



THE NOSTALGIA ISSUE

LOH



YESTERDAY'S MUSES, TODAY'S ICONS

Why are people obsessed with finding “the next big thing?” For me, something about the past has always been far sexier and more fabulous. Don’t even get me started on the present.

As a kid, I remember hearing my grandparents and their friends talking about business deals that went down at the Playboy Club, ridiculous nights at the Tropicana in Cuba, and exotic vintage Japanese ivory collectors. It’s safe to say it was way cooler than whatever bullshit was going down at the kids’ table.

Thinking about what this issue’s theme would be was like trying to find a new outfit for an important event. Time was running out, I needed another latte, and nothing seemed to fit right. My inner critic, a mean bouncer with great pecs named Gilbert, kept shooting down ideas and saying, “It’s all been done before.”

A shift in perspective was all I needed. I went from “ugh, it’s all been done before” to “aha, it’s all been done, let’s do it again!” This is a really long-winded way to say this issue’s theme is about nostalgia. I was stoked to spend time isolating and examining nostalgia without giving into it and spitting out the same thing. After all, most sequels should’ve never been made. What new conclusions could be made by looking back? What misconceptions could be cleared up? What does injecting fat from your legs into your butt do for history? Together, we’d get to the bottom of it. See what I did there?

Within these larger-than-carry-on-approved sized pages, you’ll find the winning numbers to this week’s lottery, the secrets of Miami’s hottest Coral City celebrities, and forgotten tales from the pre-digital era.

We’ve got Miami’s infamous Queen of the Night Tara Solomon on the cover. In true 90s style, we shot her in the penthouse of The Pelican Hotel designed by Diesel’s Renzo Rosso. I’ll forever treasure getting to hold up a can of Diet Coke with a straw to her lips in between shots. I interviewed her and other icons from the Miami Beach underground scene of the 90s for “The Last Underground.”

Gypsies! Not the Fleetwood Mac kind, but the flamenco community in Spain that took us and our contributor Clara Calvo-Sotelo on a 6 am bender in Madrid.

Artist Lulu Sanchez gives us a peek at what it was like growing up in an artistic family in the 90s Miami Beach art scene. She just wanted an Abercrombie & Fitch shirt but her parents and godfather Kenny Scharf were like, “Huh?”

Is that Barbara Walters (Baba Wawa) or Whitney Mallett? In Bimbo Summit, Whitney explores how bimbos like Pamela Anderson are today’s whistleblowers who could save the world. Flushable wipes are not flushable!

Need help questioning your reality? Mexico City and Madrid collective Niños Heroes show us how AI can create fake nostalgia. One question, can AI erase exes and trauma too?

I haven’t seen Sierra Grace Manno stand in front of a wrecking ball yet. But after reading her piece about nostalgic architecture being at risk, I’m game to stand with her if she asks me to.

Don’t get me started on the art in this issue. Direlia Lazo, la curadora, the curator, the boss, la jefa, proves that the identity of fringe culture will forever inspire us to let our freak flags fly. I’m hanging the Dalton Gata pull-out poster next to a mirror to remind myself to be weirder.

With so much love for the past, we gave hope a shot and highlighted the people shaping Miami’s future. Isn’t it beautiful seeing them all together at one table? Miami, te quiero. Extra love to the amazing set design team led by Pili Weeber.

Our LoHi Spy gives a new, more PG 13, spin to the classic children’s puzzle book. Seeing CC (Caroline Castro) and Vanessa Diaz bring this diorama to life was special. So many people helped and I’m so grateful. P.S. I got to DM with the creator of iSpy Walter Wick. 7-year-old me would be screaming.

Paris Kain has been a New York godfather to me since I met him and his crew a decade ago. Aside from a couple of nightmares, I’m très honored to feature a piece from his Psycho Klown series.

Anyways, have fun. Leave the mag on your coffee table and live your life around it. Hang the pull-out poster and DM us pics.

P.S. Thank you for EVERYTHING Moi. You’re the HI to my LO.

Con mucho, mucho amor,

Chris

LoHi Magazine Est. 2020
Made with Love in Miami, FL
Issue 04

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Niños Heroes	Lulu Sanchez
Paris Kain	Neil Vazquez

PARIS
KAIN

South Beach
Renaissance
Baby

Fake
Nostalgia

The Last
New Wave

THE LAST
UNDERGROUND

TRANSFORM

WET SCANDALS

♥ Bimbo Summit ♥

DETRÀS DE LAS
BAMBALINAS

DALTON GATA

Unveiling Identity
and Joy In
Contemporary Art

PEOPLE SHAPING MIAMI

Trap Me, Miami

Miami Before Madonna: South Beach's 80s and 90s Underground Scene

LO-HI MAGAZINE

THE LAST



UNDERGROUND

By Christopher Menendez



Miami Before Madonna: South Beach's 80s and 90s Underground Scene

By Christopher Menendez



Images courtesy of Carlos Betancourt, Jaime Cardona, Jordan Levin,

Jody McDonald, Darny Santiago, Tara Solomon, & David Vance

It's the 80s, and Anthony Kiedis, the lead singer of Red Hot Chili Peppers, plays at the Cameo Theater, and after the concert, he ends up hanging out with this Sicilian model Antonina. They go back to her apartment, he's hyper beyond imagination (do the math here) and starts parading around her apartment in one of her dresses. That's the underground, baby. Marked by an explosion of creativity, South Beach emerged as the epicenter of culture, fashion, art, and nightlife, where Latin American exiles, downtown New York artists, and European models and photographers coalesced.

When thinking about the South Beach Underground, people's heads typically flow to Versace muscle boys in scissored shirts strutting down Ocean Drive or Madonna ordering a bottle of Dom Perignon at a Miami Subs drive-through at midnight. Why did icons like Versace, Madonna, and Sylvester Stallone flock to Miami? Well, it wasn't just for the beautiful beaches. Rather, they wanted to follow the lead of nightlife promoters like Louis Canales, artists like Carlos Betancourt, fashion muses like Danny Santiago, performance artists like Jordan Levin, and it-girl (and our cover star) Tara Solomon. Yes, the underground of Miami Beach is what made it a global muse.

See, by the 80s Miami had a bad rap—worse than Kanye now. The city had been branded as the bad boy capital. Think cocaine wars, pre-Don Johnson; old leathered grandpas (not the fun sling kind) rotting on the beach; and more mafia drama than a screenwriter could ever dream of. Miami needed a rebrand, a second chance, rehab. This was no task for a police department or the National Guard. Rather, this cloud of negativity could only be moved by two things: art and PR.

In 1983, Christo and Jeanne-Claude's installation Surrounded Islands brought global attention to Miami and reminded the art world how beautiful Miami was. With the AIDS and crack epidemics stewing, New York artists saw a chance at a better life. Miami's always been that good friend you call when your life feels like it's falling apart. But as soon as you're back up on your feet, you're out... like Shout.

With the artsy set migration, the underground *unofficially* started to take form. Leather-skinned seniors tanning on the steps of their Miami Beach apartments would wave as their new neighbors in bikinis and art supplies started moving in. Young Cuban-Americans and NYC drag queens played together on the beach. Across the causeway, a nightclub called Fire & Ice became the place to let your freak flag fly. Anyone coming to Fire & Ice who pretended they didn't spend at least an hour putting together their look was a liar. Hair teased higher than Dolly Parton's, fluorescent harem pants, and experimental eye makeup, teenage Cuban-Americans and New Wave loving New Yorkers danced to Tainted Love together for the first time. The Cuban's hips were used to salsa's 1,2,3s but the new moves they came up with when they became possessed by the synthy sounds were nothing short of ridiculous. Imagine Cuban Janis Joplin krumping to the Beastie Boys while wearing an oversized two-piece purple suit with shoulder pads. Electrifying, loud, fun.

So let's turn off the WiFi and look at the magical pre-digital age of the South Beach underground, where you had to somehow learn the passwords to clubs, where the "it" parties spread by word of mouth, where you had to be in the know to know. We'll hear from the insiders who created a cool, "más es más" creative culture that gave Miami Beach its new DNA.



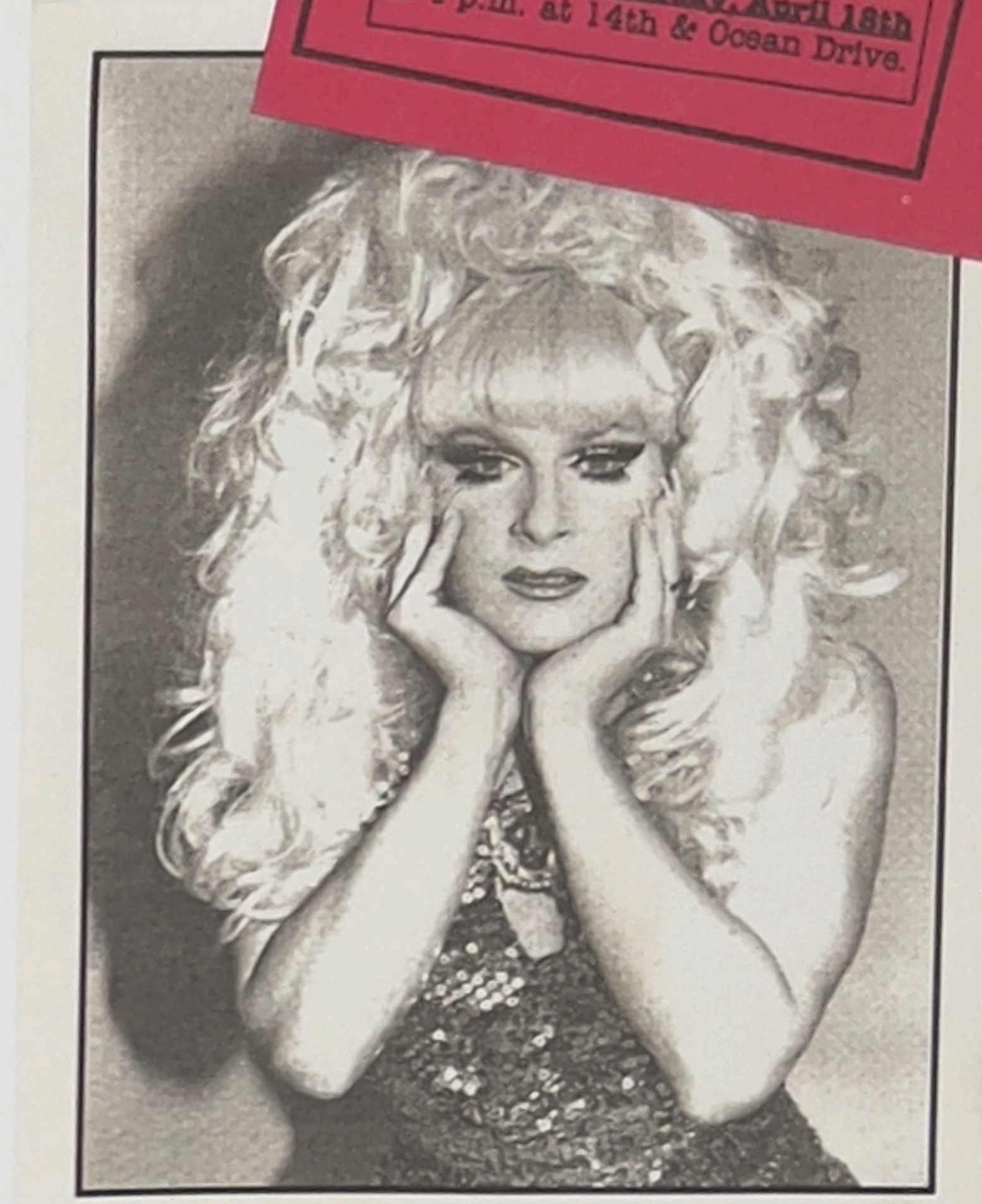
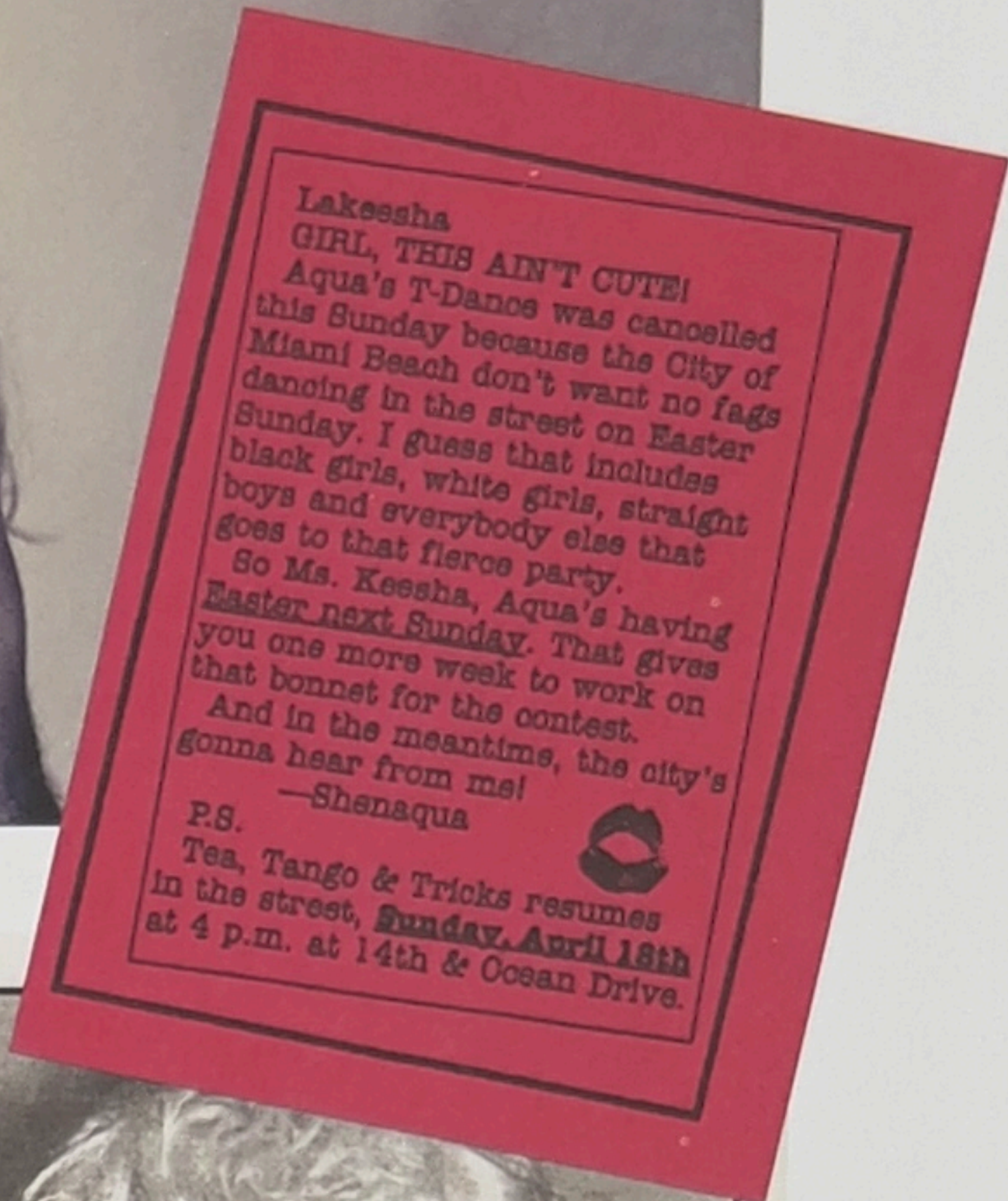
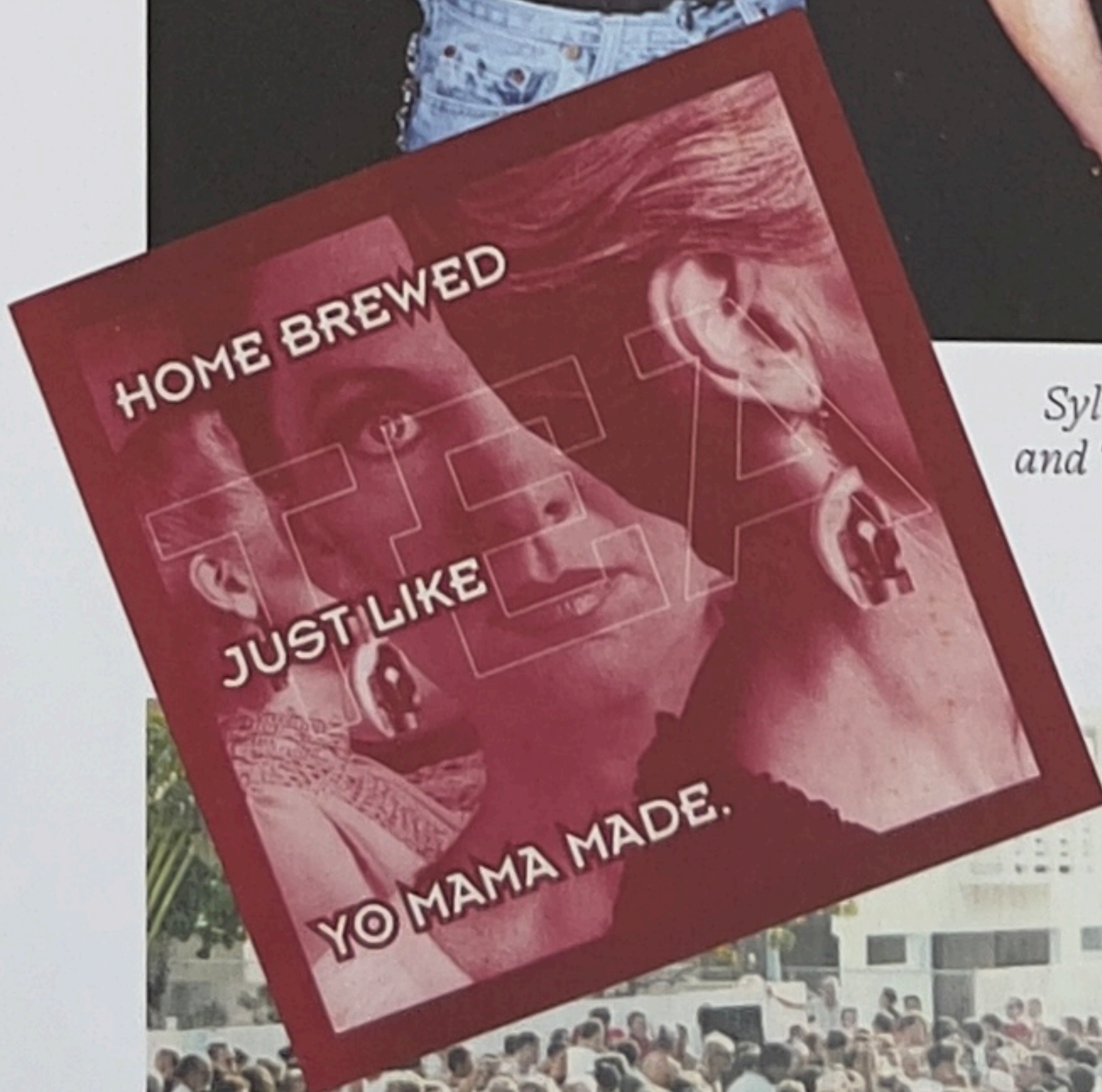
Carlos Betancourt



Carlos Betancourt, Louis Canales, David Thomas, and Tara Solomon



Sylvester Stallone and Tara Solomon



Lady Bunny



Jody McDonald's Sunday Tea Dance



Photo by David Vance

Danny Santiago

Danny Santiago, who's now the costume designer for *And Just Like That*, remembers going to thrift stores to find vintage suits to wear to the club. In the underground, your bell-bottoms, exaggerated lapels, and faux diamond brooches were your secret weapons. Before he knew it someone would approach him with a flyer for an upcoming party at Fire & Ice, a safe space for artists, musicians, and fashionistas. Tuesday night's Abstract party became the place to be, and each week the party's host, Howard Davis, would transform the club with a new theme. Whether it was Egyptian night or jungle night, Howard would bring on artists like Overtown's Purvis Young to paint murals and build props. "It was all for the sake of art," says Danny. Well, and partying.

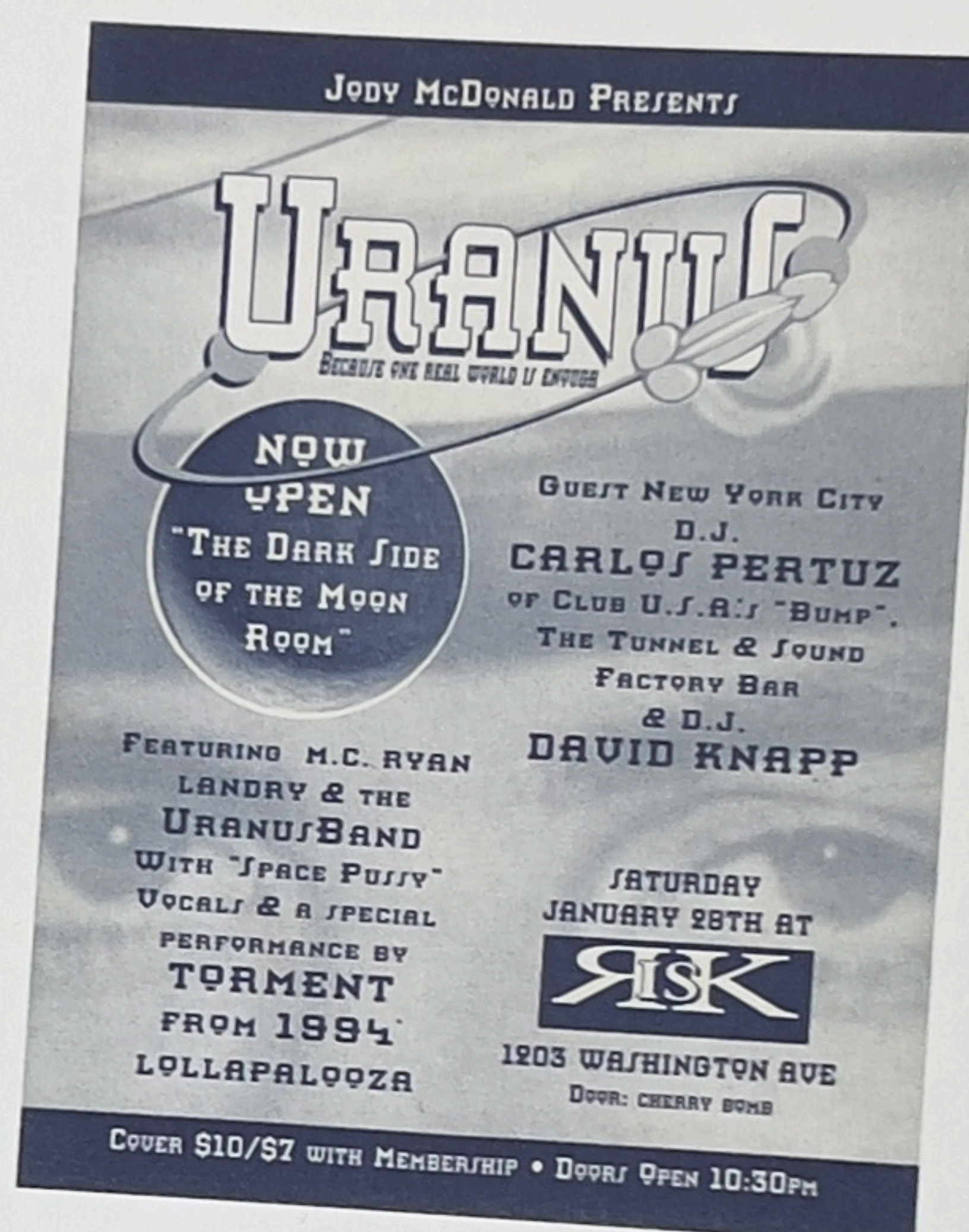


Danny Santiago

"I was in a forgotten fantasy world on the edge of the ocean."

Jordan Levin

Jordan Levin, a former music editor of *The Miami Herald*, was an 80s club princess from the downtown East Village scene who performed contemporary dances—fully painted in gold—at clubs like the Pyramid and Danceteria. Walking home from work one night, Jordan ran into Craig Coleman (better known by their drag name Varla), who went on and on about how Miami was the land of opportunity. Jordan was curious and bought a roundtrip ticket to Miami Beach...and never looked back: "I traded junkies for old people tanning. From a filthy street littered with glass I now could walk barefoot to the beach from my apartment on Collins and 14th. It felt like I was in a forgotten fantasy world on the edge of the ocean." She recalls poetry nights at the Cameo (then owned by Paco de Onis and James Quinlan) and hilarious performances at theater shops like Art Act and Area Stage on Española Way and Lincoln Road. Anything went.



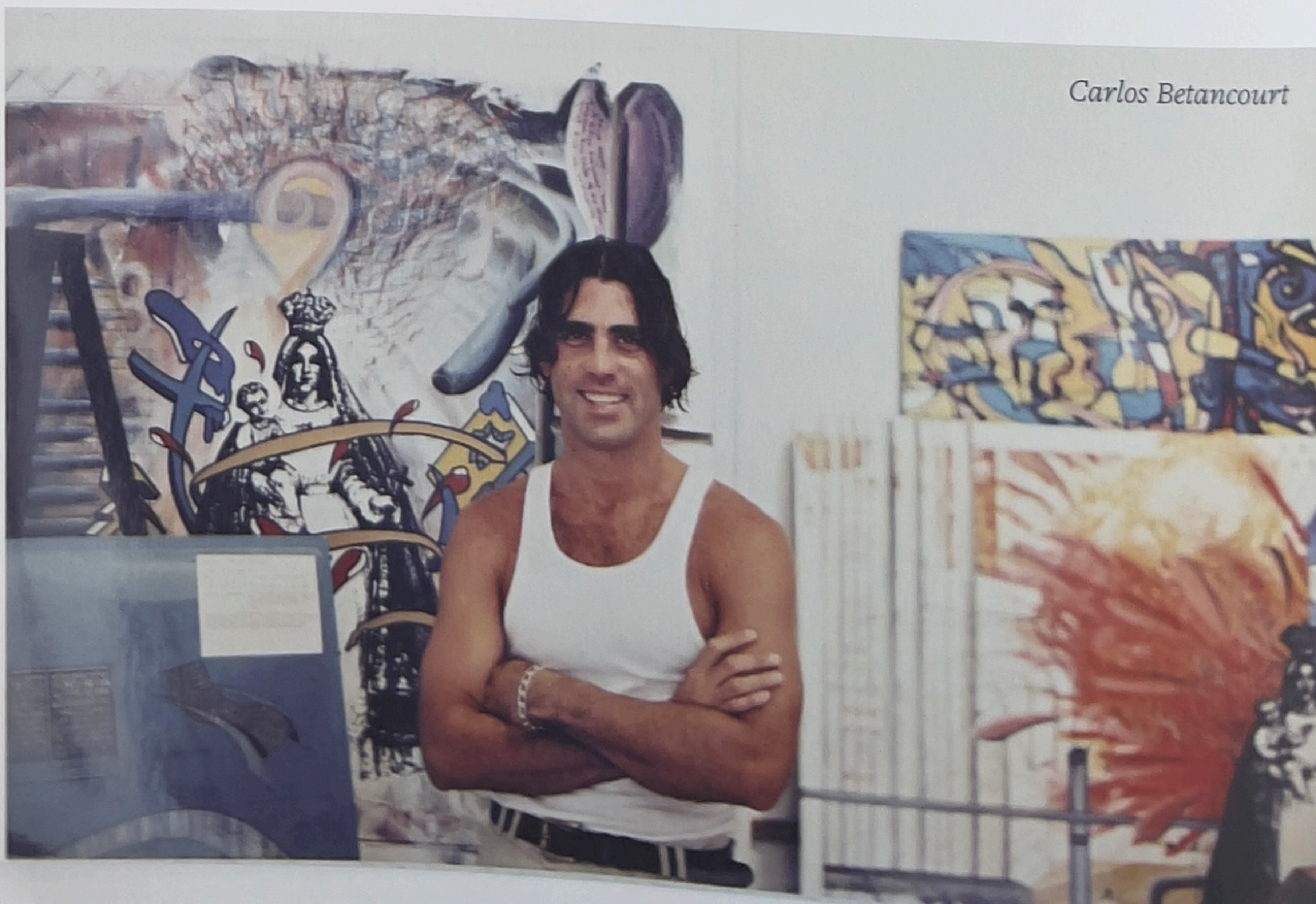
Imperfect Utopia

Carlos Betancourt

The art scene in Miami Beach, while still in its early stages, felt raw and passionate. Carlos Betancourt, a multidisciplinary artist, can trace his successful career back to the opening of his Imperfect Utopia gallery on Lincoln Road. With its doors always open, Carlos was at the heart of the art scene and made people feel like they belonged to it too. Galleries and studios like these took on a life of their own and became institutions for art, community, and partying.

Combing through old photos, Carlos remembers people visiting from out of town wanted to know what was going on in Miami Beach. Ricky Martin would swing by and hang out on the couch at the gallery. On another night, Carlos satisfied Madonna's curiosity with Cuban culture by taking her to see Albita, a Cuban singer, perform on 8 street. The freedom to work on art while interacting with a community full of talented people who were ridiculously good-looking sounds heavenly. It also sounds distracting, but sometimes distractions can lead you to answers, right?

Avenue A parties, hosted by Gary James, were some of Carlos' favorites. To find out the location and theme of the party you'd have to call a special hotline on a specific day—more on this hotline later. He recalls an epic party at the Eden Roc Hotel called Mermaids in Ecstasy where everyone decided to jump in the pool naked. People in the lobby looking through the underwater pool windows had a front-row show to the underwater spectacle. Miami local and Carlos' friend Michele King Soffer remembers another iconic Avenue A party on Monument Island that had live alligator wrestling. Till this day no one knows how the alligator got there or how the 200+ guests managed to get off the island when the cops raided the party.



Carlos Betancourt



Louis Canales

The underground is like a magnet that never stops attracting people who make it stronger, weirder, edgier, and smarter. Louis Canales embodied this magnetism and became one with it: "Instead of seeing decrepit Art Deco buildings, what I saw in the early 80s was the Miami Riviera."

A successful marketing and public relations specialist from New York, Louis was the alchemist that helped transform Miami Beach from a snoozy town of seniors into a global cultural destination. His thoughtful, smart, and humanistic touch not only turned water into wine but could turn any empty corner into an exclusive members club people wanted to go to. Louis started bringing members of the New York underground like Susanne Bartsch, Kenny Scharf, Joey Arias, RuPaul, and Fran Lebowitz to Miami Beach: "Just come check it out once, if you like it, come back".

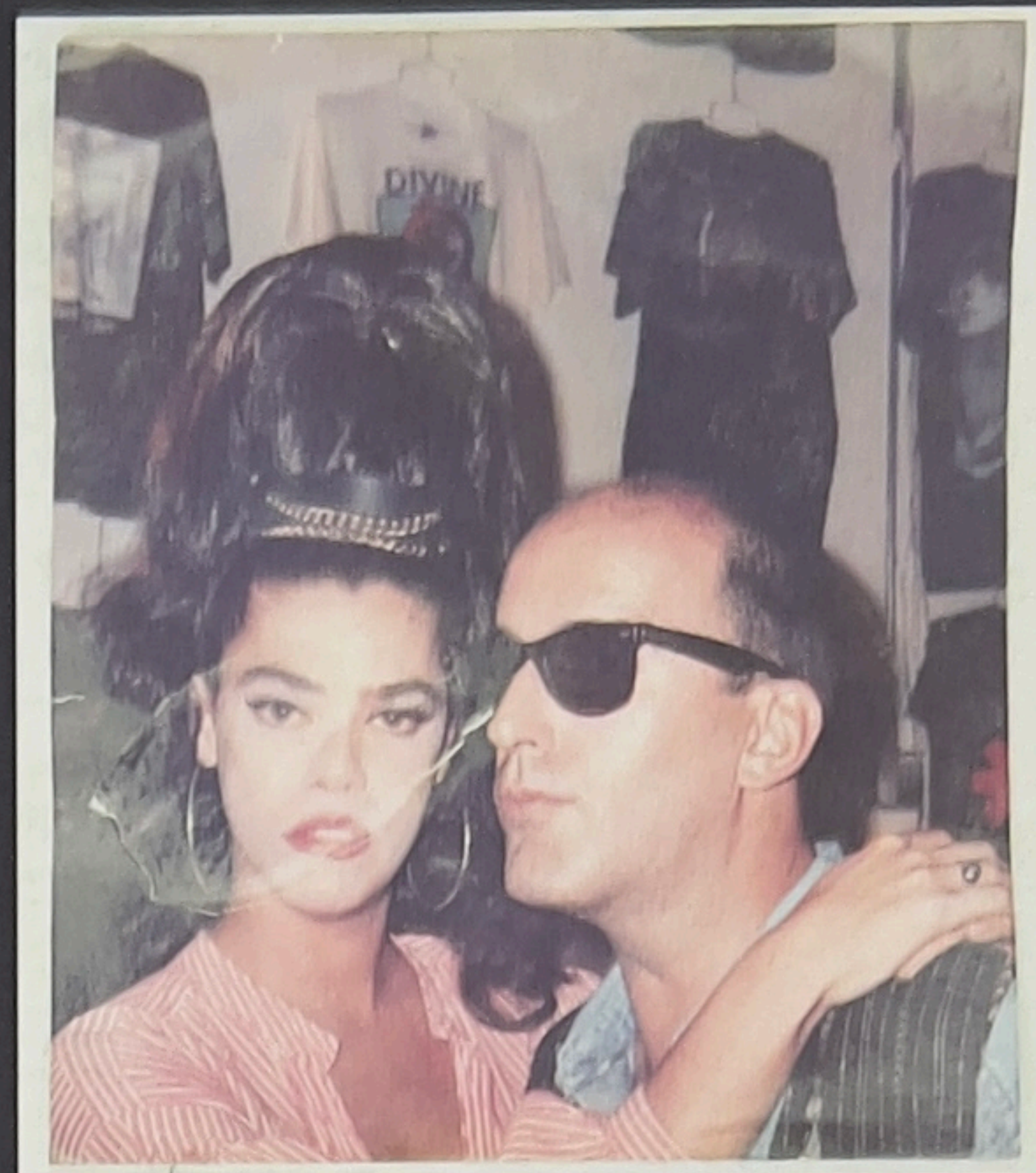
Mr. Worldwide, aka Pitbull, once said, "If you think it's a game, play with it." Louis wasn't scared to play the game. On weekdays, he'd send out faxes to thousands of New Yorkers with a headline that read "A Weekend in Miami Beach: It's Cheaper Than Going to The Hamptons." The faxes included updated flight and hotel prices for the weekend. "You gotta do what you gotta do" says Louis. Louis was also responsible for creating the hotline you'd call to find out the location of Avenue A parties. While we couldn't confirm what these hotline recordings sounded like, something tells us the voice of a sexy female or a hilarious drag queen were responsible for inviting all the boys and girls to the function.

ISSUE 04

"Here, people had the luxury to be themselves."

In the 90s, if you weren't being featured in a magazine you might as well be a cow farmer in Kansas. To get the buzz started, Louis would invite the press down to see what was going on in Miami Beach. By this time, local photographers like David Vance were honing Miami Beach's editorial aesthetic: Skin, Art Deco architecture, and abstract Avedon-like poses made it stand out. In 1986, Interview Magazine dedicated an entire issue to South Beach. Then came New York Magazine's "Soho in the Sun" issue in 1992. It wasn't long before the European fashion photographers and models started showing up and capturing the Miami Beach aesthetic for their campaigns. Wanna party with the hottest models? Count on it.

"Here, people had the luxury to be themselves. It wasn't unusual to go to the Century Hotel restaurant and have George Michael sitting at the table next to you" says Canales. Other regulars included Thierry Mugler, Jean Paul Gaultier, Paloma Picasso, Anna Wintour, and Bruce Weber and his wife Nan Bush. These high-profile people weren't just coming for the blue waters and sand, they were coming to experience the South Beach underground.



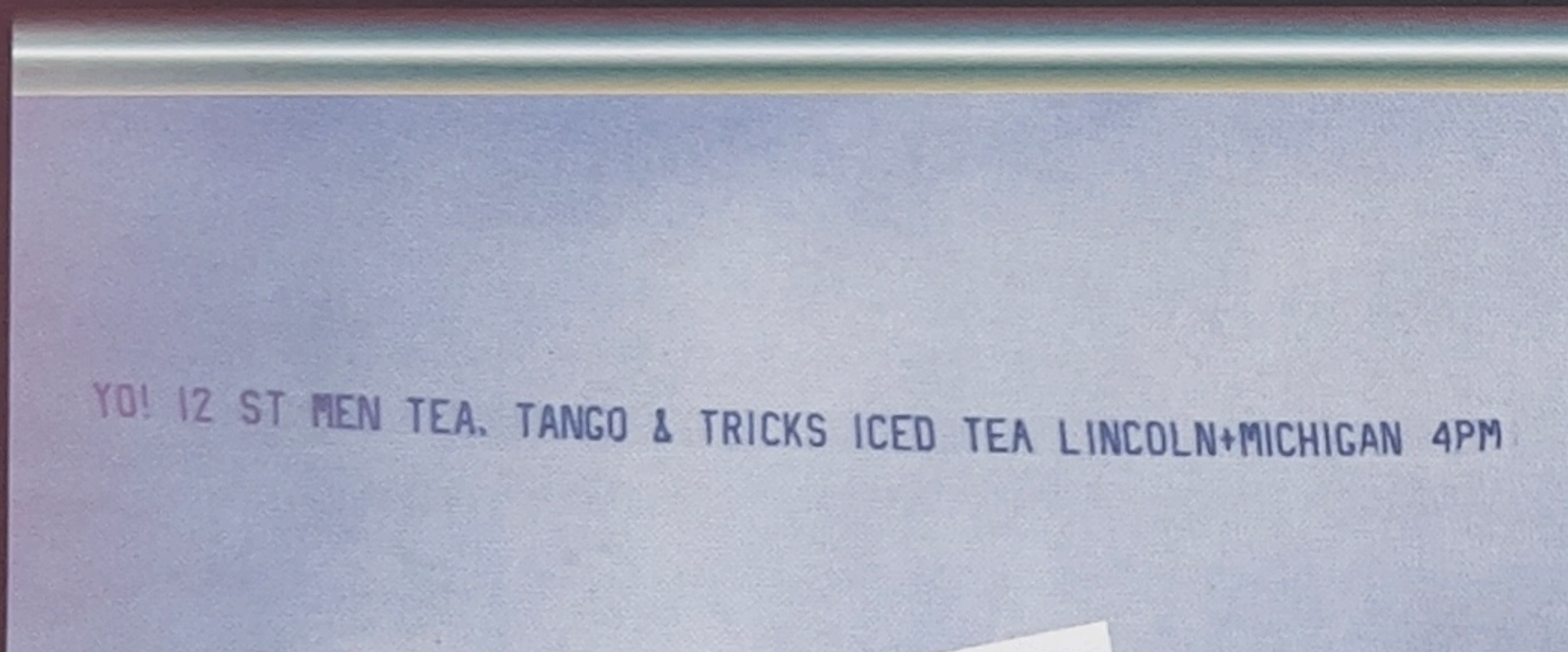
Louis Canales & Betty 'Too Much' Rodriguez



AVE. A



Tara Solomon



RuPaul and Company

THIS FLYER IS PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER. ONCE YOU HAVE BECOME ONE WITH THE TRANSCENDENTAL INFORMATION ABOUT ICED TEA, AND YOU FEEL THIS KNOWLEDGE STARTING TO THROB IN YOUR ROOT CHAKRA, AND YOU ARE CONFIDENT THIS PARTY WILL TRANSCEND ALL PARTIES, INCLUDING THE FIERCE CRUCIFIXION PARTY YOU WENT TO WITH SHIRLEY MACLAINE IN A PAST LIFE, NOW SIT IN LOTUS POSITION AND AFFIRM THAT "YES, I WILL BE ON LINCOLN AND MICHIGAN, SUNDAY AUGUST 22 AT 5:00 P.M." THEN GIVE THIS CARD TO A FRIEND, OR SEND IT TO YOUR YOGI IN TIBET WHO HAS NEVER SEEN A FLYING ADVERTISEMENT, OR SHARE IT WITH YOUR PSYCHIC WHO SAID YOU WOULD MEET THE MAN OF YOUR LIFE AT A BIG OUTDOOR STREET EVENT ON SUNDAY THE 22nd, OR USE IT AS A LIPSTICK BLOTTER, OR MAKE A CASSETTE COVER WITH IT, BUT, PLEASE, PLEASE DON'T LITTER THE BEACH.

See You Sunday!

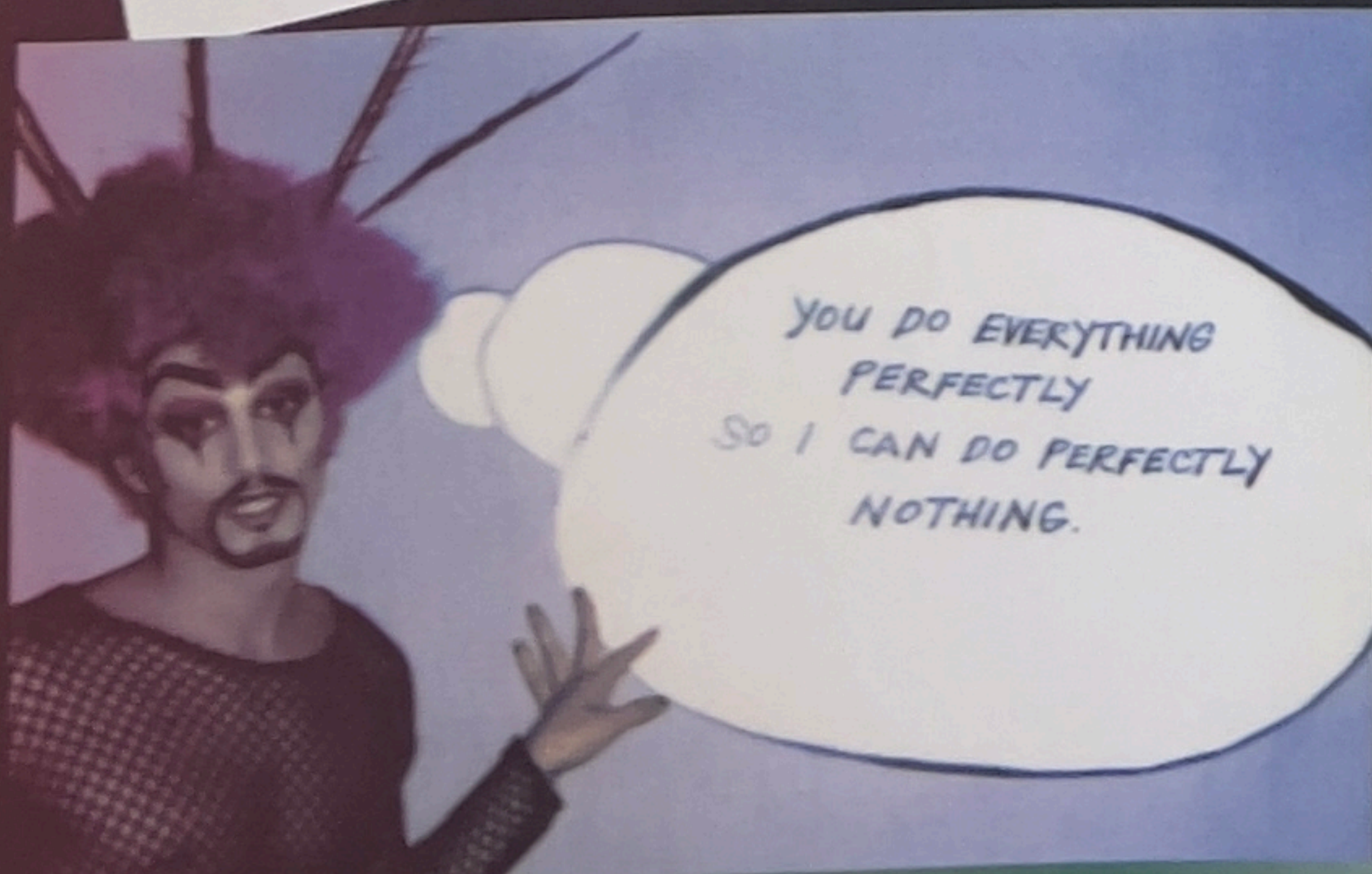
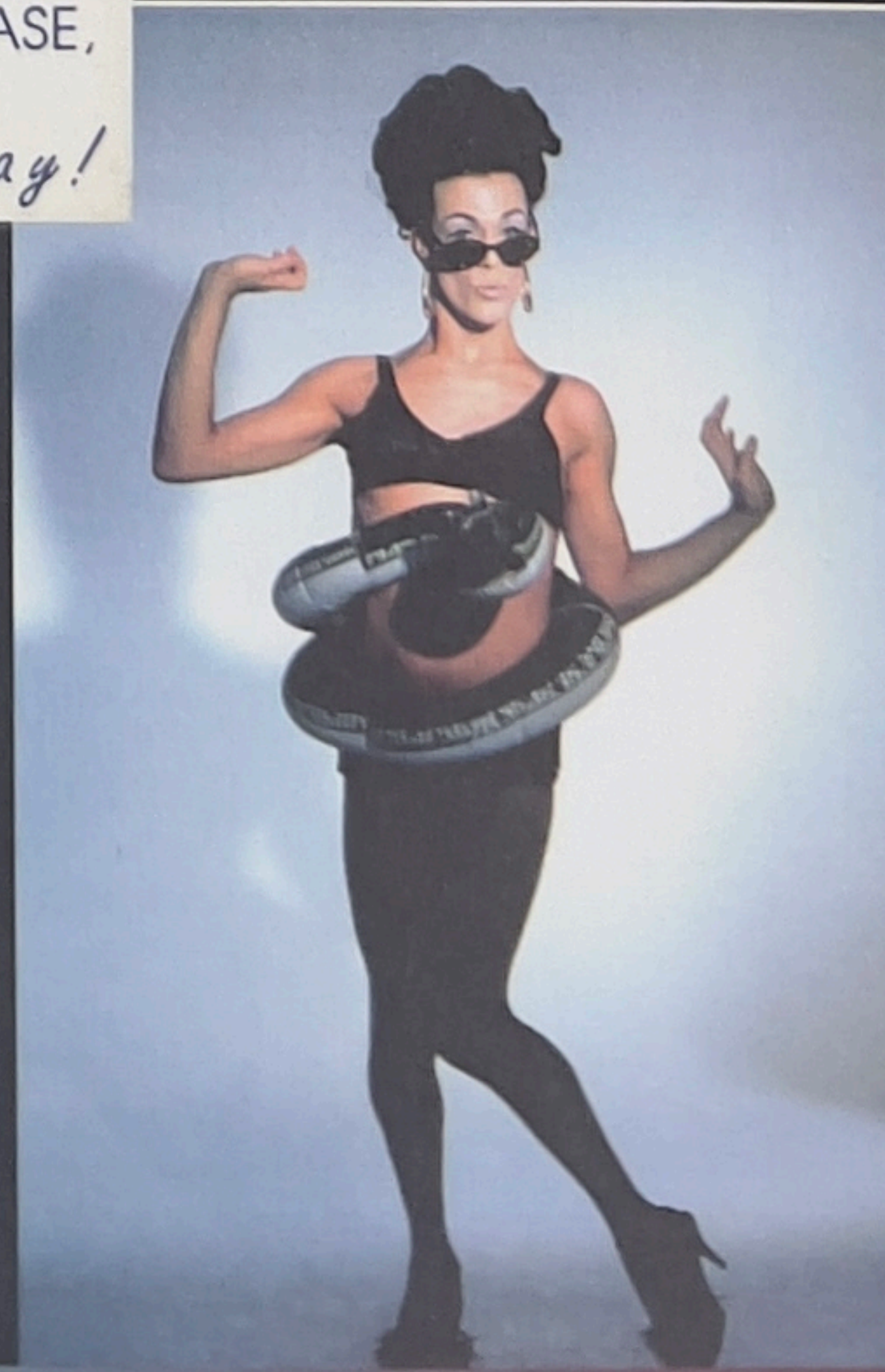
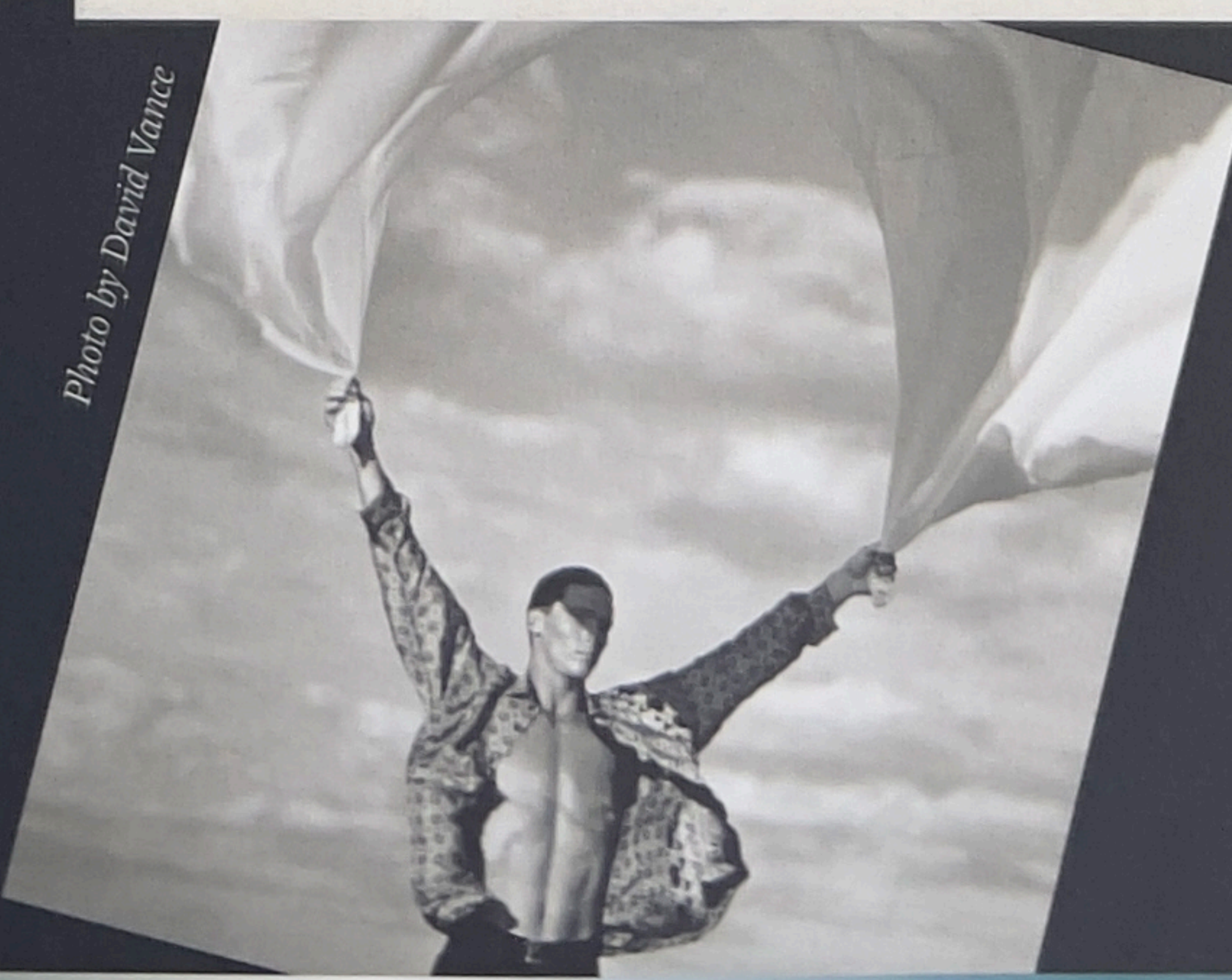


Photo by David Vance



MIAMI BEACH
magazine
Top secret
Private number
October 1991
1001 N.W. 159th Drive • Miami, FL 33189 (305) 625-4100
Features Editor
TARA SOLOMON



Tara Solomon



TARA SOLOMON
QUEEN OF THE NIGHT

Cue the spotlight and turn up the volume because we're headed to Wednesday night's go to party at Semper's. Hosted by Tara Solomon, a writer and founder of Tara, Ink. PR, Wednesday night's karaoke party became the elite melting pot where the New York arts scene and European fashion scene mixed with the Miami Beach underground.

Our cover star Tara Solomon started her career as a journalist but went on to become the 90s Miami Beach it girl, Mz. Thang, and a muse to artists and couturiers.

You could say she was the Athena in South Beach's neon version of Mount Olympus after dark. When she walked into a room, everyone would break their necks to look at her. Aside from being a natural beauty her sense of style was unique and confident. For Wednesday night karaoke she typically rocked a custom outfit from La Bomba, a designer duo Derek and Alfredo who designed clothes for Kate Pierson from the B52's. Paired with her iconic orange Ginger Rogers wig, she was unstoppable.

Like the B52's Private Idaho lyrics Tara was "underground like a wild potato." Her one liners were sharp enough to leave the even cattiest of drag queens at a loss for words. As a journalist, her sassy and elegant voice spoke for the underground and got the attention of major publications. The titles of her Miami Herald columns speak for themselves:

"The Queen of the Night" and "It's Not Your Mother's Advice Column" shared local happenings in a social diary style, not unlike Bridget Jones's Diary.

What unfolded at Semper's was nothing short of magic. Of all things, karaoke is what was bringing the New York, Miami, and Europe trifecta together. This is a testament to the reality that parties are forever the real boardrooms. "People were truly able to reinvent themselves. Miami beach has always held that allure", says Tara. Anyone who performed a karaoke song would get to take home a cassette recording of their performance. If they were especially bad, Tara would offer them a bus ticket home, especially if they were part of the "bridge and causeway crowd" coming from suburbs like Kendall.

In Miami, we say "dime con quién andas y te diré quien eres" which loosely translates to "tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are." It's not cute to compare, but Tara's eccentric circle of friends would put even the weirdest of Brooklyn creative collectives to shame.

Artists like Carlos Betancourt, fashion couturiers like Fernando Garcia, iconic vintage boutique founder Debbie Ohanian of Meet Me in Miami, and many drag queens including Varla, La Wanda, and Tamata Du Plenty. She had so many friends that were drag queens she could've filmed at least 4 seasons of Drag Race.

"People were truly able to reinvent themselves. Miami Beach has always held that allure"



It's not your mother's advice column

Yes, it's a jungle out there. But luckily, Tara Solomon's on hand, dishing out answers to life's sticky dilemmas. It's about real life. Real problems. Everything you want to know about relationships, sex, dating, fashion, etiquette and more. Look for the Advice Diva, every Sunday in The Herald's people, arts and entertainment section, IN South Florida.

in
southFLORIDA
The Herald

Jaime Cardona

By the mid 90s, this Roman empire was reaching its climax. Gianni Versace remodeled a Mediterranean style home on Ocean Drive that would forever be known as the Versace Mansion. Jaime Cardona, a former Versace model who worked with the Versace family, remembers the beautiful years before Versace's assassination. Gianni captured Miami's energy through his fashion collections and sex positive editorials shot on the beach. Going through Jaime's collection of candid photos from the Versace years is like watching soft-core porn. Make sure to check out the photos on the inside front cover of the issue. The beautiful tan bodies wrapped in vibrant Versace silk were sexy enough to make even the most devout evangelical drool. Afterall, "Armani dressed the wife, and Versace dressed the mistress."

Gianni Versace wasn't much of a club-goer. He preferred more intimate gatherings at his villa with the likes of Madonna, Mario Testino, Elton John, the Estefans, and of course his family. Still, he was fascinated with the underground scene outside his mosaic walls. The Warsaw Ballroom, Miami Beach's top gay club, would house Versace's VIP room for Versace to host his guests on Saturdays. Jaime would curate the crowd by walking around the beach and handing out invitations to the most interesting (and best looking) people he'd come across. Back then, getting invited or allowed into a club was the ultimate form of validation.



Gianni Versace and Jaime Cardona



Around this time other celebs like Sylvester Stallone and Madonna would follow suit and move to Miami. In a very New York way, no one would bother them here. Instead of paparazzis Miami Beach brought them access to the underground in a laissez faire environment. There were drugs too, lots, and lots of drugs. During this time, Madonna's Sex book was inspiring people to feel comfortable with self-expression. It not only offered the world a full-frontal view of her neatly trimmed bush, but also a peek into the avant-garde movement in Miami Beach.

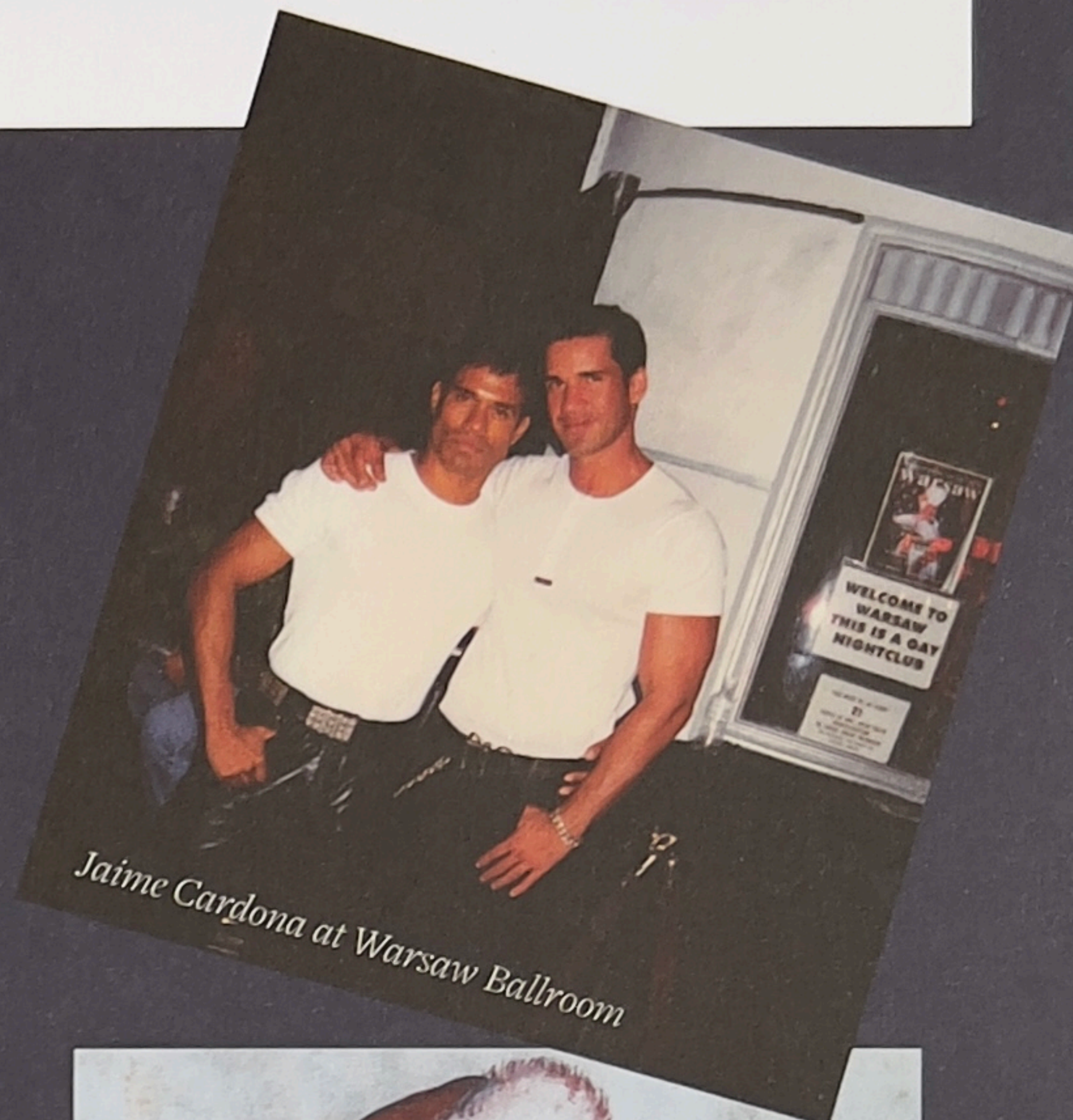
Ingrid Casares, who dated Madonna, opened a club called Liquid in 1997 that did something more important than just play amazing music. In a queer game of chess, Ingrid and her business partner Chris Paciello, started booking big DJs for their infamous gay Sunday night parties. "By bringing headliners to the gay parties we were putting gay culture in the faces of the straight community." If you wanted to see Danny Tenaglia play you had to come party with the gays. It was brilliant. A documentary about Club Liquid is set to be released later this year. Look out for it.



Photo by David Vance



Carlos Leon, Emilio Estefan, Madonna, Gloria Estefan, Jaime Cardona



Warsaw Ballroom



Madonna and Jaime Cardona

FLOWERBOMB TIGER LILY VIKTOR&ROLF

