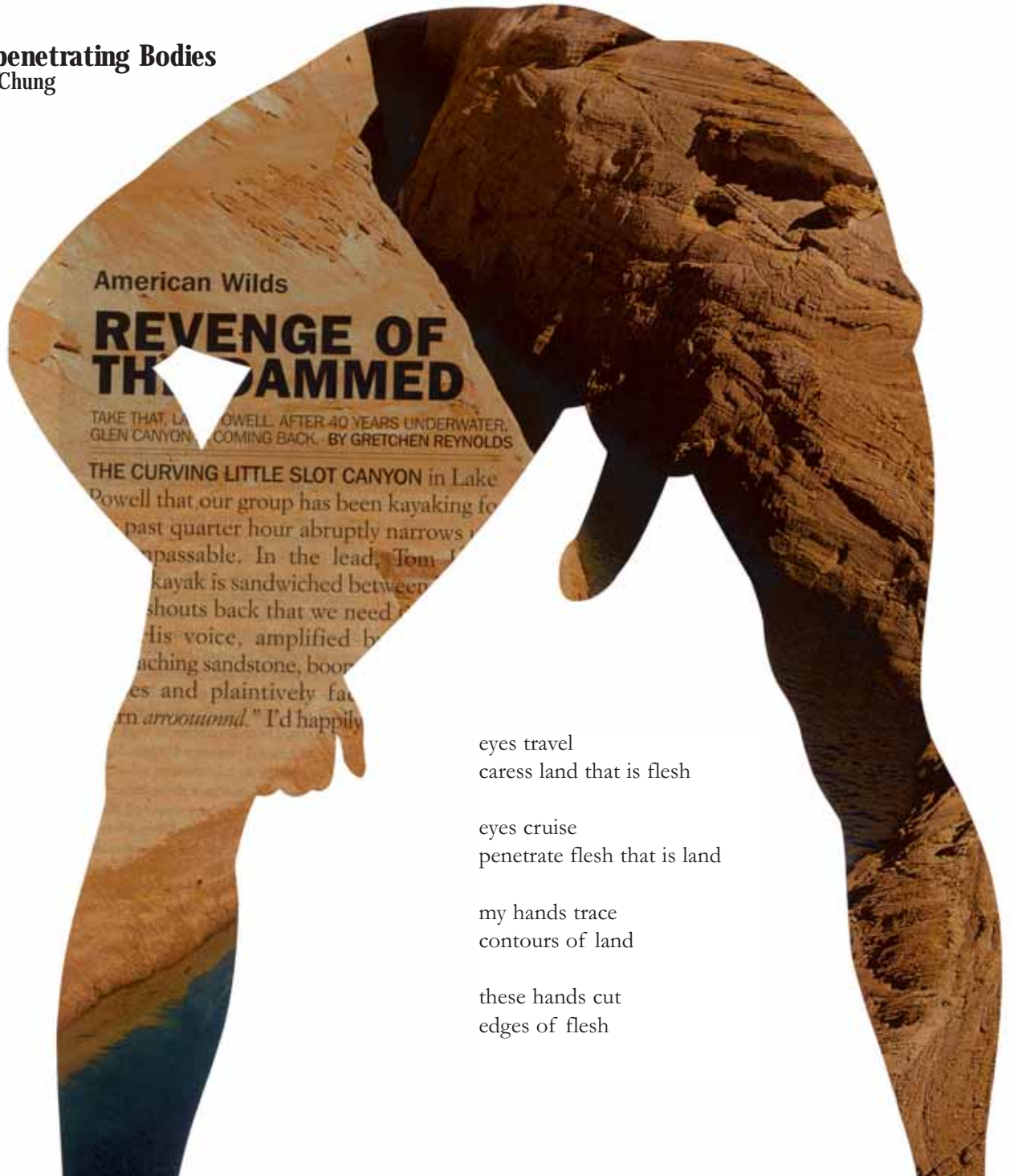
For more info and techniques, check out Dr. Stephen Goldstone's the "Ins and Outs of Gay Sex" published in 1999 by Dell Publishing. To find a gay-friendly health care provider, check out <http://www.glma.org>.

de conseguir este reflejo (conocido como reflejo bulbo cavernoso) es apretar la cabeza del pene; verás el guiño del ano. El último: el reflejo creamasteriano. El nervio que te hace sentir lo que sientes en la parte interior de tu pierna, por alguna extraña razón, está conectado al músculo que sube y baja los testículos. Intenta frotar la parte interior de su pierna—el testículo de ese lado se subirá. Hazlo repetidas veces y no sólo tendrás un yo-yo, sino que serás su maestro lechero por el resto de su vida.

Si tienes que hacerlo, debes entrar de la manera correcta. Y tienes que repensar esta parte de tu cuerpo, como quieras llamarla, para que así puedas estar cómodo y disfrutarlo. En la escuela de medicina nunca nos enseñaron que podíamos llamarlo algo tierno como *fundamento*, o cómo asesorar a las personas para que lo quieran y cuiden. Fundamento viene de la palabra latina, *fundus*, que quiere decir fondo. Piensa: Derechos fundamentales, fondo de conocimiento, fondos de jubilados, base de maquillaje. Trátenlo bien chicos—su isla de especies, su capullo, su frutita, su estrella negra, su quinto punto de contacto. Libera tu mente y tu culo también lo hará.

Para más información y técnicas, lee el libro "Ins and Outs of Gay Sex", del doctor Stephen Goldstone, publicado en 1999 por Dell Publishing. Para encontrar a un médico "gay-friendly", visita la página electrónica: www.glma.org.

Interpenetrating Bodies
Young Chung



American Wilds

**REVENGE OF
THE DAMMED**

TAKE THAT, LAKE POWELL. AFTER 40 YEARS UNDERWATER,
GLEN CANYON IS COMING BACK. BY GRETCHEN REYNOLDS

THE CURVING LITTLE SLOT CANYON in Lake Powell that our group has been kayaking for the past quarter hour abruptly narrows to a point that is impassable. In the lead, Tom's kayak is sandwiched between the rock walls. He shouts back that we need to back up. His voice, amplified by the echoing sandstone, booms and plaintively fades in *arrrroooooond*. "I'd happily

eyes travel
caress land that is flesh

eyes cruise
penetrate flesh that is land

my hands trace
contours of land

these hands cut
edges of flesh









ON MEETING THOMAS: excerpts from a journal

Vince Golveo

September 13, 2000

We met at Stuart's going away party, in early August, just after an art opening. I think it was Saturday, the twelfth of August. So I've known Thomas for over a month. It took a couple of weeks of setting up times to meet before we really got together. At that time, I had just leased a new car, was dating a few guys and playing around here and there. Thomas was one of my dates. My scheduling was very messy that weekend. I overlapped a dinner date with Thomas with another date to see Stephen who was moving from Long Beach to San Francisco the following weekend, and with another date to have drinks with Quentin. Fortunately, Stephen cancelled. I had dinner with Thomas at the Kitchen. Later Quentin joined us for drinks at Akbar.

September 14, 2000

Because Stephen had cancelled, I met up with Thomas earlier than expected. I hadn't eaten dinner so we went next door to the restaurant. Seeing his face and hearing him speak, I knew that I was really attracted to him. What I liked, and this has been consistent so far, was that he was very honest, not only with me but with himself. What most impressed me was that he really saw something in me.

We shared an order of mussels and I had a baked squash. I don't exactly remember everything I told Thomas about myself, but I did mention the billboard, with my artwork reproduced on it, at First and Western. I proposed that after dinner we should go and visit the billboard before returning for drinks with Quentin.

My drawings were used for a couple HIV prevention billboards in Koreatown. I think my work was used because it was visually compelling and seemed to foreground promiscuity among Asian men. The billboard we looked at faced HK Supermarket and hung along a storage building next to LA Seoul restaurant. I parked at the supermarket.

Thomas thought the piece was smart. He liked the ambivalence in the expressions and in the readings one makes of the portraits. I had always thought my drawings contained an ambivalent attitude towards pleasure (formally, subjectively and visually) and for Thomas, this registered in what he described as a fascination with the ambiguous "death-mask" quality in some of the faces. He also liked the environment and the context. Flattery scored points with me, but it was more than that. We reflected on parking lots, geography, LA's racial blending and segregation...

He has a beautiful face, I thought. His accent was so exotic. I could stare in his eyes unflinching.

September 22, 2000

The evening of September 15, 2000 was really stressful. Thomas and I had an appointment to get an HIV test at the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center clinic in Hollywood. Traffic was so terrible, I had already decided to turn back, but Thomas suggested that we still go. Even though we were over an hour late, we were still seen and tested.

A week later, we go back. Thomas' result is negative. Mine, although inconclusive, indicates my blood is seroconverting.

September 26, 2000

I found out I was becoming HIV positive as of last Friday, September 22, 2000. Thomas was with me. We had been together since August 21, 2000. Another journal of a diseased person has begun. I had started earlier this month trying to record the delight of meeting Thomas.

Today, delight has deepened to a strong, profound attachment. The shock of the disease has struck straight to the core of our relationship, revealing something beautiful in both of us. Compassion? It's really indescribable. I've always kept journals but could never write with any consistency. Now I will I suppose; it helps keep me from getting frightened, at least tonight. Sunday night I was alone; that was hard. Yesterday, I stayed the night at Thomas' apartment and slept quite peacefully. Tonight, I have decided to sleep by myself again. I will write in my journal about the recent events. And consistently from now on, I will write something about today and a little bit about the past as well. Then when I'm finished, I will have a document of my life.



Vince Golueo, "Happy Together Forever," 2000. Ink on paper. 10.5" x 8"

September 27, 2000

I have been scared the past few days. There is a constant ringing in my ears, sticky coating in my throat, general fatigue, and many bouts of paranoia about illness and death. All of this, I know is not the result of HIV+ blood. But I'm scared.

The thing between Thomas and me is that he sees me very clearly. We took a long hike—probably 12 miles—in Zuma Canyon on Sunday. There's a photo I had taken of him where he gazes right at me with a look. This look belongs only to me, and it is meant only for me. When I was very frightened, by myself in bed, later that evening, I brought this image up again on my digital camera's screen. I fell asleep soon after seeing it.

The hike at Zuma Canyon, besides giving me a big blister on my heel and bruising on my toes, helped us sweat out the drama of the past few days. We saw a deer on the path just before it got dark. Tala came along with us—the only other person so far who knows about my health status. I cried to Thomas when I admitted that I was afraid I would lose him because of the HIV situation. He made sure I knew there was nothing to worry about and not to be afraid. There were birds, wild fennel, the scent of jasmine, ocean, sky, sunset, darkness, a ride through Malibu Canyon and finally, a well-deserved dinner at Ruen Pair, our favorite restaurant. Thomas is with me; Tala is with me; I am with them.

October 14, 2000

2 weeks ago I got the results of my second test. Negative! A huge range of emotions followed after the news. Disbelief was perhaps the most confusing emotion.

So this is a journal of a person given a second chance. What sort of chance, to see life another way?

November 12, 2000

A month and a half has passed since I got back my results. Now I am constantly monitoring my emotional and intellectual state. I've just had another birthday. Robert never made it here. The weekend that I got an "indeterminate" HIV test result, I actually found myself at an art opening at Schindler House; a year earlier I had attended a memorial service for Robert there.

Just got off the phone with Jim; "Life is precious" was what I said to describe my state of mind. Also, many of the things we talked about reflect a new perspective for me, a more serious, intuitive, hard to describe, sense. There is a lot of sorting out going on.

Much of what I've created has been experimental, half-baked. The truth was that I never felt I wanted to carry out an idea to completion—I see now there is something quite strong and notable inside me; several people at different points in my life on the same wavelength have pointed out the reality and importance of it.

Writing all this down makes me impatient with a frantic, obsessive paranoia to bring the many aspects of my personal, emotional and career life under control (and fast). I suppose I've had other times of high anxiety in my life, but unlike other times I have a strong sense of self right now and I feel a real perception of reality. I feel really awake and alive and really connected. I'm beginning to understand what people are—the weight and reality of humanity.

“If we can reach the understanding of what we actually are, there is no better remedy for eliminating all suffering. This is the heart of all spiritual practices.” - Kalu Rinpoche

“Today's world requires us to accept the oneness of humanity. In the past, isolated communities could afford to think of one another as fundamentally separate. Some could even exist in total isolation. But nowadays, whatever happens in one region eventually affects many other areas. Within the context of our inter-dependence, self-interest clearly lies in considering the interest of others.” - Dalai Lama

I can pause here now.



“HIV is still here. SO ARE WE,” 2000, bulletin billboard, 14' x 48'
Sponsored by LA County, Dept. of Health Services, OAPP
Photo by Patrick “Pato” Hebert



PHOTO: Patrick "Pato" Hebert
All others courtesy of Chanel Tresvant

We Have a Situation Here: An Interview with Chanel Tresvant

Patrick “Pato” Hebert

Chanel Tresvant has long been active within HIV prevention and transgender circles. She has led innovative programming for numerous Los Angeles AIDS service agencies, participated in groundbreaking research projects, and founded her own non-profit organization. Corpus talked to Chanel about her personal transformations and her strategies for community organizing.

Pato: Do you find that you are the first a lot of the time?

Chanel: I do. It’s funny, ‘cause people watch television, and these comedians are making fun of the community. People don’t know what to expect when they really come across a trans woman or a trans person period. So when they do come across me, first the initial shock is, “She really looks this way?” They don’t expect it. Then to be African-American, and a person who can really stand their own in conversation, in the work environment? I think that they are somewhat surprised more than anything. A lot of time I leave the situation with them having a different opinion of a trans person. So that to me is satisfying.

P: What about firsts for yourself? Do you keep surprising yourself?

C: Yes. As far as the police are concerned, I just had an experience with a rental car. Long story short, they reported the car stolen, I was pulled over, but before anything could be explained to the police it was just utter chaos. I had to go to the police station, the whole nine. But it’s the way that the police treat you when they realize you are transgender. It’s like respectfulness for you as a human goes out the window. Out of maybe ten police officers that I came across, only one of them had any type of decency for the next human-being. Everything I have says “Chanel,” it was all changed to my new name. But even though they were able to pull up my driver’s license record they still wanted to know what my birthday was. They could not believe someone had undergone such a change, and had paperwork to back it up. While I was waiting for bail it was like they didn’t want to let me use the phone, they didn’t want to bring me toilet paper.

P: Did they house you with the women?

C: No, they housed me with the men. They housed me alone, but they housed me on the men’s side.

Even during the booking process, they have two different sides, and a female police officer comes out and says, “Hey you’re taking her on the wrong side,” and the police officer says, “Well, this is a guy. This have a situation here.” They have no respect for you. And it’s so funny because, the station was 77th and Broadway and in my project for County HIV Epidemiology, we call their vice squads to see if they are doing sweeps on certain nights. I actually communicate with them during my regular work day! So, to be on the other end of it, I was like, “Whoa, that is so three-sixty!” I guess I always felt like I am not the common transwoman, but they treat you like dirt. So that was a first. I had never been in a jail.

P: So what has it been like in the last ten days as you process that?

C: Well, I was like, “What am I going to do about this situation?” I thought that the entire situation was embarrassing, first off. Even when they pulled me and my friends over, they made us spread eagle on the ground. I am wearing a fur coat! You could tell immediately that these three women are not car thieves (laughter), they are not criminals, they are going out. So, it was really embarrassing. I was just like, “What do I do? Do I want to be an advocate? Do I want to write a letter? Do I want to see what I can do, a press conference? A rally?” But there are so many things that I am shuffling in life, I just don’t know if I am ready.

Even in my career I am at a turning point, because I cannot be a private person. I feel that in my career I can only go so far being a noise maker with a hooded top. I have tried so hard to be a transwoman blended in to the rest of society. I want to be the girl next door that you never knew. I want to be the woman that you see in the bank in front of you, and you say, “Hi. Do you know the date?” I want to be the woman in line at the grocery store who’s having a conversation with the woman with two children. But, you know, that’s a silent transwoman.

P: Can you be that woman here in the apartment complex where you live?

C: Yeah, I’m already that woman. But its like, well, what is that really benefiting? It keeps things quiet yeah, but at the same time it’s like I’m hiding. It’s just so funny ‘cause I was watching X-men II the other day. Have you seen the movie?

P: Oh yeah. I was all over it.

C: You know, there is that scene where one of the characters asks Mystique, “Like you can change into anyone, even their voices?” So Mystique repeats the words back to him in his voice. So he says, “Why don’t you just stay disguised?” And she says, “Because we shouldn’t have to.” I was like, “Work it!” It’s like I can only do so much. I’ve opened a non-profit for transgender women, I’m trying to get programs off the ground, but I’m still trying to be this hermit. I’m still trying to be this hidden image. And the one thing the transgender community really doesn’t have is an outspoken face. So I’m like, “Well, I’m going to give up a lot just being an out transwoman.”

P: Does it get easier to learn about yourself as you get younger?

C: It gets more difficult. I’ve hidden so many things in my life. I have selective memory. I don’t know where it comes from.

P: Is that a survival strategy?

C: It may be a survival strategy. But my strength comes from other people, or it did come from other people. Now I am learning to develop strength from within, and that has been the hardest thing to do. I’ve been living the last ten to fifteen years for other people, so now I am really trying to start living for myself.

It’s very hard. I was just having a conversation with my oldest kid about how this whole police situation has just thrown me for a loop. I was telling him it’s so hard to put myself in other people’s hands. I am the matriarch of the family. It’s so hard to say, “I need help.” And he’s like, “That’s what we are here for, that is what we do. As many times as you help others, it’s okay for other people to help you too.”

P: How do you maintain both a sense of tenderness and resilience?

C: Me? (laughter) It’s been really hard. I kind of gave up trying to be the nice girl. I guess when I started I tried to be, but you know, people challenged that quite often, so I let it go. Now I am just really outspoken and people will have the tendency to think that I am an angry person. That’s because I’ve learned to be really outspoken. One mentor of mine, Kelly Trambaco, tells me it’s a politics game and you have to learn how to play it. I try to tell her. “Well, that’s what the old school girls did. They tried to play that politics game, or they tried to be nice and savvy and tried to get in good with the pleasantries. But I feel like there is a balance—that’s why we need to work together.



People like you with that pleasantry need to come in after girls like me come in and stir them up. You need to come in and smooth it out to get what we want. But it's me that needs to get the message out and let them know, 'Hey we need this,' and then it's time for the diplomat to come in."

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P: So what else do we need from our new school girls?

C: We need courage, certainly courage, but it's so hard trying to find out who you really are when you are too busy trying to be someone else. So we need the courage to be ourselves from start. We need the courage to be able to learn who we are naturally and not by defense mechanisms. I am thirty now, and it's like I am finally learning who I am. I didn't have an adolescence. I am a late bloomer, and it's so hard to admit that, but I am. I kinda feel like Janet Jackson a little bit. She was part of this celebrity family and she and Michael Jackson just never really had an opportunity to be kids, to be teenagers.

P: And, of course, Janet came into a different kind of her own in her thirties, and she's been working it for a while now.

C: Exactly. So I'm going through that whole thing. I've always been someone else. Even starting to work for different agencies, I was their transgender pawn. I was their transgender this, their transgender that, you know, it's all politics. Just recently, I realized that I need to use whatever agency to my advantage. It's kinda turning the tables a little bit. You want a pawn, okay then let's *ponder*, let's see what we can do.

PREVENTION & POSSIBILITIES

P: What should we be doing differently in HIV prevention?

C: In outreach, what I've learned is that you can't stop a person from doing something, and you can't take something from them without replacing it with something else. So, I think that programs need to be initiated for long-term purposes. We need housing units, like instructional housing units. Transgenders need a sorority house type of facility—whether they are just getting out of jail, or just starting, whether they are questioning—they need that health link center. They need follow-up sessions, they need A through Z.

Establishments are set up like that for every other community, and we need one. Whether it is a system set up for us if we are just questioning, one that will help us fine-tune what indeed we want to do. Maybe I'm just effeminate but something to help me realize that, put me on the path, give me the tools to assess that. And if I have decided to transition, one that allows me to transition legally and one that gives me a step to do something positive with the life that I have chosen. One that gives me tools, empowerment.

I feel like if the system was set up, people wouldn't go into prostitution as easily or quickly, because they would know that there was another way, another chance, another opportunity. Something that was more long term, something that didn't say, "Well, come in for thirty days, and then you are back out on your own," with just a case manager that gives you bus tokens. We need a system that is actually implemented for you to survive. One that is not put up for you to just kind of access and then leave you hanging. That's what I find with too many of the agencies that I have worked for. They all compete for the same monies, for these high-risk communities, and it's like, "We only care about



them as long as we have the funding.” But, they never really do anything, they never really set up programs. And I totally understand, “We can’t do it if we don’t have the money,” but if they set up a program that would be beneficial from the jump.

One agency where I worked wanted to start the Wonder Woman Project. I was like, “Allow me the time to train ten girls. Let me take them through a really intense training program. We will start with grooming and go through the basics: voice therapy, training people ‘cause you have to re-teach yourself how to talk, how to think, how to walk, how to dress. Then let’s put them in an office environment. Whatever skills they had, let’s get them adapted to this new way of doing things. Let’s get them into working, getting dressed, you know putting on a uniform to go to school, to be a productive part of society. Give them some empowerment the whole time that they are attending, and then after they are finished, let’s make sure they get to job interviews. Let’s get them clothes for those interviews. Let’s take them to some psychotherapy sessions. Let’s see if there is anything that they need to talk about, things that developed in their childhood, or even currently in their adult life. What’s making them tick? Or what will make them go boom? Let’s find out.”

It would have been a great project. But they were like, “Well, it looks like it’s going to be a twelve month project. Well, no, it looks like nine. Well, six. Can you do it in four months?” I said, “Then let’s not do this at all, because it’s not going to be done.” If we had programs that would be really beneficial for people long-term, I think that would be a good place to start. When people are doing things, when they can find something that they enjoy, and realize that they can make something happen, and they are being a part of something, they are not getting into things that will necessarily put them at risk. So to me that is HIV prevention.

Like this pageant, the Miss Southern California Pageant, it’s HIV prevention. It’s info-tainment. It’s basically a project that allows transgender women, female impersonators, female illusionists, to get into something that they can do for a yearly event. Right now we are about to start a food drive, February through April, so that we can feed the homeless for Easter. We are accepting blankets, shoes, toothbrushes, canned goods. All the food we get we are going to prepare and we are just going to make plates and hand them out to community members.

P: What do you think transgenders need from gay men?

C: The same support that we gave them at Stonewall. My experience with a lot of gay men, like in agencies, is that they have been real prejudiced against transwomen for whatever reason. I just think that they should give more support, and be mindful that some of us are a part of their community, and some of them are a part of our community. We need more concern. It's more acceptable for lesbians to be out, to be out in public holding hands, to be butch, dressed in men's clothing. And with gay men, now they're more acceptable, in certain areas. West Hollywood is just a piece of heaven. But we don't have that. We don't have that kind of community, nor do we have the finances, nor do we have the ability to mesh in situations with the powers that be. So if we could get more support from those types of people that are already in place, that would be a great help.

P: In terms of building that kind of community, that little slice of heaven, the future that you evoke when you talk, where would the romantic and sexual partners of transgenders be? How do we make a world where everyone can become the person that they need to become?

C: I am not really saying that people need their own spaces. Everything is so caught up on imaging, especially in L.A. But for me, I like hetero-sexual men. So the one day that society will allow a man, or even an African-American man, to be with someone who is transgender, that will already be a piece of heaven, because it's all about imaging. Even with a man himself, he feels because society sees this as one way, then he's less of a man, that there are problems for him. Everything is behind closed doors. I am just sick of it. I am, I'm angry.

P: I wanted to talk to you about desire as a force that shapes our lives in many ways, the desire to be who we want to be, the desire for affection and romance or just getting busy, the desire to see the world the way you want it. I wonder if you could talk about the power of desire, the challenges of desire, the politics of it. How does desire shape your life?

C: It tears me. It tears me. You have to have so many different points of your personality. Like, as far as being romanced, or when I want to be with a man, it's a private life. It's a totally different life from



anything else. It doesn't mesh with anything else, it just doesn't. But I do hope for a world where everything can just be what it is, where people can be who they are without the next person's comments. I am a firm believer that someone else's opinion isn't necessarily my reality, but if you are trying to be in a relationship with someone, you are in a relationship with *some* one. So whatever they are going through, their identity crisis, how they feel about their identity, that has great bearing on you. And depending on what type of transgender woman you are, or where you are in the continuum, if you haven't already gone through your stuff about identity, this guy is going to take you through it. I mean totally take you through it. Boyfriends get with you, and they are ashamed of you. After it's all done and over, it just becomes a whole chaotic scenario. How does a person really find love if they are transgender and if they identify themselves as heterosexual? If they are not attracted to gay men, or to other transsexuals? It's hard, it's really hard. Your love life becomes very private.

Even in main society, right now my assignment with the Office of Epidemiology at DHS is going to be over. I don't always want to do transgender work, or transgender related work. I want to be able to go to mainstream businesses and apply with the comfort of knowing that my resume will speak for me. But once they see me or get an inkling that I am a transgender woman, besides the fact that my resume has transgender all over it? In some cases I have to rework my resume so I can have a heterosexual resume. So you really can't be yourself at any time.

P: Do you think of that as a form of passing?

C: It's passing, but it's like, what are you passing? You know I am truly blessed to be able to walk without having rocks thrown. But at the same time if someone does realize that I am a trans woman, I don't want to be threatened by that. I don't want to feel immediately insecure about that, whether it is in the street or at a job interview.

Career-wise, I have certainly locked myself in a box, and I think that it certainly has a purpose. But I still have a great amount of fear of going into the mainstream. I have been doing this work like ten years, so it is all that I have known.

P: Is that only a box, or is that a giant field to run around in?

C: No, it's a box because there isn't much out there. So, once you're done, you're done. You have to find some means of survival. That is why a lot of the people who have worked for an agency, as soon as they are not working anymore, they go back to the whole street mentality, the back on the boulevard

thing. I have never indulged in any sex work or things like that, so it's going to be harder. And I keep saying to myself, "I will never sex work. I will never allow myself to get into that." But what is left for me? If I keep going to these mainstream places, and all the transgender positions are taken? How am I to survive?

P: It's that basic tokenization you talked about. It limits people's choices instead of a situation where you feel free to go wherever you want.

C: Definitely. I am even looking for work now, and it's like, "Oh god..."

P: What gives you hope?

C: What gives me hope is that I feel like somewhere along the line I am going to make a difference.

P: You don't feel like you have already made a tremendous difference?

C: I feel like I have made an impact, but I don't feel like the change is finished. I think that change is coming, but I don't think that it has been set yet.

P: Yeah, and I realize the task is so huge.

C: And the accomplishments seem so small. They seem so small. But I look at things, like this Miss Southern California Pageant. It's my baby. I am the new producer of it. It hasn't happened in five years, but it was so important for me to do it. I financed it myself, even though I wanted sponsors and corporate this and corporate that. It was so important for me to do it just so I could say, "Here is something, and now all we have to do is build it. It's something, and it just needs participation. Let me just put it out there so that people can participate, and hopefully next year people will be, "Oh, I want to help.""

We are going to make this what we want it to be. This is the first pageant that's open to female illusionists, which are female impressionists and transgenders, chemically enhanced and non-chemically enhanced. It has given us an opportunity



to work together, and that's one way the gay community is a part of it. But I just wanted something that has Chanel's signature, and not just the pawn or the transgender person that worked for this or that agency. Even having the Unique Woman's Coalition, like Trans-Unity, it's our pride celebration. I have been on our planning board since inception, and I've been battling with people across the table to have a presence, to have a say-so, to have an opinion or a voice. This year is going to be our fifth year, and now I'm an executive board member. That's one for the minorities. We're in the beginning of something that's going to be so huge.

P: You talked about how sometimes the accomplishments seem so small, but what else is an accomplishment for you, big or small?

C: Well, I think that getting the 501(c) 3 non-profit status for my organization is an accomplishment, and the Pageant is definitely an accomplishment. I think those have been the two biggest accomplishments so far.

P: When did you start your organization?

C: We actually started the organization in '97. But my friends and I we weren't really an organization, we were just girls in the hood. We we're just like girls who decided to turn on their stoves and ovens for Thanksgiving dinner. So we started feeding the homeless for Thanksgiving, and we said, "Hey, why don't we do it again next year?" Before we knew it, that was our thing. We were feeding the homeless for Thanksgiving. I worked for Minority AIDS Project, I was the project coordinator and we ran support groups. That was the first time I had come across agencies that do programs for the time being. My goal was to take that and make it something that would go on even after the agency lost its funding. So we started TG Talk, which was basically a weekly rap group, and we had it at different locations throughout the city. That was an accomplishment.

P: Was it a challenge to do it at rotating sites, or did you find that people came together pretty easily?

C: Well, it was a challenge, but we researched where the hangouts were. We went to the medical center, on Cahuenga, the one that has hormonal therapy. We collaborated with the doctors and we had them set all their appointments with transgender clients on a particular day, then we would be there on that day. It would take the clients quite a while, waiting for the doctors, going through the forms, so we would just have group while people were waiting. Then I worked on a mobile unit and we had a lot of transgender clients. So I passed out flyers, and I just said, "Well, why don't you just walk down the



street and we'll go over to the Griffith Center?" They provided space for us. So we just used local resources that we knew the girls could get to, where they already either hung out at or near by.

- P:** Have you had any organizing experiences with female-to-male transgenders?
- C:** We partner all the time with the FTM alliance, you know, Mason Davis and Daniel Gould, we collaborate all the time. We all work on basically the same events, like they are a big part of Trans-Unity. They are also a big part of the transgender youth symposium from Children's Hospital. I know that this year for Trans-Unity we are trying to focus a lot more on workshops, so we'll probably be doing a lot of stuff together.

FORGING FAMILY & SELF

- P:** Did you feel like you came out when you were a boy or did you always feel like you were identified as a transgender girl?

C: I really feel like I was always identified as a transgender. I feel like my mother wanted a daughter anyway. I had long hair as a child. I remember ribbons and barrettes, you know, going to pre-school.

P: And your mom was supportive that way?

C: I don't even know if she knew what she was doing. I think that it was just playing and hair. But I don't have many memories as a boy, I really don't. My grandmother just passed away last year, and for the first time I had an opportunity to see old photographs of me as a child. These were probably the last ever and I was six years old, maybe seven. I was like, "Wow, I've been a woman that long? Gee whiz!"

P: When are you going to write your book on transgender puberty?

C: God, I don't know, as soon as I get an offer! But it's funny—I've always been a woman.

P: So, the coming out is about, "I've always been a woman and now I am a transgender woman?"

C: Definitely. I just know what kind of woman I am, I am just a transgender woman. Even in junior high, I didn't want to take gym 'cause I didn't want to get my hair wet or sweaty so I joined dance. And I actually think that was the road, that was it for me, I knew from that point. So my last two years of high school, I left town. I left Los Angeles, and went to Oakland, and I moved in with some family. I just made a complete transition.

P: What brought you back to L.A. ?

C: Feeling a little completed, feeling like a new person.

P: How long did that take?

C: I was there for two and a half years. I finished school so I felt like I was ready to come home. I felt like I had been a woman. No more gym, no more P.E., no more yell leading practices or anything like that. I was just like, "Okay, I am ready to go back to L.A. as a brand new person."

P: Were you scared about the Chanel you would find in L.A.? Or the people you would find here?

C: Yeah.

P: How did you deal with that?

C: Selective memory—that is the honest answer. I basically didn't remember anyone, you know, purposely. It was just like a metamorphosis, I was out of the cocoon.

P: As soon as you were on your own, you began your family. How did that happen?

C: Suffering from loneliness. Being very alone. Just leaving my family behind, wanting something to replace that. So that started it. I am a very lonely person. I love company. I love to be around other people, and I love to take care of people. I have a very natural nurturing type of persona. So everything just kind of happened naturally.

P: So who were your children?

C: People that I had just met as I started going out into the gay community. I became an entertainer, and so I started going out to the clubs. Youngsters that I would see at the club, or people who enjoyed seeing me perform. People would come meet me in my personal space at home, and we just started hanging out. Rapports were built, and before you knew it, we had a family.

P: But it wasn't a House of Chanel thing, it was something else?

C: No, it was more personal. We didn't have a house or anything like that, even though members of my family do participate in house functions, or are members of houses. We always considered our space to be family space, to be personal.

P: Meaning, a house is not a home? Like you were making home space?

C: Yeah, home space, this is where we lay our head, this is where we get away from all of that business and the club. It was always family oriented.

P: How big is your family now? Is it pretty extended?



C: Actually, it is pretty extended. I have six kids, and one of my daughters has two kids, so now I have grandkids. Then I have sisters, brothers. We are probably a family of twenty-five or thirty, if we count all the people that we really haven't seen in a while. During holidays you realize how many people really are a part of the family, because everyone wants to come and say hello and seasons greetings.



P: It's beautiful to watch you light up as you talk about your family. You really become animated.

C: Yeah, they're a joy, but we have dealt with really dramatic, serious issues. We dealt with me going to jail. We've dealt with almost being homeless. We've dealt with being hungry. We've dealt with not having employment. We've dealt with siblings' fights, parents not getting along. We've dealt with single moms. So, literally, this is family. I have abused my children, they've abused me. I mean this is real stuff.

P: Do you fear, like many parents do, that your babies will leave you?

C: That used to worry me a lot, empty nest syndrome. But I think that's one of the advantages of being friends, too—we don't get tired of each other like that. And even if we do, we're just a phone call away. That's the security in family, knowing that someone is somewhere. Most of us live closely knit right now. My friend lives right here next door, my son just moved upstairs, I have a daughter that is like three minutes away. We're it. We're here to stay. So I am okay.

P: How did you come to be a mentor? Have you always been that way?

C: I feel like I've always been that way, but I don't want to say "mentor."

P: Is that a dirty word?

C: Well, I feel like I have a lot of growing up and learning to do myself. I don't want to be looked at as a person who has all the answers or who knows it all. I am a person you can sound off with, I am a person you can get feedback from. People are going to make their own choices, but I just want to be a person with whom you can express yourself. I can express my opinion, but to be a mentor? I fucked up a lot, I really have.

P: Why wouldn't that make you a great mentor?

C: Well, people can learn from my mistakes (laughter), but I don't want to be idolized. I thought that was cute at first, I really enjoyed it. But I really don't want to be looked up to. I just want to be a down to earth person that people can express themselves with, and get sound advice from.

P: I have a colleague who says, "So often we have to mentor ourselves."

C: Absolutely.

P: And, if we are lucky, we mentor each other. But it's rare that we get a mentor whose path we can follow in life. Are there people that have been mentors for you?

C: Yeah, I have certainly learned a lot. Like Kelly Trambaco, African-American transgender woman. It's just the way that she approaches situations. She's a cool, calm, collected person, and not afraid of failure. Whenever I need encouragement, she always gives it to me. We used to work together, and now that we don't work together, we still work together, you know? She's just a person who's a



community person. She's so open. She's like my grandmother type. Kelly's helped me in my business, in my career. And when I first transitioned, I came across a woman named Consuela. She was an entertainer here in Los Angeles, very famous actually. She helped me become a fine-tuned woman.

P: How did she do that?

C: She helped me by telling me to be natural. She helped me not be an amped-up person, but to just kind of let things flow.

P: Did you used to be amped up?

C: No. I was a wallflower, very quiet, very timid, very “don't look at me too long. If you don't look at me too long you won't even notice, or say anything if I keep my head down.” Consuela was like, “Hold your head up. You're a beautiful person regardless. Know that every day when you wake up you're a beautiful person. You should never hold your head down. As long as you are able to get up, you can smell, you can see, you can feel heat on your skin. Hold your head up.” She just taught me to believe in myself, to know that this life that I chose, or the life that has chosen me, was right.

P: Where did Consuela get that?

C: I think she may have gotten it just from strength that she built up, you know that toughness. She was 6'2" , 6'3". She was like Phyllis Hyman, that was her character, the whole nine, size and everything. So there was no hiding it. She was very free with herself. It was a beautiful thing.

P: You said she was helpful to you during your transition. What else was helpful?

C: Just knowing that you kind of have to re-learn, re-teach yourself all the things that you have known all your life. Just learning how to adapt to things, using your feminine wiles.

P: Is there anything getting on your last nerve lately?

C: Transgender tokenism. I am just really at a point where I am so sick of being someone else's transgender something. I had my fill of it at my last job.

P: So what made you agree to do this interview?

C: It's the approach of it, you know, it is about empowering. It's about giving a different perspective, and that's what I am about, giving a different perspective. This is a chance for change, not only for me, but for someone else who reads the article, or that gets something out of it, someone who may have been challenging the idea of being transgender or being an outspoken transgender person without knowing of anyone that has done it. I know for myself, had I not come across certain people in the community, I wouldn't be doing it. That's what is really important—finding who you are, having some idea of who you are early on, and being able to be comfortable with that.

P: Thanks Chanel.

C: Thank you.



Once Upon a Phase... ...Based on My True Story

Sergio Romero

As a child I was expected to be a “man.” I was called names like faggot, maricón, vieja, sissy and girl. I really hated that shit. I did not even understand some of those words. All I knew was that they made me feel bad. Growing up, I felt that my life was controlled by my parents and peers, and their main thing was that I was supposed to act, fight and defend myself like a man. I was scared of fighting and getting hurt, but at times I was forced to do so. I could not understand why being a man meant fighting, playing with boys (not girls), going with my father to the park and playing sports.

At Stevenson Jr. High School, I met some boys who would always get in trouble. I thought it was so cool for them not to care about anything. I did not want to care about anything either. I wanted to rebel and do what ever the fuck I wanted. One day, I went with my father to the park near General Hospital, and found a cigarette box near a tree. When I picked it up, I felt something metallic or glass move inside. Later, when I had a chance, I looked and saw some weird-looking pipes. I took it to school the next day and showed it to one of the troublemakers I had for homeroom. When he saw it, he said, “Uuh, there must be drugs inside those pipes. I’ll meet you at the restrooms near the cafeteria during lunch.” When I met him, we just looked at the pipes and decided that we would take a hit the next day. He brought a lighter and I brought the pipes. For the first time in my life I got soooo high that I could not go to my next class. So we ditched and went to his house. He said, “That shit is called heroin!” Asked me how he knew that shit? Pss . . . I don’t know.

After that, I was cool enough to hang out with the troublemakers. Since my family was always stressing the fact that I had to be a “man,” I decided to get more involved with them. These guys would get into fights, get suspended and not give a fuck about it. One day Curly said, “Hey man, me and the homies were talking about you and I wanted to ask if you want to be part of the neighborhood?” Wanting to feel acknowledged and special, I said, “Yup!” At lunch, Curley, Dopey, Payaso, and Huero took me behind one of the buildings to jump me into the neighborhood. They asked, “What do you want to be called?” I didn’t know. They said, “Let’s call you Shy Boy.” I thought that was cool. So I



got jumped in the neighborhood as Shy Boy. I got my ass so kicked, but I did not feel alone anymore and I was doing something very “manly!” Shit! I was forced to fight before to be a man, so fuck it, now I was man enough to confront a fight with four vatos.

That day, after school, I went to meet the rest of the homeboys. Osito popped me in the face and said, “Welcome to the neighborhood.” I’d rather be popped by his ass than go home and get popped every day for no damn reason. When I got home, I had to put up with some shit ‘cause they noticed that I had fought, but I felt like I belonged to some people that would protect me so I did not care anymore. In living the cholito life, I knew I had to do something to be someone to get attention, to feel acknowledged and most important, not feel neglected. I used to think about so much crazy shit that I used to even damage school property to express myself. I hit my nickname and my neighborhood on schoolbooks, the restrooms, walls, and busses every chance I got. I would even practice on every piece of paper that looked like a good spot to hit my shit up. All I wanted was to earn my respects by not caring, getting in trouble and making people feel scared of me.

I started finding ways to get out of the house to hang out with my homies. When my family would go to sleep, I would get my baggy clothes from under my bed, put on my gangster attire, get my mothers car keys and g-ride that shit to the neighborhood with my homies. But did I know how to drive at age 14? Hell no! But I had to learn if I wanted to be part of the “I don’t give a fuck” crowd. My family had no clue about what I was up to (so make sure they don’t get a copy of this Corpus edition j/k). All they knew was that I was not taking shit from nobody anymore.

When I was 15 years old, my mother got pregnant and I was actually excited and disappointed at the same time. Excited because I need another member in the family who might love me. There was hope for me! I was disappointed because this child is going to be part of this fucked up family (excuse my lingo, but that is how I felt at the time). It really sucked for me, you know, being an only boy and trying to find myself with no guidance and support from nobody.

At first it seemed like everyone was focusing on my mom’s pregnancy, rather than my bullshit. But when my mother would focus on my shit, I didn’t care. I had enough of her that I would just run away from home. I felt I had to do this after



PHOTOS: Patrick “Pato” Hebert

constantly hearing shit like: “quitate de aqui,” “enfadas,” “vete con tu mama,” “vete con tu papa,” “no vallas con tu tia porque le das lata!” blah, blah, blah . . . uh! So what do you expect from me? The longest time I ran away was about two days. Sometimes I was just around the corner laughing at them, seeing them being so worried for me but also feeling lonely as fuck! One day I got home looking all G’d up with my best gangster clothes and with my head almost bald. My mother was so pissed off that she actually ripped my shit and told me to take them off and dress more decent. At this point I had it with her. I felt bad cause she was pregnant, but she was not thinking about it herself, screaming and shit. So I sat down and just listened to her “noise.” She thought that I did not give a fuck, so out of nowhere she rushed me and tried to slap me. My natural reflex was to cover my face with my arms and legs and I ended up accidentally kicking her in the belly. Believe me, I felt so bad and I felt I was getting out of hand. I could not even stand myself that I just ran-away (as I normally do when I feel like shit). I ran away pretending that I did not care about it and swallowed my tears until now that I am expressing it (disculpame Mamy si te lastime!).

I ran to Evergreen Park. I sort of prayed that day and asked God for forgiveness, but since I always prayed for God to make things better for me and nothing ever did, I was beginning to think that my prayers would never be answered. When my father got home, he looked for me and found my ass walking down Euclid Ave. I was scared of him, so you bet I got into that car real quick before he beat my ass in the streets. I got home and guess what happened? Yes, I had to hear it from them and yes, I got my ass kicked for being an asshole. The most fucked up thing about it was that I had to get the belt, give it to my dad, and get on my knees so that he could whip me with it. Ouch!”

Uh . . . during this phase I didn’t know shit about life. I was getting so lost that I just wanted to end it right here. I started thinking about ways that I wanted to die. Yeah, my family would feed me, give me shelter, buy me clothes and especially put up with me. But I also kind of felt like I should kick back and not be too hard ‘cause I was not really getting anywhere. Then things would actually get harder. I would get away though. I would go to Jalisco, Mexico with my grandparents, to Calexico with my aunt and cousins and to my godmothers house in Hollywood. But my mother would always have something negative to say, as if I did not deserve to enjoy life or as if I was paying for the fucked up shit that men have done to her. She would say things like, “Como das lata, tu cres que la jente te quiere sorportar?” (I’m sorry I can’t translate that, you have to feel in order to understand it). I was feeling neglected by my people and the world. When I was a kid I did not like to fight and I would get my ass kicked for not fighting. And now as an adult, I was getting my ass kicked and feeling neglected for getting involved in gangs and violence. Who the fuck would sit down and try to understand anyway? I started getting tattoos of my neighborhood. Yeah, I had other sources of getting away while being here in LA. I did my usual drugs when they were available. Like



smoking heroin, yesca, snorting some cocaine, dipping my cools (so if you're smiling you know what I mean, it's not "good for you!"). But I was actually scared to get addicted and become a big-ass bum. I guess it was just easy for me to do it and it was the only way I could get away from here.

Finally my mother's new child was born, I was happy about that. So I rushed to the hospital with my father and older sister. And what do you know, a little girl. I just stared at her and wished the best of luck in this world. Then it hit me, "Oh my goodness I am a big brother to this little girl." So I cracked a little side smile. As the month went by, I became very attached to this little girl. When my Mom and me would go at it, I would go to my little sister and just talk to her. I needed an ear to talk to and someone who would not judge me [pause: I am getting a little emotional right now]. But yeah, I really love my little sister and I

wanted to take care of her. When I was in the 11th Grade at Roosevelt High School, I dropped out for a few months to baby-sit her. I did not trust anyone. Only I could take care of her. I would bathe her, comb her hair (the only way I knew to comb her was slicked back with a cute pony-tail), feed her, play with her, talk to her (even though she did not know what the fuck I'm saying) and just give her my undivided attention. I would be the first one to see her do things for the first time. The most important one was when she walked. Oh boy, I was the proudest brother. When my family would come home after a long day of work and school I would eat and leave to the streets. I got hit up in front of my house one day and I ranked out cause the first person that popped in my head was my little sister. I was experiencing something different during this time cause my family was moving around to different rival neighborhoods. Which made it even harder for me to grow up. I really felt trapped during this phase of my life.

When we moved to Lanfranco Street (a block away from where I was raised), I met a lot of people my age and made new friends. My aunt and cousins moved across the street from us, and yup, I would hang out with my girl cousin. We would go to ditching parties around the neighborhood. When I babysat my little sister I would take her with me to the ditching parties. I wanted to show her off to everyone, but I was a kid myself. I took her to dangerous places with me, and the worst one was a g-ride when we ran over two dogs while going 80 on a 35 zone. Even though I would get drunk, I knew my sister was okay cause she was with some other kids and we were at my homegirls house. I would



get home before my Mother got home. I don't know how I did it sometimes, I was so drunk to carry her, but I managed. One day some of my homies came over to my house and hung out while I was babysitting, they even brought some of their friends. My little sister had to be taken care of first before I partied with my homeboys. I even bought her some finch birds for her to play with so she won't be bored by herself in the room. I checked up on her every little while to make sure she was feeling happy and to let her know that I am available to her regardless of my situation. One of my homies was doing a tattoo on my back. I thought my little sister was sleeping but she was watching the whole thing, I grabbed a pen and said, "Come here mija, look, they are just writing on me with a pen." She asked "Lele?" (meaning "duele", "Does it hurt?" in baby language). I said, "No," and showed her by writing her name on her shoulder and my neighborhood on her fingers with the pen. Later she went to sleep and my homies left and I too, knocked out. When my Mom got home, she saw that I had done (oops, I forgot to erase it, duhh!). She got mad and asked me what that meant. I made something up, I can't remember what. I do remember she was not happy about it though.

My family knew that I was up to no good. And I knew they thought of me as a bad example for the family, especially my little sister. So one day, we got into an argument and there were threats of them sending me to some correctional facility. I said, "Hell no!" So I tried to get my shit together and went back to Roosevelt High School to finish my education. Even though I was the only one from my neighborhood at Roosevelt, I

tried to finish and represent my neighborhood at the same time. I got into a little fight at school that caused me to get suspended. I started making enemies and my life became 187ed. I pretty much lived with fear at home and in the “real world.” I tried not to care a lot about these little chavalitas though, cause all they did was talk their little shit. After school, some fools would be outside waiting for me to kick my ass. But I was slick. I would go out through the other side exits. One day a bunch of them were cruising in a minivan and they saw me walking alone, boy was I shitting bricks but I kept on walking. When they caught up to me they started talking shit, name calling and all. But I said to myself, “What is the worse thing that could happen to me, get my ass beat, shit! That might be the best that happened to me.” Thinking about going home to a fucked up atmosphere, I told these fuckers off and said, “I can’t hear you, why don’t you get off the car and come tell me in my face.” One of those little bitches said to me, “You better keep trucha ese, or your ass is grass!” I thought he was so stupid, but I was proud of myself and felt that I was down for my shit and I’m really not taking shit from nobody in the streets or home.

So I had my little crazy experiences at Euclid Ave. School, Stevenson Jr. High School and Roosevelt High School, but I made it through school and managed to get my diploma. It was very challenging to go to school here in East LA. I’m sure it’s not any different from other schools and I’m sure everyone has their issues, but this is my story, shit! And yes I had to put up with people talking shit to me and calling me names because I felt a certain way. From playing in the playground with other kids or being teased for

playing with girls to getting socked in the face. From going to field trips to ditching school and smoking weed and heroin with the homies. And of course, from innocent to confused. I was proud of myself for going to school and trying and actually getting my diploma. I’m sure my family was proud of me as well, but they showed it by hitting me, calling me names and saying negative things to me, which was very challenging for me to overcome those things spiritually. They were even negative about some things that I did accomplish, but I think they were not conscious of how it made me feel. Unfortunately, that is what I grew up to realize, cause what other reason is there if we all were born as little innocent angels? Until adults fuck it all up!



Now that I was out of school and 18 years old, I was expected to get a job and pay some bills. I was feeling pressured by everything going on in life and I was running out of choices that would make my family proud. During a huge discussion with my family about being involved with the crowd, they compared me to other family members who were supposedly better than me and my habits. My parents did not realize these family members were partly the reason that made me the person that I am as this point “The Bad Son”. And you know what? I’d had it. I was getting frustrated and tired because I felt alone and was not good enough for anyone. I tried to pick myself up and I fell, I tried to pick myself up again and still, I kept getting pushed back down, so none of my efforts were worth it. So fuck everyone. My Mom said, “You are here causing danger to the family.” I said, “Well I don’t want to be here, and you know what? I don’t have to be here.” She said, “Well go ahead and go with your friends, lets see if they put up with you.” So I left my house and I really felt like I never wanted to come back. This time it was for good. This is when I felt that it was the beginning of the end for me.

When I left, no one tried to stop me. They let me go and I felt a little bad that they did not beg me to stay and I actually wanted them to say, “I’m sorry, come back!” Although I would have rebelled against them I would have felt somewhat wanted. I walked to my neighborhood and looked for my homeboys, but no one was around. So I went to my veterano homeboy and called him out, “Pato! Pato!” and he came out, “What’s up homie? Are you looking for the homeboys, they will be here later on.” I asked him if I could kick it ‘cause I just got kicked out of my house. He said, “Well I don’t know if my lady would like that but if you want to smoke a joint, we could go in the backyard.” Well that was better than nothing. So I went with him and asked him if he knew of any homeboys that I could stay with. He didn’t know, but I knew for sure not with him, since he had to be asking his old lady for permission. In my heart I felt that this was not going to be as easy as I thought. I had to really change my life if I really wanted to live with my homeboys. I had to be more O.G. and do the things that I’ve always been scared of doing. So I waited for the homeboys to get there while I was getting high with Pato.

That night, I felt like everything was different and nothing was better and safer than staying home and being yelled at. My homeboys got there and that day Osito’s lady was going to throw down with one of the homegirls for some stupid reason. I was really quiet on the side and observing the whole “pedo” going on. Then the homegirls got there and they went straight for the putasos. The energy on this first night was starting off violent and crazy. There was a homeboy that that was really cool with me and I wanted to hang out with him. His nickname was Rascal. I thought he was really good looking. He would look at me as well and touch me on my shoulder or back. I felt good hanging out with him. He would put his arm around my neck and talk really close



to my face and say, “What’s up little Shy Boy!” I was so shy and nervous cause I did not know what the fuck I was feeling or thinking. Later that night, some of the homeboys went to get some liquor while others went to get some drugs. Sombra asked me, “What are you going to do afterwards?” I said, “I got kicked out of my pad and I wanted to stay over with someone, you know if I could stay with you?” He said, “My Hefa would trip if I bring any of my homeboys over.” So I figured that was a “NO.” When the homeboys got back, we drank and smoked out and then they all started leaving. Rascal asked me if I needed a ride and I said, “Nah, I am gonna kick it in the neighborhood tonight.” Now at this point, I tell you, I was scared as fuck cause for the first time in my life I had no roof over my head and no bed to sleep in. But on the other hand, I thought it would be an experience if I spent the night in the streets. So I made myself comfortable on a couch that was trashed in our dead-end street.

Bad Morning! The morning sun was hitting my face and the noise of the freeway was annoying me. I was spaced out and I couldn’t believe that I spent the night in the streets. I was wishing that it was a bad dream, but I knew it wasn’t. So as I picked up my face and looked behind the couch, towards the streets, I was trying to believe that this was really happening to me. “What should I do? What time is it? Where do I go? I’m hungry!” These thoughts were in my head, but I had no way to answer them cause I did not know. So I got up and walked around the neighborhood. I did not see anyone. I was kind of scared to get hit up by some rivals so I walked through the small streets. I ran into a transgender homegirl who was very popular in the neighborhood. She was the hook-up for heroin and other drugs, I asked her, “Are you from the neighborhood?” She said, “Simón, why how much do you want?” So I told her, “Nothing. I’m actually in the streets cause I got kicked out and I don’t want to go home.” So she asked if I wanted to get high so I could feel better. We went to her trailer and she had all the drugs that you could think about. She got a syringe and said, “A ver estira la mano, haste un puñeta y relajate.” I was tripping out on her cause she was just so neutral, as if it was all normal for her. I hardly said anything, she straight shot me up with heroin that morning. I smoked that shit in Jr. High School but for the first time I was feeling better than good. Time was so slow but yet so nicely fast. My body was warm and my head was so relaxed. I just sat there with my arm bleeding, and as soon as I knew it, I was feeling good to be free.



So I said, “Fuck it! Let’s make this shit worth it!” That day was so cool and the homeboys got there and the same shit happened. We smoked out and had a few beers. And again, I spent the night in the couch cause there was no one that would take me in there home. I thought, “I was okay the first night, how worse can it get if I sleep here another night.” But on the other hand I was like, “Oh my GOD, please help me. Don’t let me be homeless, please!” But in reality I had nowhere to go and no one would offer me a roof over my head. But what can I do, kill myself to end it? Well the truth, I really didn’t care if I died, I actually thought that this was the last phase of my life and I want to live it to the fullest, even if I felt lonely and in need of some love. If I did die, I would not die in peace, all I needed was affection and I wasn’t getting it. So I wanted to be forgiven if I had hurt my family. I asked one of my homeboys’ kid to give me a piece of paper and a pen. I wanted to write a letter just in case I was found dead that night. On an envelope I wrote: “Please give this to my family if I am found dead.” With tears in my eyes, I put the letter in my pocket and went to hang out with my homeboys and do the things that gangsters do, that would lead some gangster to death. This letter was very significant due to it’s intent. I don’t have the letter with me right now to quote what I said, but I definitely remember why I wrote it and what it said. As I write this story with tears in my eyes, I will recap what that letter said. As much as I remember and I said something like this;

Diosito y Virgencita, disculpame si ofendí a mi familia y a la gente que quiero. Si me encuentran muerto por favor dale este mensaje a mi familia. Mamá, disculpame si te ofendí o te hice daño. No fue mi intención; pero por qué me trataste mal y me pegabas. Yo sé que nunca te dije que te quiero y mis últimas palabras para ti es que Te Quiero. Papá, siempre he querido ser tu hijo perfecto pero te quiero mucho y disculpame por haber caído en las pandillas y las calles, pero te quiero mucho.

Hermanita, disculpame que no he podido estar contigo para verte crecer, pero mi mensaje para ti es que te quiero y yo te voy a cuidar desde el cielo para que no sufras. Hermana, tú has sido como mi mejor amiga y como mi madre gracias por crecer conmigo y te deseo toda la felicidad. Gracias a toda la gente que fue buena conmigo.

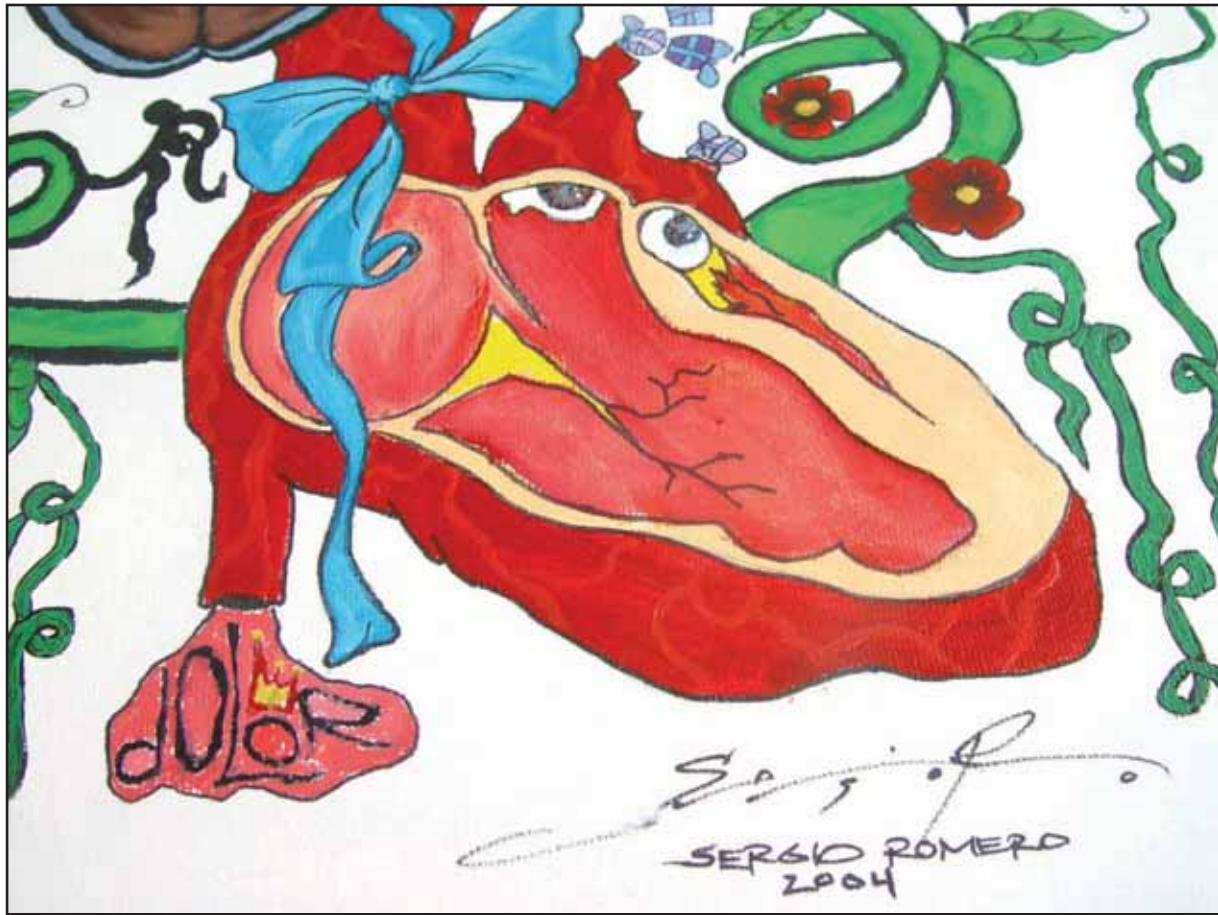
I knew I could go home and put up with my family’s bullshit. But I always wanted to feel free and not give a fuck about anything. I did not want to give a fuck about conflicts, problems and arguments, being told what to do, and specially getting hit by people who were supposed to love



me. So at this point of my life, I was getting what I wanted (so for you little rebellious people, be careful what you wish for!) Anyway, so I would carry this letter with me and at the same time I did not want to feel like this. If I could describe what I felt I could say it like: I was scared of having pride and I wished I was weak to just go back home and be stronger when dealing with my parent's shit. So I was basically stuck and I had to find my way around. I was out there for about 3 weeks. Heroin was my drug and the only escape from my world. If it weren't for looking forward to doing drugs everyday, I'd probably have killed myself, 'cause what else was there to look forward to? Halloween came and kids were trick-or-treating. I remember when I used to get some candies from the neighbors, and most important, I could remember my mother making my sister and me some Halloween costumes. She then would take us out. I guess there was some good times in my childhood that was probably blocked by other bullshit that was hard to forgive.

That weekend was the most significant weekend in my life. Of course, being homeless was the worse experience of my spiritual life. That weekend I did so many drugs that I was high as fuck. I don't even remember what the fuck I was high from. I slammed some heroin, smoked some cools, some pot then some homeboy came with a pipe that had some glass, I smoked some of that shit too. I think this was where I gave it all I had and my body tolerated more than what it should have, as if someone was up there watching and protecting me. I remember wanting to die. I wanted to just overdose from what ever the fuck I was high from and not continue this life anymore. All of those terrible feelings that anyone can feel in their heart were in mine. I was not happy and I couldn't face another day in this evil world. I knew I had lost my innocence and adolescence. So yup, I just wanted to get high. I was so stuck and spaced out, all I could think of was that my body was feeling numb but my soul was looking for some type of strength. I then snapped out of it when I saw fog coming into the city. I swore that the devil was coming to get me so I ran as fast as I could. I ran through a driveway and jumped the fence into a car lot. I broke the window of a car and hid where I couldn't be found.

I was tripping so bad that I was scared for my life and no matter how high, crazy and lost I was, I did not forget about my family and God. That was the only thing in my head. I wanted to go home, I didn't want to be there anymore. All I said was, "Please Lord help me, I am scared. Mommy, Daddy Sisters please hear me. I want to go home." (I'm sorry readers, I am really crying right now and I want you all to understand one thing, I love my family and I really missed them at this point.) I was in the car for a while until I heard the gates opening. I then saw a light in the sky and I swore it was God coming to save me, but it turned out to be a helicopter looking for my ass. In a way, I think they were sent from heaven 'cause I no longer want to be in the streets and they were going to get me out. I swear I looked up with the most begging look that anyone could have. I was begging to get out of here and I was literally talking to the light. I don't know what I said exactly, but it was all related to my anxiety of getting away from the streets. I surrendered and got out of the car.



Sergio Romero, "Internally Me" (Detail), 2004, Acrylic on canvas, 14" x 12"

Yeah, it was the cops and a helicopter. I finally got arrested and I was taken to the police station. The cops asked me if I was trying to steal a car. In my head I was like, "Duh, the gates were closed!" Besides, I don't know how to steal a car. The cops took me to jail, and let me tell you, I missed sleeping under a roof and in a bed. I was relaxed and happy that I was in jail. Two days later, a public defender talked to me and first she read my rights. "You have the right to remain silent, anything I say would be used against you in a court of law, blah, blah, blah..." You think I trusted this bitch to help me? Hell motherfucken NO! So, I said the things that would be impossible to use against me. I said I was

homeless and I was lost, I did not mean to get in trouble but I was glad I was out of the streets. I saw the judge later and pleaded no-contest. Then the public defender told me that I was charged with Trespassing Private Property and that I was going to be released. I was begging her to talk to the judge to let me stay in jail. She tripped out on me. But it was impossible to stay in jail. The public defender then said that I could go to Job Corps in Downtown LA and start all over. And so I did.

I was living at Job Corps. When my Mother heard where I was, she came to see me. She asked the security in the front desk that she wanted to talk to me. Can you believe the security said, “Your son is over 18 years of age, I cannot tell you if he is here or not, but you could leave a note for him and if he is here he will call you.” When I heard this, I was so sad to know that I was not a kid anymore and that my Mothers rights were taken. I sort of cried cause I was hoping that my Mother would come and look for me. I was hoping to run into my family and hug them. That was nice of my Mother to look for me, I guess it was my turn to give my other half and call her. So I did. My sister answered the phone and she did not know how to react. She asked how I was and then my father got the phone. I guess my older sister was too sensitive to continue talking to me. My dad asked if I wanted to come home. I paused and said that I like Job Corps but I would like to come over on the weekend. So he picked me up and I was so nervous and scared, but my Father’s greetings made me feel connected to my family again. I got home and I had a lot of mail waiting for me. My little sister hugged me so innocently. My older sister seemed scared of me but was very nice. Then my mother came out of the restroom, and with her runny nose and teary eyes she asked, “Ya comiste, tienes hambre? Como estas?” Oh no, here comes my tears..... sorry, I’m a little emotional right now..... But she asked me if I had eaten or if I was hungry. You will never know how much I missed my mothers cooking.

I made it through Job Corps and it was a very nice experience. And fortunately by that time the rapport and trust with my family was re-established. If I think about it, I really appreciate my experience and the things that the experience made me appreciate. One thing for sure, no matter what the hell happens with your family’ you will always end up with your family. I feel blessed to be alive and have a relationship with my family.

Okay, I haven’t written anything about my gay life. Well actually, it shouldn’t matter. I think I could tell you a lot if there was something abnormal about it. But yeah, I’m gay and I think that as a child I was hidden from my own identity. It took a lot to find myself and realize that who I am is absolutely normal to me. Too bad my parents couldn’t understand that earlier, I probably would have had a beautiful childhood. But I was given to them as a child and even though they had authority, they could still be ignorant to the facts.

But it was my role as an adult to help them understand that what they did was not good and it made me feel bad. Now I have to control anything that could trigger that past and make me lose my head.



But controlling that only makes me a stronger and better person. Currently, I am in a relationship and very happy with my partner. I feel blessed with him cause we have a lot in common and he understands me. Something that touched me was when I was writing this and I started crying like some crazy fool, I felt so protected when he hugged me. When I was proofreading this, he was just looking at me and seeing if I was going to cry again (I Love You baby, Pupuh!). I have a good job and I have a lot of goals set for my future. I work with great people, and some are just, well . . . But they are all a part of my current life. I've been given a lot of opportunities that justify that bad experience. And something

very interesting that I have observed, I love life and people and I try to live my life to the fullest. My parents must have done something right. I could and I will always live with that mystery!

a mix'd tape
since you arrived

CHRISTOPHER N. FERRERIA





*Sunday mornings before church
mean freshly baked pan de sal for breakfast from
Valerio's Family Bakery.*

TRACK NO. 01

at your best (you are love)

Late Friday nights are spent at Alberto's, feasting on the usual carne asada burrito
after an evening of cruising the streets with the crew.

National City is where
the Filipino bakery faces the Mexican taqueria across the street,
where the lowered Honda speeds past the hopping Chevy Impala.

On a good night, the cops aren't there when the bluff is called;
only we hear the squeal of tires drowning out subwoofer bass
in that moment before the race down the empty straightaway.

He studies me from his steering wheel.

I look the other way.

TRACK NO. 02

THE CARS THAT GO BOOM

MY BROTHER'S OF ANOTHER GENERATION.

ONE WHEN TERRITORY AND THE NEXT HOUSE PARTY WERE OF CONCEPT.

IT WAS ABOUT "LOOKOUT WEEKEND" AND WHO HAD

"MORE BOUNCE TO THE OUNCE." LISA LISA WAS THE FIRST J.L.O.

AND A THEN-VIKKLOWN MARJAN SANG BACKUP FOR THE POW-LITTLE-KLOWN

BRENDA K. STARR,

BLACK CASCADE
JACKETS, AND THE L.A.
RAIDERS AND THE
BOYZ 'N' THE HOOD.

AND THE BOYS IN MY 'HOOD WERE ALWAYS HARD. BROWN BODIES IN RED

OR BLUE WRAPPED IN BLACK.



POW, TERRITORY IS MOBILE. IT SPEEDS FROM ONE 'HOOD TO THE NEXT. AS MUCH AS I
HATE TO ADMIT IT, I AM OF THIS NEW GENERATION. THIS 24-INCH GENERATION OF
TWO-TONE LEATHER AND SHINY CHROME TUBES. THIS GENERATION OF WILLFUL DANGER,
FEARLESS AND FLYING. I STAND IDLY BY ON MY STREET CORNER, LEFT BEHIND.

NO LICENSE TO PLAY. IRRITATED
ENVIOUS SEDUCED
FOUND WANTING

BROWN BODIES DOPPING RAPIDY COLORED ARMOR.




The
Syfu
family
lived

behind us. Of the four
boys, Nathan, the second eldest, was
my brother's age and Mike, the
third son, was a year older
than me. Mike and I
would walk to school
together in the mornings. It
was the chickens in their
backyard that woke me in the early
mornings. A little piece of the homeland in the
backyard.

TRACK NO. 03

the beautiful ones

I would brave the steep incline of overgrown ice plant across
the backyard to reach the fence separating us from the
Syfus. Through cracks of old, tattered wood and
chipping red paint, I'd watch them
clucking in their pens. At the time, I
wondered why the family kept them at all;
too skinny for eating and they never laid any eggs.



They were mean chickens. Stern and cocky in their own manner,
they'd try to peck at my gazing eye through my peephole.

I just looked the other way.

Richly plumed bodies,
feathers brilliantly stained
brown green gold red.

Over time, they each disappeared.

HERE COMES SPEED RACER

HERE HE COMES

HE'S A **DEMON**
DEMON
DEMON ON WHEELS

I LOOK THE OTHER WAY
NOT SURE IF HE NOTICES ME.

TRACK NO. 04

I WONDER IF
I TAKE YOU HOME





the importance of sleep

Tri D. Do

startled i did not believe infection:
that it might take on a life of its own

beyond multiplying, i strategize. its
contre-coup is the mistake of

my next maneuver, met with a measure of
commensurate force. with every med

the virus gives and then endures. my room darkens;
these new men met by my interest

find in me new reason to lose. the light rises in
the room that fills with virus.

Making the Middle

J. Diaz

Those beautifully traveled boxer briefs
The ones that like to invite me in
Make my ears warm and red
Are still too much to wear, just
Spread yourself open across my sheets
Let go of post-modern pre-occupations
You know I like it real close
A seamless line
Because your legs run a mile long
Not yet truly traveled I can tell
Skin and spirit sun on my artist's gaze
As I read the negative space of your sex
I'll paint those parts over ten times a day
You know I could
Sweet, carnal, hurtful strokes
Old habits and faded hues all have to go
If we're going to make the middle

A Matter of Timing

Tri D. Do

I.

I live on the corner of your lips
At the intersection of
Familiarity and inconsequence
Where I lose myself watching
The weight of your words
Light morning skies
Dew of dawn gives way to
The warm breath of risk
I take my pace from
The heightened rhythm of
My heart tearlessly flawed
I live on the corners of your lips
Where else, I could not imagine

II.

Vermillion border blanched
Your uncertain pose pressed;
Inside drunken daydreams,
A strategic retreat.
This is how you resuscitated me
From neglect, from my youthful
Indiscretions and debased
Notions of the self
Now I am dawn recast,
Technicolor tones on the
Coal of yester night,
Exploding on the horizon,
The seasons of a man's life.

Contributors

Young Chung lives and works in Los Angeles. View more of his work @ paxicoreview.com.

Jaime Cortez is an artist, writer and cultural worker based in California. He was raised between Mexicali, Baja California and Watsonville, Alta California. His writing has appeared in numerous anthologies including *Best Gay Erotica 2001*, *2sexE* and *Besame Mucho*. He was the founding editor of *Corpus* and he edited the groundbreaking anthology *Virgins, Guerrillas & Locas*. He also wrote and illustrated the graphic novel *Sexile*. Jaime is pursuing his MFA in art at UC Berkeley.

J. Diaz is a poet and photographer who lives and works in New York. He takes inspiration from Estefano and Mark Anthony who say, “Valió la pena lo que era necesario estar contigo amor. Tú eres una bendición. Las horas y la vida de tu lado están para vivirlas pero a tu manera.”

Ti D. Do is an HIV/AIDS physician at San Francisco General Hospital and a post-doc at UC San Francisco. He serves on several non-profit boards and writes advice columns for several others. For years clamoring to reclaim a liberal arts background upstaged by medical training, Dr. Do now thanks love for this most recent and vigorous spurt of creativity. His poetry and art have appeared in *Ex Libris*, *Whorl*, and *Tapas*.

Cirilo Domine was born in 1969 in the Philippines, and lives and works in Los Angeles. He is an artist during all hours, a teacher by trade, and a high-end retail slut by day.

Christopher N. Ferreria is an artist and educator based in San Diego, California. His work has been shown at Voz Alta Project in San Diego, Highways Performance Space and Visual Arts Gallery in Santa Monica, CA, and the Asian Arts Initiative in Philadelphia, PA. He has also worked collaboratively on projects featured at Deep River Gallery (Los Angeles), Museum of Contemporary Art ^ San Diego, and the Huntington Beach Art Center. Ferreria is currently developing a commissioned public art project for *inSite_05: Art Practices in the Public Domain*, a bi-national collaborative project focused on the San Diego-Tijuana border region. He currently serves as Visual Arts Director at Voz Alta Project and teaches at Southwestern College and MiraCosta College.

Vince Golveo is a visual artist living and working in Los Angeles.

Patrick “Pato” Hebert is an artist-educator based in Los Angeles. His art has been featured at Galería de la Raza in San Francisco, Voz Alta in San Diego and the Japanese American National Museum in LA. His work has received support from the California Arts Council, the Creative Work Fund and the Durfee Foundation. He serves as the Associate Director of Education, Prevention at APLA.

Kenneth Irvin was born in Cleveland, Ohio and has traveled and lives in a number of places. He was crowned the Grandmother Of The House Face, a.k.a. Medea Face, back some time ago. Now in his 40’s, his life has been fabulous. He is trained as an actor, was a dancer for 13 some odd yrs, and was an instructor and fashion designer, showing twice a year. He now resides in Los Angeles, where he develops his design business and continues to dedicate time to the prevention of HIV/AIDS in order to keep education in the forefront for those infected and affected by it’s devastation.

Tyra Kreuk is a 19 year old TS living in Los Angeles. She is a peer health educator and member of APLA’s Mpowerment project, an HIV prevention program for youth. She is an aspiring performer, and recently showcased her talents at “It’s All About Love,” the queer youth of color conference at Manual Arts High School.

David McMillan is a fashion designer and club promoter, aka Face, Papi Face, the father of the House of Face. His age is legendary, the house age is 13, and it’s the little house that could (Fierce Ass Creative Energy). His pride and joy is the hottest tranny night around—”SISSY”—4 years running with DJ Josh Peace. He has also done nights like “Trabajo” with DJ Tony Powell, T-Lite “Powder Room” @ Trade LA/UK, and is presently a part of “EGG,” the hottest new spot in London. Life is a party that he would like to keep going and making beautiful.

Laurence Angeleo Padua is an Igorot writer who was born in Baguio City, Philippines and grew up in El Lay. Graduated from U.C. Berkeley with a B.A. in History. A play excerpt was recently published in *dis*Orient Journalzine*. Poems have appeared in *inFliptration* (a spoken word CD), *In Your Face*, *Maganda*, *Sphere*, and *Bridge Magazine*. Edited *Amerasia Journal* (Dimensions of Desire issue), *In Your Face*, and *sumt’n to say/behind our backs*. Received a Rockefeller Fellowship in the

Humanities, to conduct research on the relationships between art and social change, and documented the artistic contributions and creative productions of Filipinos in Hawai'i. Videos and transcripts are archived at University of Hawai'i.

Horacio N. Roque Ramirez teaches at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies. A Salvadoran immigrant, he earned his Ph.D. in Comparative Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley in 2001, with a designated emphasis on "Women, Gender, and Sexuality." He has contributed to the *Journal of the History of Sexuality* (April 2003), the *Oral History Review* (Fall 2002), and the forthcoming, *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossings* (University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming). In 2003 he co-edited the queer Central American's men's section of APLA's *¡IMPACTO!*, "La Escritura Centromaricana," and completed a study for GLAAD, "A Language of (In)Visibility: Latina and Latino LGBT Images in Spanish-Language Television and Print News Media," also available in Spanish. He is completing a book entitled, *Communities of Desire: Memory and History from Queer Latinas and Latinos in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1960s-1990s*. He can be contacted at roqueramirez@chicst.ucsb.edu.

Tino Rodriguez was born in Guadalajara, Mexico and currently maintains a home and studio in New York City. He is fascinated by the complexity of human sexuality, transformation, longing and transgression. His paintings create a syncretic universe in which all is integrated, whether it be good or evil. In 2003, he held a solo exhibition at the San Jose Museum of Art, entitled, "Tino Rodriguez: The Darkening Garden." In the fall of 2004, the Jan Baum Gallery in Los Angeles mounted "Strange Flowers Blossom," a solo showing of his work. More of his paintings can be seen at www.tinorodriguez.com.

Sergio Romero was born in East L.A., lived in Jalisco (Mexico) and grew up the remaining years in East LA. He currently works at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles in the Division of Adolescent Medicine. He has also worked for the L.A. County Department of Health Services HIV Epidemiology Program. For the past seven years, he has researched HIV/AIDS among adolescent of color in L.A. County. He is working on his Bachelor of Science in Health Administration at University of Phoenix. Being a full-time student and full-time employee, he takes pride in making a difference in our communities by contributing with research studies. His long-term goal is to create his own research study and direct an organization. He works to convert his own unhealthy moments and be an empathetic person with a healthy state of mind.

Andrew Spieldenner has lived in Oakland, New York, Ho Chi Minh City, Bangkok and Los Angeles. He wrote the teleplay “Kevin’s Room,” the story of five black gay men dealing with AIDS, which garnered two Black Filmmaker Hall of Fame Awards in 2001. His stories and essays have been published widely. Currently, he is in the MFA program in Theater at UCLA.

Chanel Tresvant is the founder of Unique Woman’s Coalition (THE UWC), a Southern California-based social and support organization driven by Unique Women of Color for Transgender women. The organization hosts annual Thanksgiving and Easter dinners for the homeless, established the Supreme Queen Pageant and the Miss Southern California Pageant for Transgender Women and Pantomime Entertainers, and was part of the organizing committee for the first annual Trans-Unity pride festival. Chanel has been honored by Trans-Unity Pride’s “Siren Awards Ceremony” with the Icon Award and the Trailblazer Award, for her dedication and support to the transgender community.



**PUSH
BUTTON
FOR**



R62DL5

No you
don't
be talking
to me
like
that.

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