



17 September 2015

**How! Happening: an Arturo Vega Project Presents
SECRETS OF THE GREAT PYRAMID**



The Pyramid Cocktail Lounge as Cultural Laboratory

Curated by Brian Butterick aka Hattie Hathaway

—Signature Performances Like Cafe Iguana with John Kelly, Whispers with Hapi Phace, Channel 69 with Linda Simpson, and Blacklips

—Artwork by Steven Tashjian, Greer Lankton, David Wojnarowicz, Keiko Bonk, Jayne County, Chris Tanner and more—

New York, 17 September 2015—How! Happening: an Arturo Vega Project is pleased to present *Secrets of the Great Pyramid*, an exhibition paying tribute to the legacy of the famed 80s nightclub. Named for the bizarre stepped pyramid motif above the entrance of the bar, the Pyramid Cocktail Lounge became the epicenter of the nascent EV/LES artistic community and eventually sparked a cultural revolution in music, dance, theater, video, fine arts, performance art, activism, feminism and LGBT politics.

More than a reunion, a retrospective, or a forced march through niche history, *Secrets Of the Great Pyramid* shows how a simple cultural laboratory continues to resonate in Post-Millennial America. *Secrets of the Great Pyramid Opening Reception: October 17, 6–8 PM. Live performance: Cafe Iguana at 8 PM.* The exhibition runs through November 7, 2015 at Howl! Happening, 6 East 1st Street, New York. For further information visit howlarts.org or call (917) 475-1294. (See performance schedule at end of release). **All events FREE.**

Featured in the three-week exhibition will be a recreation of the legendary Pyramid bar; artwork and visuals from deceased trailblazers and working artists embraced by the Pyramid; ephemera and ancient artifacts; and a veritable three-ring circus of performances and other events that spotlight the enduring spirit of the club.

On December 10, 1981, Ronald Reagan had been president for less than a year when a group of New York art-school flunk-outs threw a party at a small Polish/Ukrainian dive bar on Avenue A in New York's East Village. Ed Koch was mayor, the East Village was in flames, the street drug trade was rampant, and rents were cheap. First Avenue was viewed as the farthest east any sane person would dare to tread. The bar was called the Pyramid Cocktail Lounge; the party, *Home On the Range*. Within a few weeks, a simple excuse to frolic had transformed into a seven-nights-a-week venue—an epicenter of art, music, performance, and social change.



Julie Hair, Paula Now, RuPaul, 1984. Photo: Lynn M. Grabowski

Carrying on a rich, centuries-old New York tradition, the Pyramid had many faces and functions. It was a watering hole, a social club, an art gallery, a dance hall, a music venue, a sexual hunting ground, a happening, a haven. To its denizens, it was always a freak magnet. And for many, it was home. It lasted for roughly a decade. Like the great ethnic and cultural movements and migrations in the East Village's long-past history, it seemed to disappear in the twinkling of an eye. What didn't disappear were the changes the Pyramid inspired in culture and society at large. Nor did the work of many of the artists and performers who got their start there.

Included in the exhibition will be Art and Multimedia by:

Steven Tashjian, Greer Lankton, David Wojnarowicz, Joseph Horatio, Julie Hair, Deb-O-Raw C, Jack Waters/Peter Cramer, Tanya Ransom, Clayton Patterson, Jayne County, Connie Fleming, Chris Tanner, Keiko Bonk, Frederick Nunley, Aner Candelario, Lynn Grabowski, Ande Whyland, Nelson Sullivan, Marjan Moghaddam, Mark Rizzo, Chloe Dzubilo, Scott Wright, Elizabeth Bouiss, Leslie Lowe, Tweed Theaterworks, James Romberger, Marguerite Van Cook, Dug Wah, Robert Petrick, and more.

PERFORMANCE Schedule: *Don't miss a moment of the action! Performances can be seen LIVE streaming @ howlarts.org.*

Opening Night: *Café Iguana*, Saturday October 17th, 8 PM

Part Weimar-era Cabaret, part Great White Way, with a dash of the Merry Pranksters and Happenings thrown in, *Café Iguana* blended song, dance, poetry, theatre and gender-illusion into what was then a futuristic mix. The evening was held together seamlessly by its host, the late Ann Craig, channeled tonight by Heather Litteer.

Performers:

[John Kelly](#), From bar top to international acclaim, double Obie and Bessie award-winning performance artist and Pyramid regular, Kelly most recently completed a successful run of *Love Of A Poet* (a staging of Robert Schumann's *Dichterliebe* song cycle) on Governor's Island in New York Harbor.

[Kestutis Nakas](#), Pyramid Theater Mogul responsible for such legendary productions as *Titus Andronicus* (with Ann Magnuson and Steve Buscemi), *When Lithuania Ruled the World*, and *The Andrew Carnegie Story*. He currently teaches at Roosevelt University in Chicago and runs The Bridge theater company.

[Paula Now](#), one of the original Pyramid bar dancers, Paula Swede (one half of the highly interactive duo Cindy and Trish) is wellknown for her work with John Sex and Joey Arias, as well as a blogger and burlesque performer and producer under the name of The Swedish Housewife.

Featuring [Heather Litteer](#) as Ann Craig. Litteer is a member of Big Art Group and a resident artist at La MaMa. She is the recipient of the 2014 Fox Fellowship with La MaMa where she will presenting her solo show "Lemonade" in Spring 2016. Her daring film choices include working with Darren Aronofsky, Jane Campion, and Mary Harron.

Whispers hosted by Hapi Phace: Saturday October 24th, 8 PM

Conceived as a response to the gentrification and pasteurization of New York in 1984, Whispers was billed as "The Complete Suburban Gay Experience" and as a party for "hairdressers, display queens, theatre folk, fashionistas, florists, and sensitive straight people," Whispers was distinctly tongue-in-cheek, featuring everything from the hanky code, to roller disco, Sixties kitsch, drag queens and kings and the fine art of the lipsynch.

[Hapi Phace](#)

Much loved emcee of Whispers, Hapi is also a Melville Scholar, sculptor and most recently appeared with Dancenoise at the Whitney Museum, NYC.

[Sister Dimension](#), co-Founder of not only the Pyramid, but also Wigstock AND Whispers, star of the YouTube sensation *Pickle Surprise*, and a world-famous DJ to boot, Sister has recently returned to the stage after a decade-long absence and recently wowed the audience on The Wigstock Cruise 2015.

Channel 69: Wednesday November 4, 8 PM

[Linda Simpson's](#) Drag Experience

NEWS ALERT

Howl! Happening, an Arturo Vega Project
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Despite a demanding career in publishing, Minnesota native Les Simpson found time to create the iconic Wednesday night bacchanal *Channel 69* which featured DJ Dany Johnson and lasted into the 1990's, while concurrently releasing *My Comrade/Sister*, a high-end Lesbian and Gay 'zine. Author of several plays, one time Time Out NY editor, and currently touring round the globe with a slick audio-visual presentation as Gay "herstorian" Linda Simpson.

Closing Reception: Saturday November 7, 8 PM

Check howlarts.org for updates.

Blacklips

Floyd

Beaut

Poison Eve

A fully illustrated catalogue will accompany the exhibition.

Live Streaming 24/7 @ howlarts.org

All performances Free and open to the public

Gallery Hours: Wed–Sun, 11 AM–6 PM

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For further information, images, interviews contact MartinMPR:

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