



PRESS RELEASE | 31 March 2016

When Jackie Met Ethyl An Exhibition curated by Dan Cameron

May 5–June 1, 2016

Opening Reception: Thursday, May 5, 6–8 PM | Free



Jackie Photo: Jack Mitchell



Ethyl Photo: Dona McAdams

East Village, New York—Howl! Happening: An Arturo Vega Project is pleased to present ***When Jackie Met Ethyl*** curated by **Dan Cameron** opening Thursday, May 5th from 6 to 8 PM. The exhibition considers the cultural and historical impact of Jackie Curtis (1947-1985) and Ethyl Eichelberger (1945-1990), two of the most influential figures from the East Village's heyday, as cauldron of transgressive gender performance. Although they came from the same generation and shared an overlapping fan base and love of the absurd, Curtis and Eichelberger were very different figures. For more information and updates on special events visit [Howl! Happening](http://HowlHappening.org).

Jackie Curtis was born John Curtis Holder, Jr. on the Lower East Side, and mostly raised by his maternal grandmother, Slugger Ann, whose eponymous bar on 2nd Avenue was a well-known refuge for social misfits. As

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one of Andy Warhol's original network of Superstars—along with Candy Darling and Holly Woodlawn—Curtis' stage debut was at age 17 in Tom Eyen's *Miss Nefertiti Regrets*, followed by roles in Warhol's films *Flesh* (1968) and *Women in Revolt* (1971). Aside from possessing a mesmerizing screen presence, Curtis' greatest artistic influence was as playwright and songwriter for the productions *Glamour, Glory and Gold*; *Vain Victory*; and *Heaven Grand in Amber Orbit*, all of which featured transsexual characters. The Jackie Curtis signature 'look'—glitter and lipstick combined with ripped stockings and/or housedresses—was widely adopted in the 70s and 80s, and in 2004 the documentary *Superstar in a Housedress* brought the Curtis legend to a new generation.

Ethyl Eichelberger was born James Roy Eichelberger in rural Illinois, and spent much of his first 30 years studying acting and working in regional repertory theater, eventually becoming an expert wigmaker with Charles Ludlam's Ridiculous Theatrical Company. In 1975, he legally changed his first name to Ethyl and introduced a flamboyant stage presence, singing while playing piano and accordion, and radically re-conceiving classic characters like King Lear and Medea as drag cabaret. Although Eichelberger appeared in films and Broadway theater productions, his main impact was as a performer in intimate East Village venues. In the course of more than 30 original or adapted plays, his was nearly always the title role, often with multiple male and female characters switching parts, and occasional acrobatic or circus stunts thrown in for equal measure.

When Jackie Met Ethyl will feature a number of media including photographs, video documentation, scripts, props and costumes. The centerpiece of the exhibition will be an extended video montage of documented live performances by both Curtis and Eichelberger, along with interpretations of Curtis' monologues and songs by Justin Vivian Bond and Paul Serrato. There will be screenings of *Superstar in a Housedress*, *Flesh* and other gems of the era, as well as poetry readings, panel discussions, and other activities.

About Dan Cameron

Dan Cameron founded Prospect New Orleans in 2006, and directed the organization and exhibition until 2011, a period when he was also Director of Visual Arts for New Orleans' Contemporary Arts Center (CAC). From 1995 to 2006, Cameron was Senior Curator at the [New Museum](#) of Contemporary Art in New York; and Chief Curator at Orange County Museum of Art from 2012 to 2015. As an independent curator, Cameron was Artistic Director for the 8th [Istanbul Biennial](#) in 2003 and Co-Curator of the 10th Taipei Biennial in 2006, and he was recently named Curator for the XIII Bienal de Cuenca, Ecuador in 2016. Cameron is currently a guest curator for the Getty Foundation, where he is preparing an exhibition for 2017 on Latin American kinetic art of the 1950s and 1960s.

Howl! Happening: An Arturo Vega Project
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Gallery Hours: Wed-Sun, 11–6 PM

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