

ARTNOIR + MEATPACKING DISTRICT PRESENT

THE IGU IDE

THE GUIDE: STORIES OF THE MEATPACKING DISTRICT

ARTNOIR

MEATPACKING
DISTRICT

Stories of the
Meatpacking
District

2021

THE GUIDE

An editorial interview series that amplifies
the untold legacy of the Meatpacking District.
Interviews conducted by Paper Monday + ARTNOIR.

**HEAR FROM SOME OF THE VOICES
WHO MAKE UP THE CULTURE AND
SOUL OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.
THROUGH STORIES OF INNOVATION,
PRESERVATION, AND IMAGINATION
WE WILL UNEARTH WHAT USED TO BE
HERE TO INSPIRE WHAT WILL COME.**

So tell me about your experience in the Meatpacking District.

“

I ALWAYS TELL PEOPLE IT KIND OF FEELS LIKE COMING BACK HOME IN A WAY BECAUSE MY MOM WORKED THERE. SO I KNOW PEOPLE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, PEOPLE WATCHED ME GROW UP. SO I WOULD SAY IT'S LIKE A WARM, FUZZY FEELING COMING BACK AND BEING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

”

—erika mccallum

ERIKA



mccallum



TIFFANY HARDIN



GLADYS JACKSON



GEORGE MARFO

TONY



“It was like a renaissance out here of sorts. You know, we were coming out of the 70s and the 80s you know, it was a music renaissance here between the B-Boy culture and the DJ culture and the music that was coming out of New York trendsetting all over the world. So there was a strong vibe out here. You know, people, there was an energy out here at that time.”

TOUCH

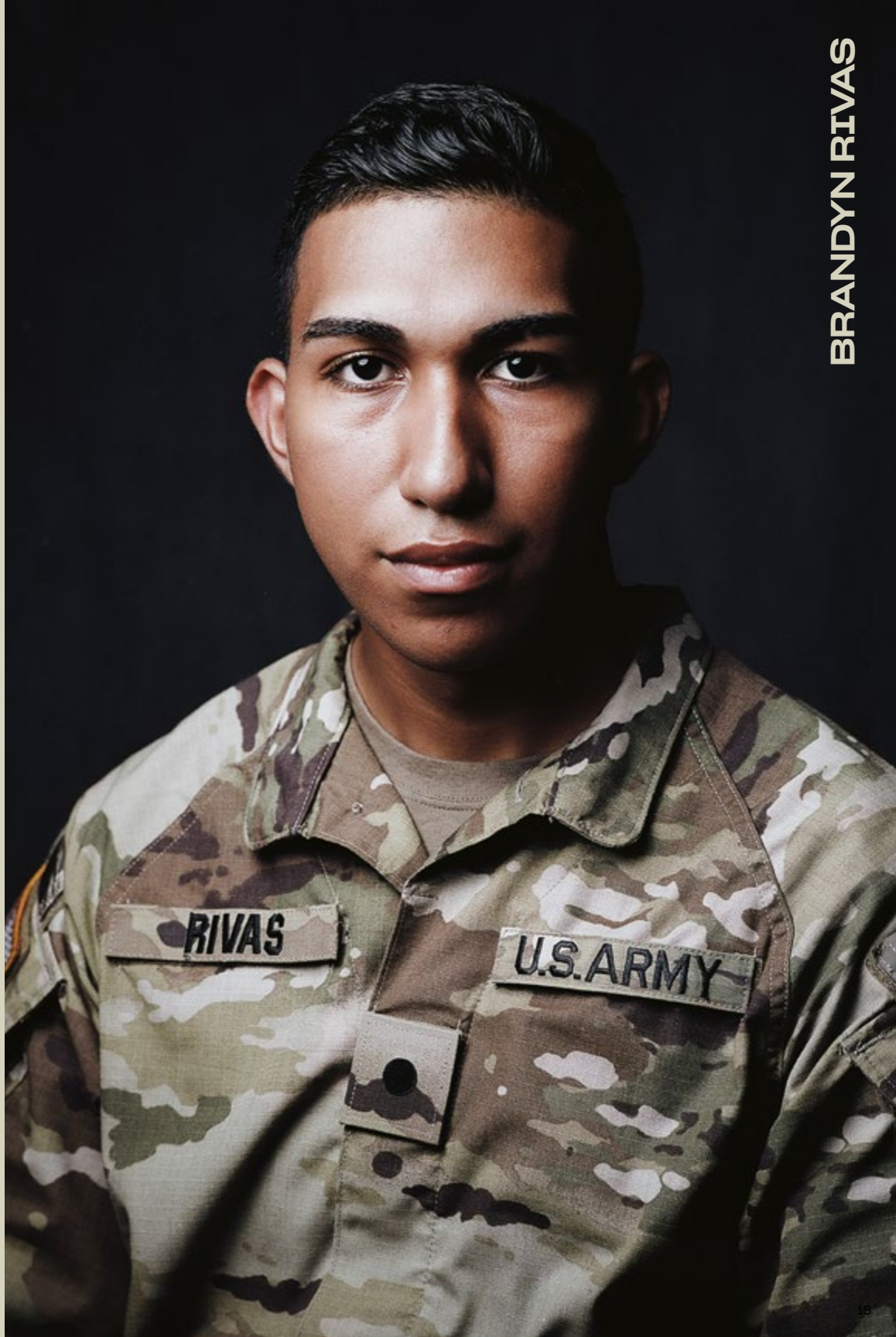


MAHEN

bonetti

“I THINK THE DOWNTOWN VIBE, YOU HAVE THAT ROOM FOR INDIVIDUALITY. YOU CAN COME OUT IN A BLANKET AND WALK DOWN THE STREET AND FEEL SECURE. YOU CAN ALSO SPEAK TO SOMEONE WHO IS AT THE STREET CORNER AND NOT JUDGE THEM.”





BRANDYN RIVAS



JUS-SKE/JUSTIN SALGUERO

CHRISTINA



“

BEING AN ARTIST, IT'S BOTH A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT AND A SOLITARY CONSTRUCT. SO THAT'S WHAT'S SO NICE ABOUT ARTISTS HOUSING, IS THAT PEOPLE WHO ARE GENERALLY OUTLIERS, BOTH TO THEIR FAMILIES SOMETIMES AND TO THE REST OF THE WORLD, EVEN IN THEIR SOLITUDE, FIND A PLACE TO BE UNDERSTOOD.

”

— *christina maile*

RESIDENT OF WESTBETH ARTISTS HOUSING

maile

Tell me about Artists Housing.

It's actually an interesting building. It used to be the Bell Telephone Company building. It was renovated in 1970 to become affordable housing for artists and their families. And it's been going along ever since. Well, it's very affordable. Once you move in, no one ever wants to move out and it's a lot of fun. There's a gallery, there's studios, although we lost a lot of studios during Hurricane Sandy, there's performance spaces. So there's a whole variety of people and their disciplines range from, oh, painting, printmaking, musicians, dancers, directors, filmmakers, poets.

How did you get into art?

I was a playwright and so my husband and I applied many, many years ago and we got in, you know, within like two weeks. Nowadays the waiting list is closed. And before it was closed, the waiting time was like 15 years. As I say, once you get in, it's such a strong community to be surrounded by people that kind of understand who you are. And it's a diverse community, which is really nice.

So tell me about the community.

The community part is mostly people finding their way to collaborate. There's a community relations committee and we have movies, exhibits, shows. But being an artist, it's both a social construct and a solitary construct. So that's what's so nice about it, is that people who are generally outliers, both to their families sometimes and to the rest of the world, even in their solitude, find a place to be understood. And so you'll see a range of very social people, you know, putting together events and exhibits and very solitary people who don't talk at all to anyone and just concentrate on their art.

So how long have you been living in Artists Housing?

I've been living there for the last 50 years.

Wow.

I know. So that's why I'm telling you, once you get in there, because it's so incredibly affordable and the community is just that kind of community. It's like being in an insane asylum, except it's not quite insane. They are creative and creatively insane.

And tell me about the shift in the neighborhood from 50 years ago to now. How has it changed?

When we first moved there, there was an edginess to the Meatpacking. There was this element of dangerous sexuality and dangerous habits. And no one actually knew a lot about it because it was really the Meatpacking. So no one ever went to the Meatpacking. So whenever I told someone I lived on Bethune Street or lived in Westbeth or told a cab driver to bring me back from where I was, it would take an incredible amount of direction to get people to find this place.

So being in a place that no one in the middle of a giant city could exactly find, you know, answered both questions about isolation and integration. So that's what was so nice. Plus, there was all this great stuff that you could find on the streets to make your art. There was, you know, wood and there was furniture. Right on the edges of the meat market, there were townhouses and brownstones. So they were always throwing out furniture on some particular night.

And so everyone would go out and furnish their apartments with things they found on the street. People built these extraordinary lofts and walls. And so they were constantly looking for materials to, you know, get off the street or borrow or just, I don't know, pick up somewhere. So it was, it was so much fun, but it was dangerous.

CHARLES SANDS



ERIKA MCCALLUM



SANDRA



walker

COMMUNITY MEMBER SINCE 1966

I moved over here at an interesting time.

About what year?

I moved here in 1966. You know, the piers were still open, but they decided to shut it down because the Teamsters and their longshoremen were having issues. My mother was nervous because it's a little sketchy, you know. But at the time I moved over, they were getting rid of all of that. Now, the meatpacking stayed around for a long time.

Wait, tell me about what it was like!

Well, actually, it was kind of unpleasant because you were not allowed to kill animals other than chickens in New York City at that time. So what would happen is they would get the hanging carcasses of the beef from New Jersey and you know, the butchers cut it up.

You can kind of see the remnants of that era in the old Western Beef. They still had the hooks in the ceiling where the meat used to come around. This is so bizarre. Nobody's ever asked me these questions before. I haven't thought about this in years. And then that kind of changed. And instead of bringing the meat over here, they kept it in Jersey and just trucked it over.

So we don't really have a meat industry anymore, although the name stays. They may have one packinghouse over there, but there were many back in the day. You know, ironically, they were only open at night. I don't know what that was about. You know, you wouldn't really see that kind of activity in the day. That's why they maintain those cobblestones over there, because of the fat and the offal. Offal that would fall. And it was easy to get a hose and have it go into the sewer. It didn't cling like it would with tar. And I think some of the area is still intact with cobblestones.

So what was the culture like when you first moved here?

There were minimal Black [people]. In fact, in my buildings, I've lived in nearly fifty five years, I don't remember two other Black people.

And I'll tell you one thing that I thought was kind of amusing, you know that the Wayans family grew up here, I saw them all as children. Can you imagine how shocked I was when I turned on my television one day and I said I know them! Then I was trying to figure out where I know them from. I said, well, I'm older than all of them. I didn't go to school with anybody. And then, you know, it took awhile, something happened. And

I said that those are those kids, because I believe they were the only Black family at that time. I never saw any of the Black kids except them.

You know, I could be wrong because you remember I got a job. I'm not sitting outside watching people all day. And they were very popular. I noticed that they always kind of were with each other, you know, like I would never see one [Wayans], it would be two or three. I never knew how many there were, to be honest, but I knew it was a big family, you know, and they got along very well with everybody.

Everybody said the neighborhood has changed. How has it changed?

Well, they've tried to maintain the authenticity of the area. You don't see many high rises. But the people who had the brownstones, they still have them. They still have the townhouses. So that hasn't changed too much. They are very particular about new developments in this neighborhood. You know, they aren't just going to let anybody just come in here and do what they want to do. Even this housing development, my neighborhood, almost

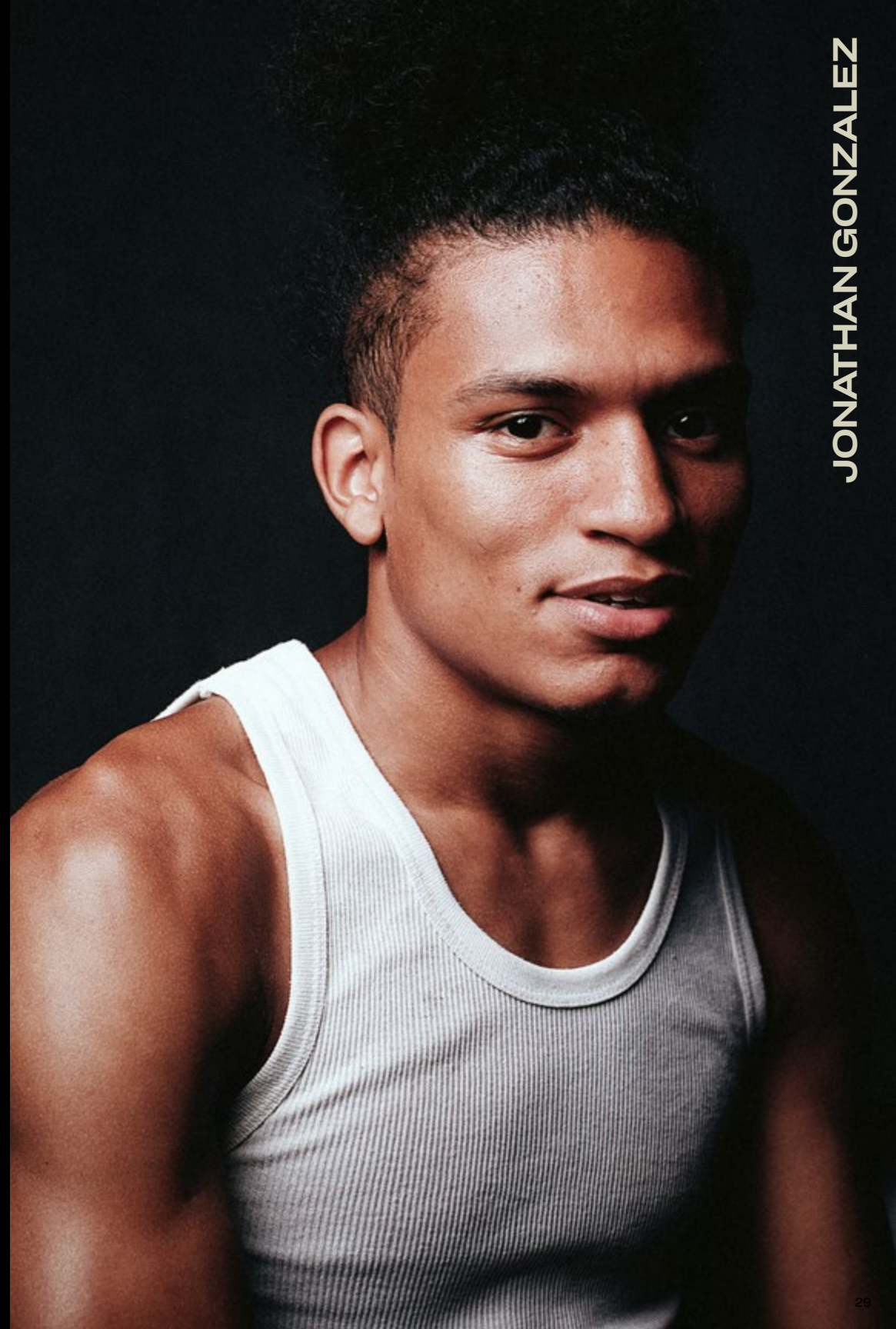
every housing development, Jacob Riis, Baruch, Lillian Wald are fourteen stories. These are short. You know, they want to keep the integrity of the neighborhood, you know, find public housing, but it's not going to be twenty stories, which is great. I mean, when you look down the blocks, things are kind of uniform. You don't have this up and down. It's kind of uniform, which is rare in New York City, I should say, Manhattan.

Do you have a fond memory of a time or an experience in the neighborhood? If there was something you could put your finger on and say, "Oh, I always remembered that. I always loved that."

There are a lot of little small things, you know? I know that they had a convent. Yes. I think it's on 10th or 11th Avenue. And they also had a women's prison, you know, so those are kind of unusual. I was walking around one day, "Oh, it's the women's house." Oh, my goodness. A prison right here in this highly residential neighborhood. Who knew? And like I said, a convent. So some of those things were interesting and I just happened to bump into them. Um,

you know, there's been some changes. I think the biggest one was Google that took over the Port Authority building. I mean, I looked up one day they had Google with the little banners. You know, so far Google has been an asset to the community. I know at one point, even though I didn't need the service, they were having computer classes over there. And they do donate to various activities, you know, which is good. They haven't gotten out of pocket job, shall we say. So far, so good. And I hope it stays that way, you know.

UNCOVERING STORIES OF BLACK CULTURE, COMMERCE AND COMMUNITY



JONATHAN GONZALEZ



MAHEN BONETTI



WILSON CANO
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HUDSON GUILD

WILSON CANO JR.

FLORENCE

dent hunter



What was it like in the 70s?

It was comfortable. I felt comfortable. Everybody knew each other. It was like family. You knew everybody that lived around because we knew most of each other since we were teenagers, we went to parties and dances. It was like a family. Yes,

and then our children they knew each other and they all went to school together. And, you know, it was fine. We all get together on weekends. We would go to the Hudson Guild farm at the time, and that was a getaway from the city for us.

Do you have a memory of the neighborhood that sticks with you?

Oh like our yearly reunions. That's what we miss. You don't get all the old timers getting together and talking and socializing and dancing and everything, playing old music. Not all that stuff they got today. I don't

understand what they're saying, you know? Play the old music, do the different dances from back then. That's one of the things we miss. And playing bingo. That was one of our favorite things we used to do too.

**“I TAKE WHAT’S HAPPENING
AND I KEEP ON GOING.
GOTTA KEEP FIGHTING THE
SITUATION. THAT’S WHAT YOU
GOT TO DO. CAN’T GIVE INTO
IT, GOT TO KEEP FIGHTING.”**

— *florence dent hunter*



DARLENE WATERS



LARRY OLIN



FRED *street*

When I came to New York, I had an apartment on the east side, I lived there for a while. Then I came over this way looking for an apartment. I found an apartment on West 15th Street, and I've been living there ever since.

So how has the neighborhood changed?

To me, the neighborhood has changed quite a bit, but the people have not changed.

OK, and tell me about your poetry.

Oh, my poetry, my poetry, yes. Well, I began to write poetry in 2000. I was diagnosed HIV positive and I went to ASC AIDS Service Center and they had creative writing there. It is no longer ASC it is now an Alliance for Positive Change, it's the same organization. But that's where I learned to write poetry. There they had a young lady that was teaching poetry. And in 2003 she gave me one of her books. And at that year I entered a contest in 2003 and they chose my book, which was one of my poems and they published it in "The Road That Never Ends". And I have a copy of that book. And I gave one to my sister and I gave it to my mother.



**GLADYS
JACKSON**



**ANJEANETTE
SMITH**



TELSHA *anderson*

BUSINESS OWNER SINCE 2020
t.a. LOCATED AT 332 W 13TH STREET



So what made you come here, of all the neighborhoods to be a part of in New York City?

Why Meatpacking? Great question. It's somewhere that I frequent a lot. I found a space that I was able to configure in the way that I wanted, as opposed to a lot of other areas in New York where certain commercial spaces are already kind of built out, you just jump in. And I wanted to create my own aesthetic, not only with design, but with color. And it was the only place I was able to do that.

And so tell me about your experience about becoming a boutique owner. Like, how does that work?

Yeah, there's like a Meatpacking Association. They reach out frequently letting me know different things that are happening. Supporting me in any way they can, whether that be putting me on their website, sending my name and store and website out to different local residents that they have. And they support me in that way, not only as a Black owned business, but as a female owner and just a new boutique in the area that people didn't know about a year ago and now know about.

AND IS THERE ANY PLACE IN THE MEATPACKING AREA THAT IS REALLY SPECIAL TO YOU?

I got my first job selling park guides on 14th Street and Union Square. And before I got an apartment, I got a Soho House membership when I was 23, and I remember going there all the time and hanging out in the area and everyone in that area being so open and receptive and interested as to how this 23-year-old girl who sells park guides is at Soho House. And I remember looking around and just walking past open commercial spaces and five-plus years later, I now own a store that you can see directly from the Soho House roof. And I look there all the time like I cannot believe what a full-circle moment. And now, obviously, I have an apartment here too, but it was great.

What do you think about, like the future of Meatpacking? Like if you have a vision for it, what would that look like?

The future of Meatpacking? I mean, I hope there are more boutiques in the same aesthetic as mine, independent boutiques. I hope they find their way to Meatpacking and thrive. So I would love to see more of me in spaces like this that you normally don't see. And for us to not only pop up but to stay there and thrive, which is the future for Meatpacking.

Like sustainability?

Yeah, sustainability for Black businesses, support for Black businesses, for Black female owners as well, and just finding other resources that can allow us to “infiltrate” these spaces that we’re normally not always accepted or let into.

The events of last year felt this sort of extra push of support?

Yeah, a hundred percent since the brutal killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. And it was definitely a bittersweet feeling, people coming in that are “our allies” wanting to talk about how I felt about it as a Black business. The increase of digital support was insane. And just finding a way to navigate through that, especially, you know, in different media outlets that we’ve worked with and talked to like, making sure that if we are going to work with these outlets, working with Black editors and writers that can tell our story in a way that’s uplifting, but also truthful, has been a thing as well.

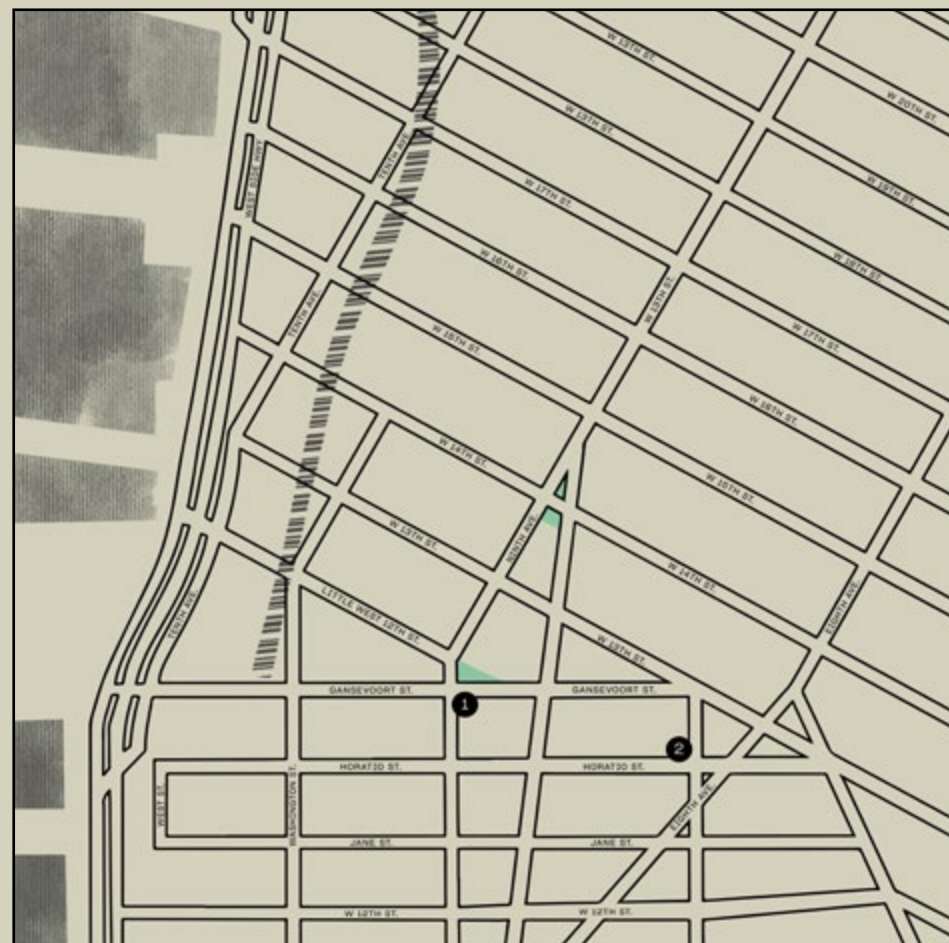
So, yeah, there’s definitely support. The shop Black and buy Black was really big on the, you know, white spectrum. And there were times when people came in apologizing, buying thousands of dollars of stuff out of, you know, white guilt. So I think it’s, like I said, a double-edged sword. And, you know, the most they can continue to do is to support not only me, but other Black businesses inside and outside of Chelsea and Meatpacking.

Come visit us at THE MEETING POINT gallery at **2 GANSEVOORT ST** presented by ARTNOIR x REGULARNORMAL and the Meatpacking District highlighting work by emerging Black artists from NYC, curated by Danny Báez.

Then, come sit and stay awhile at **GANSEVOORT PLAZA** to view “WHENEVER/ WHEREVER”, a site specific public sculpture by Olalekan Jeyifous curated by Oshun Layne and ARTNOIR.

On August 14th and October 2nd experience VISIONS IN MOTION, a celebration of performances by contemporary Black performers revealing liberation, imagination, and Black futures directed by Dario Calmese, and produced by ARTNOIR at **GANSEVOORT PLAZA**.

For more information on public activations and The Meeting Point Gallery, please go to www.artnoir.co.



1— GANSEVOORT PLAZA

2— THE MEETING POINT GALLERY

GRATITUDE

Jane Aiello
Telsha Anderson
Sherlen Archibald
Isis Arias
ARTNOIR
Danny Báez
Julia Bailey
Meatpacking BID
Mahen Bonetti
Wilson Cano
Wilson Cano Jr.
Kristyn Cheek
Carolyn "CC" Conception
Beth Hird
Florence Dent-Hunter
Jewels Dobson
Chad Gitten
Jonathan Gonzalez
Tiffany Griffin
Hudson Guild
Tiffany Hardin
Melle Hock
The Westbeth Artists Houses
Gladys Jackson
Emily Kapsner
Jeffrey LeFrancois
Christina Maile
George Marfo
Erika McCallum
Paper Monday
Nadia Nascimento
Larry Olin
Larry Ossei-Mensah
Miguel Pedraza-Cumba
Christian Perez
Lish Rebman
Brandyn Rivas
Cate Roepke
Jus-ske/Justin Salguero
Anjeanette Smith
Fred Street
Evan Sweet
Tony Touch
Rog and Bee Walker
Sandra Walker
Darlene Waters

Photos were taken on site at Hudson Guild.