



THE DOCUMENTARY PART OF SUZANNE FORBES

DEMIMONDE

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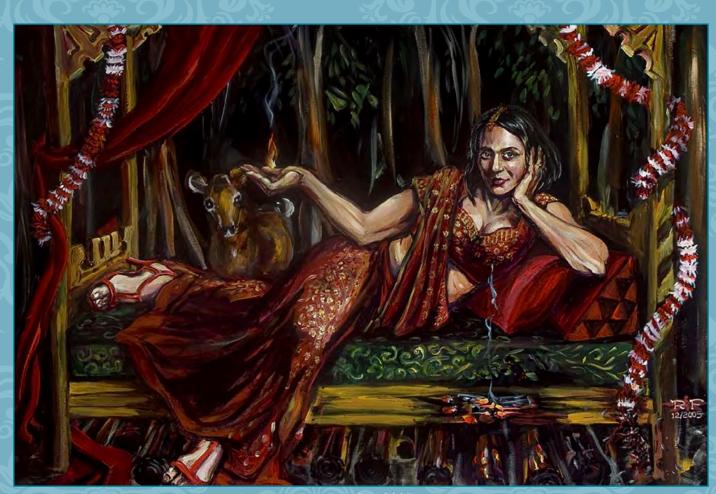
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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword: Demimondaines		8	The San Francisco to Berlin Express,	
	by Anuradha Vikramvii		by Eva Galperin91	
Preface: Suz, how did you choose the pictures to include? ix		9	"Documentress of the Demi-Monde", by Sadie Lune 93	
	PART ONE . SAN FRANCISCO		PART TWO . BERLIN	
1	2005. The sound of a flogging starts up across the club. 1	10	Beloved Friend-Muse-Patrons and moving to Berlin. 103	
2	Becoming Suzanne. The Citadel, The Porn Palace, Folsom Street Fair	11	Drawing in Berlin	
	and O premiere in Hollywood! 11	12	Ludwig and Bassy Club, R.I.P	
3	Kinky Salon, Dr. Sketchy's SF, Nude Aid, painting Midori, Torture Garden and more!	13	FOSTA/SESTA: Sex workers warned us. 159	
	forture Garden and more:	14	2019; My big year	
4	Steampunk, nightclubs and Fetish Weekends. A Trampage begins	15	2020, before	
5	Femina Potens, Wicked Grounds and the end of my full-time art	16	2020 after, goodbye to all that, and the next five years	
	career in SF. 61	Afte	erword: by Victoria Shestack Aronoff303	
6	The Upper Floor and startup life, again	Tha	Thank you from Suzanne 305	
7	2011-2015. The last Bay years. Settling down, painting loved ones, and being depressed			



Anu as Sati 2005

### **FOREWORD**

### Demimondaines by Anuradha Vikram

The Bone Room, a natural history store in Berkeley, California, twenty years ago in October 2004. We were immediately aligned. Two high femmes in straight-passing circumstances, married to cis but vaguely genderfluid men in the goth industrial scene, we found ourselves navigating the economic contradictions of a life in the visual arts with only the outsized incomes of our tech-funded husbands to insulate us from the skyrocketing costs of living in the Bay Area. Suzanne would paint me, alone and with my partner, creating images that both celebrated and questioned the social structure of the legal and romantic bond that unites us. I was honored to be included among her subjects who were mainly the cool goths and hot strippers I'd been hanging out with since my teen years but never really felt a part of. Did I mention that in those days SF queer and kink spaces were still painfully, blindingly white? I didn't know where I fit, but I knew I belonged if Suzanne and our ragtag band of Suicide Girls, biology nerds, and hot smart chicks were afoot.

Before the dot-com gays took over the Castro and pushed everyone weird out to places like Portland, Oregon and Denver, Colorado, San Francisco's queer scene was characterized by a dual nature of utter rowdiness and sweet naiveté. In the days before Grindr, kinky queers could be found on Craigslist "casual encounters"—a site that has since been shut down under the pretense of curbing sex trafficking, as gay and queer spaces often are, "for our own protection." Google, Twitter, and Facebook were just beginning to reshape cities, as the internet was rapidly restructuring how we met one another, related, and hooked up. Queers and goths could be found at the Armory in San Francisco, operated by the proprietors of the porn site Kink.com, and at the DNA Lounge, funded by proprietor Jamie Zawinski's earnings as a programmer for Netscape (an early web browser), as well as at community events like the Hunky Jesus contest in Dolores Park and the Folsom Street Fair. Queer artists shared their work on MySpace and DeviantArt and Flickr. Unlike the public spaces where LGBTQIA+ people gathered, often clandestinely, before the internet age, these newer online spaces are all privately owned and for-profit. Frequently, web companies (I'm looking at you, Facebook) would hide clauses in their terms of service that gave them free rein to use and sell proprietary images that artists shared on their sites. Censorship was rampant (and still is). There were a ton of interesting people to draw back then, doing exciting things, but the fun clock was rapidly running down and we all knew it. By 2014, I had relocated to Los Angeles, and Suzanne would soon depart for Berlin.

In Berlin, Suzanne found herself in a new milieu. The story of sexual counterculture in the city is over a century old and closely aligned with both queer and anti-fascist histories. In Europe, Suzanne's 2006 self-christening took on a new association, that of Suzanne Valadon (1865-1938): the nineteenth-century bohemian artist and model for artists including Toulouse-Lautrec who would become a prominent painter of Parisian sex workers and lesbian couples, known for sensitive, expressionistic nudes. Unlike Toulouse-Lautrec, who though disabled and an ally was both a cis man and a member of the upper class, Valadon was an unwed teen mother from humble origins who saw her work accepted to the Salon des Beaux-Arts without the benefit of any formal art education. As a "fallen" woman, Valadon could articulate the tenderness and passion of feminine desire without

the distorting lens of masculine validation or the straitjacket of propriety that restricted women Impressionists like Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt.

Suzanne Forbes was a teenager in New York in the 1980s at a time when heroin addiction ravaged the vulnerable downtown community of punks and queers, followed quickly by HIV/AIDS. By the time I arrived in the city in the early 1990s, these waves of devastation were beginning to subside. The heights Suzanne achieved early on, being one of very few women to work as a pencil artist for major comics publishers, were met equally by lows of sexual assault, drug addiction, and chronic illness that she experienced. This experience of having "fallen" and risen, perhaps more than once, enables Suzanne to draw and paint her models in acts of joyous transgression with a similar sensitivity and compassion to that shown by Valadon.

For my part, I spent twenty years in a "straight" contemporary art career, working in nonprofits and commercial galleries and universities, trying to win by playing according to the rules. I couldn't really tell you whether I'm any better off for it. Certainly, I've gotten to work with some incredible, highly intellectual and conceptual and academically rigorous artists whose time and contributions I will always cherish. But despite all the money that gets thrown around, contemporary art just isn't that sexy. Most of the time, it's devoid of flesh and fluid, going through the motions of soliciting desire within the market while stifling everything that makes sexuality and kink hot.

More recently, and especially since the pandemic, I've recommitted to spending more of my time with sex workers, and more of my resources to support artists whose practices intersect with sex work. Suzanne Forbes was doing it before anyone else, and better. It's an honor and a privilege to celebrate her twenty-year career as a kink and fetish artist with this glamorous, spicy hot book.

ANURADHA VIKRAM Los Angeles, October 2024

### **PREFACE**

# Suz, how did you choose the pictures to include?

t was so hard. I started out with 275 SF pictures and 450 from Berlin, knowing I had to get down to a total of about 300 somehow.

Because I've been in some scenes in my life, and adjacent to somewhat famous people, I've had the experience of paging through books about times and places I was in. It is a strange and disorienting feeling. "But I was there! I was right there! Why don't they mention me?" "Where am I?" "I'm part of that story too, why didn't they include me?"

Now that I've made the edit for this book, I have some answers. To choose less than 10% of the pictures and the moments around them from over 3000 is the worst possible kind of "killing your darlings". It took me six months of working on it every day, and it was miserable to choose.

For every show or event I list, there are two more; for the 300 drawings and paintings you see here, there are 2700 more. I did my best to give you the spirit of the people, times and communities.

Here is my process:

First, the design, layout and printing of this book is funded by a crowdfunding platform subject to the regulations of the payment processors it uses. Most payment processors are in the "United States" (Turtle Island). These processors are trying very hard to suppress sex and sexuality. So, drawings showing actual sex-having were immediately out. This grieves me badly, because those drawings are so important. However, explicit sex drawings are only about a hundred of my total works. So I could bear it.

Next, I focused on queer and kinky community. Those are the pictures most likely to be erased from the internet. I have seen vast worlds of queer and kinky art erased from the internet already, in the seven years since FOSTA/SESTA became law. I live in Berlin; I know which identities and art they come for first. Since this book is my hope of preserving as many of my representations of queer, trans and kinky folx as possible, I had to cut many pictures of cis and het folks that I dearly love.

Sometimes I couldn't include pictures because the likeness was too damn good! I couldn't include my sweet boy from Wicked Grounds, because every drawing was such a good likeness. When people don't work in the sex industry, plausible deniability matters!

Because the book is about sexuality and gender, I want it to be as safe as possible for the people in it. So that meant no drawings that showed harm-doers that I knew about. Of course, I could only do what I knew. There is harm in every community and every institution; I chose drawings where folks were safer at least in that moment. I chose images where the Domination and submission dynamics were queer, radical and playful, and moments where folks who hold marginalized identities were empowered and safer, to the best of my knowledge. I included some pictures of nonbinary folks whose bodies have changed over time, with their clear consent.

People of the Global Majority, people who are not "white", are most likely to be erased. As are disabled, fat and visibly different folks. When I had to choose between a drawing of a thin, abled white person in a scene or show, and a person more likely to be disappeared, I cut the thin white person. Centering the most marginalized is important to me.

Sex workers are also erased and disappeared from history. So, if I had to choose between a sex worker and another friend who was at a party playing, I chose the sex worker.

Having the original artwork on hand or a good scan mattered a lot. Many, many of my artworks have been sold or donated over the years. I don't have good scans or photos of all of them. How large or small a picture appears here is often a reflection of available scan size. I wanted the book to look beautiful to you, for you to be able to really see the pictures. Then, the focus of the book is SF/Berlin, so I cut nearly all the drawings of people in/from other places. Augh! That was so hard.

Storytelling matters too. I worked my ass off for years to understand visual storytelling, and a book of pictures needs a rhythm and balance. So sometimes I chose drawings with a good group or background to set the scene over ones that were a great likeness of a single person.

Then, well, I cut the least good drawings. I'm proud of my skill, I'm vain about my work, and not all drawings I've made meet my standards. My years of training and study made me reliable in performance, but I was sick and often stressed the whole time I was doing this work, and I'm not a machine. So I cut the ones that weren't my best work, too.

If you hoped to see yourself here and you do not, I am so sorry. If I drew your picture, know that I loved you while I did it, that I saw you and witnessed you, and that I will keep your picture online as long as I can.

My husband helped me move my website domains to the safest "nation" we could find in terms of censorship, so all my work will be online as long as the platforms support it and we can pay to host it. I hope that if there is an internet when you read this, you'll visit:

chipinhead.com, suzanneforbes.com (age-gated, NSFW) and https://www.flickr.com/photos/suzanneforbesart/.

All my art is there, all free to download, print and share. You're welcome to reproduce my art of yourself for profit.

#### Did everyone consent to be in the book?

I made these pictures in two very different milieus, San Francisco 2005-2015 and Berlin 2015-2024. In SF in the Aughts there was lots of "radical transparency". Everyone had a phone with a camera and a flickr account. Everyone shared everything everywhere without asking for permission. I often drew people performing in public without asking permission and without getting their names. I contacted those I could find on the SF side to ask for consent for this book; sometimes I couldn't find the person and more importantly, I knew the likeness I got wasn't one where they could be identified. It was a non-specific-person drawing. Sometimes the whole scene I was in was being recorded and/or livestreamed; everyone there had consented to being documented and shared. I also had model releases for a lot of people. But consent evolves, so I re-asked everyone I could.

Moving to Berlin, I found privacy culture to be very different. Phones are often not allowed in clubs, darkrooms and dungeons. Here, I started asking permission before I drew or showing people the picture

afterwards and asking if they were okay with it and with my putting it online. I got on Instagram too late to do my career any good, but it's been great for posting pictures of performers, and I soon began asking everyone's insta handle to tag them. I posted drawings on my blog, metadata'd with all the performer's social media info, websites and events, to help them be visible. Using stuff I learned about Google indexing at my shitty tech marketing jobs for good!

Here in Berlin, I've connected with and drawn many more people who are exposed to structural violence. I asked people who hold a marginalized identity if they gave enthusiastic consent to appear in the book, and exactly how they wanted to be credited. In fact, most people in the Berlin section were personally asked for consent. I did often draw dancers in the background or in the audience as non-specific-persons, not trying to represent individuals. If I missed asking you, and you see yourself here, or someone who could be you, I hope that being included in this book brings joy. I hope everyone I couldn't include knows I wanted them in here so badly.

#### What do you mean, if there is an internet when you read this?

Living in Europe, I learned about women artists that my decade-plus education at a series of fancy American art schools hadn't mentioned. Jeanne Mammen, Berlin superstar of the Weimar era, who lived 1.5 kilometers from our flat. Chinese artist Pan Yuliang, a sublime painter of women. Amrita Sher-Gil, an Indian-Hungarian painter I love. I was wowed by Jo Brocklehurst's vivid drawings from London fetish clubs in the 80s. Most shocking of all, I stumbled on a 20th century French illustrator named Suzanne Ballivet, who did both prolific "vanilla" illustration and loads of professional erotic illustration, from very explicit sex manuals to kinky lesbian nuns!

### Suzanne Ballivet's work is preserved (for now) on the excellent art site honesterotica.com.

They just found copies of her books and uploaded the art! It's free to download! That simple!

I bought some of her books on ebay before Brexit. They came from UK rare book shops; Suzanne Ballivet's erotic work often illustrated book editions of just 500-1,000 copies, with lithograph art plates, for collectors. I bought a copy of "Les chansons de Bilitis" (The Songs of Bilitis), a book of erotic lesbian poetry illustrated (copiously and passionately) by Ballivet and published in 1943. Her name, her work had been erased, lost, disappeared to American artists interested in queer erotic illustration. I discovered her in 2017; I was fifty years old. But "Les chansons de Bilitis", and a few thousand books, remain out there.

Of course I'd always wanted a book of my art, but no-one had ever expressed any interest in making one, despite my efforts at contacting publishers. Holding that little volume that was almost eighty years old, I felt certain that if any of my art would survive the erasure of queer, kinky women artists and the rise of fascism combined with climate collapse, it would be in a book. I needed a book.

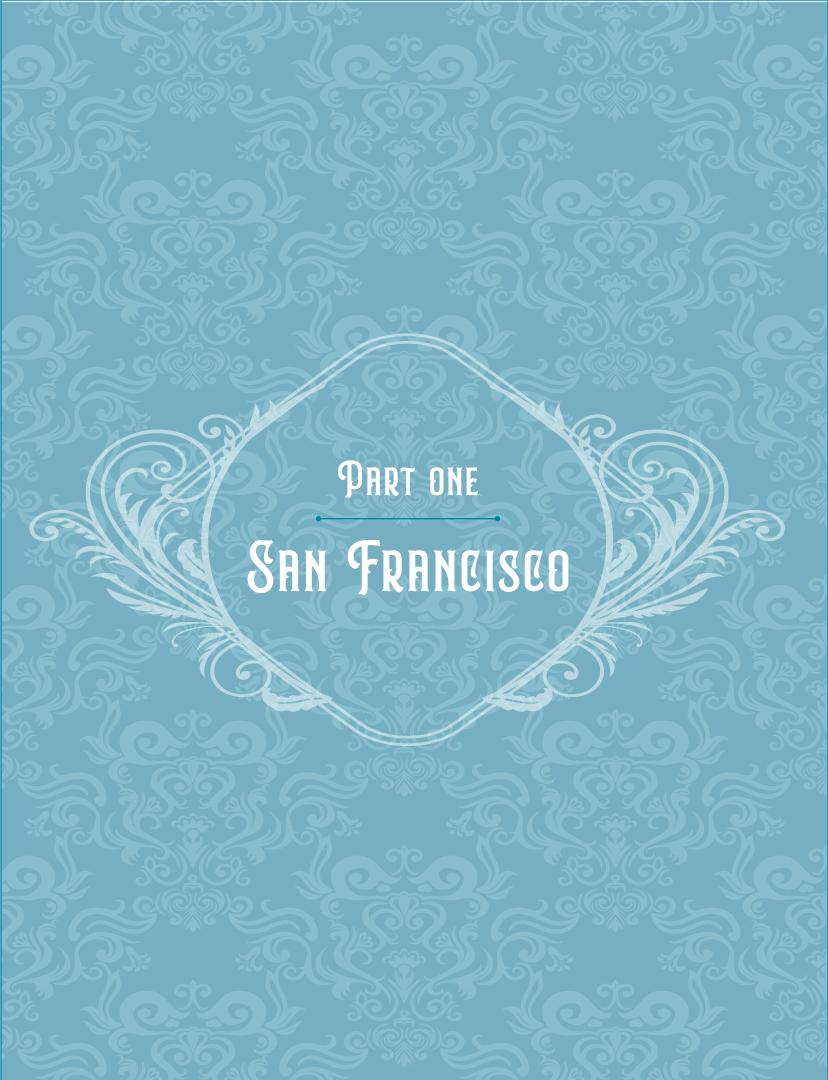
And times of erasure are upon us. Lots of systems, including possibly the internet, will fail. We have already seen how easily fascist regimes can cut off part or all of internet access to millions. So many people will be erased. It is my great hope that this book will preserve the memory of some of them, including me.

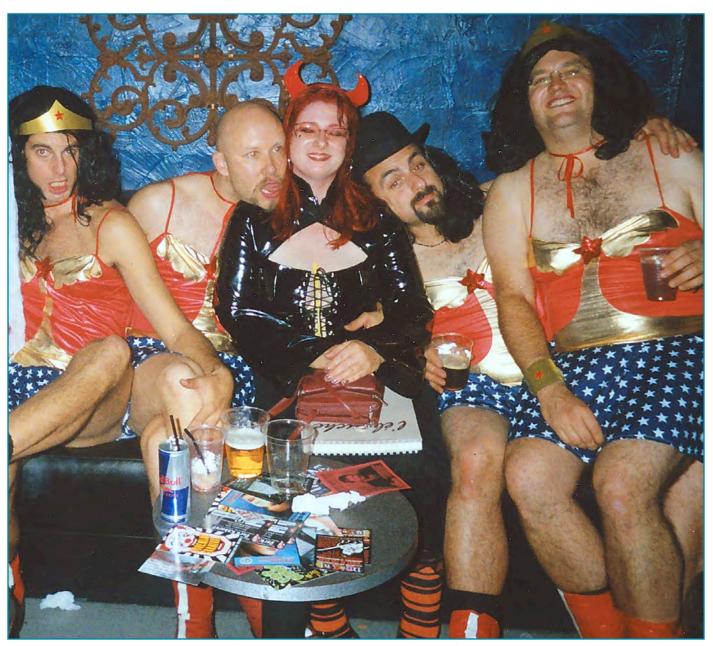
Land acknowledgement: As best I understand from First Nations sources today, all my "Berkeley" and "Oakland" artwork was made on the xučyun (Huichin) territory, the unceded original landscape of Lisjan (Ohlone) people. My "San Francisco" and "Santa Cruz" art was made on the homelands of the Muwekma and Ramaytush Ohlone people. My "Los Angeles" art was made on the homelands of Chumash, Tongva, and Kizh people.

Love, Suz



Suzanne Forbes painting Shakrah Yves, photographed by Mirella Frangella 2018





Halloween at DNA with the Rosin Coven boys 2006

### CHAPTER ONE

# 2005. The sound of a flogging starts up across the club.

i! My name is Suzanne Forbes, and I'm a fat, queer, disabled artist. The last twenty years I've been a documentary artist making portraits of queer and kinky community. This book holds some of my drawings and paintings of the people I have known.

# People ask how I went from being a television courtroom artist in Minnesota in the 1990s to live-drawing girls fisting in a San Francisco dungeon in 2005.

It sounds like a long way, but to me, it felt like coming home.

I could barely pass as a working stiff enough to do courtroom drawing for a Minneapolis TV station; I expected to be busted as the freak I am the whole time. Court artists work for news media, not for courts, but you work in the courtroom all day. It was my first career job, before I was even finished at my final art school, The Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD). I saw it

as a well-paid way to get better and faster at drawing while I fought to break into mainstream superhero comic books as a woman.

I didn't realize how traumatic sitting through thousands of hours in the US court system would be. My position as a sexual assaults survivor made the rape trials very hard to bear. My history as a graffiti artist and junkie in 1980s New York made having to draw corrupt and violent cops hard to tolerate. I was more editorial than objective, but I was very, very good.

# I think this 1993 drawing of a teenager the state wanted to try as an adult is probably the truest thing I ever made in the courtroom.

Courtroom drawing was fantastic for my drawing skills, and I leveled up my natural aptitude for capturing likenesses.



Suzanne Forbes by Gloria Viagra at Vaudeville Variety March 2017



Courtroom drawing 1993 Suzanne Forbes aka Rachel Ketchum



Kirk's ass, and censorship in the arts.

That aptitude led to my finally breaking into mainstream comics, a field that even now, thirty years later, savagely excludes women. I was hired to do some fill-in and annual stories by Margaret Clark, the editor of DC's Star Trek comic books, and soon became a monthly penciller, the holy grail of comic drawing. When my dream of working for DC Comics came true in 1993 and I started drawing Star Trek, I was determined to put as much freak in as possible. I was sneaking in lesbian couples and nightstand condoms, and I even showed too much of Captain Kirk's butt and got censored. Drapery was inked over the plump sex-positive



Teenage me with perhaps the first New Mutants cosplayer, Creation Con 1985. I'm wearing the Betsey Johnson frock I called my "Daisy Mae Mid-Victorian Spandex Bondage Baby" dress.

curves I had penciled. I love Star Trek, but the scripts I got were not my favorites and I really wanted to be drawing mutant superheroes. Queer mutant superheroes!

Sadly, the first gay superhero kisses were years away.

Working in comics turned out to be unbearable for me; my fulltime comics career lasted about eighteen months. I had dedicated years of education at The Art Students League, Parsons and the School of Visual Arts to building the speed and accuracy of my draftswomanship. I had endured sexual harassment and sexual violence at comic conventions, showed endless sexist editors my samples and made new samples, pursuing my dream of working for Marvel or DC, for almost ten years.

But I couldn't tolerate working at home, alone, on deadline, for the ten-hour days a monthly comic requires. I couldn't manage my depression, my aching trauma-cookie brain, multiple neuro-divergences and physical illness. I was miserable. In 1994, while I was drawing Star Trek: The Original Series in my Minnesota home studio, I heard Cher on the radio. She was talking about having a disease called "chronic fatigue syndrome".

Suddenly I knew what was wrong with me, had been wrong for years. Today, we call it "ME", for Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, or MECFS, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

I was sick and the work was killing me. When the industry crashed in 1995, my beloved editor Margaret was laid off and all the Star Trek comic books were cancelled. I left and never went back.

#### What was wrong with me? I was physically sick, and I couldn't get well.

Summer 1986, when I was nineteen, my best-ever boyfriend died of an overdose the same weekend as I suffered a horrible anal rape at San Diego Comic Con. That fall I got a nasty viral infection, probably cytomegalovirus. The highest fever I'd ever had, chills, my usual agonizing sore throat. My sweet new boyfriend Cyrus wiped me down



My sexy New Mutants fan art from 1985



Scarlet Witch lithograph by Suzanne Forbes aka Rachel Ketchum Fall 1986

with rubbing alcohol in an ice-cold bath. Two weeks later, I was in the print lab at Parsons, making a lithograph of The Scarlet Witch. I was trying to rub out the plate, and my arms were like jelly. My strength was gone.

I was never really pain free or a person with normal energy again after that virus, though it wasn't the worst virus that was sweeping through downtown Manhattan in the '80s. In my queer, sex worker and needle-user community, things were very frightening. Still, becoming a fulltime junkie suddenly seemed like a good idea, and I combined it with continuing to be a drunk and going to art school, which was a disaster.

In 1987 they asked me to go on academic leave from the Illustration BFA program at Parsons, where I had been a star in figure drawing classes, after I vomited copiously in line for registration. So I pivoted to The School of Visual Arts, which actually had a comics drawing BFA program. But I was so debilitated and so messed up. I passed out watching live sex acts at the Hellfire Club and burned my legs badly with my cigarette. I overdosed on two occasions and the paramedics came, and I sold my precious X-Men comics for a single bag. I was privileged: I got a month of inpatient treatment, then landed at a Minnesota halfway house newly sober in March 1989.

# Even when I got clean and sober at 22, I was not healthy. I needed more sleep; more rest than anyone I knew.

I could never wake up in the morning. Keeping a job was always a nightmare; I have been fired fourteen times. Working daytime hours as a courtroom artist, I was always in a state of violent exhaustion. By the time I'd been working in comics for a year I was suicidal, pounding ibuprofen and antiacids and Prozac, unable to sleep more than a couple hours at a time, suffering severely disordered eating and compulsive shopping. I was broken, mentally and physically.

And this has remained true for the rest of my life; I've had periods of exhilarating hyperfocus work where I could ignore my body, periods of symptom remission, but all the work you will see in this book was done by a disabled, erratic, impaired, exhausted lady.

I'm grateful as hell I was able to do this work, even though all the times I pushed through shortened my life and I can no longer work. I can't say I would trade it, though I was so often in so much pain. Not because I think suffering for art is good. I do not. Because the art was what I was here to do, and I got to do it. I was supported by my mom, community and my third husband, and enabled by privilege to work unpaid or for poverty wages, and while very sick, for so many years.

It was an idiotic life choice, but I kind of specialize in those! I would have preferred to know about postviral illness and neuroinflammation and gotten medical care that acknowledged it, but that wasn't a possibility, then

or now. Doctors have been telling me that my tests are normal and I am fine since the last century, and the only time I improve is when I listen to other sick people instead of the medical-industrial complex.

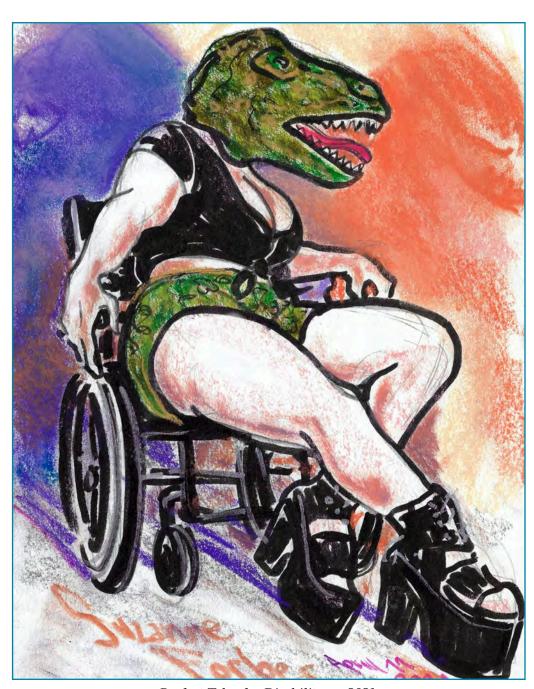
We say in the MECFS (and now Long Covid) communities, "This disease feeds on ambition and passion." And I am a triple Capricorn.

"My dear, Find what you love and let it kill you. Let it drain you of your all. Let it cling onto your back and weigh you down into eventual nothingness. Let it kill you and let it devour your remains. For all things will kill you, both slowly and fastly, but it's much better to be killed by a lover. —Falsely yours" Kinky Friedman

I burned my body to the ground doing this work, and I'm at peace with it, because the work you will see here matters. The queer, kinky, crip and trans love and joy I drew matter.

I cherish the sex workers and drag queens I drew and the queer, kinky communities I've been in. Knowing these folks is transformational and illuminating, the great honor and delight of my life.

Yet my documentary art praxis started sort of accidentally! I moved around the US for two years after leaving comics, taking non-art jobs, and in 1997 landed in the San Francisco Bay Area of Northern California. Living in the East Bay, I hustled jobs I wasn't qualified for, in the gourmet food business, in sales, then at tech startups which were then called



Perfect Tyler for Disabilitease 2021



Vamp Lorraine in Leather 2006

"dotcoms". Working in the food business meant I always had a meal a day, even when I didn't have a dollar to my name; it saved me so many times. I married my second husband, a much younger goth. I made friends in San Francisco's goth community.

During these years I described myself as a "former artist", because I couldn't conceive of being an artist without it being my job. I gave weird, elaborate parties with my successful young husband, painted and decorated our homes, and helped friends with their Burning Man projects.

In 2003 I had my first drawing session with a model in years, one of those Burner friends in a Dark Garden corset. I had been to Dark Garden, San Francisco's pioneering corset atelier, and seen the beautiful corsets on mannequins, but it was seeing my friend wearing a Dark Garden Victorian underbust in person that finally released the kraken. Logan's silhouette, in that corset, so like Sargent's Madame X, loosed my lifelong corset fetish.

### Drawing Logan that day made me feel like I could reconnect with my power and pleasure as a draftswoman.

And so, in 2005, laid off and on unemployment from another hateful admin job, I decided to try and be a professional artist again. I thought I would paint portraits, as I had in my last years of art school at MCAD, and I started

with goths in corsets. I started with friends, the people around me.

Logan in Dark Garden 2003

It was euphoric to be painting again, dropping into flow state and the lover's gaze of portraiture. I swiftly made a ton of paintings, like this one of Anu and their spouse Stephan Bugaj.

I painted my beautiful friend Vamp Lorraine in a striped Vivienne Westwood corset she'd bought on eBay and in her Stormy Leather corsets. Her corseted waist was 18". It was such joy to paint her and her collection of fetish fashion, styled to perfection!

In those days San Francisco's South of Market, SOMA, had



Anu and Stephan 2005

multiple fetish shops, from Stormy Leather Corsets to Mr. S Leather and Madame S., where there were latex fashions and Puimond Corsets. There were legendary gay bars like The Stud, and dungeons and sex clubs too, The Citadel and the Power Exchange. (SF joke: What do you do with a bratty sub? Make them lick the floor of the Power Exchange!) I made trips to the Castro to paint drag queen Miss Dimond and her partner Fernan at home. I had the idea I could be a portraitist to queer and kinky couples, make a practice of commissioned portraits for people who weren't served by the suburban blonde ladies painting babies. Gothic Stripper Night 2005

Gothic Stripper Night 2005



Dancers at Gaskells 2005

### "Traditional Portraits for Alternative Lifestyles" was the tagline on my first website.

"Alternative lifestyles" was a trendy phrase for anyone outside cishet "norms" back then. I started carrying a sketchbook everywhere again, as I had in my last years of art school. I talked to people in goth clubs about being a portraitist and asked strangers if I could draw or paint them. In July a goth girl named Nadine invited me to her strip club for "Goth Night", and I went and live-drew strippers, a decade before the Life Drawing with Strippers movement was started in the UK by The East London Strippers Collective.

### I had always had friends and lovers who were sex workers, and I was so happy to draw strippers from the side of the stage! It was exhilarating!

Drawing in the goth clubs, I felt my deep queer kinky soul awaken after two vanilla marriages.

I went to events by the Greater Bay Area

Costumers Guild, to Gaskells Ball and to Dickens Christmas Fair, and drew tattooed corseted people. And I kept painting. My marriage was a mess, but I kept working. The work was so fulfilling and fascinating. I saw so much beauty!

My husband was working and living in Los Angeles, so I was shuttling down from Berkeley many weekends, and visiting the LA goth clubs. One night I was at Bar Sinister, the Saturday night goth club at Boardner's in Hollywood. I was sitting on a circular settee, like the one in the Toulouse Lautrec paintings "The Two Friends" and "At the Moulins

Street Show".

### I was sitting and drawing, and the sound of a flogging started up across the club.

Suddenly I felt deeply, profoundly at home. A tension I'd been holding for years of depression and trying to have a vanilla life relaxed. I knew I was coming home to the queer and kinky self of my teens, and I was so glad.







# Becoming Suzanne. The Citadel, The Porn Palace, Folsom Street Fair and O premiere in Hollywood!

In 2006, my husband broached divorce. He didn't want me to move down to LA to join him like we'd been planning. With my comfortable Berkeley matron life breaking down, I decided to renew the self I'd always been. I adopted a new name, Suzanne Forbes, inspired by all the great Suzannes of history and my mother's maiden name. I bought my first real steel boned corsets and new bondage gear. I replaced the leather restraints and whips my Minnesota therapist had persuaded me to throw out in 1990 with new candy-apple red patent leather ones. I joined the livejournal corset community, an early social media nexus for corset obsessives. My health improved as I took desperate nutritional measures to survive the crisis of my marriage. I was painting nonstop. I got my first tattoo, the Jean Grey Phoenix logo, as a tramp stamp!

#### In 2006 I started scanning and uploading my drawings to a photo-sharing website called Flickr.

As of this writing in late 2024, Flickr has survived migration from Canada to the US, multiple changes of ownership, and problematic policy updates. It is now one of the few places left on the internet where artists can upload adult and erotic content, filter it as moderate or restricted, and allow adult account holders to view and download it at high resolution for free.

# Since 2006, most of my art has been available, free, to download, share and print from Flickr using Creative Commons licensing.

When I drew people, they could go to Flickr and download the drawing in any size they wanted. And some people did; there was an era when many kinky people in San Francisco had my drawing of themselves as their icon on social media like twitter. I spent a decade telling people they could also print my art before I realized that the idea of using a media platform to share art for free was a uniquely San Francisco concept. Most people expected artists to try to control their work after they put it on the internet. Which was obviously impossible! I kept saying, it's free! You can wallpaper your bathroom with my erotic drawings!

But I was operating from expired worldviews, both that drawing mattered to mainstream audiences and that printing things out mattered. I had left the world that cared deeply about people being able to draw behind when I left comics. And in the first years of the 21st Century, with portable telephones that suddenly had high quality built-in cameras, making drawn or painted portraits of people was even more of a retro quirk.

It wasn't until I got on Instagram in 2017 that people started really sharing my art and printing the drawings I made of them, though I've had little success redirecting them to Flickr to download high resolution versions.

# If there is still an internet, and still a Flickr, when you read this, I hope you will print some of my art. It's free!

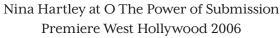
https://www.flickr.com/photos/suzanneforbesart/

At any rate, in 2006 I oscillated wildly between the fulfillment of the painting I was doing, the excitement of meeting more kinky queer folks, and the misery and grief of the dragged-out end of my marriage. I bought kinky online porn and I learned who the legends of feminist porn living in California were, like Annie Sprinkle and Nina Hartley. I made bondage paintings of my friend Nixon Suicide, a founding model on the pin-up photoset site Suicide Girls. I painted Denny, the manager at the Haight St. Fluevog store, lounging at his Twin Peaks apartment in full Leather Daddy glory. Denny was much loved for his skill at working with sex workers and their clients! I was painting people in LA too, corsetiere Shaerie Meade and famous tightlacer Michaela Grey and her spouse.

#### In September I went down to LA for the premiere of "O- The Power of Submission".

Directed by Ernest Greene and featuring Nina Hartley, this modern remake of my problematic teenage fave was a big budget production. Porn company Adam&Eve hosted a glamorous party at the same club as Bar Sinister. So many porn performers! So many goths! So sexy! I drew the performers at the photo wall, then set up my portable easel and live-painted Nina in the packed courtyard as models in tiny rubber clothes squeezed past us. I drew so many great performers and had such a wonderful, exuberant time. I donated the painting of Nina to a benefit and sadly don't have a decent picture!







Guests at premiere of O The Power of Submission 2006

## The Folsom Eve party at the Porn Palace was a week later.

The porn production company kink.com was headquartered in what appeared to be a typical SOMA warehouse, but the grimy, even abandoned-looking facade concealed several floors of elaborate sets, editing rooms and a hot tub on the roof. Many parties were held there. I arrived at the Folsom Eve party, stationed my easel in the big "castle" room, and made drawings of go-go dancers and bondage models late into the night.

And I had my first booth at Folsom Street Fair the next day. Burner friends set up my booth; I set up my easel and did live painting in a shiny corset, with friends as fetish models. I sold the big painting of Vamp Lorraine in Leather for a thousand dollars, to a total stranger! I was able to give a hundred-dollar donation to SFAIDS, whose booth was across from mine. I met and made my first brush sketch of Eva Galperin, who became my immensely beloved friend and muse and patron.



Suzanne painting at Folsom St. Fair 2006 detail by Carol Franger

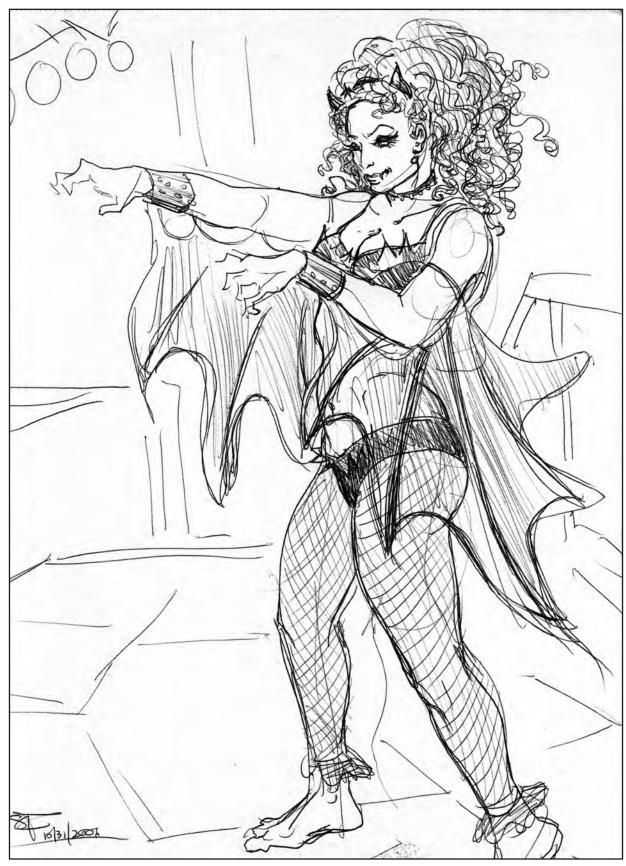


GoGo dancer at the Folsom Eve Ball, 2006

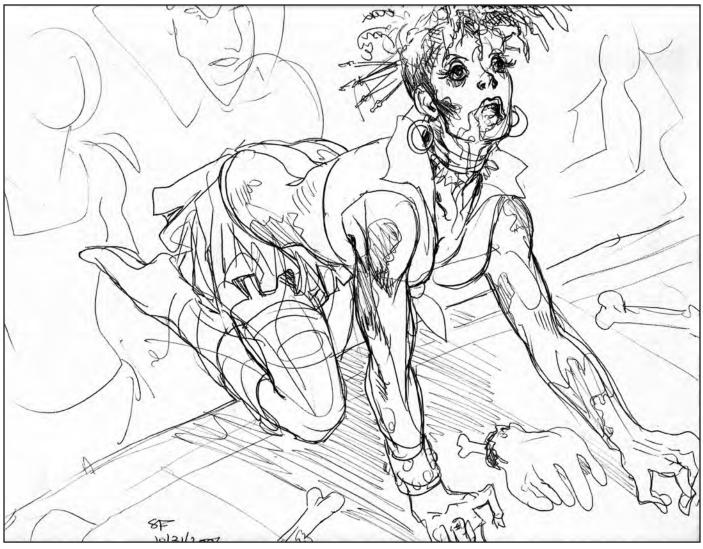
### I thought that maybe my idea of being a kinky portraitist might work out, that Fall in San Francisco when kink was thriving.

After Folsom I emailed one of San Francisco's famous fetish figures, the artist, author and rope bondage educator Midori. Might she sit for a portrait? To my delight she said yes, she could do that in 2007.

The Folsom Eve Ball was the beginning of regular visits to the Porn Palace, where the bar taps were dildos and the bathrooms were unisex. I went for the Friday night Happy Hours and soon half the people I knew were working there, in systems, accounting, wardrobe or in front of the camera.



Penny Whistle of The Twilight Vixens Hubba Hubba Revue Halloween 2006



Voodoo Zombie of The Living Dead Girls crawls onto the stage at DNA lounge Halloween 2006

# There were cabaret and burlesque shows to draw too, with The Hubba Hubba Revue at DNA Lounge, and the epic Hubba Halloween party.

I have always appreciated Kingfish, producer and MC of Hubba Hubba Revue, for unhesitatingly putting weird, challenging, political burlesque onstage! I loved his shows and loved to draw them.

That Fall there was the Vampire Ball in Alameda, goth/industrial clubs like MEAT at DNA and Death Guild at the Glas Kat, and the Absinthe Party in South of Market (SOMA) when absinthe was still banned in the US (not that it mattered to me, as a sober person!) I drew my newly divorced friend Jeanne with her much younger boyfriend at the Absinthe party; it was an age of cougars in SF.

#### I heard about "Bent", a play party for young people at the famous SOMA dungeon called The Citadel.

I asked the organizers if I might come and draw, even though I was almost forty. They said yes, and I went to the Caligula-themed party in the first week of December. I started out upstairs and drew this nice young lady who was an aspiring manga artist. We had a great talk as she posed.



A guest at Bent at SF Citadel 2006

Later I drew two beautiful young women fisting on the swing in the basement, and afterwards I showed them the drawing and they twined their slim arms around me and pressed their dewy cheeks against my boobs. I felt so deep into the intimacy and magic of the work.

I'd sent out an email with all my many kinky events for December, all the places I'd be drawing, all the community benefits I was donating art to, all the parties I was going to. That weekend I went down to LA for the Tom of Finland Foundation holiday party and to work on the paintings of Shaerie and Michaela and their spouses.

# Somewhere in LA, in the car with my second husband, I realized he was gonna to leave me, he just couldn't say it.

I went to Shaerie's studio that afternoon, and she held me. I went to Michaela's and K's place and painted their queer love.



Bait and Tackle 2006 photographed by Michaela Grey

Then I put on a corset in the car in Echo Park and went to the Tom of Finland House. My eyes were swollen from crying, and it was hard to put my false eyelashes on, but I had been invited to the Foundation's Holiday party, and I wasn't going to miss it. I came up the walk to the beautiful Craftsman house, and friendly leather folk waved at me from the porch. The house was glowing with light in the winter dusk; I went in the open door and found myself in history and family. The kitchen was full of steaming potluck dishes; there were clusters of people laughing in every room, and everyone welcomed me.

I wandered the house, looking at the art on the warm walls, thinking about the queer stories the house held. A cute twink sprawled on the bed in the Artist's Residency room, showing me his art.

I felt as if I were pregnant with pain, every cell in my body was poisoned with loss, but I knew my work mattered and that it mattered in the embrace of this living museum. The community was a beating heart, and I was just one random corpuscle, safe in its pulse. I knew people cared about me and about art and that I was going to survive this terrible day and keep making sexy queer art. Just as the LA Leather community had survived the AIDS crisis, just as queer life has survived and blossomed in the 21st Century, I was going to keep working.

I flew back from LA the next morning and went to work. Incredibly, I was at the Center for Sex and Culture drawing bondage models for their Nude Aid benefit that night. I met a young woman named Kitty Stryker there;

she was posing in a fetish nurse outfit and I speed-painted her picture. And we have been friends ever since! Kitty has become an educator, author of multiple books, and activist! Somehow I did events all that week. December 13 I was at Little Minsky's Burlesque in the Haight, drawing snowflakes. I was at Dickens Faire in front of the Dark Garden windows drawing Miss Tanya on December 23; I got served divorce papers the next day. If you have been the person who was left, after a marriage or years of partnership, you know. If you have not, you can't imagine. But I survived. I was loved and held by my Mom and my friends. I was deeply supported by my recovery community and therapist. I kept working.

Little Minskys Burlesque in the Haight 2006

1 As this book went to press, I learned there was rot at the heart of Tom House. The cofounder resigned in disgrace, thanks to the work of young Leatherfolk who shared his hateful behavior. The young trans POC people in the leather community are its lifeblood, and always renew my hope.



Tanya in the Dark Garden window at Dickens 2006



## CHAPTER THREE

# Kinky Salon, Dr. Sketchy's SF, Nude Aid, painting Midori, Torture Garden and more!

turned 40 in January 2007, surrounded by friends who held me tight. I managed to stop crying once the party started. I was looking for regular work, as I had no savings or money of my own, but drawing and painting meanwhile. I was still committed to contributing to sex-positive benefits, and on February 3, I made drawings at the Citadel for Midori's AIDS Lifecycle fundraiser, Bang4theBuck. This one of a resting, tender butch and femme is still one of my favorites.

### I went to some delightful Valentine's events with my broken heart.

Kinky Salon, San Francisco's most creative sex party, held a Sweetheart's Ball at the Porn Palace.

This young lady was new in town and a New Yorker like me. Sadly, I never got her name. There were girls in candy bikinis and boys dressed as fauns; I love to see a faun!

At another Valentine's party, the Grimm Brothers Ball at Glas Kat, I met Aimee, a gifted artist who



A New Yorker at the Porn Palace 2007



became a beloved friend, because I asked her if her corset was from Dark Garden!

It was, and she had made her beautiful cut silk swan feathers and swan staff herself. Several other cherished friendships came from that night, and I am so grateful that my live drawing always made it easy for me to talk to strangers.



Aimee at the Grimm Brothers Ball 2007



Jason at the Grimm Brothers Ball 2007

Jason Benton, the young muscleman in the kilt, was kind enough to pose! Sadly I did not get the kitty cat's name. I always hoped to paint Jason, but never managed to organize it.

## I went to visit Midori's home with sketches. We got on immediately and it was thrilling to start a big painting with someone so regal and so brilliant.

I was working on a slew of other paintings too, with my friends Eva, Lee, Nixon, Monique, Anu, Khris, Logan and Gothkitty Jen. I did a "sexy officer" painting of Denny on his Twin Peaks fire escape, the classic gay kink, though cops have never been sexy to me!

# In March I went to a new thing called Dr. Sketchy's Anti-Art School, a spinoff of a New York event created by an artist named Molly Crabapple.

Early SF Dr. Sketchy's events were at the historic gay bar The Stud, and were so warm and cozy, so highspirited. I loved that the models were costumed and drawn from our community. I was so happy to draw PennyPoundCake, creator of the great SF latex brand Lust Latex, in her roller derby gear. I loved sitting in a chair at a table to draw for a change, instead of standing next to a moaning bottom on a St. Andrew's Cross! My body was holding up okay so far to the stress of the divorce, as long as I slept a lot. I slept on the couch in the living room for the first five months; I couldn't get into the bed that had been our bed.

I had a show of my paintings at Stormy Leather in March; I had to overdraw my checking account for toll fare to get there, because my husband was not yet paying spousal support. I was selling all my fancy baking books to the East Bay used booksellers to buy gas, counting pennies at the gas station, that winter. Blessedly, that March I got a job. I was taking random illustration



PennyPoundCake at Dr. Sketchys SF 2007

gigs from craigslist, the free ads site that everyone in San Francisco used for everything. I replied to an ad from a guy named Frank Wu, a Hugo-winning artist who was making an animated movie about a giant space chicken. Although the movie never happened, I am so grateful that I was able to make storyboards and model sheets for it for almost two years, well treated and well paid.

### I had portrait commissions here and there too.

My friend Kitty Stryker asked her boyfriend Clear Menser to commission a portrait, and the two of them came to pose for me. We had wonderful visits, and my large round cat loved Clear. In May I stripped the bed, washed the sheets and the sex toys, and got myself a boyfriend. Twelve years younger this time, an artist, and conveniently living just around the corner. It wasn't the very worst rebound ever; we had some nice times.



Clear and Kitty 2007

### I made it to lots of Dr. Sketchy's and Kinky Salons that year.

The theme here was "Fantasy Island". When Kinky Salon was "at home", it happened in a sprawling, eclectically decorated Mission Avenue apartment. The rooms were snug and crowded with creatively costumed players. The nights were long. I usually got tired and went home before the revelers got to the rooms set up with beds and safer sex supplies!



Rose Pistola dancing at Kinky Salon 2007  $\,$ 





Dr Sketchy's at Bombshell Betty's 2007

## Bombshell Betty, a burlesque performer and teacher, took over hosting Dr. Sketchy's. Here I drew her showing her classic moves!

I was often in the city to paint my beloved Eva, pinup style in vintage lingerie and in her Dark Garden corset at an Alameda butcher shop, where they let us set up the easel and work. There were Burner parties at warehouses in Oakland, with sparking Tesla coils and the Flaming Lotus Girls' metal sculptures spitting fire, and a punk

guy suspended from meat hooks swinging overhead. It was common in those days in San Francisco to go from the Zombie Flash Mob to the Clown Prom, and change in the car, before heading out to the illegal warehouse rave.

I have loved dressing up since I had three outfit changes at my eighth birthday party, and I loved the outfits and the themes. I knew the fact that nobody was getting paid to make the costumes and sculpture art for these parties was unsustainable. I didn't understand yet how badly it would undermine what remained of San Francisco's gallery culture or how it would impact me.



Kinky Salon at Porn Palace, 2007



Logan as dandy 2008

### A July Kinky Salon at the Porn Palace had what looks like a culturally appropriative theme.

It was a big problem in alternative circles in SF in those days, and I was as harm-doing as anyone. I knew my art had a representation problem, because unlike every other time in my life, my SF friends were mostly white. But I thought representation was enough. I was so ignorant. I'm grateful I lived long enough to be guided by community in Berlin and anti-racism educators, and to learn to work to do better.

I had a lot to learn about gender and gender roles too, being ten years older than most of the people around me, and I'm grateful for the folx I learned from in SF and in Berlin. One of my early works about nonbinary identity began in 2007, a portrait of Logan as a dandy chap.

I went down to LA with my boyfriend that summer, to draw at the Labyrinth of Jareth masquerade ball, and to finish the paintings of Shaerie and her husband and Michaela and her wife. I didn't see my ex-husband; I never saw him again, nor ever went to LA again. I missed out there, because a new figurative painting movement was starting up in LA, around galleries like La Luz De Jesus. I might have parlayed my painting skills and graffiti background into an actual livelihood, if I had moved down to LA and gone less portrait, more surreal. Like the painting of Shaerie and her late husband Josh, "Zombie coming, one bullet left."

But I didn't, and I am deeply glad,

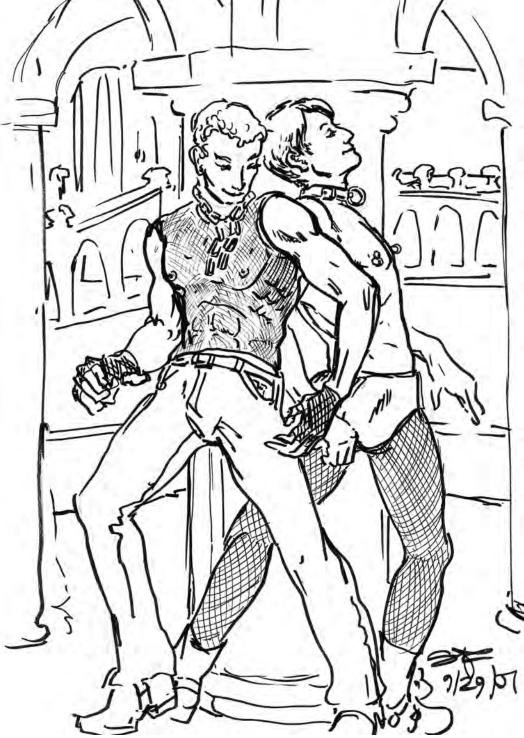


Zombies coming, one bullet left 2007

because success would have meant losing the years of simple service that lay ahead. I always said I wanted to be a portraitist in the community like a plumber, a person who did their job and was useful, and so I have been, and it has served my struggling soul much better than any fame and fortune would have.

I had shingles that summer, from the stress of the divorce said my doctor, but otherwise I was still fairly strong and doing okay on my latest antidepressants, thyroid meds, asthma meds and so on. I prepared for Folsom and to go to England for Torture Garden in the Fall.

Kinky Salon had
a Folsom Eve Ball
at the Porn Palace,
and I drew Polly
Superstar, the legendary
Kinky Salon co-founder, dancing with friends.



Dancers at the Folsom Eve Ball 2007

I did my booth at Folsom again, but it was a wash. The "Great Recession" was coming.

I sold some corsets to help fund our trip to England, and my boyfriend and I headed off. Clear and Kitty were living in London, and I brought them their finished painting. We stayed in their dormer room, the boy and I fighting. My booth at the Skin Two Expo, newly relocated, was a wash too. For everyone. I met the lady behind What Katie Did corsets, which was cool, but it was a long hard day for us all, no clients to be seen. The sound of a singletail cracking in the demo area echoed in the empty hall. By the time my boyfriend and I got dressed up and got to Torture Garden, held in a fantastic cavernlike space by the Thames, we were both exhausted and miserable.





Midori and Steve Diet Gedde at Torture Garden 2007

## I got a nice drawing of Midori in her incredible latex octopus costume, enthroned with the famous fetish photographer Steve Diet Gedde.

I drew a radiant latex nun—I love a latex nun—and some marvelously dressed partygoers on teetering heels. But when I tried to draw the headline performer RubberDoll doing her angle grinder act, the room was so packed I could not raise my arms to draw. I was wearing a black PVC ballgown and black PVC bolero, and I got trapped between people in latex trying to get a better vantage point. The latex lube and PVC caught on each other, and we were all sticking together, trying to twist free, as the sparks flew onstage. It was a long, hard night and I was sinking under the crowd.

Back in the US my boyfriend left me, my divorce got worse and worse, and still I was drawing and paint-

ing and promoting my work and hoping for the best. Drawing movie art for Frank Wu's project helped fund my lifestyle of many benefit art donations. I did Nude Aid again, and I met a young woman in a cloche who was modelling. Her self-possessed beauty and style captivated me, and I introduced myself.

Her name was Sadie Lune, and she became another great friend and muse and patron, a chosen family member as necessary to my life as oxygen.

Sadly, the camera I brought that night ran out of charge; my phone didn't have one. I didn't get photos of my first drawings of Sadie, or of the three drawings I did of Nina Hartley's strip tease! But people bought them to support the Center for Sex and Culture, and they are out there somewhere. And in late December I was back at Dickens Faire, drawing the tableau vivant models in the Dark Garden windows and the sexy can-can dancers of Mad Sal's.



Dickens Mad Sals CanCan dancer 2007





## Steampunk, nightclubs and Fetish Weekends. A Trampage begins.

In January I went as always to the most wonderful gothic costume ball in San Francisco, the Edwardian Ball. This splendid event had been growing for eight years, and I'd attended the last five. I met my cherished Friend-Muse-Patron Monique Motil at the Cat Club outside the Ball in 2003; we saw the Ball get bigger and better every year. 2008 was the year the event moved to the Regency Ballroom, a huge and glamorous venue built in 1909. Monique and I and other friends exhibited artwork; everyone in the goth and burner scene was preparing

Monique and I and other friends exhibited artwork; everyone in the goth and burner scene was preparing their costumes all year for the Ball. "Everybody make and show their art unpaid" was such a part of SF culture at that point, after twenty-two years of Burning Man. I didn't expect to be paid anywhere I went to documentary-draw; I just got free entrance. I loved dressing up and being at the parties; drawing gave me community usefulness and a way to be comfortable sober and make friends. And I still had the idea that someone would see the value in what I was doing, in my work, and I would be able to earn a living.

## If I was exhausted, and gas and tolls and parking cost a fortune, well, I was promoting myself and I was working.

The Edwardian Ball isn't a fetish event per se, but there is always a beautiful Dark Garden fashion show among the circus and theater pieces, and so many people in corsets. My favorite drawing from this Ball is of my friend Lee and her young man C. As I say, it was an age of cougars in SF. All of us fabulous femmes of thirty-plus had hot and brilliant young men in those days.

### Steampunk was a big part of the Ball that year. Every goth in the city was obsessed with it.

I was absolutely obsessed. I felt like the secret aesthetic of the interior of my skull was finally visible! Like my child self, clutching the collection of Victorian mink stoles I called my "little dead guys", was vindicated. It was the future past I had always imagined!

It seems strange to me now how fiercely we seized on it, how much creative power it unleashed, when it was often a movement without a message, sometimes even nostalgia for Empire. The connected DIY and Maker and relearning Old Ways movements are powerful, and some incredibly talented and cool people met through steampunk spaces. My friend Ani Niow made a steam-powered vibrator, which was both conceptual and workable! Folks like Margaret Killjoy, who has lived an inspiring radical life for decades now, brought crustpunk ethos. But how sad I am now about the parties where people wore pith helmets and gilt sidearms. What a long road I am on, to kill the colonizer inside myself.

I was working hard on my steampunk magnum opus, a portrait of Eva called "Defending the Electronic Frontier". This big painting was made as a fundraiser for the digital civil liberties organization. The Electronic Frontier Foundation. Eva looked incredible in her Five & Diamond finery, holding an antique crossbow, posed in front of a shiny brass

Difference Engine. Neither of us knew then how hard and long she would work to protect the people's right to online safety; she is fighting still.

I had a desperate hope that this big painting about the fight for selfexpression and privacy online would raise my profile as well as help the cause.

I was also working hard for Frank Wu, making so many wild pre-production drawings for his Giant Space Chicken movie. I had portrait commissions and personal paintings going with people all over town and even down in Santa Cruz.

In March it was San Francisco Fetish Ball Weekend. One of



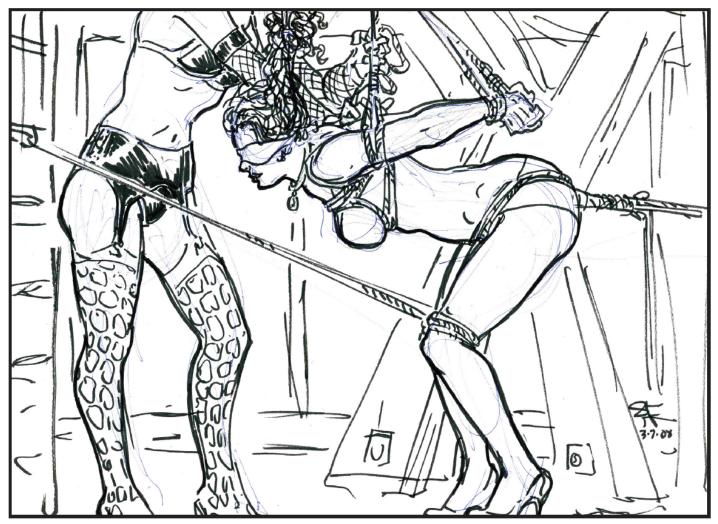
Defending the Electronic Frontier detail 2008

the pre-parties was Club Enslaved, where I drew these lovely young women doing a rigging demo. I wish I had gotten their names! There was a gallery show of some of the hot young "Pop Surrealist" painters up from Los Angeles at DNA, but I didn't go to that. The Seventh Annual San Francisco Fetish Ball itself was at the Regency Center, so I was back again drawing in that vast glittering space.

When Liliane Hunt drove her pony cart onto the floor of the Ballroom at the Regency, it was one of those indelible moments. Like Bianca Jagger riding the white horse into Studio 54.

The whole latex-clad crowd gasped and drew back, instinctively forming an oval. And when Liliane cracked her whip and her pony surged forward in a high collected trot, everyone cheered.





Club Enslaved 2008

I was so grateful in the moment for my childhood of drawing horses, dreaming of being a horse book illustrator like Sam Savitt. I was so grateful I had a good view, and I understood the mechanics of a trotting cart and harness. I knew that I could nail this moment, and I did.

I worked on the drawing for at least forty-five minutes after Liliane took her pony off the floor. The party grew around me, almost a thousand by the end of the night, but I shot my wad early for this event, and I have never regretted it.

I wandered the luxe venue and the crowd of revelers the rest of the night in a daze, taking peeks at the drawing, thinking, "Did I see that? Did I draw it? OMG." I drew a few more people, where I could find space. The venue was so packed with shiny, clinking people. I was so dizzy and so warm in my corseted black PVC ballgown and black leather boots!

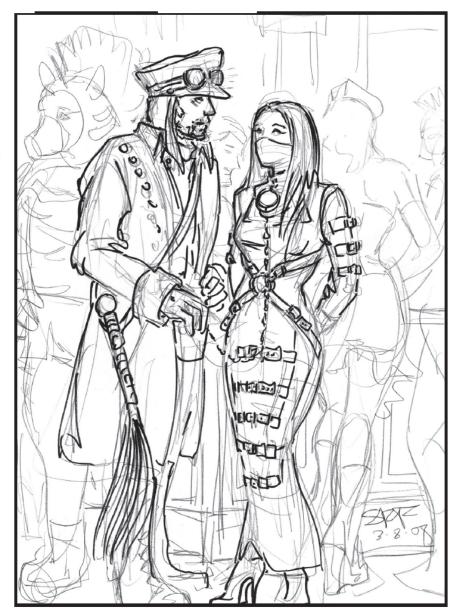
I relocated to a reception room and drew a lovely couple, of whom I wrote on Flickr at the time: "I just loved the look of this couple. Pet was very beautiful, with elegant features and jet-black hair, and Sir had very period ginger whiskers and 20-hole Docs. The latex Zebra behind them was orange-and-white striped like a Creamsicle, I wish I had had color tools to show it."

## It took another ten years, but I did eventually have color tools for moments like that!

The couple bought the drawing from me later; I had a store on etsy.com in those days and some of my original art was sold that way. A sweet collector named Greg bought many pieces, including the one of Liliane Hunt driving her pony. I drew other revelers that night, a well-attended mistress with her servants and a young woman with a tiny patent-leather-corseted waist. But I have no memory of drawing these last two, and the rest of the night is a blur.

### What remains is the gasp as Liliane drove onto the ballroom floor, and all the shiny, shiny boots of leather.

That spring was my first Maker Faire and the first Contraptors' Lounge there, a special area for steampunk creators. I met and drew smart, creative, awesome people like Jake Von Slatt, Margaret Killjoy, and Libby Bulloff and willowbl00, who you will see later on. The rise of steampunk was so fast and so intense, it seemed like some of us



Couple at the Seventh Annual San Francisco Fetish Ball

might make a living as creatives from it. But it never really worked out that way, and as in many "alternative" communities, there were brilliant people lost too young.

## That summer I lost my home, as my not-yet-ex-husband forced the sale at a loss of the little Berkeley house I had spent so many hours decorating.

I put most of my art, furniture and lifelong collection of beautiful weird things in storage and moved to a generic apartment nearby, a blank slate to display my paintings. I have now moved fifteen times, and I can say that this was one of the most terrible.

I made about a dozen smaller paintings and finished or nearly finished two big, very detailed paintings in 2008, "Defending the Electronic Frontier" and the portrait of Midori. Midori and I had several lovely sittings and visits, and we often talked on the phone while I was driving (which wasn't yet illegal)!



Portrait of Midori 2009

## Midori called my cell one July afternoon and luckily, I was in the city already.

She said she and K were going to go get married at San Francisco City Hall and if I wanted to documentary-draw this historic lesbian marriage moment I had 45 minutes to get there.

I raced over to City Hall and found parking, thinking of my courtroom drawing days as I was checked through the metal detector and hurried up the stairs. It was just a tiny group of us. The officiant was San Francisco trans politician Theresa Sparks and she looked lovely. Midori was radiant in traditional kimono and K was sharp in a suit. We stood at the top of the staircase, where so many people have gotten married, and I drew as quick as I could!

### In August I went to Montreal Fetish Weekend, and then a steampunk convention in New Jersey called SalonCon just two weeks later.

During Montreal Fetish Weekend I took a half day off, my first vacation day in years, and wandered the city. I saw graffiti writers working up on a scaffold, doing a wall mural. I climbed up to join them in my long skirt and Mary

Janes. They were surprised. "Back in the day", I said, "I could go over a 20-foot chain link in a cotton sundress." And I could, though that day in Montreal was pretty much the last time I ever climbed anything.

### The woman on the left is named Liza; the ponygirl nodded consent to be drawn, but of course she couldn't tell me her name!

I got to draw famous latex model RubberDoll finally at Montreal Fetish Ball, and other wonderful latex and fetish folks, and speedpainted Dante Posh posing in a conference room!



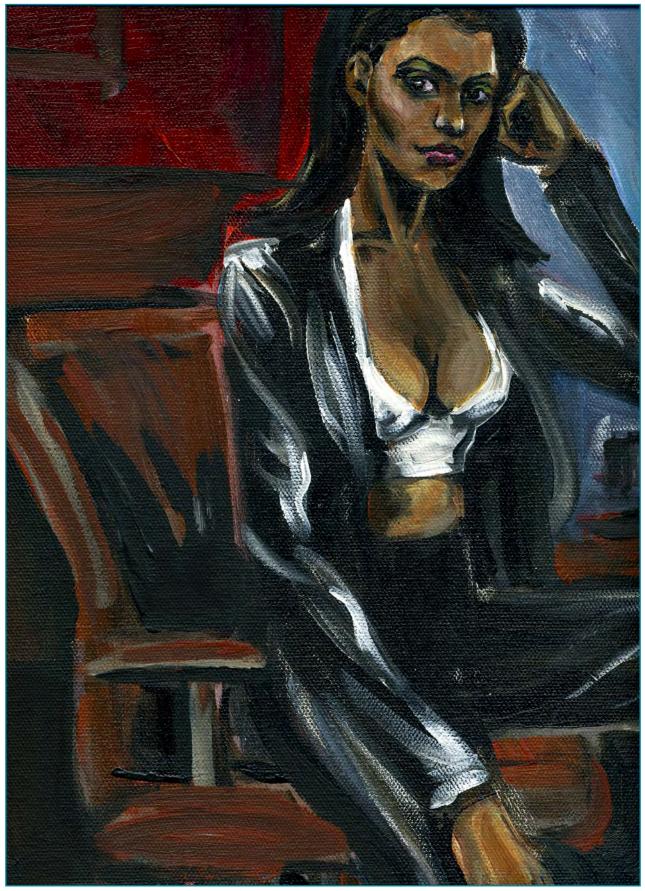
Liza at Montreal Fetish Weekend 2008



Wedding of Midori and K, San Francisco City Hall 2008



Ponygirl at Montreal Fetish Weekend 2008



Dante Posh painted from life in Montreal 2008



Workshop with Maitresse Francoise and Mistress Antoinette at Montreal Fetish Weekend 2008



A real-life loving couple gave a wonderful Extreme Play presentation, Montreal Fetish Weekend 2008



Margaret of New York Jedi at SalonCon 2008



A lovely couple at Salon Con 2008



Anthony at SalonCon 2008. He said he thought it was important that working-class people, steamplebes, be represented.

### Back in the Bay, there were so many September events.

Choreographer Amy Sigil created this ponygirl performance at DNA, of which I said, "This is one of the sexiest things I've seen in a life that consists of seeing a lot of sexy things."



At a Folsom Eve party at Fat City I drew Alix Izen in his booth in his Dark Garden corset. I was only beginning to know some trans men, and this is one of the earliest trans guy drawings I made. I ran into Alix at an art opening in Berlin ten years later!

This drawing of Eva Von Slut was made at a Dark Garden fashion shoot that same week. Corset love!!

I had no booth for Folsom, so I was free to hit my friend

Pony girls and mistresses Sigil 2008





Eva Von Slut in Dark Garden 2008



Alix Izen of Inverted Eye 2008

Eva's famous Folsom party early on. I made this drawing, which includes Erica Mulkey aka Unwoman, who became one of my great and beloved friends and muses. Erica had just left her husband and was wearing her Betsey Johnson wedding dress under a corset for Folsom!

### Then I pulled a hot guy and took him to my new place. I knew Eva would forgive me for leaving early.

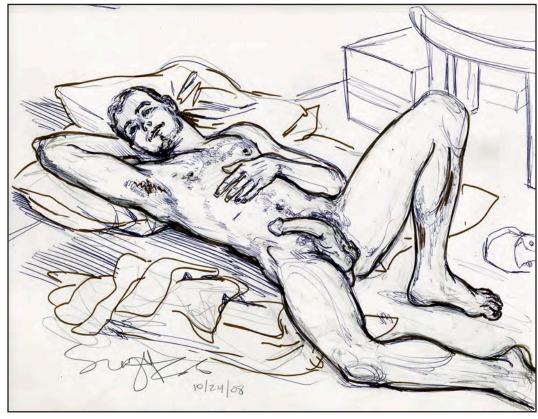
So began my last Trampage, a tramp rampage, a two-year festival of 40s slutting I am still proud of.



Folsom party at The Bunker 2008



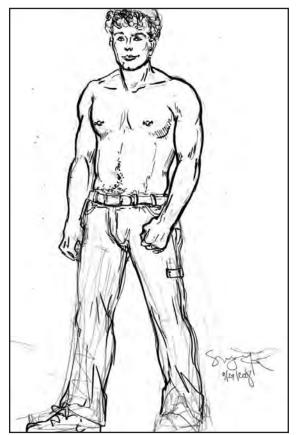
My Female Gaze—J after Folsom 2008

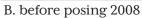


Gianteye in the morning 2008



m. estee at dawn 2008







B. at the Prim Queer Tea at Folsom 2008

In that Fall of 2008 in my bland apartment I started new paintings, of Erica, Chayna Girling, and a pale-haired boy named m. estee who became one of my lovers.





Scott Levkoff and Polly Superstar of Kinky Salon with Peepshow Minigolf 2008

I kept making it to club nights, parties and events. I loved my work, loved my friends, missed my pretty little house.

## In October there was Burning Man Decom, a street party for Burners to "decompress".

There I finally drew the magnificent pony men. I'd seen these guys before and not had a chance to try to capture how elegant and muscular they were. This time I chased them through the crowd until they stopped to dance and I could draw! I also got a good one of Scott Levkoff (left) and Polly Superstar (far right) of Kinky Salon running their Peepshow Minigolf. The woman in the middle is Cass King of the husband-and-wife duo The Wet Spots.

Opposite: Pony Men at SF Decom 2008



Partygoer at DeCom 2008



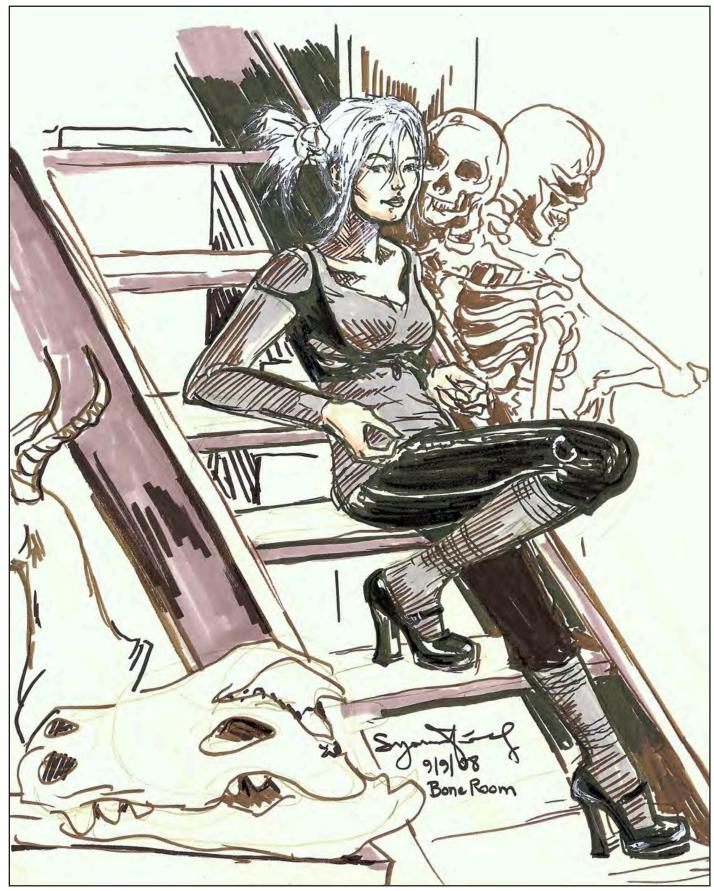
Lady adventuresses at Underworld DeCom 2008



At DeCom 2008



Victoria Victrola's living statue act 2008



3liza at The Bone Room 2008





Dancers at the first DNA Lounge Death Guild 2008



Criollo at Diamond Daggers Masquerade Ball 2008



Tammy and Jen at the last Death Guild at Glas Kat 2008

I went out nearly every night that Fall, aided by a medication for treatment-resistant depression that later became known as helpful for people with ME. I had happy affairs and gleeful flirtations. I pulled a boy right off the dance floor at DNA by asking if he would let me paint his picture! I got thrown out of DNA for sexing in a bathroom with one of the young men, hilarious! I told the story at Dixie De La Tour's Bawdy Storytelling and it was a great hit. I drew my friend Tammy with corsetiere Jen at the last Death Guild at Glas Kat.

I drew Autumn, Madame Adamme of Dark Garden, at Diamond Daggers Masquerade Ball at Fat City. I met my friend Benjamin Wilson at this event. By drawing him wearing a Dark Garden corset! It seems impossible to me now, but I went to multiple events a night. I was guestlisted everywhere, and all the clubs were near each other. One of the most unforgettable was at the Center for Sex and Culture, which had a physical headquarters in those days. It was in SOMA, of course.

It was Sadie Lune's vampire-themed 30th birthday party, and Sadie was regal in black and burgundy Madame S. latex.





Autumn of Dark Garden 2008

There was a very cool performance. Jiz Lee and Syd Blakovich, queer porn celebrities, performed an iteration of their work Twincest, with mutual fisting and drinking each other's blood from syringes. Sadly, I did not draw it. I couldn't see well enough through the crowd, because they were on the floor. I didn't draw Carol Queen either, that night or while I lived in the Bay Area, and I regret that deeply. I thought I had plenty of time ahead, that I was going to live an Alice Neel life. Portraitists do their best work late in life, and in 2008 I thought I was just working through the decades until I got really good. Sadie's 30th was a heck of a party, though. Apollo Hart dressed as "Alastair the Unicorn". He was wearing an acrylic dildo strapped to his head, yes.

The next night I was at the Sunshine Biscuit Factory, an Oakland warehouse full of unlicensed performance and party spaces.



Sadie Lune at her 30th birthday party



### There was a goth Druid ritual happening and the performers got out syringes to draw each other's blood. I was like, "OMG, blood-drinking AGAIN??"

There were Halloween events, at DNA and at the Regency Center, but I honestly cannot remember making the many drawings I made. I was working so much, so fast.

In November I was going to the circus school to draw m. estee and other circus people, drawing hackers at the new hackerspace in the Mission, Noisebridge, and to a Dark Garden fashion show.

#### Then it was Spanksgiving, a jolly play party at the same SOMA venue as the Absinthe parties.

I love this drawing of my friend D., a gifted artist and printmaker who later commissioned a portrait painting from me. Seeing her dancing with her date in his chair was so sexy, and reminded me of the first time I saw a wheelchair user on the dance floor. In 1997 I was at the historic White Horse bar in Oakland (said to be the oldest continuously operating gay bar in the US!) with my friends from my gourmet food job, and I saw a wheelchair user dancing. It was a new idea to me then, that a person in a wheelchair would want to dance. Now I'd be happy to dance in a chair, if I had one!

In December I was at Nude Aid drawing again, my third, at Dickens again at the Dark Garden windows, and at DNA drawing Eva go-go dancing in a Santa hat. But there was hard news: Frank Wu had been laid off and could no longer pay a crew of people to work on his movie. I was out of a job, and scared.













### Femina Potens, Wicked Grounds and the end of my full-time art career in SF.

I was invited to be in a corset-themed gallery show called "Cinch" at Madison Young's gallery in the Castro. I went to the gallery, Femina Potens, to make sketches of Madison and her young queer-porn-positive crew. I met Annie Sprinkle and began to talk to her about doing a portrait, an homage to Alice Neel's painting of her in New York.

#### Madison, left, and Maxine Holloway with her camera, right.

I also hit the city for Dr. Sketchy's, with burlesque performer Citty Rich doing a phenomenal job modeling. At the Edwardian Ball I drew Erica with her cello, Kingfish in his fur greatcoat, and a few more. When I came home that night with Clear, now one of my partners, I chopped my long red hair off with kitchen shears. My capacity to dress up, to present, was going.





### On February 2, the art show "Cinch" opened at Femina Potens.

My drawings and paintings covered most of a wall; Fakir Musafar was on the opposite wall. Everyone I loved was there, both my boyfriends, so many chosen family. Someone from out of town bought the drawing of Tammy and Jen at Death Guild right off the wall, for \$200!

It was a glorious night, the peak of my career in SF.

Monique and Autumn looked magnificent in their Dark Garden corsets. I was dressed up in a shiny new Madame S. latex corset and top from my boyfriend Clear, and my boobs looked so good. Clear took this beautiful picture of us.



I donated my time and art, made drawings of guests and performers. At FP, as we called this beloved space, cis men and hetero couples were present but not centered; the focus was queer femmes and sex work. After so much dress-up and partying purely for play in SF, I felt like there were real issues being surfaced. Sex workers were being seen.

My own status was very insecure, as my remaining spousal support was reduced in stages while Bay Area cost of living skyrocketed. A rich portrait client had booked three paintings for the holidays, which covered my January rent. My lovers bought paintings, which helped. But I knew I had to move to a cheaper apartment. It was another terrible, debilitating move. By April I was in a basement place in suburban Oakland, even more of my things in storage. Scraping new freelance illustration jobs on craigslist was a nightmare; the clients were bad and I was worse, burned out and traumatized.

## Somehow I kept going out and drawing, at Hubba Hubba, at Death Guild, at house parties, at shows where friends like Erica performed.

I remember one night I could barely pull my corset laces; my arms were so weak. Eva was performing an aerial act at DNA







and I had to be there, I had to draw her. "It doesn't matter how you feel", I said to myself, as I always said about getting ready to work. This was a period, like my courtroom days in the Twin Cities, where I often had to pull my car over and just black out for a bit. Once some friends drove past my unmistakable trashy art car parked on the little triangle strip where 80W splits off for the Bay Bridge.

They called my phone and woke me up: Suz are you ok??? "Yeah, just resting." In the middle of the freeway, like you do.

In May Eva and I started what would be our last painting collaboration, as she was now very busy at her work, which was and remains some of the most important work anyone I know does. I never finished this little sepia-toned picture of Eva in full superheroine mode, but it's one of my favorites anyway, and it hangs proudly in our flat in Berlin.



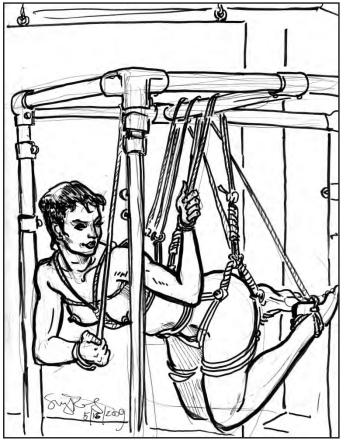
There were go-go dancer Murder Nurses at Hubba Hubba, and another Art of Restraint at Femina Potens.

At FP I drew Sadie encased in purple latex, performing with her snakes, and once again I wished I had color tools.

#### Marvelous rigger Fivestar self-suspended on a bamboo frame and performed feats with clothespins.

So many of the young queers I met in the FP days went on to wonderful careers in indie porn, escorting, sex education and pro-domming. As I write this in 2024, Fivestar has their own Oakland content studio and holds BDSM craft nights! Tina Horn is a fantastic writer (including a great sex-worker comic series) and educator. Jiz Lee is an author, educator, actor and triathlete! Madison has continued to do incredible work as she raises her family, books and movies and podcasts!

In May there was another Maker Faire with lots of steampunk partying and costumery and art, where I had a booth in the Steampunk area.



Left to right, below: dear ones willowbl00, Molly, and my friend Benjamin Wilson and his partner. Kalico Delafay was doing stunning steampunk designs for Dark Garden, and I think Ben's corset was one of those.





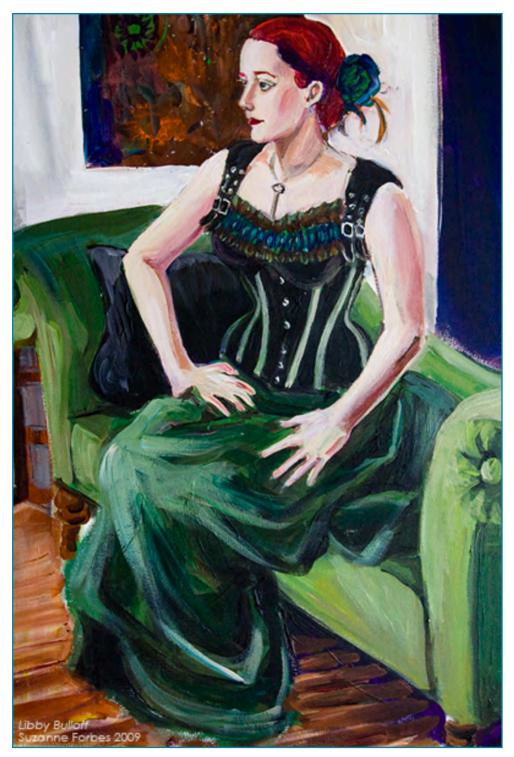


# In June my holiday portrait client flew me up to Seattle to paint him and his mother.

I stayed with Libby Bulloff in the city afterwards and painted her portrait in her green corset, and she took a set of beautiful, sexy photos of me. Libby and Willow were excited to show me their city, but I was so weak. I couldn't walk anywhere, and we had to take taxis, which none of us could afford. I loved being with them, but I was glad to get home to my rusty car.

FP had curated a little show of my work at Madame S., and there I met T., a former sex worker and her partner who were starting a sexrelated content startup.

They gave me some small data entry jobs that summer, which helped. I was scraping by with a little marketing work, the odd portrait commission, and what remained of my spousal support. My divorce was finally final and my health insurance cost a fortune, equal to over half my rent.



### I kept working, finishing paintings, starting new ones, going out and drawing. I was depressed and scared and broke.

In July there was a Kinky Salon with an Alice in Wonderland theme, and I brought a color tool, as I had to Sadie's vampire birthday party. That was a great Kinky Salon. It was one of the last parties where I felt in control and powerful while drawing.

It was a very lucky Kinky Salon for me, as it turned out. I met Ryan and Rose, a couple who were about to open a kinky coffee shop in SOMA.

## The coffee shop was called Wicked Grounds, and among other things I met the boy who became my third husband there.

My exhaustion and burnout were bleeding through to my work, and a week later at a Fetish Ball at Supper Club, I was off my game. My friend and colleague Marc Taro was there drawing too, and we reclined on the white beds of the club, people coming to us to be drawn. I felt drained, nothing to pull from, as if the people I was drawing were taking my energy instead of the glorious exchange of seeing and being seen.



### Still, I like this drawing of a person in a miniskirt and flame shoes.

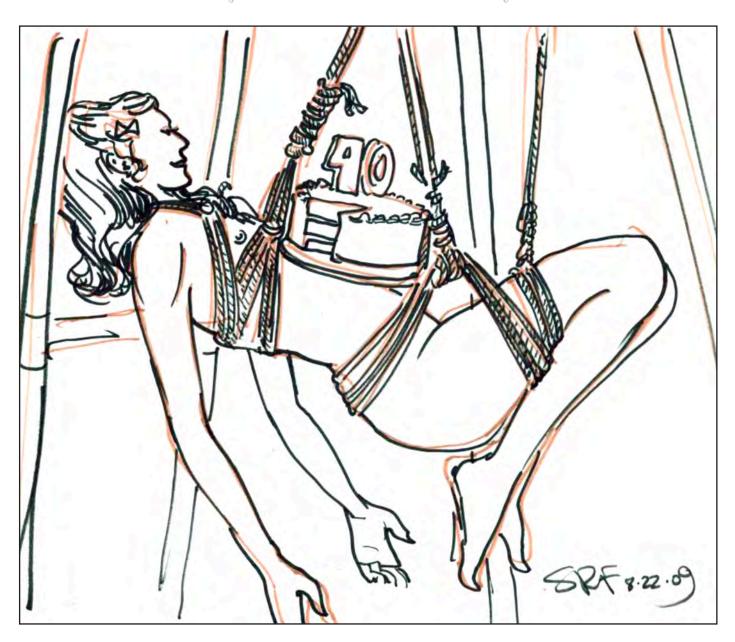
There was a summer edition of Nude Aid the next day, and I showed up as usual and worked my ass off. Nude Aid always felt so good. My drawings were always the most popular of all the artists, I can say honestly and with pride. I drew Jiz Lee in sweat socks and a red jock strap, a moment of celebrating their nonbinary joy amidst





Ryan and Rose of Wicked Grounds at Kinky Salon 2009





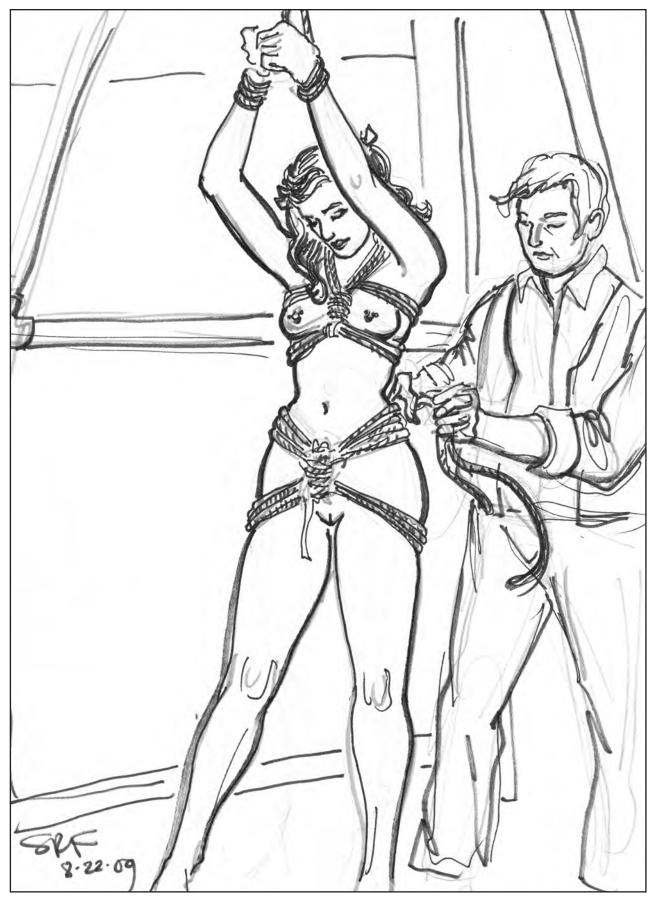
Jiz was the first person I knew who used the singular they to identify, and they are a wise person I learn so much from.

The red metal horseshoe in the photograph is the edge of the clip used to hang the drawing on a clothesline for supporters to see; this one was snapped up instantly and I was lucky to get a pic!

That July I painted my friend Audrey Penven. Audrey was one of the documentary photographers doing superb work on the scene, unpaid like me! Audrey was also the first of the friends who later saved my life by supporting my Patreon in Berlin. We were going to do a photoshoot in trade back then, but I never found the energy.

#### In August there was another Art of Restraint at Femina Potens.

It was shibari artist Madame Butterfly's 40th birthday, and there was lots of play with cake!



Madame Butterfly tying at Femina Potens 2009



I made this exuberant drawing of Madison bound and swinging around the column.

### I knew I had to get a job, that I couldn't keep going, and I asked Rose and Ryan if I could work at their new cafe. They said yes, and it saved me.

That September, waiting for Wicked Grounds to open, with endless delays, we were all desperate. Everyone was being hit by the "Great Recession", except the rich people of the city, and San Francisco didn't make it easy to open a kinky coffee shop. I did some sexy queer drawings for the first ever Wicked Grounds coloring books and was booked by a friend to live-draw at a bachelorette party, which helped me scrape up rent and medication co-pays.

Blessedly, on a scorching hot Folsom Sunday, Wicked Grounds opened. We were all topless, sweating, wearing the round Wicked Grounds stickers on our nipples!

I hadn't worked in food service for over a decade, and it was so hard, but so joyful. Funny thing about opening a restaurant, always: once it starts, no matter how good your plans were, you can't find your ass with both hands. Despite the chaos, Wicked Grounds became my refuge. I made wonderful friends (many sex workers) and reconnected at depth with

leather culture.

WG saved my life on so many levels, and I got a super-lovely new young boyfriend while I worked there too. Blessed memories. Sweet kinksters. Human puppies frolicking in the back of the cafe,



From Wicked Grounds Beefcake Coloring Book

drinking milkshakes from dog bowls. "Sanitize as necessary" (there was so much fucking in the cafe). Making out with my young boyfriend as we pulled espresso shots! There were porn shoots in the cafe, with a sign on the door "Closed for porn shoot". I met dear ones Mickey Mod, KC and so many more.

Jared from DNA gave me the sobriquet "Velocicougar"—"My God, it can open a door!"

Thanksgiving. Collaring my boy. Our staff Christmas party, and New Years Eve 2009, when my boy and I had the cafe all to ourselves. Candy cane whips, stingy not thuddy! Leather elders meeting in the cafe. Littles playing! Glorious SOMA leather spirit. It wasn't easy, it was very very hard on all of us, and especially on Rose. Rose worked harder and is still today, in her high-stress professional role, more driven and committed than anyone I have ever met. But there was a lot of love.

And then I met my husband while working there! He came up to the counter one day looking like Central Casting for Suzanne Forbes had sent him, tall and thin with long dark hair and blue Irish eyes. I had to waitlist him for the next year because I had so much action already, but I knew when I saw him, he was gonna be a big deal to me.

#### In October I went to the Exotic Erotic Expo with the sex startup folks to draw.

This lady with a whip is the only drawing I felt good about that day. I was empty of creative force, feeling toxic and useless, forcing the machine of my craft to grind. I was talking to the startup people about a fulltime marketing job, because as fun as Wicked Grounds was, it was killing my body, and I could not live long-term on food service money in the Bay Area.

In November my husband's lawyer moved to get my remaining spousal support terminated because the house had been sold, as he'd insisted, at a loss. I chose between paying my health insurance, which covered much of my very expensive medication, and paying rent. I told my landlord I was moving out, and then in December I was homeless, my art archives and the rest of my things in storage, without a lease in my name for the first time in my adult life. I slept in my car one night and then went to stay with a wonderful friend in West Oakland.

She and her partner gave me a home for the holidays, and in January offered me the rental of a basement room at a very low price. They saved my life too.

The VG Fetish Ball at Supper Club in December was the last event I did as a fulltime working artist.

Lovely women in this drawing, Lilla Katt and Kiten. They look a bit bored; I think they were!

In my five-year run from January 2005 to December 2009 I made over 650 drawings of community, over 100 finished paintings, and hundreds of drawings for commercial illustration clients like Frank Wu.

I had no assets besides a rusted, scrappy 1991 Toyota Corolla, no retirement, no savings, and on January 1, I had to let my health insurance go.





### CHAPTER SIX

#### The Upper Floor and startup life, again.

hings did get a little easier in 2010. I was now a tenant of my dear friends in West Oakland, and a parttime employee at Wicked Grounds. Most nights tips at the cafe shared out to gas and toll money for the next day and a taco and chips at Cancun. I cleaned the toilet at Wicked Grounds on my 43rd birthday, exhausted and aching, as my boy mopped. I wasn't happy about it, but I understood it could have been worse. Community had protected me.

Even at my best I have never been a person who could hold a full-time job and do anything else, but at 30 cafe hours a week I was able to keep hitting some events. We went to the Edwardian Ball and I drew loved ones in their splendid clothes, like Whitney Moses here in Dark Garden. Having my good boy with me was a great help.

We would go to The Citadel to play. We hung out with porn stars and leather elders at work. We would walk down the street from the cafe to Mr. S Leather, where our friend GothKitty Jen worked the Madame S. counter. We'd drool over gear we couldn't afford and hang with Jen. It was without a doubt the kinkiest era of my life since age nineteen.

### SOMA was so much like the West Village and Christopher Street of my teens. I loved it.

In February there was a bondage night at Supper Club, with a Stormy Leather fashion show, and I drew Tina Horn and her famous ass, which had its own twitter account, called, well, tinahornsass!

Later that February Madison held an event at the new Porn Palace, the enormous military building that had been bought by kink. com.

The event was called "Thin Line between Art and Sex" after one of Madison's films, and it was my first time seeing the finished Upper Floor, though a friend who worked there had given me a tour the year before. The Upper Floor was the penultimate floor of the Armory building, a suite of huge rooms elaborately decorated as Victorian parlors. It was film set and party venue in one.

"Thin Line" was spectacular, and so, so queer. People were doing personal sex in the same space with work sex and art sex, and it was one of the wildest events I ever saw. Everyone was so excited about all the padded velvet chaises and sofas!

I met performers like Devi Lynne, Maggie Mayhem, Lilla Katt,



Jessie Cox and Jack Hammer, and drew them. There was bondage and fisting and Hitachis. I made a drawing that I cannot show you in this book, sadly, a drawing of Maxine and a fucking machine that is the most popular drawing I ever uploaded to flickr, and has been viewed over 40,000 times to date. There is one of Devi fisting Lilla that is my second-most viewed drawing!

Just a month later we were back at the Armory for another Femina Potens event. This was an afterparty for Art of Restraint at FP, and I drew right through both events.

Maggie Mayhem tended bar topless. Maggie has become an author, activist, athlete and advocate who does so much good, and came to Berlin to speak at a hacker conference not long ago!

I drew Jack Hammer again that night, while he was in rope by famous Seattle ropemaker Twisted Monk. The ceiling of The Upper Floor was studded with rigging points, spotlights and wires through the faux tin tiles.





I loved drawing beautiful Bella Rossi, seen here with Maxine.

In April there were changes. I finally start-ed a marketing job with the sexcontent startup folks, and my boy got an actual career job in a distant state. I wasn't giv-ing up on my art career yet, though, or on Femina Potens. It cost Madison a fortune to rent the gallery space in the Castro, and very little art got sold; the concept was too transgressive for the staid, "family-friendly" Castro of the Oughts. Madison worked so hard to keep the gal-lery open, and the fundraisers were great fun.



Jack Hammer and MinxxGirl at Thin Line 2010



This drawing of Jessie and Bella is one of my favorite drawings I've done. I was also very excited about the new, soft couches. I was always tired and in pain, and it meant the world to have a soft place to sit.

#### In April and May I went to KinkySalon for a play party called "Threshold", where I made a pretty drawing of Pink in rope, and got to draw Madame Butterfly tying again.

Starting my new job was fine at first. I liked my colleagues, and I could drive to work near the Panhandle (as a New Yorker, I refused to use SF's little "subway" on principle). I liked doing marketing for sexrelated content, working with the great San Francisco toy company Good Vibrations and others.

### We were at the Armory again April 16, for "Art Unveiled", a new take on "Art of Restraint".

I drew Madison in her Puimond corset looking like a movie star, in the excellent lighting of the main room. There were like six full-size woven carpets in the main room, anchored by sofas, bondage furniture or the stage, with a couple or threesome going at it on each. I loved that there were safer sex supplies like condoms, lube, sanitizer and dams in baskets everywhere.

I kept most drawings from these events, instead of them being sold to fundraise, and I am glad I had many of them still to scan for this book. My presence live-drawing had become an attraction, an event component, itself! Jack loved my drawings of him and we always meant to meet up so he could buy them, but never organized it.



#### In May there was Maker Faire, drawing dear ones dancing, walking around the huge fairgrounds until I thought I would die.

My life in these years consisted of being depressed, feeling terrible, going somewhere and drawing queers fucking or friends in corsets, feeling exhilarated and great for a few hours, and then being exhausted but so proud of the work I'd done and full of love for the people I'd drawn. My spirit was so willing and my body was so weak.

I started the sittings for a big commission for a couple I'd met at the Armory, a serious D/s portrait with much detail, that I was actually paid for. That work took much of May and June when I wasn't at the office or visiting my boy in the middle of the country.

# In July I went to the art warehouse NIMBY to draw women I knew making sheet metal cubes for a huge Burning Man project called Syzygryd.

These three later became my loyal and generous early Patrons, and I am so grateful to them for sustaining my work.





Christina Nicole and Audrey working on Syzygryd at Nimby 2010

There was another "Art Unveiled" at the Armory, and I made many drawings, including a great one of Maxine going to town on trans star Billy Castro's strap.

Somewhere in the summer I made this drawing of my friend Kitty Stryker, which is my favorite of the many I have made of her. Working a job was wearing on me, though. My boy came to visit, and I was grouchy, too sick and depressed to play. Friends had used art I made for their Burning Man project for a commercial project without my consent and without payment; I was bitter and devastated. My sweet boy and I gently separated. I pulled a couple new boys, but my heart wasn't in it. My Trampage was nearly over.

I went to Five Minutes of Fame at Noisebridge, a weekly event, quite often. That hot August at Noisebridge I drew D., the boy who became my third husband, for



drew our friend Ani Niow, the creator of the steam-powered vibrator, while she ran the Five Minutes light and tech.

D. and I started talking about doing Johannes Grenzfurthner's sex performance livestream event, Six Feet Under. It was going to happen the week after Folsom.



### Meanwhile I went to a porn feature film shoot at the Armory, where I made my first human pup drawings!

How lovely to see Liliane Hunt poised and elegant with her pets, including her purse-holder. I had spent so many hours admiring pup hoods and headpieces at Mr. S, but it was still hard to get the pup muzzle shapes. I don't like animal dogs, I'm scared of them, so I never learned to draw them!

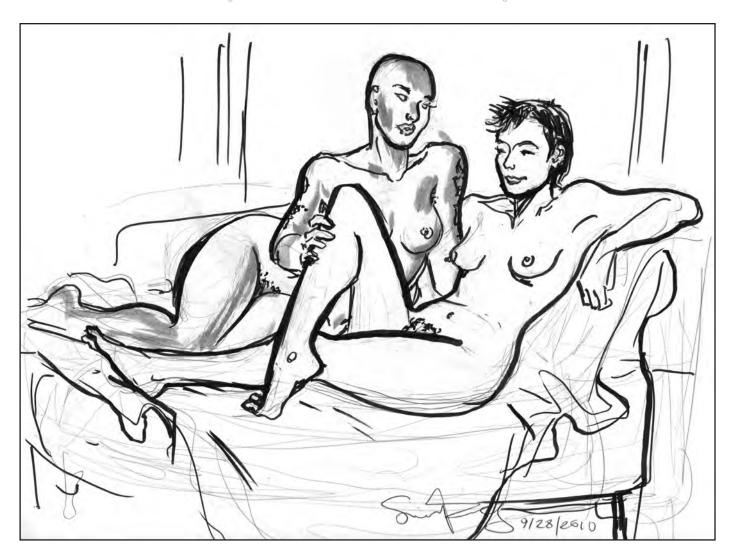
Then it was Folsom again, and after a long hot day running around the Fair, I was in the lobby of a hotel with D. He asked if he could kiss me, and I said yes.



So Folsom Weekend is our anniversary, and while we often forget our wedding date, we never forget Folsom.

During that week I did one of my most precious drawing sessions. I was invited to live-draw during a shoot for QueerPornTv by Jiz Lee and Courtney Trouble. I dressed up at work, headed over and settled on a loveseat in a Mission bedroom lit by one of the most gorgeous twilights I've ever seen. For over an hour I drew Jiz and Papi Coxxx fucking, sucking and fisting.

I can share only this drawing of the afterglow, out of these six drawings. I am in the movie, at least; Jiz and Papi come to me gleaming and grinning, post-coital, and look at my sketchbook!



### The next Saturday was Six Feet Under. D. chickened out and I wound up doing the coffin sex with a wonderful young lady I knew.

I had sample dildos and harnesses in the trunk of my car, for reviewing for work, so I just grabbed them! That last day of my great Trampage began with jumping out of an airplane with my housemates, having a nap, and then having strap-on sex with a girl half my age. In a coffin. In a dumpster full of dirt. On a South of Market street. While hacker auteur Johannes Grenzfurthner of monochrom livestreamed us onto the wall for the watching crowd.

Then I retired to the loft of Noisebridge for a late-night boy-boy-girl threesome (my fave!), with D., who became my husband, and another twenty-seven-year-old.

#### And the next day D. and I were together, a couple, just like that.

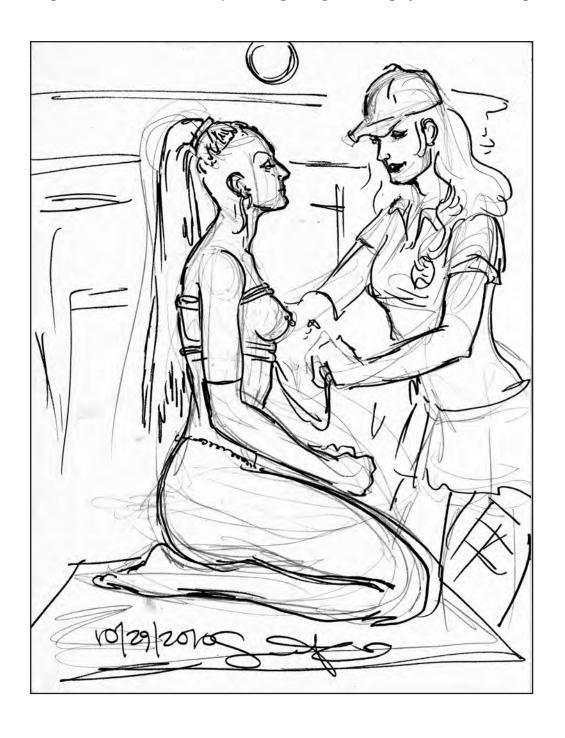
D. and I went to all kinds of events in our early days together, Femina Potens and the Armory and Burner parties. For Halloween at The Upper Floor D. and I dressed as Richard Nixon and Rose Mary Woods, and my friend

The Mickey Mod made a drawing of us, the only drawing that exists of me having sex at a sex party!

I drew Mistress Chey in her Girl Scout costume in front of the fireplace, putting nipple clamps on a partygoer. The other drawings from that night are far too explicit to print here!

There were Trickster Art Salons at Mission Control, the Kinky Salon headquarters, the EFF awards, and the Artumnal Ball. I bought D. a top hat and a vintage silver tuxedo for the Edwardian Ball, since I had a sort of real job and still lived affordably in my friends' basement.

In 2010 I managed to do 130 documentary drawings, despite having a job. I was winding down, though.

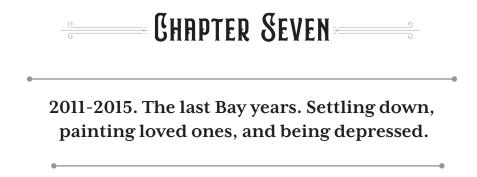




Randall Furtographer at the Artumnal Ball 2010.



Cover painting for Unwoman's "Uncovered" album.



kept working in 2011, as much as I could. D. and I became regulars at the Upper Floor, for the Sunday brunch play parties and other events. It wasn't the same as Madison's events, though. Commercial porn production, even with dear community members and friends, felt more male-gazey, more cis-het, less equitable. It was convenient, it worked for our day-job schedules, but I wish I had committed to documenting independent queer porn community instead.

#### We went to the Edwardian Ball, of course, and the Burton Ball, and to raves and house parties.

But mostly I went to my job, and painted. I made a big painting of D. in my dear friends' basement, and one of my beloved Erica, Unwoman, for her album Uncovered. I wasn't okay, though.

The startup I worked for pivoted to a software as a service concept, and I was lucky to be kept on, but the work was less joyful. Everyone at work was stressed, and I started not being able to sleep at all. Sleep was always the only thing that held me together. I called D. crying from the office that Spring, knowing I couldn't hold a day job anymore, and he said, "We'll get through this."

#### We have been married since that night, as far as we are concerned.

I was lucky to be laid off instead of fired, and D. and I moved into a beautiful little Craftsman apartment in Oakland that Fall, while we were both on unemployment! Three things I have always been able to get: a man, an apartment and a job. I thought I'd rally after the move, having my own home again with all my art and beautiful things, But the move crushed me. Doctors didn't believe any of my symptoms were physical; I was "just anxious", "just depressed", "getting older".

#### I had five couple's portrait commissions that year, of wonderful people.

I finally painted my cherished friend Anandamayi in her North Berkeley garden. I painted our friend Whitney Moses in her Dark Garden corset. I live-drew our hacker friends' November wedding, but I barely hit my marks; I was too depleted to make the athletic mind-body connection of live drawing.



M. and I. at home 2011

I started doing more creative handwork that year, messing around with embroidery and polymer clay and jewelry-making, and I think those low-stakes things helped some.

The paintings were pretty good; I especially loved the sittings for this portrait of my femme friend D, of the wheelchair dance at Spanksgiving, and her girl S. They posed in D's flat in the Mission, and it was truly quality femme time, the three of us talking and working, S sometimes head bowed in service space. It was a bright spot.

Depression was hounding me, endless cycles of therapy, treatment, dose changes, so many recovery meetings, nothing lasted. I was tortured by suicidal ideation.

# By 2012 I was driving aimlessly around the East Bay freeways, thinking of nothing but death.

Of course we still went to parties, we still went to the Edwardian Ball, I was a highly functional depressive, but I was miserable. That summer D. came home early from a hacker conference in Berlin, terrified for me. His new startup job allowed domestic partner coverage, and I got on a new plan.

My mom called a hundred East Bay psych doctors, from her home in Connecticut, to find me a new shrink. I got new meds, and they worked, and they have worked ever since.

After a lifetime of severe depression, I have now had twelve years of complete remission. It is the great good thing of my life, one medical miracle in a sea of doctors denying my reality.

With my brain finally at peace, my body immediately broke down further, permanently. I didn't try to go back to making art full time when I entered depression remission. I wasn't going to push my luck. I went all in on soothing crafting, sculpting, and making, and got a part-time marketing job, a job on MY side of the Bay finally! I went in to work at noon, my first disability accommodation, and could call in sick as I needed.

I made all of three drawings in 2013, of my co-workers. These good guys helped me set up a website I could use myself, with a blog, and I started blogging. In 2014 I made just three pieces of art, but they were fine ones: portraits of dear friends. Some of these last Bay works are in Chapter 10. Our last years in the Bay were in that



pretty apartment, me going to my low-stress job a few hours a day, making pretty crafty things, trying to get medical help that never came. I was not depressed, but I was dizzy, exhausted, had fibroid surgery that was a nightmare, had constant agonizing hot flashes and increasing visual snow. D. needed a hip replacement and a highly specialized rib cage implant.

We knew we had to move to a place with better healthcare. A place where it wouldn't be as hot as our Oakland apartment was every summer and fall. A place with some kind of social safety net, since neither of us had any assets or savings.

And my friend Sadie Lune had been living in Berlin for several years. I sent her an email.



Suzanne and Eva painting at the Meat Market Alameda 2007



### The San Francisco to Berlin Express, by Eva Galperin

n the eve of her third wedding, my friend Suzanne raised her glass and declared to the assembled crowd: "I have never had thin thighs or good credit, but I've always had a lot of courage." She was preparing to fling herself into the unknown, moving from San Francisco to Berlin, a flinging which would turn out to be more expensive and anxiety-inducing than she had anticipated, as I'd discover upon visiting her a few months later.

I browsed housewares with Suzanne in Potzdammer Platz because we are people who find housewares soothing and the white walls and lack of large brown furniture in her new apartment was setting her teeth on edge. Suzanne nests harder than any person I have ever known. Her little Craftsman in Berkeley was a burgundy-walled coral reef of art. No surface was free of paint, fringe, or velvet. Everything glittered. And the moment she landed in Berlin, I realized that in the same way that in the midst of Winter Albert Camus found within himself an invincible Summer, Suzanne carried this Aladdin's cave within herself and would simply recreate it wherever she landed. I need you to understand that the Suzanne that came to Berlin from San Francisco was incandescent with the urge to paint her walls in jewel tones, hang velvet drapes, and to buy up all of Berlin's unwanted, bulky Victorian furniture and fill her apartment with it until it was near bursting.

Suzanne brought that same level of intensity and fearlessness to every portrait that she ever did of me, whether I was posing in a kimono and a white fox fur stole I had nicknamed Archibald on an overstuffed pink Chesterfield at her house in Berkeley or in a Dark Garden leather corset in front of the meat counter at an Alameda grocery where the proprietor insisted we should come back and do something in produce, or brandishing the crossbow I'd purchased in Shanghai in the living room of my Folsom St. warehouse. I lost count of the number of times she would finish a portrait and I could not hug her because her shirt would be covered in paint and I would gasp because the person in the portrait with the outfits and the props and the sets was always recognizable as me, but she was also beautiful in a way that I do not normally feel I am beautiful. When other people look at me, I am "poised" and "striking" and "interesting" and "charismatic" but there was never any doubt in my mind that my friend Suzanne chose to paint me because she loved me and she thought I was beautiful. And doesn't everybody deserve that? Doesn't everyone deserve a person who will observe them with tenderness and care, who will take their weird gestures and uncanny facial expressions and the joy that comes from doing the things that they love in an environment where they are powerful and confident and turn it into art?

In the same way that Suzanne carried her home inside of herself and willed it into being on the other side of the planet, Suzanne carried the intensity of her portraiture over to Berlin. If anything, she became even more engaged in the sketchy and the marginalized, the weird and the transgressive, those with thick thighs and questionable credit.

And I hope that they see this work and they gasp. I hope that they get to feel like someone sees them and loves them and thinks they are beautiful.



Sadie Lune with her second child Berlin 2019



uzanne always blows prismatic bubbles into my heart when she calls me one of her muses.

My child-self goes giddy with the delight of a dream made real, my adult self embarrassed that I want/ ed the implications of the title so badly. She is a generous artist, generous with praise and her pen, generously permitting her subjects to enjoy their own trussed-up personas, to delight in costume, character and mutual world-building. Sitting for a painted portrait was like a playdate at an enchanting friend's house, a kinky Victorian tea party where we all held roles of model, muse, painter, and artiste. There, amongst talk of trauma, revelations, and life navigations, to everyone's shared satisfaction and delight, we played. Incredibly, after just a few hours of gossip and bolstering each other's belief in ourselves, we had the painting. The canvas proclaimed that no one was play-acting; Suzanne has a swift, powerful, finely wrought talent. It's a wonder to find yourself rendered from a precise angle, to see yourself seen as you'd always wished the world saw you. Suzanne excels at seeing people, seeing their projected glory and their frail humanity, and blending them with grace. She loves your magic, feeds on your glamour, and fosters the archetypes you embody without disappearing your face, your stance, and the stories told by your body.

Suzanne reflects the desire of her models to be seen and to be desired. She draws from her own desire for others to live into their bodily autonomy and supports their gender euphoria. She holds up the temporary worlds and fleeting moments created between their desire and her belief. She brought magic to events, bridging the space between the stage and the scene. At any theme party, she was her own genuine attraction. Smiling while she worked, she relished the mutual pleasure circuit that her work and working brought the performers, the audience, and herself. Her presence and skills were closer to a durational performance art piece than the voyeuristic one-way capture of most photographers or artists working from life.

Suzanne and I met at an event at the Center for Sex and Culture, the community center, event space, and sexuality library founded by my beloved mentors cum friends, Dr. Carol Queen and Robert Lawrence. I was impressed by her outfit and artistically intimidated by her accomplished drawing. We became event comrades; I'd enter a space and find her seated like a figurine on an altar as I did my nervous first scan of the room. I always hoped she'd ask to draw me. We were not friends yet, but kind of mutually-admiring, symbiotic, artist party girls. We were both regular participants in Nude Aid, one of two annual fundraising events at the CSC.

Nude Aid was just Suzanne's wheelhouse, a public live-art event and auction with up to 20 local visual artists creating work based on a mutable tableau of lingerie-d, harnessed and collared, or completely nude live models, volunteers from the intersections of performers, sex workers, kinksters and exhibitionists that loved the Center. Attendees watched and schmoozed, and got to take home one piece of art, or pay more for additional pages. Suzanne's work was always swiped from the wall as quickly as she could finish them, swift ink drawings of burly naked pup-masked trans men, gay sailors and femmes in bondage, or three fat lovers reclined and beaming from their sensual embrace.

From 2024 it's hard to imagine how many of us were allowed to glut on years of pummeling festivities. We were exhausted, still hot-gluing the last fake-fur earpiece of the week together at 11:30 pm, but what a boon, what privilege, what amazing luck! We had fun, we had movements, we had full-time scandal, and over-full schedules. We didn't have smartphones, thank goddess, or Facebook yet, for some of these years. We were all dressed up with four places to go, but ironically no one thought to take a photo before we dashed for transit. How elegant, how affirming to arrive at the show, a motley bouquet of misfit dolls wanting to see and be seen, and meet Suzanne. She'd be exquisitely appointed in boots-full skirts-corset-cleavage-fascinator. You'd be fawned over for your labor at presentation, then you and your gay apparel were drawn, archived, and commemorated. Suzanne would translate your night out into real and lasting art.

Since before we had selfies or cam shows, Suzanne has been consistently showing up as an ally to the sex worker community. She's been documenting our activism and pageantry with her loving hand for decades. We screamed and stripped in the streets for our rights, rallying for mutual aid, political campaigns, press conferences, and memorials. Suzanne was one of the few regular attendees of our events who was neither worker, partner-of-worker, client, or looky-loo. Always on theme, she'd dress all in red, a completely crimson flame. Not many non-sw's at the time understood pro-sex-worker feminism, and few cared about either our waves of successes or the assaults on our identities. Suzanne is a recovering junkie, artist, and outcast "bad girl" who respects the plights of all of us hos. She's lived through lifetimes of lurching, nauseating dynamics between men, women, and society at the intersections of power, validation, and economics. She's been invisibilized as a youthful junkie in the 80s, strived against the boys' club penciling for DC in the 90s, and faced new diminishment as a defanged, disabled middle-aged female artist working with nightlife in the Teens. From youth, she understood the basic truth that whores are precious humans.

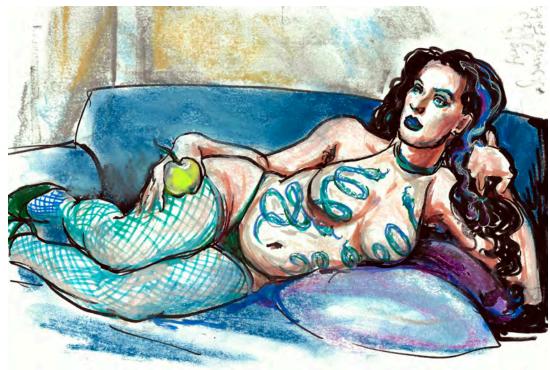
In SF we both did events at Femina Potens, the queer-feminist gallery founded right out of college by multigenre porn director/performer juggernaut, Madison Young. Madison believed in and supported Suzanne's work and my own. In its heyday, Femina Potens was housed at the tip of a triangular corner on Castro Street with full-length windows on two sides. The space held trillions of events, multi-genre treasures, evenings of visual art, installations, and performances. Nudity and genitals and blood were all allowed, as were crying and fisting. It was understood that to stand in the first two rows watching a performer, you pre-consented to place yourself in the splash zone. It was a little queer-feminist art paradise, an actual standing venue in the City that welcomed our work and our political context.

We could make live pro-whore art with the convenient utility of our own nude bodies and prepped orifices right in the window on Castro St. This was early Internet, this art was caught mostly in person; hot crowds standing rapt straining for their view, cis-straight men present, but not centered. This was when most of us didn't have cameras on our phones or were too polite to use them; the crowd's eyeballs and murmurs fed back to the performers directly. Suzanne was there, often the only documentarian. Only memory and her drawings caught the exquisite weirdness and thrills. In these drawings the *communitas* connecting performers and crowd is palpable, you can feel the room on your tongue, like being hand-fed an ecstatic contagion.

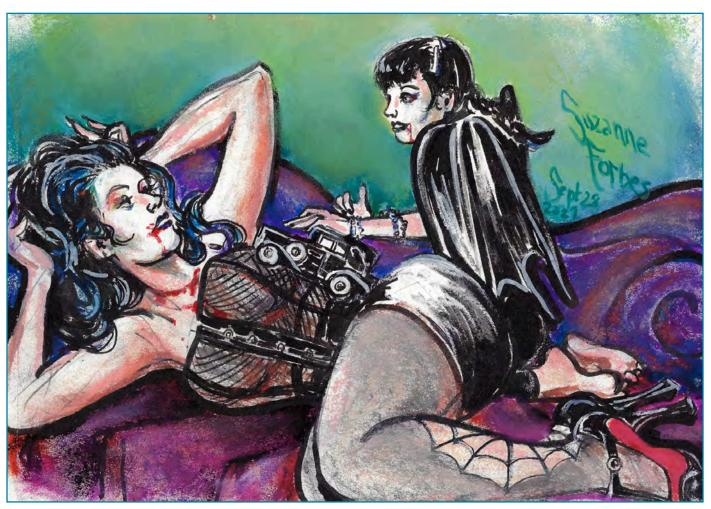
A few years after I moved from San Francisco to Berlin I got an email from Suzanne. In 2013 I had been priced out of the Bay by the second tech bubble. My childhood dream of living part of my life outside the US, divided by the American cost of birth and children, plus my status as a career broke sex worker without health insurance, found me on a plane, 7½ months pregnant, hauling my lugubrious body and luggage to Germany. Suzanne had followed my adventures through my newsletter. She, her husband D., and their two cats were about to relocate to Berlin. She was looking for tips and migrant disambiguation. This was the real beginning of our friendship, and naturally, we began working together.



Sadie Lune performing at Femina Potens 2009



Sadie Lune in Thistle and Spire 2020



Sadie Lune and Vampirina with Hearse 2021

Her home is a flat in West Berlin, an exquisite high-ceilinged life-sized diorama with jewel-toned walls and velvet chaise lounges. In minimalist techno Berlin, she's curated a curio shop up front/brothel in the back ambiance. Her walls boast a lavish selection of her own and friends' art, and artifacts that appeared via gifts, estate rummages, and her needle in a haystack shopping super-power. She set up tableaux in her huge light-up doll house, each room portraying classic and rare comic action figures in bespoke group scenes of political solidarity, perversity and scandal. None of it is canon, but all deeply informed. All of it queer, elegant, defiant, subversive and tiny.

Suzanne saw me at Folsom Europe and asked to paint a portrait of me and my girlfriend at the time, the photographer and filmmaker Jo Pollux. What an honor it was to be invited back into the museum of unnatural history where she lived. The process of sitting for Suzanne was both the easiest art modeling I've done and the most intimate. Art modeling was my gateway drug to sex work; it provided a way to be part of the generative process of artmaking during a miserable 5-year art slump in my youth. Art modeling was a salve to my artistic loss and grief. If I couldn't make, muse-ing felt like the next best thing. At Suzanne's, I felt seen as both co-muse and artist, two truths held together by her and my partner, at the same time.

We talked, a lot. We talked about recovery, relationships, mental health, cooking and decluttering. We shared updates and old stories about mutuals from the SF scene. I learned more about the bag of stones she and her husband carried, with multiple chronic health challenges each, and how influential those hardships were in their leaving America for Berlin. She was effusive in encouragement that remission from major depression was possible; she gave me flickering hope by sharing her own experience of relief from that life-long brutal beast in her 40s.

We lamented the cloud that the completely ineffective "anti-trafficking" law, FOSTA/SESTA, cast over our international underworlds, pushing sex workers worldwide into poverty and onto the streets. We reminisced fondly about the great movers and shakers, the people who taught us integrity, and all the events, parties, and bizarro shenanigans we were so lucky to experience. Something started to shift in me through these painting sessions, held always after dark in Suzanne's lush and cat-strewn sitting room. Pieces of myself from my decade in San Francisco, that almost no one in Europe had ever seen, started to settle in place inside of me. Suspicions and dismissed feelings, unwelcome reactions, and unsettling scenarios found a witness, validation.

Amongst the playful creativity in which we indulged lurked a pervasive culture of dismissive and violent sexism. Despite the glorious bodily freedom, many women and queers were treated with predictable violations and betrayals. Consent and respect were assumed but not practiced by the dogmas of the scene. Substance use and abuse were a constant houseguest, nudging aggression and transgression on. Sex-positivity could be used as a blunt tool to wear down firm boundaries, and many of the big figures on campus were classical "great artist" arrogant assholes with a long list of betrayals in money, sex, art, and friendship. The outward-facing showman-ship often disguised backroom ethical breaches, and in the late aughts we were conditioned to distrust rumors of power abuse when they were about people with sex appeal, clout, or a big following.

The portrait of Jo and I was a large diptych, each of us portrayed on one canvas. Suzanne had connected the two and painted them simultaneously. The double sapphic D/s portrait was hung in Suzanne's sumptuous solo show at Ludwig Berlin. The three of us made lots of work with, about and assisted by each other for the next 2 years. Jo and I shared deep pleasure in Suzanne's aesthetic sense. In brutalist, andro-centric Berlin, connecting through image-making in Suzanne's wicked femme lair felt like dipping into a perfumed moonlit pool. Suzanne live-drew at many of our events: a birthday party with masochistic tasting menu, an exhibit of Jo's photography at the Berlin Porn Film Festival, the book release for Jo's gorgeous book of black and white queer kink photography, "As You Wish, My Lady", and an exhibition including my soft-sculpture installation at the Schwules

Museum. She drew me topping strangers as performance, Jo in ripped fishnets and cloche hat like a debonair queer flapper, us lying beneath my large hanging mobile sculpture with my fetus-full belly cresting above our heads. Jo and I did a shoot at Suzanne's two weeks before I gave birth again, and I treasure those photos of my impossibly balanced extremely pregnant body, made by a beloved in the ornate world curated by Suzanne.

We planned after I gave birth to my second child for Suzanne to paint a portrait of me with my brood. I was very excited to sit again for her fluid brushstrokes, but our first and second attempts to schedule were canceled by one then the other of us. My mental health had been so unstable, especially in my queer event sphere, and the years' worth of baby-induced sleep deprivation didn't help. Kids were sick constantly but unpredictably, and Suzanne needed more days in bed.

By 2019 it was rarer for me to make it through the production of getting ready, leaving the house after dark, making the scene. I was actively trying to jump off the "push train" to save my life. Since mid-way through my second pregnancy, my body and psyche wouldn't tolerate it anymore. Suzanne frequently spoke of exhaustion, canceled two of her three epic annual house parties. Believe me, when Suzanne cancels Halloween, it's clear things are not right.

On the last night of February 2020, the infamous London fetish party Torture Garden came to Berlin for the first time. I had forgotten most of my nightlife ambitions and I had already planned my younger child's first birthday party for the day after. Nevertheless, I had a rare free overnight childcare opportunity, and Suzanne told me she already had tickets, so despite foreknowledge that two events with a hard turn between them was too much for my system, I decided to go. Since this TG was Berlin local, there'd never be a more convenient way to banish residual FOMO about such a legendary event. I found Suzanne easily, seated on the shore of the sea of sweaty bodies heaving in their harnesses as purple lights swung about the room. She had a small headlamp so she could see her page, a settee near the stage, but Suzanne was uneasy and shaken as I approached. She had fallen from her perch and was startled and unsteady. I sat with her and tried to do whatever I could. We had a little fun, but both of us left fairly early. Neither of us could access the full magic of the night. Within weeks, the first covid lockdown began in Berlin. And Suzanne was having a revelation that she had lost a fair bit of ability to function. Base energy, clear thinking and pain tolerance were all faltering. She began to understand the scope of ME and what a risk to an autoimmune condition a virus like COVID could be.

We both crashed hard that year, separately, but with shared understanding that the ways we had been living just weren't possible anymore. I had a burnout, a major psychological breakdown, a baby, a breakup, and Lyme disease within two years. My stress tolerance was shot and my body was too. Suzanne became an expert on MECFS and COVID, joining online crip community. She sent me the latest updates and evidence-based info about avoiding long covid, and advocated publicly for folx to understand the consequences of their actions on the chronically ill, who were all sequestered into fearful isolation.

We both discovered the depth of loss when we lost our ability to participate in events. Community and friendship based in event organization or attendance won't follow you home when you can't get out anymore. The energy spent in and on scenes doesn't necessarily come back to support you, though the folx who do feel like lifesavers in human form. Most won't be there to care for you or your kids, won't re-organize events to be accessible for you, won't book you, if you can no longer get yourself to the events. Goddess bless those who even check in. The scene moves on and auto-regenerates. Busy people don't give much thought to why people sometimes just "disappear". They think it has to do with choice, not lack of access or energy or care and support. I always wondered where people went, and now I know. Care and healing and support require space, time, connection and consistency.

COVID, of course, cost most of us much of the wealth of our extended community. Social media can help keep up your profile, but that takes an unreasonable amount of unpaid energy and focus to maintain. In big cities and fast traveling scenes, we forget each other quickly if we don't continue to go out or faithfully update our feed.

Suzanne and I struggled as we seemed to disappear, but doggy paddled together through chat. We each knew the held-breath sensation of daily drowning, under pain and exhaustion and overwhelm. As the early lockdown online events ended, Suzanne began drawing her models through zoom, which was surprisingly effective at injecting little doses of life into us both. We gently continue to stroke each other's void while we both yearn for and adapt to our lost people and energy and art.

Growing up before the internet, I saw sparse examples of strange adults making their way through the world, by hook or by crook dedicated to the values of art and eros in the demimonde. It's no small feat to survive decades in the underground, creating without succumbing to abuse, addiction, conservatism or suicide. I know the hollow ache from the absence of forebears in deviance. It wasn't until adulthood that I saw photos and media of happy femme artist elders, sex workers organizing, or flamboyant queer love.

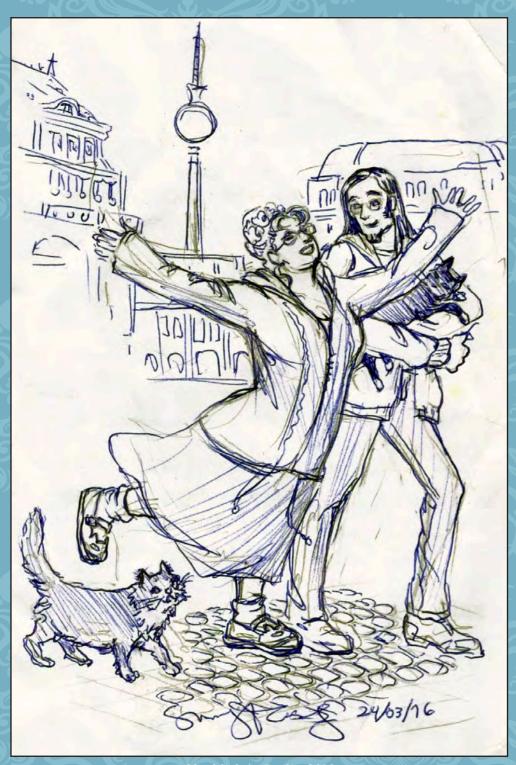
Paging through Suzanne's work gives me the same knowing surges of connection I feel when I look at historical images of criminalized lives. Her work holds our spot against the oblivion of hegemonic erasure, like advertising postcards of brothel-workers from 1910s Storyville, centuries-old queer erotic illustrations, or a snapshot of convivial crews of dykes and trans friends, mugging in bars in Weimar Berlin. Suzanne deeply respects the power of presentation, performance and play. She understands the importance of the respectful voyeur and cherishes the exhibitionist in all of us. She stokes the fierce spirit of defiance to oppressive norms; she glorifies the universal human right to moments of corporeal freedom and expression. She honors the release and relief of time spent in an alter ego for those of us for whom conformity is a stifling costume. She has spent decades diligently drawing the members of the communities that bring her pleasure, inspiration and a righteous opportunity to serve.

The erasure of one's history is a known social assault. It impairs one's ability to imagine ourselves old. How many young bright victims and "fuckups" assume death will come early because we saw no proof otherwise? How many of us have been convinced to stop existing because of lack of access to our community and legacy? Suzanne's portraiture and archiving is an oblation that honors the history of her performers and models. It defies conventions about who is worth being seen and who is worth being shown. It is a long-term community service, honoring the backdoor soul-stuff that nourishes people through decades of their lives, though the mainstream may never hear of it.

I'm endlessly grateful that our cities and interests dropped me into Suzanne's orbit. It's been a gift both to observe and be observed by Suzanne's extraordinary eye. The sacred triangle between Suzanne, her work, and how she treats me and my work, is a long-term buttress and blessing. One day she interrupted my self-doubt lament, and said with absolute conviction: "No, that's not right. You are precious."

This book is a tribute, a record exclaiming that we exist here, now, despite everything against us, sharing joy and erotic creativity and intensity. Our lives are so short and unpredictable and connected. We overcome fear, shame, criminalization and danger for our lusts, our art, our culture, and our rights. Each of us are beautiful, each of us is precious.

Demimonde is Suzanne's offering to our community altar, her diligent logbook for the archive, her fortune of artifacts exalting the legacies of weirdos.



Glücklich in Berlin 2016





Ramon Yvarra in San Francisco 2014

#### CHAPTER TEN

# Beloved Friend-Muse-Patrons and moving to Berlin.

e got married in November 2014. Community was so generous with gifting us support for the move; it would have been impossible without friends and family support.

The first three months of 2015 were a frantic scramble of finishing four paintings for loved ones, packing, packing, packing, and cat travel bureaucracy. And eating a taco for what could the last time, over and over.

We moved to Berlin on March 24, 2015. I can say with certainty that the day we left was one of the most frightening, annihilating days of my life; moving is always HORRIBLE for me. Although I had spent most of the previous year packing 400 boxes of my beautiful household things, pretty clothes, endless works of art both mine and others, and D.'s books and papers, all that was in storage. All my things were in storage, for the sixth time.

All we took when we left was three suitcases and our two cats. I'd never been to Germany, though D. had, and the whole flight I sat up staring into space while D. and the cats slept.

### I was rigid with terror; despite all I had done to choose this and make it happen.

Our first months here were so hard. I adored the city, but our Airbnb was unlivable, D. couldn't work remotely in the freelance way he'd planned, and we had no savings or credit cards. I was soon bringing his soda cans to the grocery store to cash in for coins to buy generic pasta.

And of course, because we had come to stay, we were working all the time on the bureaucracy of immigration. At the end of May I had to ask friends on twitter for money to cover my meds.



Audrey Penven at Cakebread 2009



Anandamayi Arnold in North Berkeley 2012

#### Several friends suggested that I try this fairly new thing, an artist's support platform called Patreon.

Starting a Patreon changed everything for me. Not in a financial security way; I never earned more than 950 euros a month at my highest point. But in terms of feeling supported and having an audience I trusted to be accountable to.

It turned out to be a fantastic way to work for me. I got paid for each post on Patreon, but the most for the first. So the monthly deadline was much less frightening than in comics. In this flexible framework, I was able to be extremely productive and maintain productivity as I got progressively more disabled. I felt seen by my Patrons, who were mainly my dear friends and ex-boyfriends, and valued in the way I had always wanted most: financial support of my making art.

I am so deeply grateful for this time in my work. How loved I have felt in this safety net! How precious it has been to have "Patrons" of my art! I call my Beloved Friend-Muses who were also Patrons my "Beloved Friend-Muse-Patrons". These are the dear ones who have had a truly synergistic relationship to my artmaking, my great collaborators. I had a Patreon from May 2015 to now, November 2024, which will be my last month. Most of my Patrons have been with me this whole time, contributing substantially and meaningfully to my work.

You've already met Eva Galperin, one of my most supportive Beloved-Friend-Muse Patrons; this book could not be without Eva, and I never tired of trying to convey Eva's sharply shining spirit. Midori has been an incredible support too, and the portrait we made of her is in her home, where she sees it as she puts on her shoes. Making a portrait is my love language, my way of connecting. I am so fortunate to have known these folks, to have made art with them, to have been supported by them. Some of my favorite portraits of Beloved-Friend-Muse Patrons follow.

The people in these pictures and the list at the end of this chapter: they made everything you will see in the Berlin section of the book possible.



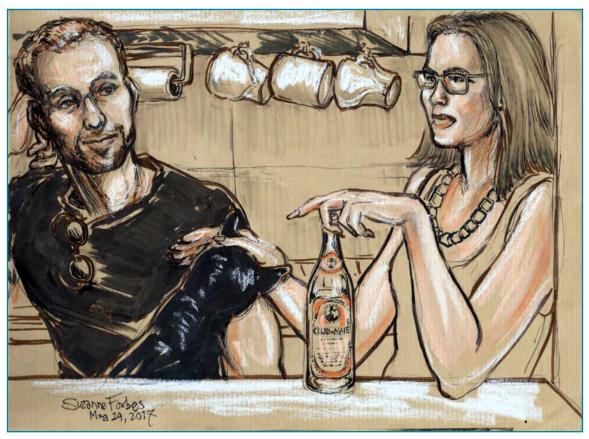
m. estee as Tentacle Lad 2008



Monique Motil painted in Berkeley 2006



Unwoman 2008



m. estee and Julia Vixen drawn in my kitchen in Berlin 2017



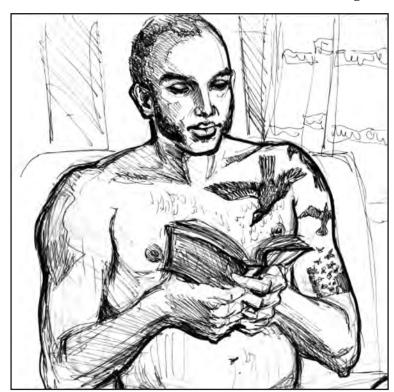
Tinny Chun and one twin in my kitchen in Berlin 2016





Kate at the office 2010

Daed at Octagon 2012



Clear reading Rudy Rucker at the Mandarin Oriental 2009





My precious friend who chooses to be anonymous, drawn at her Oakland home in 2008.



Carol F. detail 2005

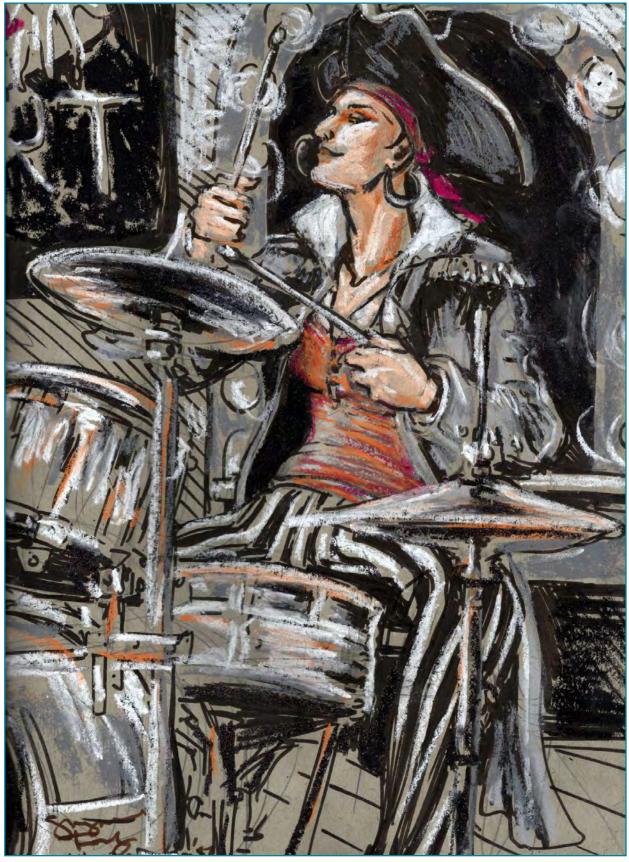


KB in stripes 2006

So many San Francisco friends have come to visit us over the years. Lots of people came for my 50th birthday party, and many used to come to Berlin every year at New Years for a hacker conference, the same one that first introduced my husband to Berlin. These folks have mostly settled down now, and don't make it out here as often. I am glad I drew and painted them when I could, during these visits in the 'Teens.



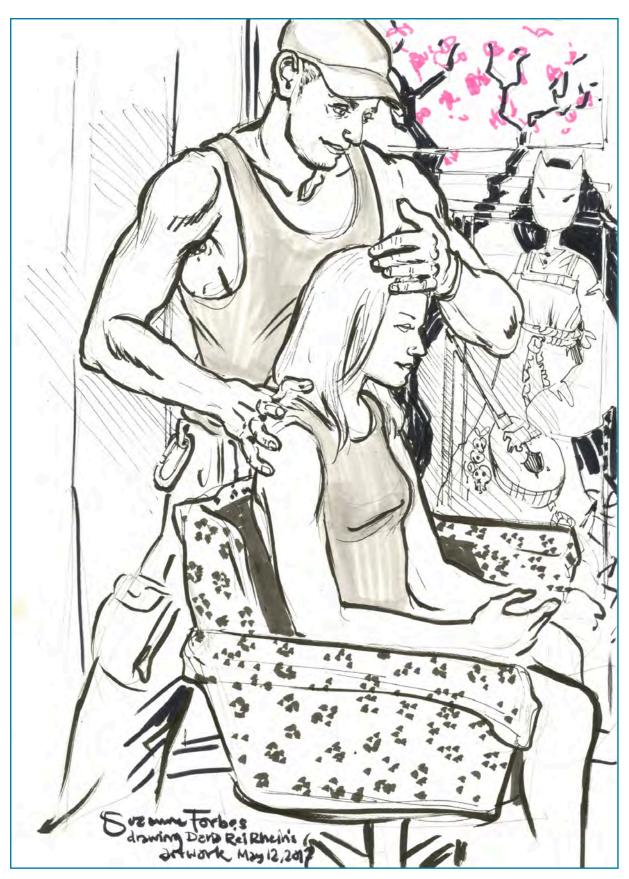
Andy and Carrie painted in Berlin 2017



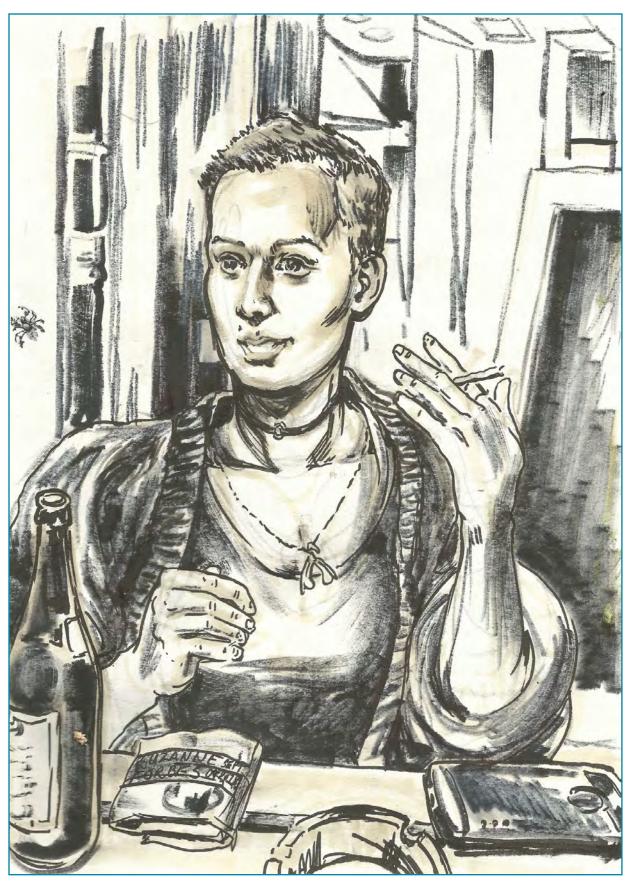
Rah Hell at Arcanoa 2017



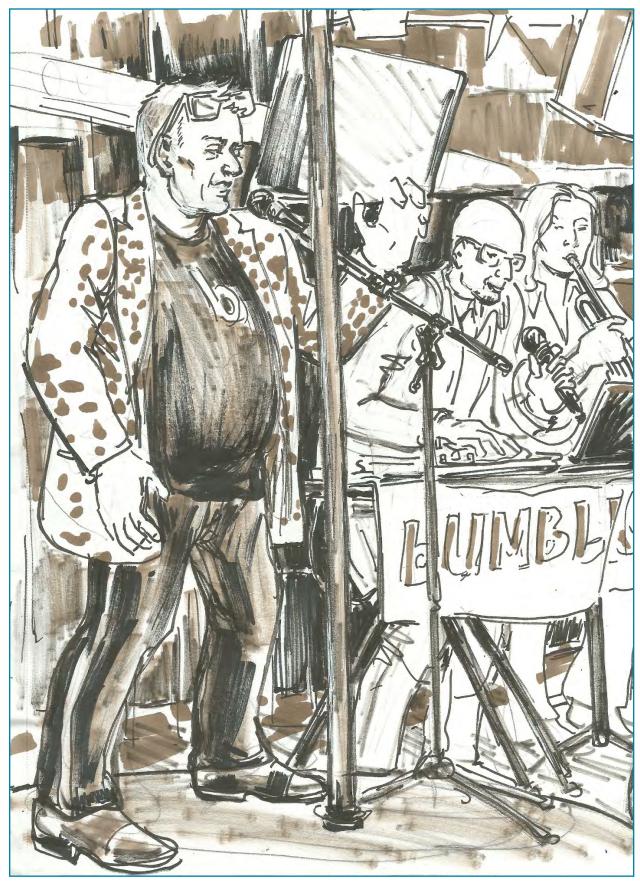
Bindy at Adenauerplatz 2021



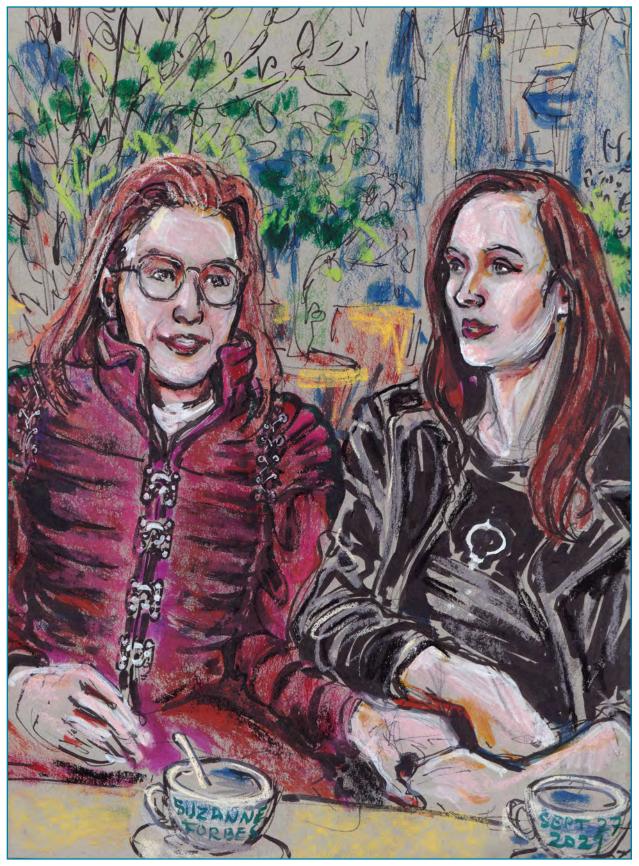
Nathan and Daria at Tremuschi Ink 2017



Silver at Ludwig 2018

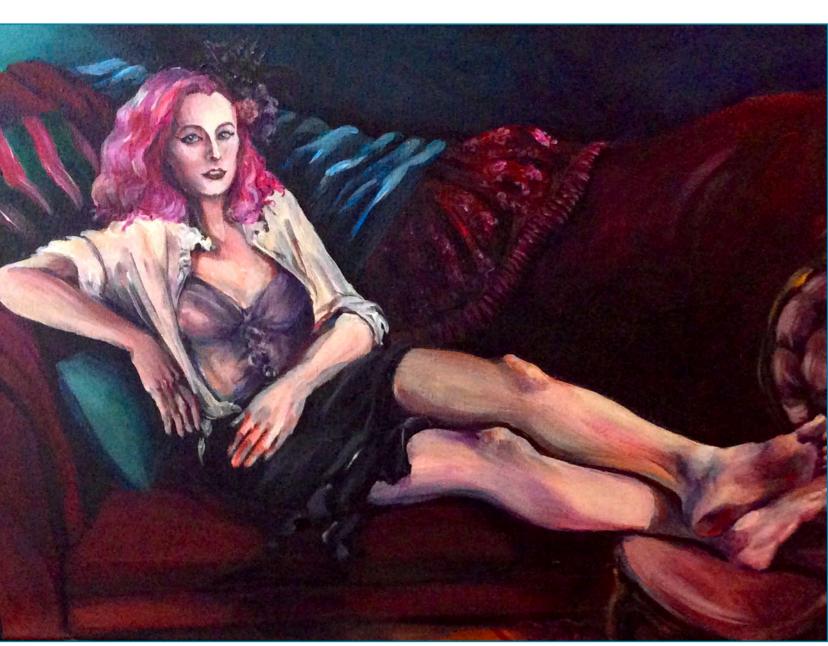


Rob Wimpory and bum Blechum at Monster Ronsons 2019  $\,$ 



Meredith and Andrea in our Kiez 2021

My friend Princess Bunny is one of the few people I have painted both in the Bay Area and in Berlin. She landed here after a trip to Japan and modeled for me, always a delight. I call this small but lovely painting "The Venus of Wilmersdorf", a little joke about our neighborhood or "kiez" in Berlin.

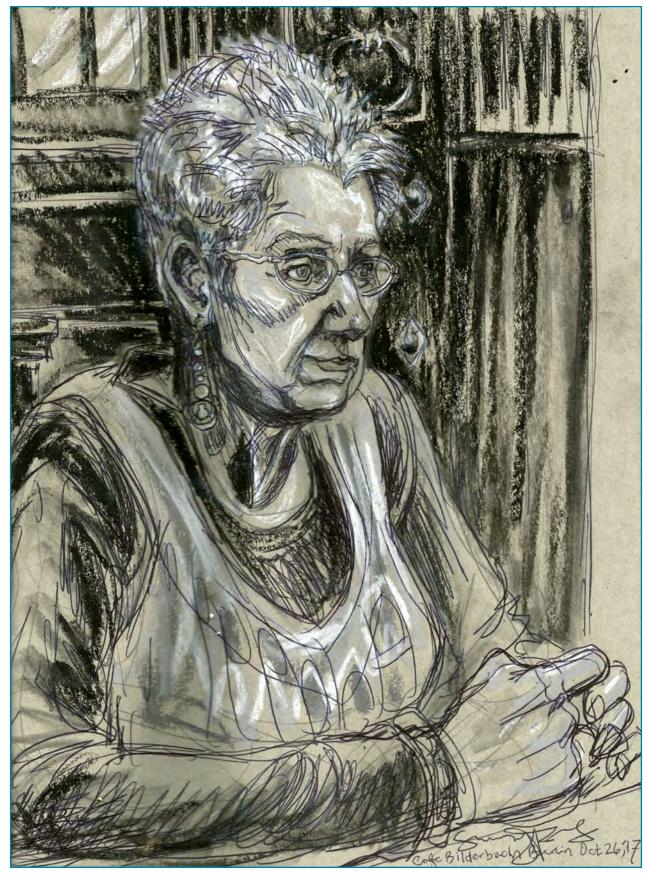


The Venus of Wilmersdorf 2016

My precious and amazing mother-in-law Maureen M., drawn in New Jersey with my hub, December 2011. My Mom-in-law has contributed so generously to my Patreon and so profoundly to our move and survival in Berlin. I am immensely grateful.

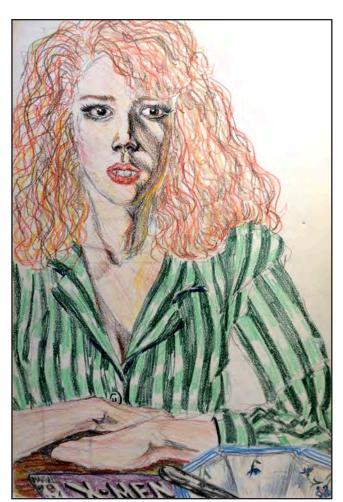


Hub and his mom 2011



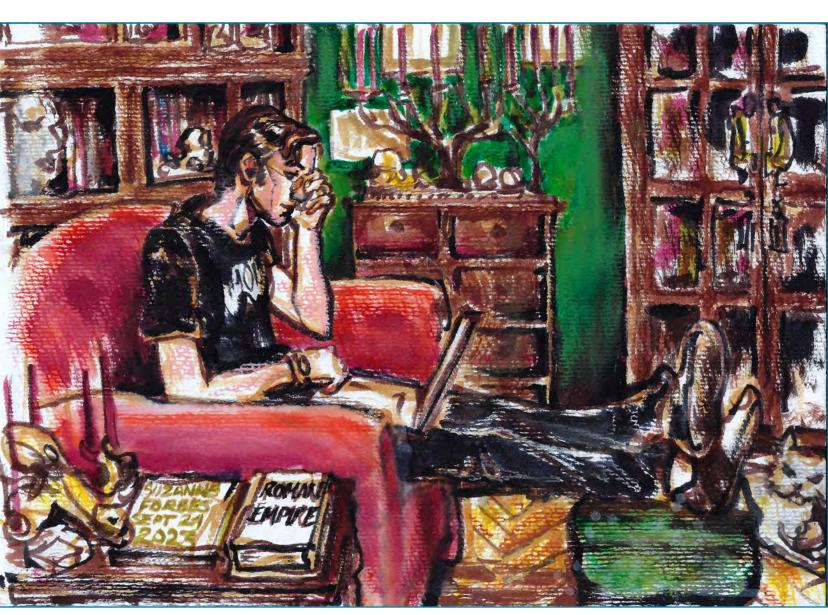
Pat Ketchum drawn in Berlin 2017. My Mama.

Oh, what it has meant to be loved unconditionally by someone as wise, and kind, as unfailingly generous and committed to growth as my Mom! I have been an expensive fuckup all my life. My Mom is the most essential person who made sure I never became unhoused or without my medications because of it. I have been a challenging kid my whole life, and my Mom has loved me right through it. I have been sick most of my life, with "invisible illness", and my Mom has believed me, sustained me and helped me. I am so lucky.





Above, Victoria Aronoff, my friend since I was 8 and she was 9. Drawn in NYC in 1987 and via zoom in 2020. Victoria's steadfast and unjudging love is one of the main reasons I have survived. Her artist's heart has always been beside me.



And the guy who made this last fourteen years possible, my brilliant, loyal and supportive husband, D. He has believed in me, been absolutely committed to helping me make my work happen and valued my art every moment of our time together. D., drawn on our 13th anniversary in our Berlin home.

## I wish I had or could share a portrait of everyone. The work you will see in the next pages could not have happened without the support of all these people:

Ed and Heather Hunsinger	Midori	Marijn van der Waa
Audrey Penven	Chayna Girling	Privacy Enthusiast
Carol F.	Betty Oof	Ms. Kyra
Carrie C.	Anuradha Vikram	Shakrah Yves
Erica Mulkey	Rah Hell	Daniel Paikov
Tom Cavnar	Robert Wimpory	Natascha Artworx
Morley Beckman	Sean Korb	Rosa Quiñones
Icka Boo	Puck the Hare	Ali Franco
Anandamayi Arnold	Mojgan	Dan Shick
Monique Motil	Silver Phoenix	Christina Liu
Whitney Moses	Cyrus Knowles	Anna Sears
Laura Elisabeth	Eva Brunner	Mindy Robin
Keller Holmes	Starchy Grant	HP Loveshaft
Russell Borogove	Clear Menser	Maria Riot
Daed Latrope	Nicole Aptekar	Jeffrey Miller
Meredith L. Patterson	Jake Von Slatt	Willow bl00
Maureen M.	Rusty Blazenhoff	Josh Smith

And others. The people who sustained my work these ten years in Berlin are lifesavers. I could not have survived becoming extremely sick and disabled without the solace and purpose of my work, and I wouldn't have done the work if I hadn't finally been earning some money to do it. Some of the folx who contributed most generously are sex workers and trans folk, and that means the world to me. I love you my darlings!!

This collaboration, between my Patrons, me, and the people of Queer Berlin has been the great work of my life, the hardest work of my career, and the most fulfilling.

I hope you will enjoy the pictures to come, the people of Queer Berlin!





y first drawings in Berlin were on the subway. I was so happy to be on the subway! I felt like I had come home to the Manhattan of my teens. And I was so busy, looking for a flat, doing bureaucracy, keeping us fed on no money, while D. looked for and found a job. Drawing on the U-Bahn enroute to a flat appointment was generally the only free time I had.

I'd begun to describe myself as disabled by 2015, but I didn't identify as disabled. I didn't understand I was a disabled person, with limitations. I thought I would get better, now that I was in this new place with "great healthcare" and a "social safety net"!

In June 2015, I did manage to connect with art community, at a lovely co-working and art teaching space called ESDIP Berlin. But I was so overclocked with our move, finding a flat, buying furniture and household needs, the grueling whirlwind trip back to California to load our shipping container, unpacking 400 boxes, and painting the new flat that I didn't make it to an official drawing event in Berlin for my whole first year.

## I started teaching drawing classes, accidentally, at ESDIP Berlin, and made a wonderful artist friend there, Daria.

I was drawing on the subway, teaching young artists how to draw hands, drawing skaters in the park with Daria. I was playing with using watercolor for the first time since 1987. I was crafting. Now that we had our beautiful flat, D. had a good job, I had my Patreon, and we had Berlin friends, I was so happy, happier than I had been in many years. But I missed kinky queers and burlesque performers!

## Daria hauled me out the door on a hot June night in 2016, when I was completely exhausted, to go to Drink+Draw Berlin, a cool young people's drawing event.

The main model was beautiful Miss Cat D'Vine, and I was in good fettle despite the heat! We had a good night drawing together with the Drink+Draw group of talented artists.

Daria and I experimented with printing things in my newly set up home studio. We tabled at an event called Berlin Graphic Days, in the vast repurposed industrial greyspace called RAW-Gelände. I found myself horribly drained by the hours tabling, sick with exhaustion; Daria and her date headed to KitKat afterwards but I went home to bed.

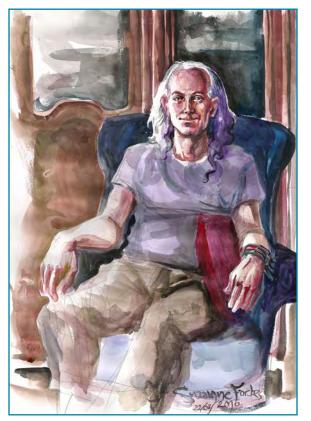
I made portraits of Eva with watercolors when she visited in August. It was a profound visit, where we told each other hard truths while I worked. It was the first time I actually felt the assault that happened to me at San Diego Comic Con in 1986, and it unleashed years of PTSD and reckoning for me. The thirty-year anniversary of my wonderful boyfriend Rob Sawyer's death, that same weekend in '86, was hitting me hard too. Teaching young woman artists at ESDIP was both thrilling and heartbreaking, a compress of hope and fear for these amazing young people.

Opposite: Miss Cat D'Vine at Drink+Draw Berlin 2016

I had full German statutory health insurance at last, and I was pursuing a sleep study to get a breathing machine for apnea, an endocrinologist to get treatment for my Hashimoto's thyroid disease, a gynecologist for Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT). Spoiler: none of that helped, every inch of benefit I have gotten from the medical system here is from talking to other patients and asking doctors to prescribe their suggestions. I had two surgeries that were fine though, and so has D.! He had his hip replacement in 2017, and titanium bars installed in his chest in 2022.

I did a few of these little watercolor portraits. Below is our San Francisco/Berlin friend Mitch Altman in our flat.

We had our first real Halloween party, and I made a truly ludicrous spread of spooky baked goods. Our friend Dia came dressed as Desire from Sandman, and I told them I had to paint their picture. A terrible man was confirmed as the next President of the United States, and I was devastated. As a New Yorker, I knew Donald Trump well, and I was so afraid.





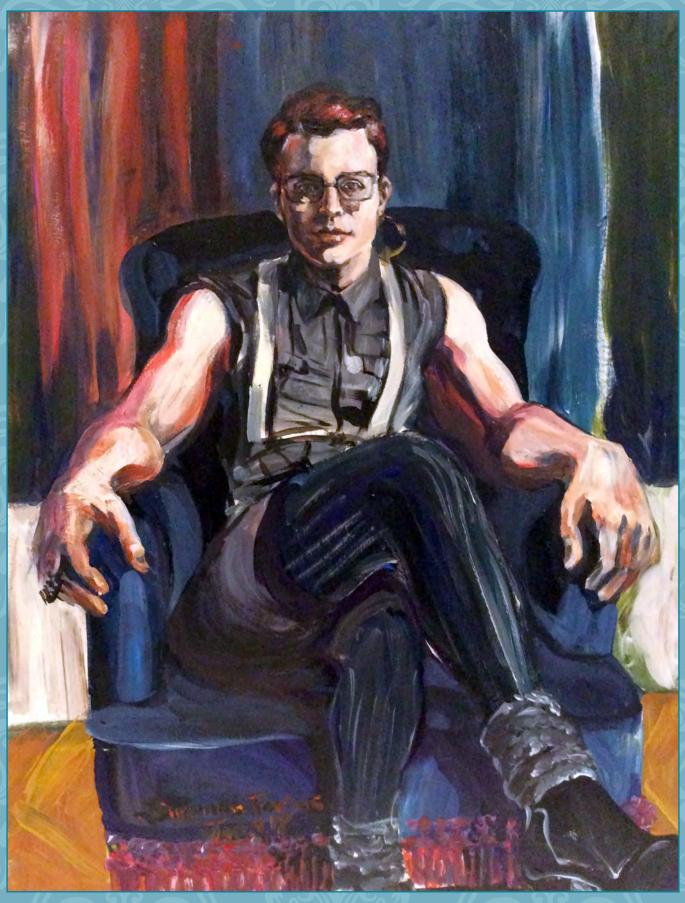
Eva in Berlin 2016

As I write this in 2024, this nightmare has repeated itself. I am different, though, because I was not surprised this time.

That Fall we had our second Fucksgiving party, a Friday night at the end of November to gather loved ones, and I cooked a feast and we yelled our rage. In our early years here, we had houseguests and visitors all the time, and I drew or painted most. Everyone came to Berlin.

And in December we prepared for my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party. Beloved Friend-Patron-Muses came to visit, some stayed with us, hackers blew into town for Chaos Computer Club Congress and rang our doorbell to crash at 4am.

I drew three Beloved Friend-Patron-Muse portraits and painted a very large couple portrait, as well as painting Dia's portrait, between Christmas and



Dia as Desire 2017



Sheila Wolf at Vaudeville Variety 2017

#### January 10.

We had our fourteen-hour Epic Brunch all day New Years' Day, and then for my birthday a week later I made my greatest feast ever. I made Alice Medrich's Gateau Marquise, and I decided to create dishes to accommodate every single guest's dietary needs and allergies. I emailed with everyone, researched, made checklists. I went to the famous West Berlin fish deli, Rogacki's, first thing in the morning on my birthday, and spent all day making food, including the absurdly elaborate Russian salmon pie called Coulibiac.

As I pulled the poached salmon out of the oven and drained the liquid to make the Sauce Velouté, I thought I was going to die from pain and fatigue. I did not know any better than to push through. Doctors said my tests were normal. From here in 2024, I beg that Suz to turn off the oven and order delivery for the goddam party. It was a beautiful party, and I was in agony all night. I am very glad our friend Colin Fahrion took gorgeous pictures, because I can barely remember it.

#### My decades of masking my depression and neurodivergence had given me great capacity to mask pain and fatigue.

Making crafty things, an armada of custom monster dolls and insect embroidery, helped me in the New Year. In March I pulled it together to go to my first Berlin burlesque show, Vaudeville Variety Revue from producer Sheila Wolf. It was at the exquisite historic venue Wintergarten Variete, with boylesque and queer performers as well as big burlesque stars.

At Vaudeville Variety I was seated next to Berlin drag queen, DJane and activist Gloria Viagra, and drew her portrait; she took the picture of me you see in Chapter One. I had no idea then how much Berlin drag queens would mean to me, how drag community would help me survive and grow!

I started going to life drawing at ESDIP Berlin, wonderful sessions with a great crowd and music, even though every trip across town to ESDIP took a bus and two subways. I had new tools; I had asked my loved ones for color and tone tools to experiment with for my birthday, and Clear brought a big set of greyscale markers to my party. I had started used toned paper, grey and buff.

#### In April, I finally made it to KitKat!

Berlin's most famous BDSM club and playspace was a little intimidating, with its famous grouchy door. My friend Natasha Enquist, a gifted musician who life-modeled for my drawing classes, was my escort for my first visit, and we whisked past the line. KitKat felt so much like San Francisco's Kinky Salon, with its mix of art and variously decorated rooms. Attire was everything from people in latex fashion to tourists who stripped down to their underwear to meet the dress code.

I felt comfortable quickly. Although cameras were not allowed, other artists frequented KitKat to draw, and me





DJane Alice D. at KitKat 2017



working was treated casually. I did ask people before I drew them with much more care than I had in the US, especially if they were playing or naked. This pup was a well-known subject for artists.

I absolutely loved the music of DJane Alice D., and the cave like lounge where she spun. I don't know techno music at all, but I know what I like! Her crowd loved it too.

On our way out, I drew two pretty boys kissing in the garderobe area, where you wait for your things to be returned to you.

In May I went to another Drink+Draw event, and had my first art show in Berlin, at a Friedrichshain tattoo studio where Daria had started tattooing. I met two twitter friends IRL that happy night, and they led me into Queer Berlin at last, after two years in the city! One was Suz, an artist and curator, and the other was Rah Hell, a punk as fuck drummer! Rah was one half of a band called Donut Heart, and they were having a video release party at a place called Ludwig.







Donut Heart performing at Ludwig 2017

## CHAPTER TWELVE

#### Ludwig and Bassy Club, R.I.P.

o enter community is to open the door to loss. Community is fluid, like gender, like cities. A local business becomes a hub of connection and expression, and then capitalist violence makes that business unsustainable. Ludwig was a bar, an art gallery, a performance space, a clubhouse for Queer Berliners. It existed from June 2016 to September 21, 2019. It welcomed gay, trans and nonbinary folks. And it was in a part of Neukölln rapidly being gentrified, where construction overshadowed street access for these years.

I first went to Ludwig in 2017 for the release party of a Donut Heart video, invited by Rah Hell. I arrived early and helped Rah glaze vegan donuts because if there's one thing I know, it's getting sweet treats ready for a party. There were cool acts and performances at the party; there was body painter Natascha Artworx, jolly costumed altar "boys" and Robert Wimpory as a priest. KAy, one of Sadie's two co-parents in the raising of her first child, was a boylesque Jesus in a strap-on who expiated one of my many sins. I met the lovely owners of Ludwig, Maurus and Ceven Knowles, married but separated artists.

#### I met so many folks who became friends that night, and I felt my life in Berlin really crystallize and begin.

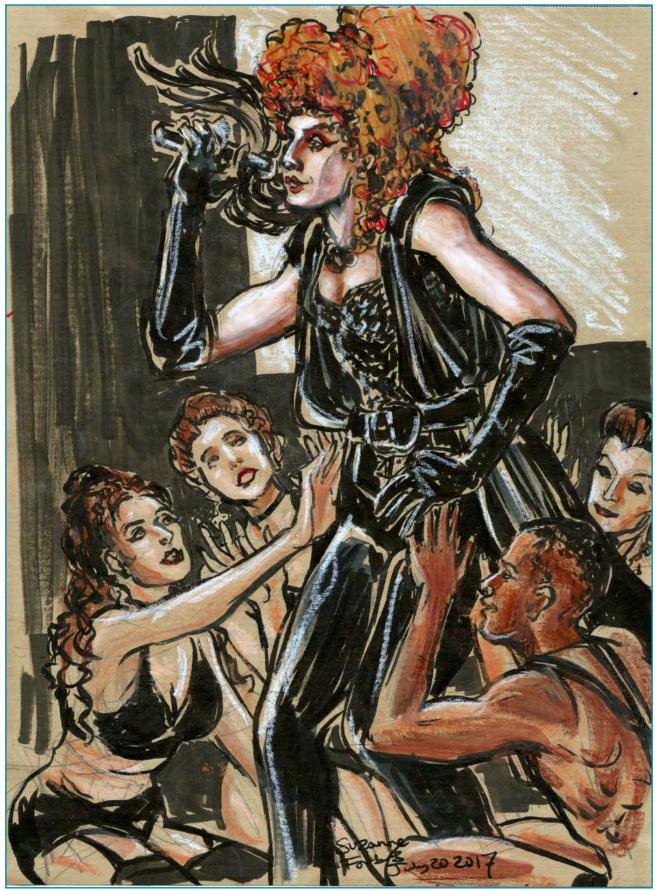
We did so many things at Ludwig in the time I had there. Art events, art shows, benefits, parties. It was cozy, beautiful, and warm. There was a "Refugees Welcome" sign in the window, and always delicious alcohol-free Apfel-Minze schorle for me to drink.

And then Rah and her band partner Alfred Ladylike invited me to Uke Boogie, and I started going to this sweet and cheerful ukelele jam session at another cozy bar, and then to a freaky alien musical some Uke Boogie folks were in at the karaoke bar Monster Ronsons, and more.

That May was my first visit to Berlin Burlesque Week. I was stationed outdoors live-painting with my friend Rafa from ESDIP for most of the day, but caught the last two poses of Dr. Sketchy's Berlin inside the fantastically preserved Ballhaus Berlin. I drew Lolita Va Voom and Viva Lamore for the first time that day, two



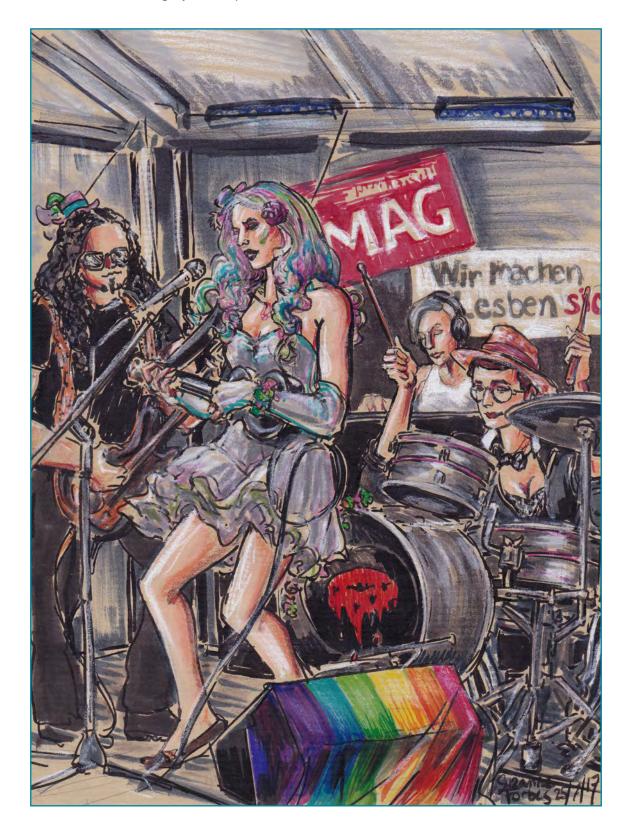
David Show performing Chocolate Jesus at Ludwig 2017

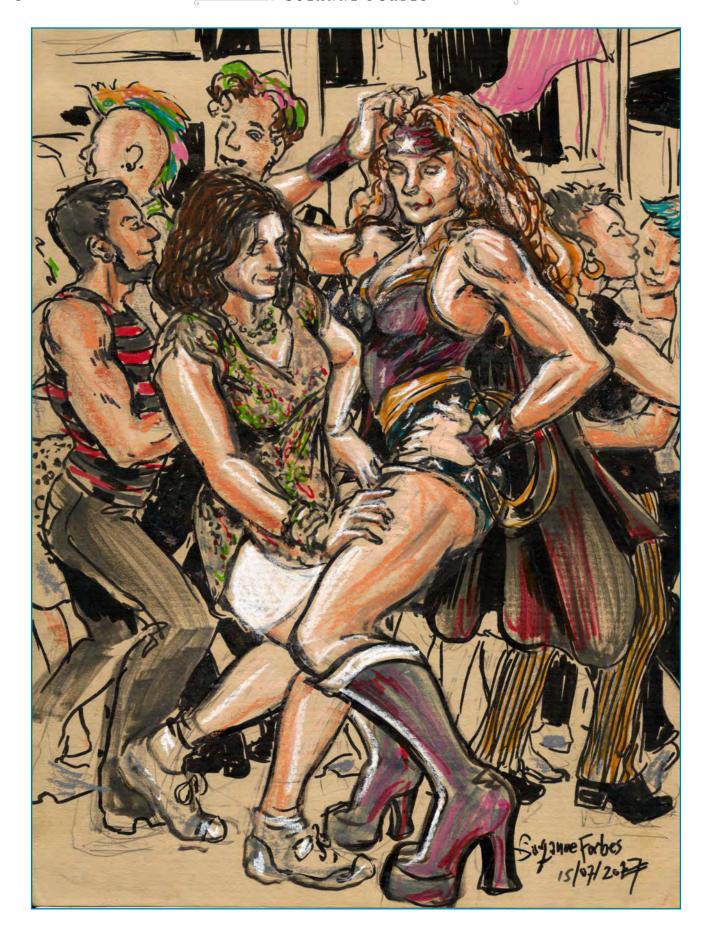


Schlomi Moto Wagner as Anastasia at Loving the Alien 2017

people whose activist wisdom would change my life, though I didn't know them then!

I went to the street festival, the Lesbisch-Schwules Stadtfest (Lesbian and Gay Festival) that takes place (as of this writing) every July in the heart of Gay West Berlin, Nollendorfplatz and its environs. Donut Heart performed on the "Lesbian and Trans" stage, joined by Baron Anastis, another friend.





#### These were the first drawings I really committed to adding bright colors to!

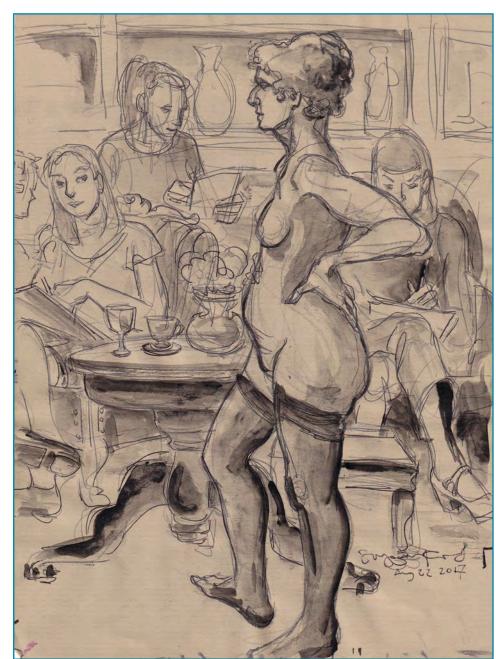
Surrounded by young and old queers with dyed hair and tattoos, I felt so at home. I drew a costumed Wonder Woman and her partner dancing in the crowd, my heart full. Obviously this needed color too!

I asked Rah to pose for a painting with her drumsticks, and we had four marvelously convivial sittings in rapid succession, so that I finished the big, detailed painting at nearly my 2005 speed. We had a summer Art Fair at Ludwig, Suz and Natascha Artworx and I, with live painting of our artists' model Natasha Enquist.

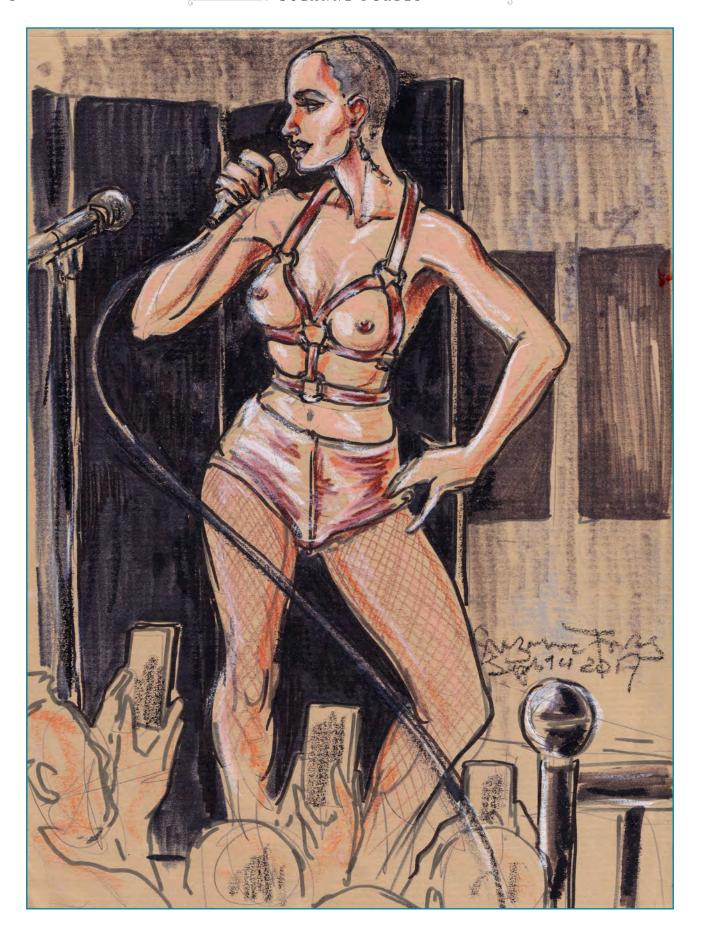
## I went to my first proper Dr. Sketchy's Berlin event in August, an exquisitely depraved salon at historic queer space Cafe Kalwil.

The session's theme was Anita Berber and her Weimar Berlin life of debauchery and artistic fervor. Bridge Markland, an incredible performer, portrayed Anita Berber imagined late in life, bitter and caustic. As well as a Drag King, actor and puppeteer, Bridge is an artist's model with decades of experience. She imbued her characterization with such wickedness and sensuality, such louche elegance. Le Pustra portrayed Anita's husband and betrayer, genderqueer icon Sebastian Droste. When they fought over a fox stole I almost died of happiness! And I met my friend Shakrah Yves that day, a fellow immigrant from the Bay Area!

I cannot say enough about the effort and care LaLaVox put into running and creating Dr. Sketchy's Berlin events, for many years. These shows were beautiful, queer, diverse, and magnificently costumed and staged, with amazing music and lighting. I had the best goddam time every time.



Bridge Markland at Dr. Sketchys Berlin 2017



#### And then it was September and nearly Folsom Europe!

I went to Chantal's House of Shame; Natasha was performing her music.

Chantal's House of Shame had happened every Thursday in Berlin without fail since 1999. It was at the Bassy Club, which was usually a rockabilly kinda place but taken over by filthy techno and sweaty naked men for Chantal's. I loved Bassy; it was kinda divey but also awesome. It reminded me of my beloved Lone Star Cafe in NY. Natasha appeared on stage at 2am. She was clad in golden sequins like a vision of 1930s glamour in the dark club, her shaven head glinting. Then she stripped off her golden batwing gown to reveal a gorgeous gold leather har-

ness and booty shorts outfit she made herself! The boys were howling, "NATASHA!! QUEENNNN!!!"

One of them was kind enough to hold his phone over my sketchbook so I could see to draw for Miss Natasha's entire performance. In all the dark clubs and sex parties I've drawn in, no-one had ever done this before! I really appreciated it. The boys packed the dance floor; they keep it sweltering in Berlin clubs all year round. I didn't go into the darkroom, because, obviously, it was too dark to draw (I'm a documenter, not a voyeur!) and besides it was even hotter, like hot yoga but with people fucking. Everyone was so friendly; I had a lovely talk with a handsome young man on the sidewalk at 4am about the casting of the upcoming Teen Titans tv show.





#### I was so excited for my first Folsom Europe!

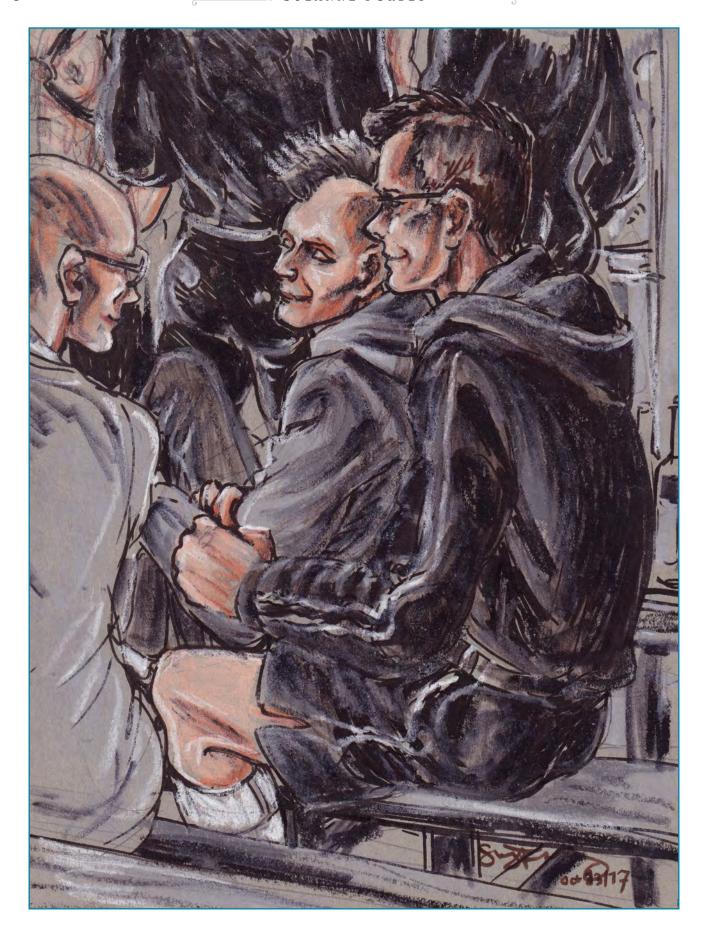
Inspired by San Francisco's Folsom, Folsom Europe sprawls through the streets of Nollendorfkiez, which were still then full of leather shops, bars with big "Glory Hole!!" signs, and gay cafes. Natasha was performing on the male.space stage, as were several other femmes, which was cool! She was styled for the event by legendary Berlin fetish wear designer Butcherei Lindinger. I was surrounded by big, buff leathermen who were cheering Natasha on and saying supportive things about my drawings!

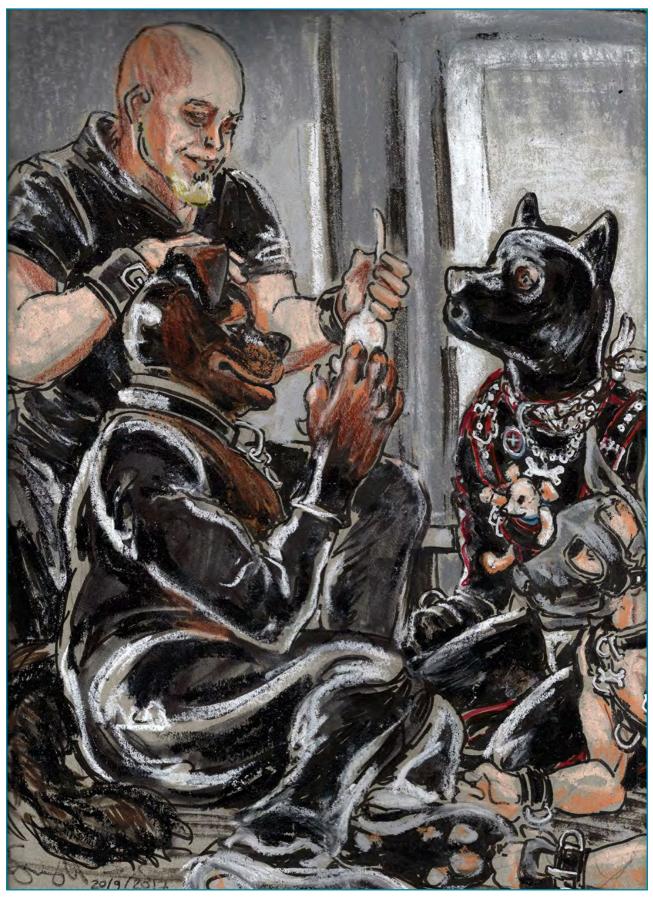
I drew Liliana Velásquez from the Freudian Slip Club and Fetish Comedy Show for the first of what would be many times.

She told jokes about working in a BDSM house in New York, which I loved; it took me back to the 80s when my dyke domme friend worked at a house in the Meatpacking District. Liliana was wearing a bespoke latex gown from The Baroness! I drew male performers too, leatherman Georg Kroneis playing the baroque cello and more. I walked the streets and the crowds for hours, drawing people playing, people loving. Folsom Europe really shines with leather and latex looks. I was a child in Chelsea in the 70s, and I love classic leather daddy looks. It felt like being wrapped in a warm blanket to see gay men rocking the old school Christopher St. Clone style.

As I have said, when I worked at Wicked Grounds, the puppyplay munches held there transformed my experience of dogs. I learned to play with human puppies, how to scratch them and throw things for them and yell "Good DOG!". Many of the puppies were over 200 pounds, and as they frolicked in the back seating area (we moved the chairs and tables out) they made the old floorboards creak.







Smarty, Lucky and friends at Folsom Europe 2017

Their joy and exuberance were delightful to me. So I really wanted to spend some time drawing puppies!

I was overwhelmed and lost in the streets and the crowds, but luckily, I ran into Sadie Lune and her partner Jo! They were dressed as amazing Autumn Leather Goddesses, and Sadie told me where to go. "There is a puppy play area where you can see puppies at play and at rest", she said with great affection. And I went there and played with pups and skritched their heads and drew them and they were so wonderful!

So curious, so alert, watching me draw with such interest, ears cocked. Smarty and Lucky, the puppies in the play area, were wonderfully friendly and well trained. Usually human puppies are much better trained than animal puppies, and I've rarely had a human puppy jump up, which scares me. Smarty later bought this drawing and commissioned another portrait; great fun!

## That October I promptly started a big diptych portrait of Sadie Lune and Jo Pollux, in their Autumn Goddess looks from Folsom Europe.

Sadie wore her Dark Garden corset, the same model as mine, and we had three sittings close together, again much as I had in my Bay painting peak. These were powerful sessions, talking deep talk, always preceded by a meal with us and D. in our library. I loved to cook for my models in my newly finished kitchen/craft room, loved to feed my muses vegetarian treats. Gay marriage was just legalized in Germany, and hope was high.

#### These nights were the life I had dreamed of.

In October there was another Vaudeville Variety, and this time I was given access for dress rehearsal, so I got to draw the performers for a solid eight hours. I drew performers like Miss Mosh, Epiphany Get Paid, Kitten N' Lou, Dusty Limits, the aerial duo Little Finch (precious lovebirds who came over and bought their drawing later) and Sarah Goody. I met the delightful twins, The Beau Belle Brothers, and drew them. I think this is my favorite of the three drawings I have done of these beautiful boys and their amazing costumery.

Of course I was exhausted and in terrible pain by the end of the eight-hour night, but I was increasingly doing more work on the drawings on the U-Bahn after events and at home, so I had time afterwards to add pastel highlights and PITT pen India ink darks, plus bits of color.

There was a pirate themed Donut Heart show at the fantastic Kreuzberg bar Arcanoa where there was a stream running down the bartop like some kind of dive bar Fallingwater; I was drawing musicians a LOT and loving it. I was loving the city like a lover. There was another marvelous Dr. Sketchy's Berlin, Victorian Spiritualist themed, for Halloween. Dr. Sketchy's Berlin, over 60 events at this point, were so elegant, so joyful! What a privilege it was to attend them.

I wrote at the time,

"Lots of my very talented badass-drawing colleagues from ESDIP Berlin were on hand, like Rafa Alvarez, and we set up at a table and just blew the roof off the place with our drawing powers. Not gonna lie, my goal at an event like this is to draw better, faster and more confidently than any man there, including my valued colleagues. Here in Berlin, where many people who attend drawing events can draw like hell, it's the kind of challenge I can set my teeth into. In San Francisco I was always the best draftsman in the room; here I gotta fight hard for that, and it is food for my soul. I locked into pure flow state very early on and spent the whole session riding the armature of my training and abilities. When this happens I watch myself work effortlessly, the only challenge being to trust what's happening. I really hit the mainline at the end.



The Beau Belle Brothers at Vaudeville Variete 2017



## Look at this straight up Leyendecker shit. I drew it in ten minutes.

And thanks to LaLaVox and to my Patrons on Patreon whose financial support makes it possible for me to go to events like this and draw like hell!"

The models were Valentina DeMonia, a famous Muse and artist of Berlin, and Lars Schwuchow, vintage gentleman and textile craftsman. I love how much I loved my power and skill; how proud I was of how I could work!

I've never had the slightest bit of imposter syndrome about my art, despite my complete lack of commercial or institutional success since I left comics in 1995!

My Mom came for a pre-Halloween visit, a precious window, though exhausting for me to keep up with her energy. My Mom has been more able-bodied than me for many years now.

Suz and I hosted an art salon for femaleidentifying people in my flat the night before Halloween.

Natascha Artworx came down from Hamburg, Natasha Enquist posed with spooky props and it was so convivial despite having mostly just two names to go around! I made a vegan and vegetarian feast, including pumpkin pie, which was new to many there.

The Berlin Porn Film Festival was on for its twelfth year, and Jo Pollux had an exhibition of her photographs featuring Sadie, which later became the book "As You Wish, my Lady". I drew Jo in the velvet theater seats of the charming foyer of Moviemento Kinema, a Berlin institution since 1906. I love that theater, but it is inaccessible as hell; the steep steps terrified me. It's worth noting here that Europe never had an equivalent to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Berlin is incredibly inaccessible, without much effort to change; I expect now, with the rise of eugenics, there never will be.

#### I came to really understand the value of the ADA as my mobility decreased.

In November there was Uke Boogie, and life drawing at ESDIP Berlin with superb tango dancer Luciano des Esbornia modeling. I went to Berlin Cigar Men at The Pussycat, a warm, snug lesbian bar dating back to 1974. Once a month the Pussycat hosts a celebration of classic leatherman culture. This evening included head shaving, with a proper razor, and bootblacking.



Jo Pollux at Porn Film Festival Berlin 2017

#### I could smell the cigar smoke all the way down the block from the Ku'Damm.

I knocked on the door and Natasha peered through the speakeasy peephole and let me in out of the cold. There was an amazing group of great-looking old-school (and young) leathermen, and so much smoke! I love the smell of smoke. I smoked two packs of Marlboro Reds a day from age 13 to age 24. People smoking is one of the things I loved about moving to Europe. And yet even for me it was a lot of smoke! I actually got a bit nauseous from it, like when Tom and Joe and Huck smoke corn-cob pipes on the island in "Tom Sawyer". The cigar crowd was international and relaxed. It was like travelling back in time to the Chelsea of my childhood, the Chelsea and Christopher St of the '70s and '80s, and I felt very much at home.

## D. and I went to a double birthday party for Sadie and Jo, at their studio in Neukölln, on a dark, cold November night.

There was a sexy pomegranate strip performance by Finn Peaks in the candle-lit space, and vampire movies. There was spanking and cake. Sadie had made a sign-up list with eleven different kinds of pain she was interested in doing, and people signed up for the pain of their choice.

There were options like "Singletail", "Scratching", "Biting", and "Genital Torture" and "Piercing". Everyone wanted to watch the beautiful evil queen torment her subjects, so we gathered in a small room lined with pillows and set up for Sadie's acts of sensation play. It was very warm and peaceful, and Sadie was lovely and frightening as she toyed with her pets. The person receiving "Butt Punching" laughed uproariously the whole time.

## We had our "Fucksgiving" Party, an enormous revel, and many loved ones came including visitors from the US, but I remember almost nothing about it.

When Myalgic Encephalomyelitis neuroinflammation is severe, memory formation is impaired. This happened often when I had crashed my body cooking for a party, like my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. It's fucking sad, and I didn't know then what was happening. Our dear friends Nathan and Iris were visiting, and I made a portrait of Iris in their Dark Garden corset, using much more color and pastel than I had previously. I was very happy with it.

I went to D.'s work holiday party, and drew the bright international crew he worked with dancing in the amazing Tango Loft Berlin, a heavenly venue in Wedding full of richly decorated rooms.

We had a Women's Art Lounge at Ludwig, with Natasha posing as the cutest elf. Alexandra Ru, organizer of bar sketching events who would later go on to run Sketcherei, was there, along with other lovely friends. I made vegan peanut butter bars and flourless chocolate cake with pistachio icing to keep our strength up. It was like a dream of coziness and security, listening to Parliament in the warm lamplight.

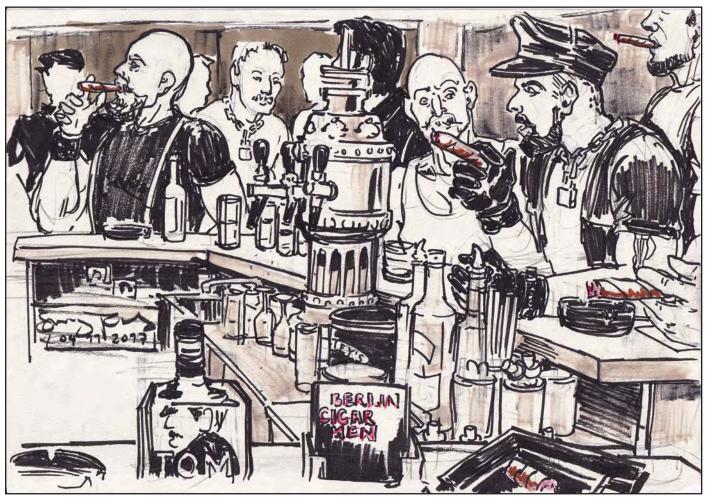
Then I was invited to draw at a party produced by an art lover and collector named Joseph, who had seen me working at a club. The party called Bordello Bizarre was at Bassy Club, and the aesthetics had a San Francisco vibe I loved. I drew Gaffy Gaffeiro, a fearless musician from Australia, an opera singer named Ludwig in nothing but a fur coat, a marvelous unicorn dancer, and more.

I started my first portrait of my friend Shakrah Yves in the quiet week before Chaos Computer Club Congress brought all our hacker friends to Berlin and to our flat. I went to Club Gretchen to draw Natasha performing for the gay boys, and drew the last assless chaps of the year.

And I built a subway station in the shelves under my enormous dollhouse, with a kit loved ones brought at Fucksgiving. I tagged the tiny station with the tags of my 80s graffiti writer boyfriends, people I knew back in



Berlin Cigar Men at the Pussycat Bar 2017





Butt Punching at Vampire Lesbians of Neukolln 2017

the day, and my own tag, with my crew, Acid Writers. I posted it on Instagram, with the hashtag "AcidWriters". It showed up as an official hashtag, so I browsed through the images, and saw people I recognized.

### That's when I found out another one of my boyfriends from the 80s was dead.

We had a high-risk lifestyle; three are dead that I know of. My dollhouse is my safe house for my memories and stories; how I loved Peter Parker and the New Mutants when I was seventeen. The inconsolable grief of the death of my best friend and love of my young life at nineteen. The New York we roamed and loved, and the way Berlin recalled it when we came here. Berlin is a recursive, palimpsest city, drilled down deep into the underworld, like New York. So I built



a tunnel to the past under my dollhouse, a secret shrine with coded messages, and grieved.

#### Stories are the immortality of love, and my stories are my tribute to the lost.

Bassy Club and Ludwig are gone now, not the first losses in this city, not the last, but two hard ones.



Gaff E at Bordello Bizarre Bassy Club 2017



Iris Perez in Berlin 2017



LaLaVox at Dr. Sketchy's Berlin 2018



and I went out on New Years, and began our 2018 with our Donut Heart and Sunday Slips friends at Lagari, home of Uke Boogie. We rode my beloved M29 bus along the river of stars that is the Ku'Damm at New Years. I was joyful and hopeful, although I was worried about FOSTA/SESTA. A US nightmare would become law that year, on April 18. But it had already harmed me and millions of others at the beginning of the year, because we knew it was coming. I knew this so-called anti-trafficking law would do nothing to stop trafficking and everything to harm both sex workers and free speech, because I followed sex work and digital freedom activists on twitter.

All the big news that mainstream media won't cover came to me first on twitter, and still does now in 2024, as the group of epidemiologists and virologists I follow wait for bird flu to explode in humans and talk hard truths on what's left of so-called X.

That January I had lots of new pastels to try and use, requested as birthday gifts from my Patrons.

## I had a second sitting with Shakrah trying full color rendering and brought my pastels to Dr. Sketchy's Berlin "Broken Baroque" edition.

I thought about how the new laws would affect my Patreon. In Berlin total nudity was normal in sex clubs and it was common for places that serve liquor to allow performers to show full frontal nudity, at least in flashes. Just a flash at a queer event had landed DNA Lounge back in SF in terrible hot water with city regulators, a legal battle that lasted for years. Berlin seemed so much freer, to the person I was then.

People on twitter who had Patreon accounts were already getting shut down and penalized without notice or explanation. People were trying to figure out what was going on. Lots of queer and furry artists were losing their accounts. The Tumblr Adult Content ban would happen that December, affecting millions of young queers who had relied on the platform for connection and expression.

## I pre-emptively converted my Patreon account from an "Adult" account to a "regular" account, terrified of losing the only reliable income I'd had for my art in a decade.

It was cowardice, it was anticipatory obedience. And, I was starting to understand how disabled I was, and how hard earning money would become for me. A medication reduction from an ignorant young endocrinologist nearly put me in a coma, and only fellow patients in a chat page kept me from staying so much sicker. I had lied to my gyno to get HRT (German law doesn't allow it until one full year after your last period). I was starting to follow patient guidance, not doctors, about my meds.

I had a job that filled me with hope that February, hired to live-draw a very fancy 60th birthday party for a gay married couple. I had met them at a club and they had seen me drawing; I gave them my card and they booked me. Drawing these distinguished gentlemen and their friends in a jewel-box restaurant with immaculate dark wood and bursts of flowers, I was so giddy. When I left at 4am, they gave me a box of the excellent chocolate mousse cake to take home.

## This was what I'd always imagined my artists' practice would be.

But that first year of FOSTA/SESTA, as I explained I was going to do less explicit work on Patreon, I lost a third of my income. I never did hit my thousand-euro-a-month goal. The year started with me drawing more musicians, and more of my subway "Unterwegs" ("on the way") series, which had become my practice for unpacking some of the racism and ignorance I had brought to Europe. Living in a multicultural city with real public transit again, I was getting used to seeing hijabi and drawing them doing the same things everyone else did. I was seeing how disabled people used transit. I was learning how to hold space for and respect all the different ways folx I knew were trans. I was just starting to know how little I know.

We were deep in trying to get D.'s highly specialized chest surgery, and in medical offices constantly. I was in stage 2 of a privileged white professional moving to Europe:



- 1. OMG, America is horrible!
- 2. OMG Europe is so much better!
- 3. OMG Europe has structural and institutional issues
- 4. (this stage only happens if you have anti-racism and decolonial guidance from People of the Global Majority) OMG Europe is where the horrible comes from!
- 5. (this is a stage I am so grateful to have reached, thankful to all the liberatory guides) OMG \*I\* am horrible!

I am so grateful to the people of this city who have led me along and the liberatory educators I learn from. I hope to spend the rest of my life in Stage 6., Be Less Horrible; I don't think my remaining lifetime is enough time to Become Not Horrible. I have already lived past the average lifespan for people with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, 54 years. I work to Be Less Horrible!

## We celebrated our third Berliniversary on March 24<sup>th</sup> that year, as many people who moved to this city did; we don't celebrate it anymore.

I went to draw my friend G doing Brazilian Jujitsu at Spitfire 2 gym, which was amazing. I sat on the mats and was right next to the action; it was just like being at a sex party or dungeon. As at a sex party, I positioned

myself out of the way but sometimes the action moved over to me and sweaty people bumped into me. Just like at a dungeon or play party, there were clear boundaries, consent was asked and given, and I had to stay alert for flying bodily fluids!

# I got back to KitKat at the beginning of April, invited by DJane Alice D. I stayed in her room for hours, blissed out on her hard beats and drawing the dancers.

I drew a beautiful young couple dancing, and the young lady kissed me on the cheek when she saw it. I was used to being kissed by sweaty, half-naked or naked hot people at clubs and sex parties, or I would have fainted from delight! I also drew a gorgeous bunny girl dancing happily in her own world, who became my dear Beloved Friend-Muse-Patron, and in fact took the photograph you see on the back of this book.

I drew the garderobe staff as I waited for my coat; it was often a long wait, at 4am.





KitKat garderobe 2018

## I was invited by burlesque performer and producer Viva Lamore to draw at Berlin's queer and wild woman-run burlesque show Full Moon Cabaret.

It was held at Späti-with-attached-club Diskothek Melancholie 2. You entered the club through a fake refrigerator in the Späti (late-night convenience shop), which I loved. It was a magical space, and Viva was a glamourous unicorn host.





Co-producer Lolita Va Voom was dazzling, performing with purple fabric, her signature color. Violetta Poison, aka The Mexican Spitfire, taught a rubber man doll some manners, one of my all-time favorite acts. Rubyyy Jones was wonderful too, and later a great artistic force in online drawing sessions when the COVID-19 pandemic began.

I went to life drawing at my friend Lydia's house, where two amazing models, a couple, posed intimately together. I drew musicians at Merlin's Berlin, held at Monster Ronsons.

And I went to the last Bordello Bizarre, in the last days of Bassy Club. I loved the Limelight-in-1992-meets-Burning Man aesthetic of the party. This was the last Bordello ever at Bassy, which closed its doors forever on April 30.

Going out with a bang, Bordello Bizarre was emceed by fellow Bay Area immigrant Scotty the Blue Bunny, an icon in Berlin.





I was delighted by the ferocious Medusa performance of beautiful Lily Lustre. She was so great, the drawing came out so well, she loved it, and I was afraid to post it to my Patreon because of Patreon's fuzzy new Terms of Service. Even a person with pasties could be "too nude"!

## It was only the beginning of the mess with Patreon's "rules" about nudity and art.

In May we moved my sites to a European domain registry and host, one that allows porn (as of this writing). With the changes happening in the US because of FOSTA/SESTA, it was clear a person like me, who made explicit art sometimes, should not have a digital footprint there. In the initial burst of shock and horror around the implementation of FOSTA/SESTA, I learned that my longtime host, Bluehost, did not actually allow nudity! Puritan assholes!



### My husband did the many hours of technical work for the move, in full support of our friends and lovers who are or were sex workers.

Porn performers, bondage artists, pro doms, escorts, rubber fetishists, queer indie porn directors, a feminist art gallery owner, activists and educators. These wonderful people bring their passion, intelligence, authenticity and courage into our lives. Many are deeply political, activists and protesters and change-makers, who work hard to reduce the shame and stigma around sexuality in the world. Many live poor and risk everything to make art about sex, educate people about sexuality, and be true to their own gender identities, sexual preferences and desires. At many events I documented, sex workers were donating their time and energy to raise funds for sex-positive art, sex education or sex workers resources. I have never seen a community give so much.

In San Francisco we saw, and I documented, people showing desire, affection and love in public sex spaces. There was laughter and deep intimacy and pleasure. It wasn't perfect or always safe, the heyday of San Francisco sex-positive culture, indie porn and the Kink Castle, but it was full of brave people. It was queer and fierce and strange, and I love the sex workers we came to know and honor their work. Here in Berlin, I have come

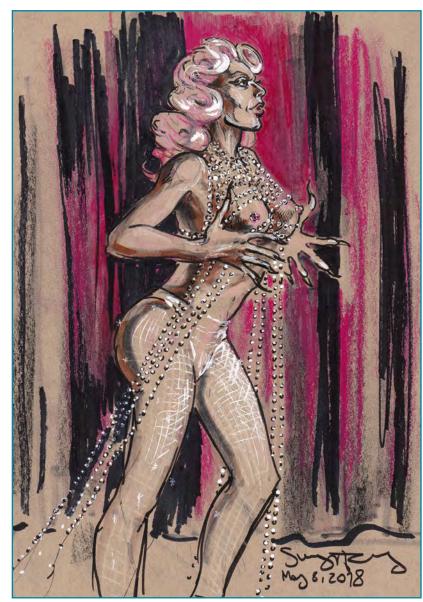
to cherish many more incredible people in the sex worker community. So I have made this book, and we will keep my sites up as long as we can.

#### That spring I had an art opening at Berlin's much-loved queer, feminist and vegan sex shop, Other Nature.

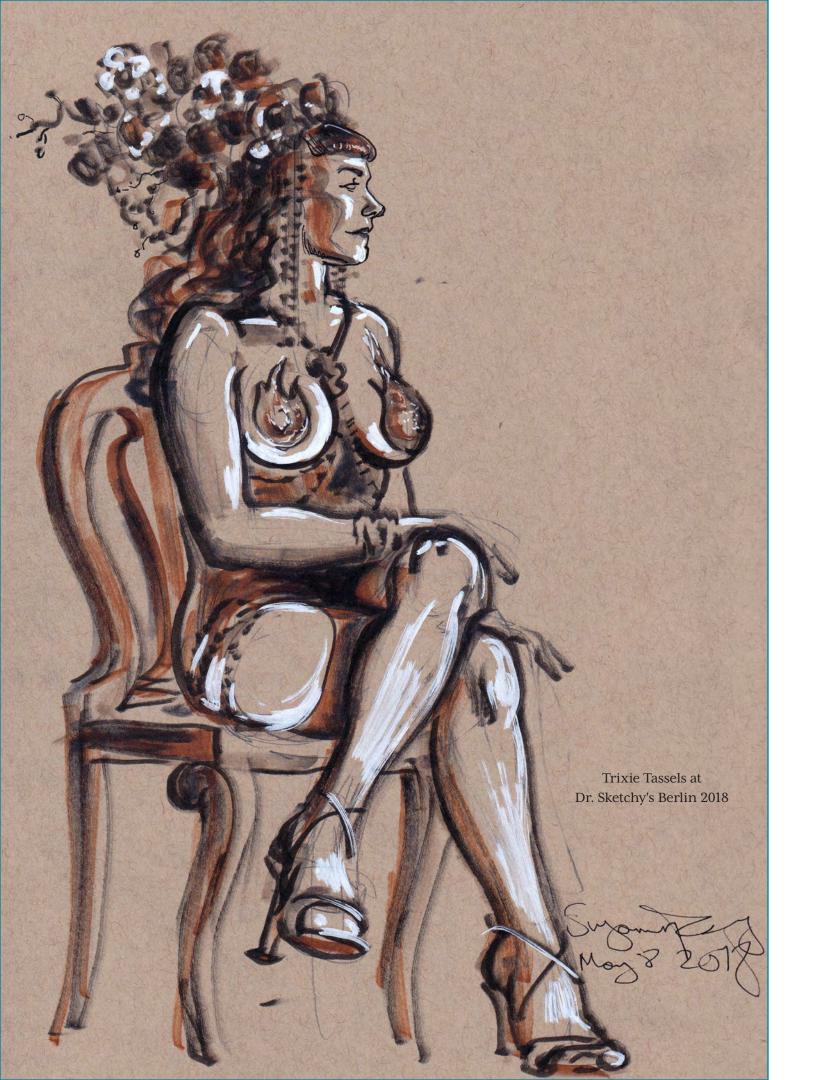
My show was a long-running exhibit in the book room, as a fundraiser for several trans support services, and I was so happy to have found a way to contribute art to community again. Other Nature is now collectively run and has just moved to a larger premises!

I was glad to make it to the Berlin Burlesque Week Dr. Sketchy's session, with a new sense of security about my art archives online. LaLaVox and co-producer Syren Joey booked terrific models. Betty Fvck, visiting from Finland, had three looks! Her beauty and presence were exhilarating, and she became one of my favorite people to draw in years to come.

I got to draw the late Trixie Tassels, a former professional life model. She combined classic life modeling skills with her bombshell looks and amazing costume. We had such a nice talk.



Betty Fvck 2018



## In June I was riding my usual bus, the M29, to go draw somewhere. It was crowded and I was standing by the driver, which is allowed here.

A car going very fast sideswiped the bus and the bus crashed into parked cars. I was crushed under some other people, and the last two fingers on my drawing hand were dislocated. I was terrified. I had been protecting my drawing hand since I was a child art prodigy. I demanded the firemen call an ambulance, for me and a pregnant lady who had been thrown out of her seat. The ambulance guys were nice, and so was the ER; I was protected by my white skin even though I was ranting and furious and spoke no German. It took a month for my fingers to begin to heal, and they are still not normal. "Live with it", our orthopedist said. It's a thing German doctors say.

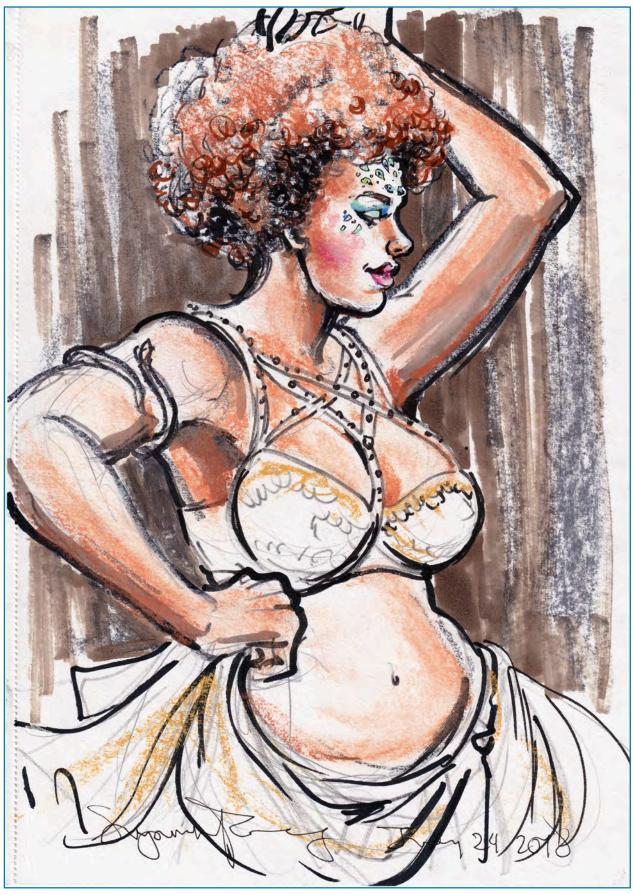
Anthony Bourdain took his life, and I went on an ice cream crawl and wrote about the miracle of my own release from lifelong depression. Some people age out of chronic depression; some people find meds that work, and some leave us. I got lucky, and was resourced, and supported. It takes all of those, and I was so fucking grateful to be alive.

By late July I was back to drawing. I'd been hoping to draw Cadbury Parfait for months; I was delighted when she invited me to her first cabaret production.

It was my first time visiting Wedding venue 800A, and it seemed like everybody else had decided to go too. Here's Scotty The Blue Bunny head and shoulders above the fray before the show, which was called Extravagant Shambles. It wasn't the most crowded club I've ever been in, but it was close!

I was thrilled to draw





Cadbury Parfait at Extravagent Shambles 2018



Noéline la Bouche at Extravagant Shambles 2018

Cadbury. Her stage presence, comic timing and immense beauty make her captivating. And the whole show was wonderful!

I also got to draw Noéline la Bouche for the first time, performing her "Shakin It" act. Noéline amazed me with her gorgeousness and talent.

I went on to draw Noéline many more times. She became one of my most cherished Friend-Muses and collaborators. She appears on the cover of this book, a vision of Berlin cabaret in the Teens. I drew lots of other performers that night as well, grateful to have gotten a comfortable chair in the crowd.

## In August there was a free art installation/performance work from Berlin superstar Peaches.

There was a big line! My friend Suz got there early, so I only had to wait an hour, but waiting in line an hour was agony. Standing had become very hard for me. Antonella DeGiorgio was rolling some refreshments next to Suz,

who was sitting in the lap of their companion. I had drawn Antonella, known then as Anto Christ, at Bassy several times and am a huge admirer of her art, both photography and textile.

Many cool Berliners performed in this project, including many I had drawn or would draw soon. Mad Kate, who I knew as one of Sadie's coparents, Valentina DeMonia, Evilyn Frantic, Noéline la Bouche, Martini Cherry Furter, Lola Rose, Lily Mortis and more. There was a crew of folks in the magnificent vulva costumes of Anne Marina Fidler, borrowed from drag producer Pansy who had commissioned them. They had created a choreography together.

# It was VERY warm and crowded inside the art venue and I had to stand to draw. Still, I got a bunch of pictures done!

The costumed crew includes Lola Rose in the center; I came to know and love Lola Rose, a fellow Bay Area immigrant, and be incredibly inspired by their work in Berlin.





In September I finished my Bi Pride corset for Folsom Europe, over 200 hours of beading the colors of the Bi Pride Flag. I really identify as Pan, but I like the Bi Pride flag colors best! It was very exciting to wear queer colors to Folsom Europe for the first time.

## On my way into the Folsom Europe street fair I made my donation to the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.

I knew the Sisters, a protest performance movement that started in San Francisco; I was delighted to learn there was a chapter doing their work of fundraising for good causes and community support in Berlin. I had a great talk with Schwester Francine and her husband, who were collecting donations. They let me sit on a stool to draw and told me about their upcoming vacation. It still shocked me how Europeans go on long holidays!



Suzanne's Bi Pride Corset 2018



Schwester Francine of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence at Folsom Europe 2018



I met this gorgeous man roaming the fair. He loved the drawing and was one of my Patrons for a time.

#### I raced over to the stage when I heard it was time for the sash-holders' photo shoot.

It is not a casual thing, not a beauty contest, to be a title-holder in the Leather Community. It requires learning community history, being of service, and being respected by your peers. Anyone who earns a sash has done the work to know what it means.



In the days to come I went to Ludwig and drew young nonbinary and trans Berliners, chilling outside. I went to Uke Boogie and drew Gorjeoux Moon, a wonderful trans feminist musician and poet, and met a young man named Sebastian who became a Beloved Friend-Muse-Patron as well as a great friend to D. and me. I went back to Ludwig to live-draw for a benefit, always a happy place for me. This drawing of event MC Kaey, a beloved figure in Berlin's drag scene, and Luna of Transophonix, a "queer trash orchestra" we often enjoyed at Ludwig, was snapped up by Luna. I drew BDSM educator Kristina Marlen, and her mom bought the drawing in the benefit auction!

I went to Monster Ronsons to draw Mad Kate perform, and on another day to draw Das Fluff, an amazing band my friend Dawn Lintern fronted. And in the third week of September, I lost my shit.

### Dr. Christine Blasey Ford was about to testify before the US Congress on her experience with Brett Kavanaugh, a potential Supreme Court appointee.

The "Me too" awareness campaign, started by Tarana Burke in 2006, suddenly leapt into mass consciousness.

Everywhere online, survivors told their stories of assault and sexual violence. I told mine too. I was beyond triggered; I was completely dysregulated. I acted out in harmful ways and made amends as I could; I lost my work at ESDIP, where I had continued to teach occasionally. I was out of my head with trauma. It seemed impossible to find a therapist who spoke English who was covered by my insurance, but my dear friend Dan Shick (also a longtime supporter of my work through Patreon) began the long process with me.

#### Blessedly, the September session of Dr. Sketchy's Berlin was Baba Yaga themed.

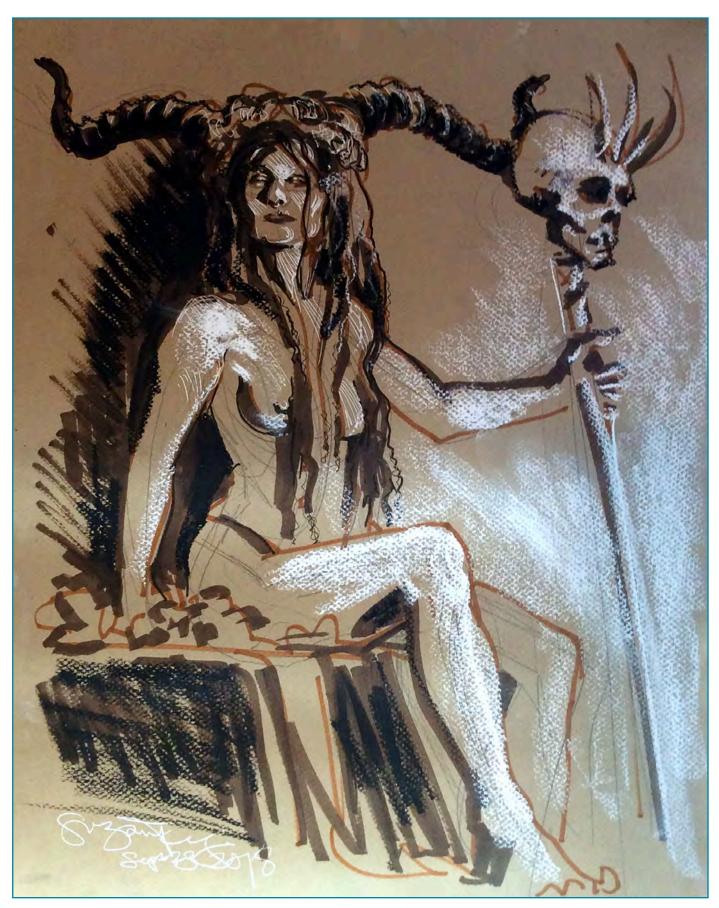
I was so, so grateful to be there. I made some of the best drawings of my career that day, drawing incomparable model Valentina DeMonia as Baba Yaga.

Marijn Van der Waa was the narrator, and she was amazing.

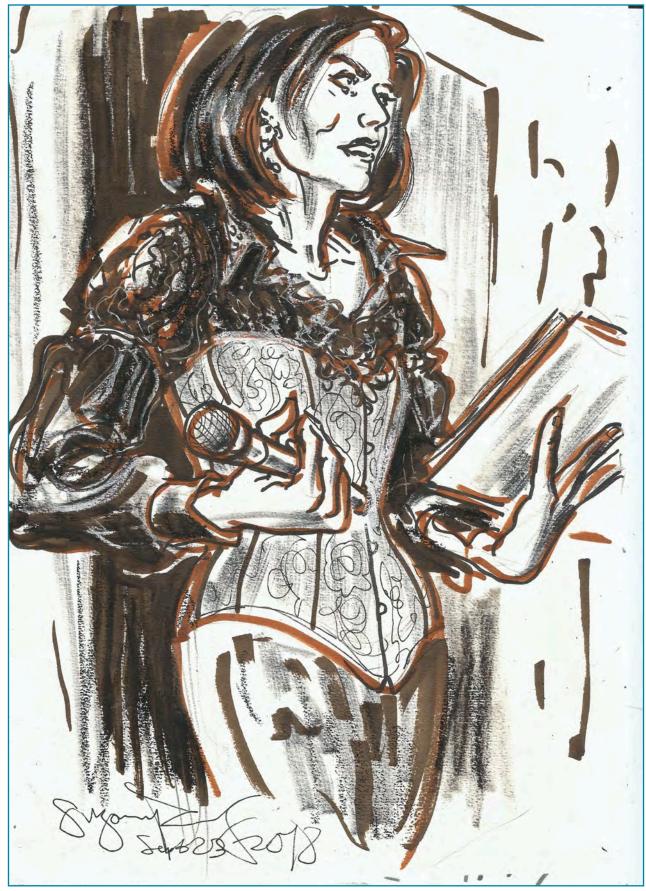
I went to see the goats at the famous goat hof (courtyard) in our neighborhood, with Suz, and drew goats for the first time since the Berkeley Farmer's Market in 1997. That helped a lot.



Kaey and Luna 2018



Valentina DeMonia as Baba Yaga 2018



Marin van der Waa Narrates at Dr Sketchys Berlin 2018

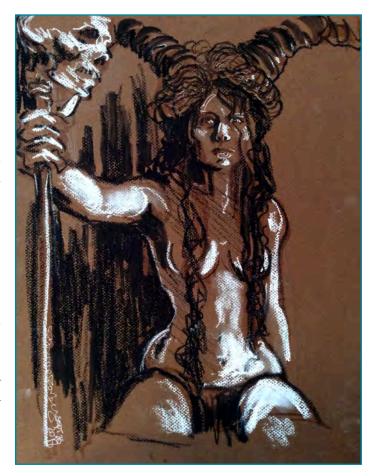
# And then in October, I went to Gieza's PokeHouse and Pansy's House of Presents for the first time, with our friend Sebastian. I learned that Drag Saves Lives.

Sometimes in my life I've known in the moment a life-changing thing was happening. Other times, I've had no idea. Going to the Tuesday night drag show in Friedrichshain for the first time, I had no idea that drag would save my life.

#### I didn't know that when the Covid pandemic began, online drag shows would hold Queer Berlin, and me, together.

I didn't know that as I got sicker, drag queens would hustle their doctors for protease inhibitors for me and appear below my balcony as angels of mercy. I didn't know drag kings would scam every pharmacy in Barcelona to get me antivirals. I didn't know how strong and how vibrant Berlin's drag scene was, then.

When I went to Pansy's House of Presents for the first time, in October 2018, I knew so little about drag.



Our young friend Sebastian took me; he knew the show and some people. I was lucky some performers were in a form of meta-drag that night, dressing as themselves as the crew's Goth drag girl, Antina Christ! It was Antina's birthday. The goth part made it all more accessible to me! I was so pleased to make Antina happy with a drawing on her birthday!

I'd done a portrait of SF drag performer Jesse Dimond in the Oughts, and drawn some drag performers in Berlin, but I was still confused by the aesthetic, the wigs and the lip-syncing.

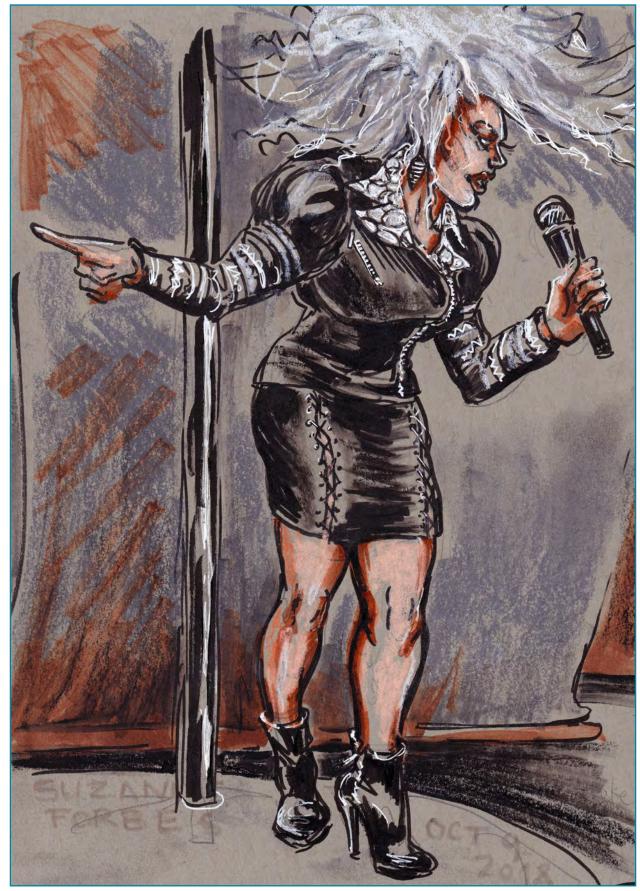
The show opened with Gieza Poke's newcomer's hour, to warm up the crowd to a frenzy. What a wild hollering audience! I did not know how serious people in Berlin are about drag shows.

#### Pansy got on stage in glitter tears and shouted about politics!

I liked the politics! I liked hearing about safer sex and harm reduction at a show! I drew Pansy, and I drew Gieza Poke, Antina Christ and Fannie Headaek that first night, people who would become fundamental to my Berlin.

I also drew drag king Alexander Cameltoe dancing, in their regular guise as Zoé Lohmann. In later years Zoé became a great support to me. They helped me get my meds and driving missions to my art archives in storage. And they hosted the Great Giveaway of my clothes archives, where my 1980s vintage Betsey Johnson dresses, accessories and "extra" corsets were distributed among Queer Berlin!

I'm so grateful to Sebastian, for helping me get there when getting across town was becoming very hard for me, and to everyone I know in the Berlin drag community for all they do. Drag became a larger and larger part of my work from that night, and I am so glad.



Gieza Poke at the PokeHouse 2018



Antina Christ 2018



Zoé at House of Presents 2018

#### Cadbury Parfait's show Extravagant Shambles was my next event, another fantastic one.

I started a painting of Sebastian, and we had two sittings, even though painting was becoming very difficult. Sebastian met me at 800A for the Shambles show and helped me find a seat right in front of the stage. The performers were marvelous. But I was so glad Sebastian walked me to the train station afterwards, because I was feeling very frail.

My mom came to visit again, which helped me immensely. She even came along to the next Dr. Sketchy's, which was Hansel and Gretel themed! I was off that day though, and the drawings weren't my best. My mom and I went on a cruise on the River Spree, and I drew another portrait of her. I had the idea the daughters of my estranged brother, two girls I have never met, might like to have them someday.

We postponed our Halloween party for a week, as I could not do it. Everyone came to November

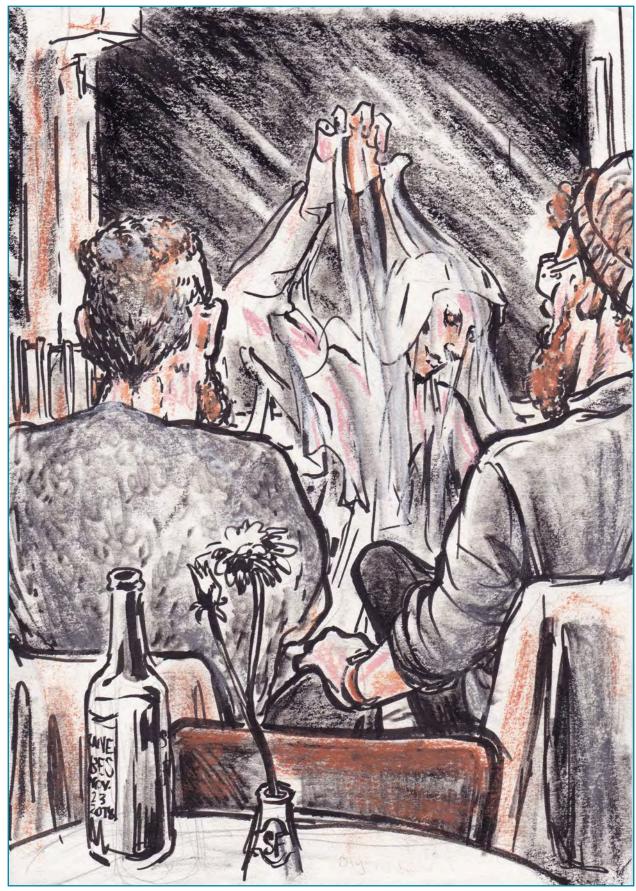


Cadbury Parfait at Extravagant Shambles 2018

Halloween very cheerfully, but I remember virtually nothing of it.

It was our last, and Fucksgiving was cancelled too. I was sick almost all November, mostly home working on the new dollhouse I was making for my X-Men and New Mutants action figures. I did get to Ludwig to draw Transophonix and Olympia Bukkakis. I was nervous about posting the drawing on my Patreon, because Olympia was naked under the plastic she draped herself with.

Olympia founded Queens Against Borders, a performance party building solidarity with and for queer and trans refugees! It is going strong as of this writing.



Olympia Bukkakis performing at Ludwig 2018

Sebastian returned to Australia, and we miss him still.

In December I got to Dr. Sketchy's, which was a Weimar Berlin theme with characters from producer Le Pustra's famous show, Kabarett der Namenlosen, but little else in terms of drawing. The good news was that my friend Dan Shick found me a therapist two blocks from home who would do EMDR, the therapy I wanted to try, although we had to pay her cash. I decided it was worth with it, and it was. I could not have made it through the next year without her compassionate support and empathy.



Sebastian with his portrait 2018





2019; My big year.

•

Sick, shattered, exhausted, trying to use color tools and struggling, I blew the doors off my art and craft in 2019.

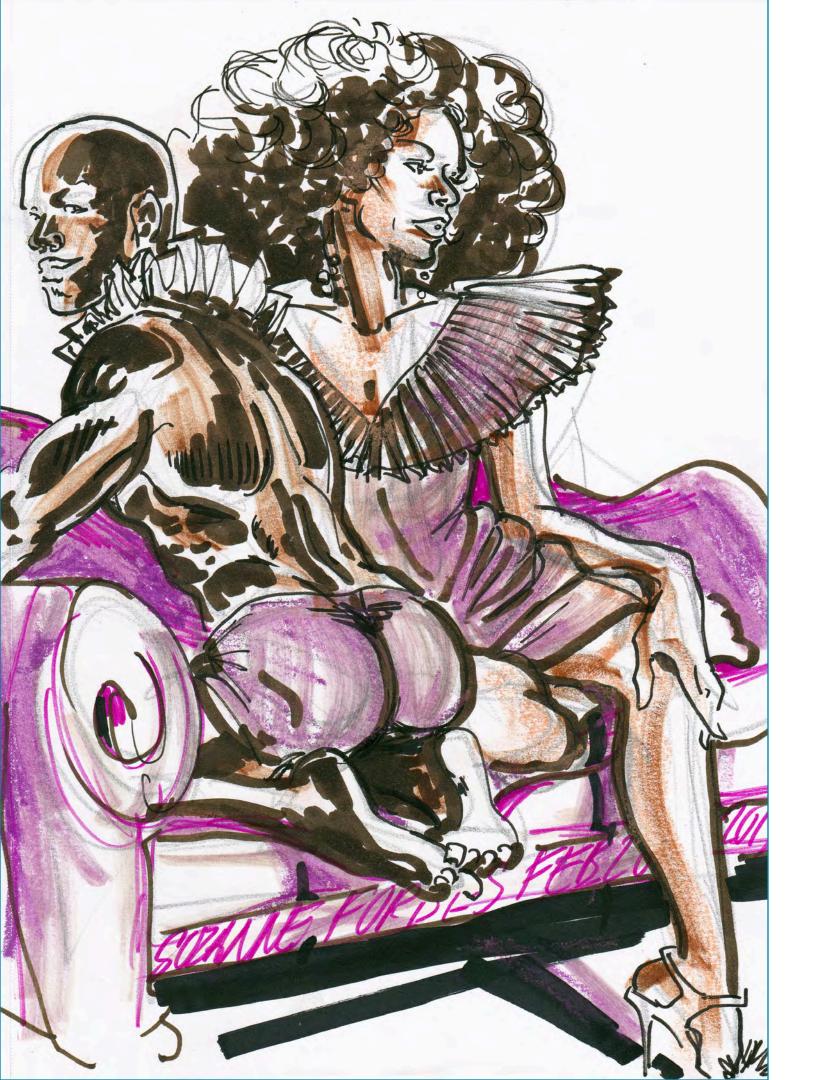
made it to 38 events, shows and drawing sessions. I drew 25 performers at the drag festival Bushwig Berlin, made 43 drawings from Berlin Burlesque Week, and made a total of 248 finished drawings of Berlin's queer, kinky, burlesque and drag folks, plus dozens more of Berliners on the subway. I am so proud of the representation of our luminous, glorious people I made that year!

My first event of the year was a spoken word show at Berlin's gay museum, The Schwules Museum. The event was held by COVEN Berlin, a sex-positive transdisciplinary genderbender collective that my friend Sadie Lune belonged to. Lee Richards gave a talk with the great line, "Voodoo doesn't give a shit who you sleep with". I also met Bard, an incredible artist and now tattooist, that night! My drawing of the audience by the bar includes Edwin Greve, in the chair, and Mahide Lein, director of AHOI Kultur and an activist, producer and cultural connector in Queer Berlin for over fifty years.

The next night I went to a benefit Rah's band was doing. I was increasing my thyroid meds on my own recognizance, and two health issues I'd had for decades disappeared immediately, but as I was walking to the event in the dark, struggling to balance on the wet cobbles, it occurred to me that I was actually too sick and vulnerable to be doing this at all.

D. and I went to Lovelite, a warm and pretty venue on the other side of town, for BEDx, produced by Smut Slam creator Cameryn Moore. A great night of sex-positive writers and artists talking about their work, and we took a cab, such a luxury then!





D. also came with me to a fun event Liliana Velásquez aka Goddess L'aDios and drag queen Fannie Headaek were doing, a live talk show format called "Le Grand Mess". I drew them dancing the tango; Liliana is an incredible tango dancer.

## And the February Dr. Sketchy's Berlin was Red Hot Love! It was my first time drawing both Martini Cherry Furter and Bishop Black.

Bishop was an adult cinema colleague of my friend Sadie Lune, as well as a dancer, play producer and actor. Bishop is beloved in Berlin, with good reason! It was a joy to draw Martini and Bishop; I made excellent likenesses. Martini has fantastic stage presence. She looked so good





I lost all decorum and yelled, "Girl you are SO BEAUTIFUL!!". She accepted that as her due, with a gracious smile. She performed her amazing fire act and the crowd went wild!

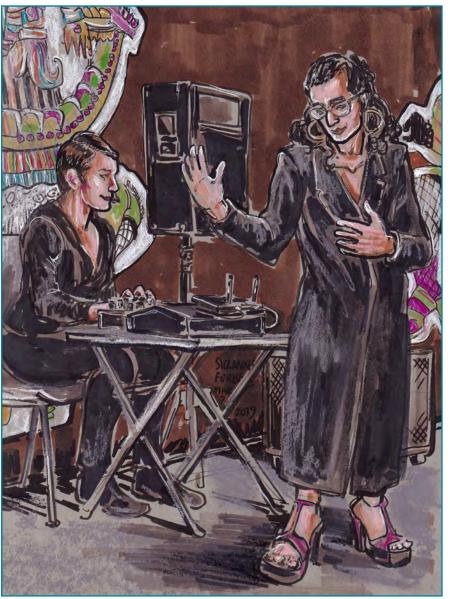
This session's drawings were posted on my blog cropped, because Patreon's Terms of Service were devolving into greater censorship. Apparently, you could no longer even link to images that had "sensual focus".

I had started a painted portrait of Lolita Va Voom in February, booking her to model thanks to my Patrons, and I had another portrait session at home when Sadie Lune and Jo Pollux came over for Sadie's pregnancy photoshoot. Being trusted to be present and document their process was such a privilege. Sadie and Jo had separated but their collaboration remained remarkable.

## Valentine's Day was the finissage (closing) of the EXTRA + TERRESTRIAL exhibit by Coven Berlin at the Schwules Museum.

Harley Aussoleil, the event programmer, provided wonderful support to me as I worked! It was such a relief to be supported. Pêdra Costa, a Brazilian performance artist, performed her work de\_colon\_isation. You can see her starting the piece here, with technical support from Maya Guttman. The work had interactive components like the smell of Brazilian "Bum-Bum" cream and a dildo camera in Pêdra, projected live on a screen, with the "The Southern Butthole Manifesto".

I love Pêdra and we have remained connected though they have left Berlin, as so many are doing in these days when the city no longer feels like a sanctuary.



Pêdra Costa at Schwules Museum 2019



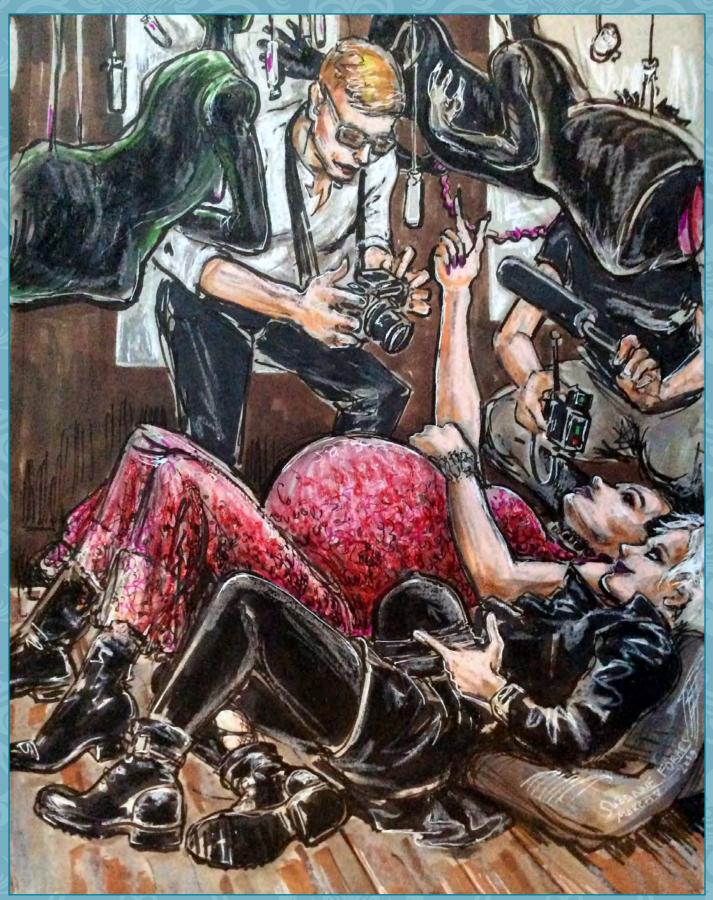
My friend Sadie Lune, part of Coven, was being filmed by the documentary crew of multidisciplinary queer artist Marit Östberg.

Here you can see Sadie, eight months pregnant, being interviewed as she and photographer Jo Pollux lie within Sadie's piece, "Weird Sisters".

I went to Full Moon Cabaret's "Hunger Moon", my first time at one of Full Moon's secret suppers.

It was at the Lori Cafe, and there was a secret door you went through to get to the event room. I had been to Full Moon Cabaret before, in another cool secret venue, without the dinner part! I loved to draw producer Viva Lamore, a fellow New Yorker, who is a historian, educator, and actress.

Event manager Mayliss, in the background with the table of guests,



Marit Ostberg filming Sadie Lune and Jo Pollux at Schwules Museum 2019



is an expert in vintage clothes and styling. Everyone at this show looked sensational, and the crowd loved it. Viva loved the "fucking gong!!" as she called it! There was a Butoh performance by Hikaru Inagawa of Theater-Butoh company 4RUDE, the usual mooning contest, and more. The acts ended with sitting on a cake by Crystal Tassels; the drawing I got was not great so vanity prevents me from sharing it!

The Drink+Draw Berlin crew had leased a boat on the River Spree, a kind of houseboat barge that they had decorated with patterned carpets, antique tables, lamps and art. It was gorgeous, a stunning secret cave of a place, and I went there to draw my friends Daria and Lydia tattooing.

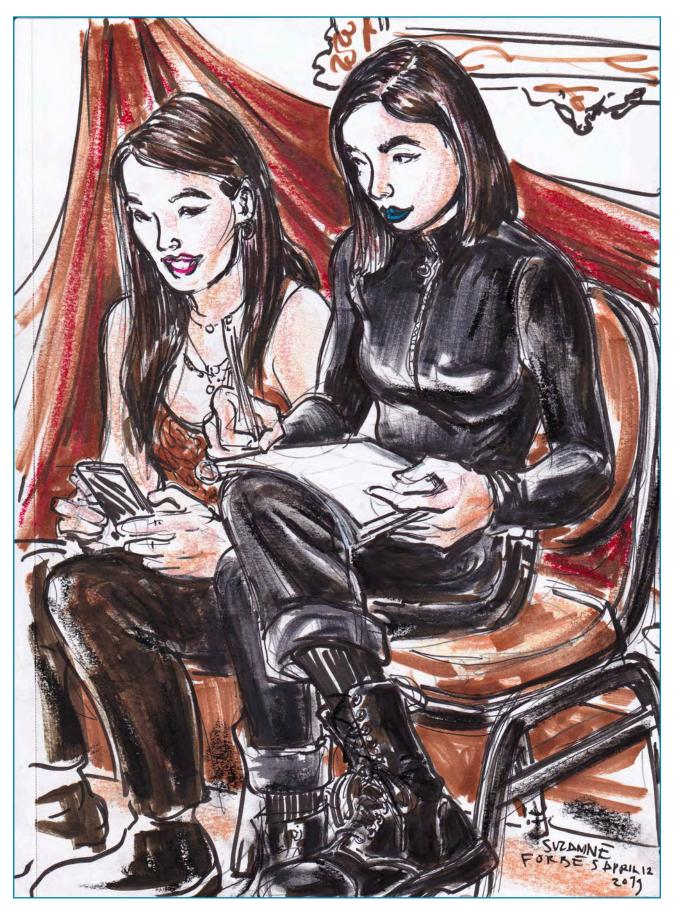
It was April 2019; Daria had a cold, so she wore a mask as a courtesy to protect her tattoo clients. This will be important later.

I met and drew two friends of Lydia's who were there. One of them, Bindy who was wearing blue lipstick and drawing, is now my great friend and the person who got me to start this book!

I finally made it to the "new" location of famous queer nightclub and party space Schwuz. I was invited to draw the fabulous performers at a benefit for the Berlin Bruisers, who are Berlin's gay-inclusive rugby team. The annual benefit is called Violet Varieté. The longtime hosts were Gieza Poke, who I had drawn at the drag show in the fall, and Liliana. I was given a folding chair to sit on; better than nothing. Hilarious, delightful Nana Schewitz



Full Moon Cabaret 2019



Bindy and friend at the Drink+Draw Berlin boat 2019



Daria tattooing Fania at the Drink+Draw Berlin boat 2019





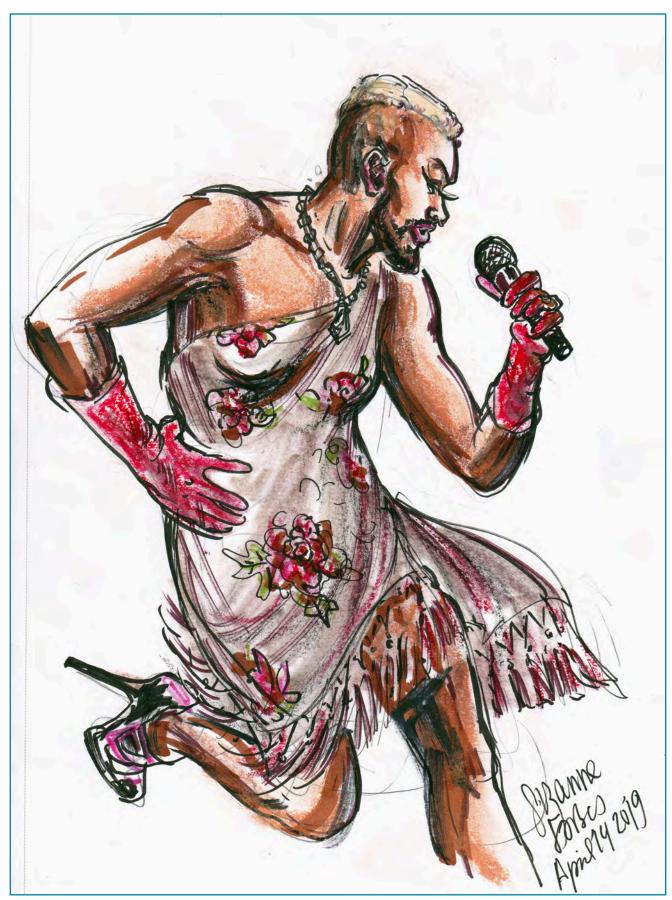
performed, and I drew her for the first time! Above, Gieza on the left and Nana on the right.

It was my first time really drawing Lola Rose, after the crowded Peaches thing the previous summer. She exploded onto the stage like a comet, trailing fringe, electrifying. I was knocked out, dazzled, moving as fast as I could to convey her choreography and self-made costume!

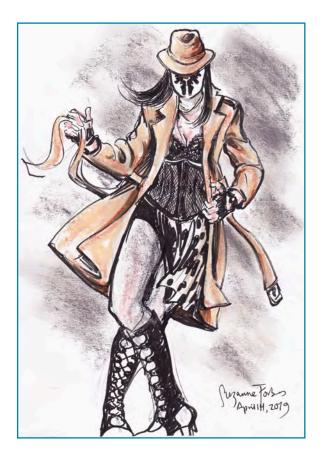
It was a great night for performers; I also drew fantastic bellydancer The Darvish for the first time.

It was a long night drawing lots of acts, with Evilyn Frantic, Dunja von K, Rah's new band and more. I never went in the dressing room anywhere, my whole thing was capturing how people want to be seen in their full presentation, but I was in such pain from the folding chair I went in the dressing room and sat on the couch and finished the drawings. So I got to meet Darvish and chat a little, which was wonderful.





Lola Rose at Violet Variete 2019





I went to the Shimmy Shake Show, put on by La Viola Vixen, founder of Berlin burlesque school The Shimmy Shake School.

It was at Ballhaus Berlin, and lovely. Of drawing emcee Scotty the Blue Bunny I said, "You can never really get used to the sight of a very tall, loud, gay man in a glittering velvet bunny suit. As often I as see, and draw, Scotty the Blue Bunny performing, there is still a pleasant frisson of shock at just how much blue bunny he is." Two of my favorite acts at this show are honestly two of my favorite burlesque acts I've ever seen: Rorschach bur-lesque from Shimmy Shake teacher La Loba Lucía, left, and Shark burlesque from statuesque Ruby Skyscraper, right!

Then I took an eight-day Make-Cation, where all I did was craft and e After a lifetime of trying to explain it, I have never succeeded in conveying the fact that drawing and painting are not fun for me. Exciting, yes. Rewarding. Fulfilling. Sacred. Exhilarating, like competing is for an athlete. But work, not fun.

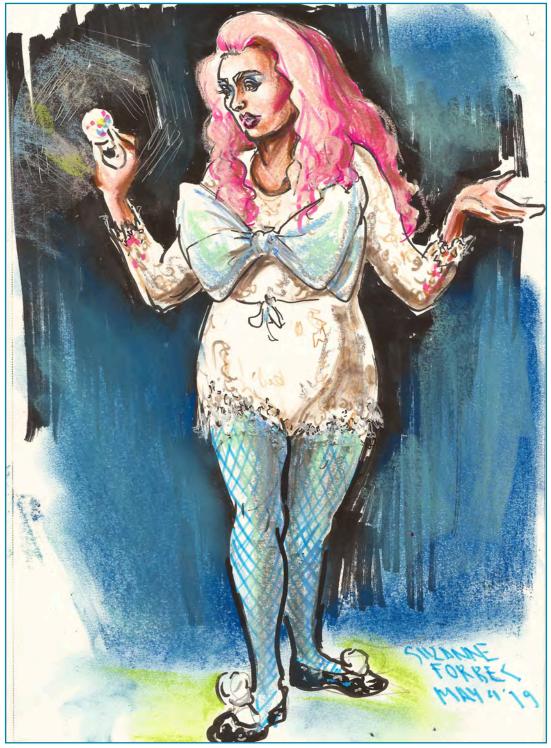
## Nobody ever got that I put my whole identity on the line every time I drew, and I was always terrified to pick up the pen or brush. So it goes.

I had painting sittings, with Daria, who was leaving Berlin, and a third sitting with my Beloved Friend-Muse-Patron Shakrah Yves. I was doing a small vintage-vibe painting of Shakrah after two mixed media drawings. Natasha Enquist had left Berlin, but a friend of hers, photographer Mirella Frangella, came to photograph me painting Shakrah. Mirella also took the photo of me in the "Thank you" chapter.



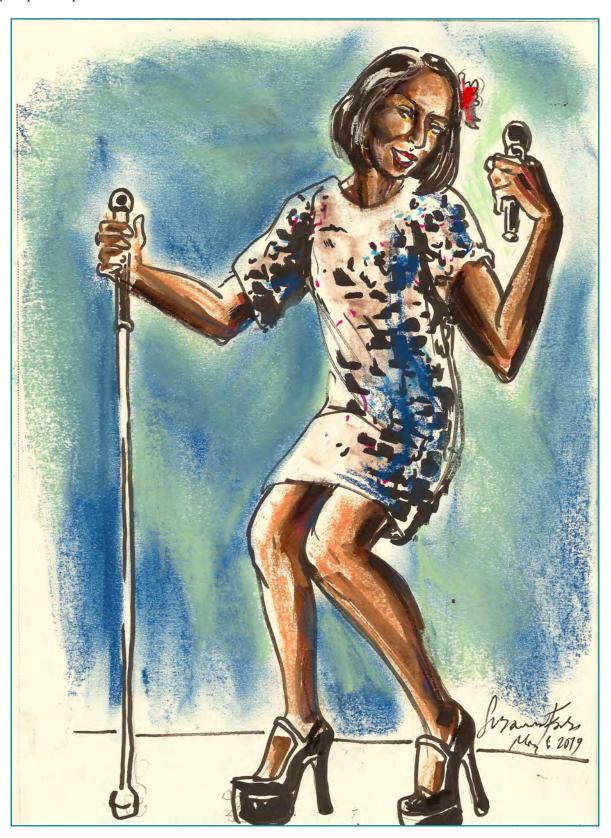
## It was a quiet Sunday afternoon that May when I glanced at Instagram and saw my friend Dia was about to perform at Tipsy Bear's Drag Brunch, on the other side of town.

I grabbed my art tools and jumped on the train. I made it just in time to catch Dia's second act as well as some other fabulous people! I didn't know Vivienne Lovecraft, and I was delighted by their act. During the trivia contest, the question "What do the H. and P. in H.P. Lovecraft stand for?" was asked and Dia yelled, "Highly Problematic!"



Vivienne Lovecraft at Drag Bunch 2019

Ebony Rose Dark danced so gracefully, so delicately on those 6" heels. She was amazing! We had a minute to chat, and she told me about some of the other performances she does, including one in pitch dark with fellow visually impaired performers.



I knew I'd gotten a good likeness and gesture in terms of line, but I wasn't satisfied with the way I'd drawn the highlights on Ebony's skin. She deserved to look as radiant in the drawing as she did in person! The main reason I was trying to add color tools to my live-drawing was to give better representation to the Black, Brown, SWANA, Indigenous and Asian people I was drawing.

I knew I'd never learned how to draw Black people's skin, especially dark-skinned Black people's skin, with color tools. White skin was treated as the default at every art school I went to. Black models were rare, and no skills for drawing them were offered. As a tv courtroom artist in very racist Minnesota courts, I had drawn many Black people. I did my best to depict them, with the color tools I had; I didn't try adding pastels or paint. I wasn't making learning color technique a goal; I was planning to work in comics soon and have a colorist handle coloring my artwork for the rest of my life! (If there is still an internet when you're reading this, there's a book called How to Draw Black People from Shabazz Arts that you can buy!)

In Europe, I was meeting more Black people with deep, richly melanated complexions. I'd been drawing my BIPOC friends and boyfriends in pencil and ink for decades, but training my eye to really see and represent the color of highlights on much darker skin was a new thing. People's melanin-rich complexions absorb UV and blue light, and reflect other light, especially stage light. The edges of the highlights on Black people's skin are clearer than on white skin. Trinidad painter and renaissance man Boscoe Holder was superb at painting Black people; seeing his work showed me so much.

And, understanding light and color doesn't mean shit as a white person if you don't do your own anti-racism work, and listen to people tell you how they want to be seen and depicted. I wanted to honor people and represent them as they wanted to be represented, and do better.

I was about to learn a LOT about my own harmcausing, and be blessed with guidance on how to do better.

On May 18 Sadie and I went to the Poetry Brothel at Lotus Loft, a relaxed, mystic event with lots of people I knew. I was happy to draw woman rigger Sawa and her model H. as they worked together. I had to post the drawing on my age-gated blog rather than my Patreon, though.

On May 23 I went to Cadbury Parfait's show Extravagant Shambles, with the theme "Tits, Bits and Politics".



Cadbury did her hilarious "Miss Brexit" act, which was an act in opposition to England leaving the European Union; it ended with an EU flag reveal. Skirt Vonnegut's act was about Donald Trump, painfully well done.

Queenie O Hart performed a great act interrogating fatphobia, which was so good to see onstage. The body positivity movement on Instagram, led by Black women, was strong that year. It seemed like there was real change. (Spoiler: not much. It was co-opted by white women, and now people inject themselves with a chemical that makes the flesh basically melt off their bones.)

I drew Maïmouna Rouge Coulibaly for the first time, and showed her the picture to ask for consent to share it after the show. Maïmouna is an authoress, TEDx talker, theater performer and the creator of Booty Therapy dance workshops in Berlin and Paris. She was new in Berlin



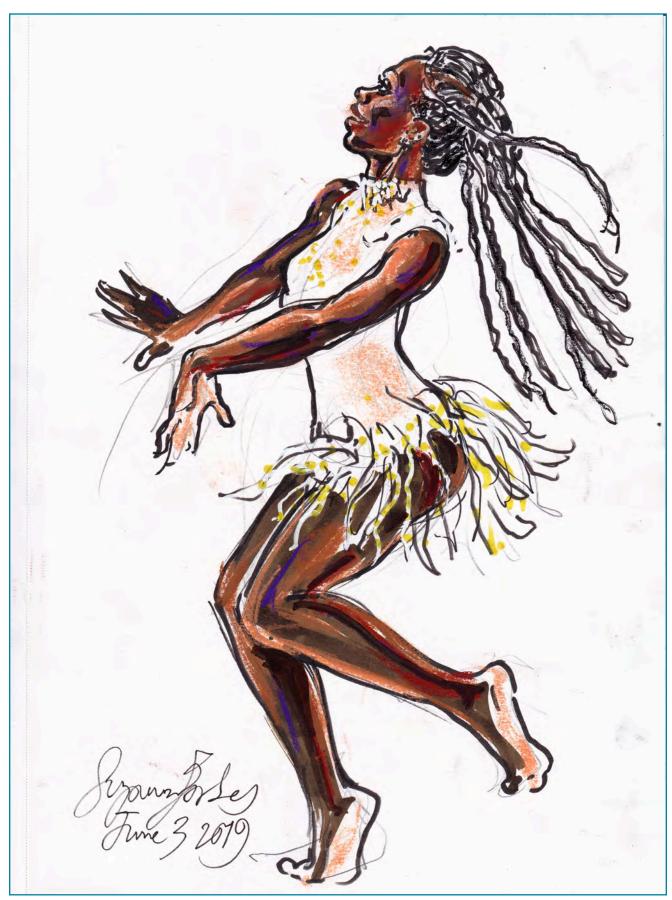


that year, and she has given the city profound works, education and celebrations in the years since.

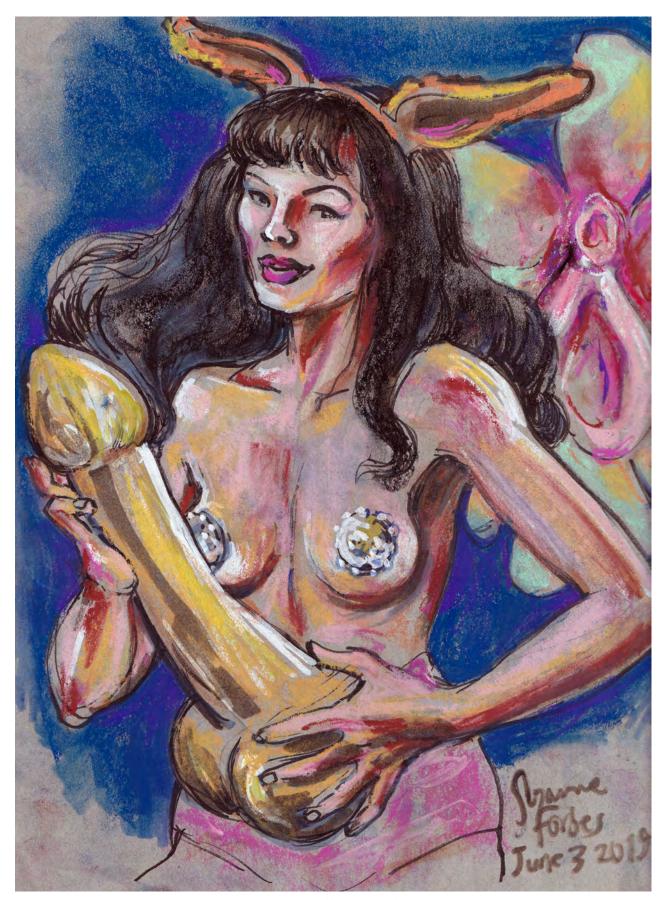
I was sick all the time as usual going to these events, always sore throat, fever, pain and fatigue, sick all year, but I didn't get tested for Strep Throat because I had been sick and been tested for it probably forty times in my life, and only been positive once.

So I went to what turned out to be the last Berlin Burlesque Week at the end of May feeling normal level bad, and determined to work all-out.

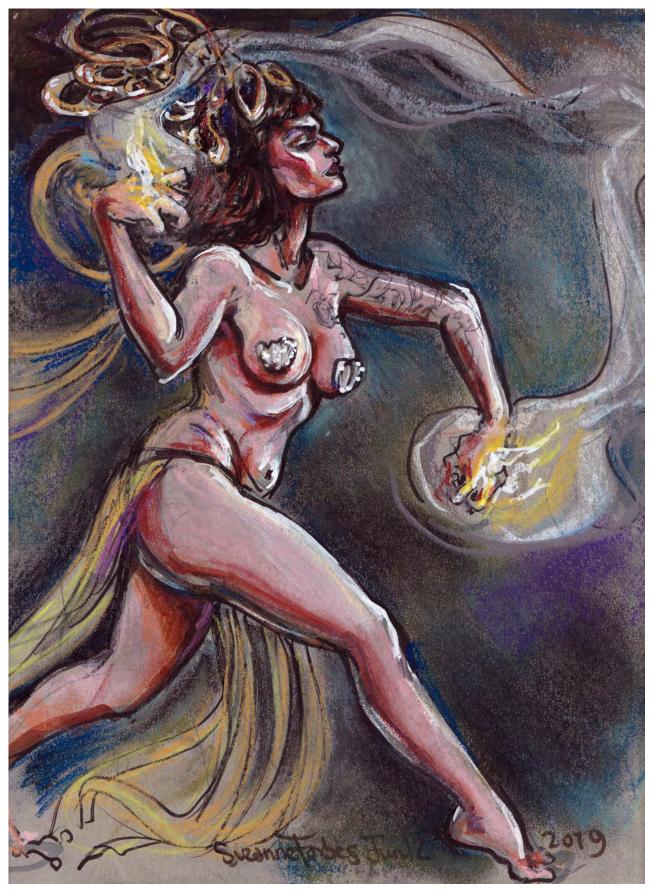
I was thrilled to be at another Full Moon Cabaret! I was all dressed in theme, already in pain from the transit to the Ballhaus but ready to go. But the room was packed, the show



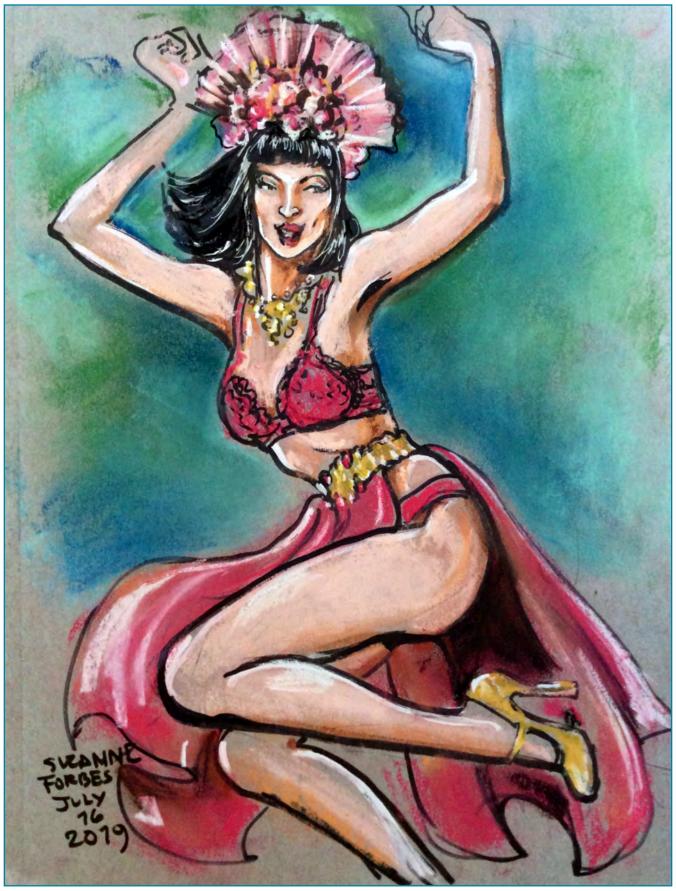
Maïmouna Rouge Coulibaly at Extravagant Shambles Tits Bits and Politics 2019



Viva Lamore at Full Moon Cabaret 2019



Valentina DeMonia as Persephone at Full Moon Cabaret 2019



Crocodile Lightning at Full Moon Cabaret 2019

oversold, there was not a single seat available. I asked Le Pustra, the Ballhaus event manager, for a chair, but he did not help. I was crying, which I almost never do, and ready to leave when Rah Hell, who was in the show, found me a chair. I am glad I was able to draw that beautiful show. There were flower pussies and Viva Lamore with a giant gilt penis. There was a heavenly performance by Crocodile Lightning, who is a great liberatory guide in her non-performer life. I wish I had a higher resolution scan!

There was an act about bodily autonomy and the freedom to use birth control, with Dotti Moscati, an amazing burlesquer I knew from drawing Big Broad Revue, her show with Liliana. Dotti had a spray bottle labeled "Spermicide" and sprayed dancing extras dressed as sperm, who fell down. It was so good.

### A day later I was excited to attend my second event, the Performers' Panel Discussion about Cultural Appropriation.

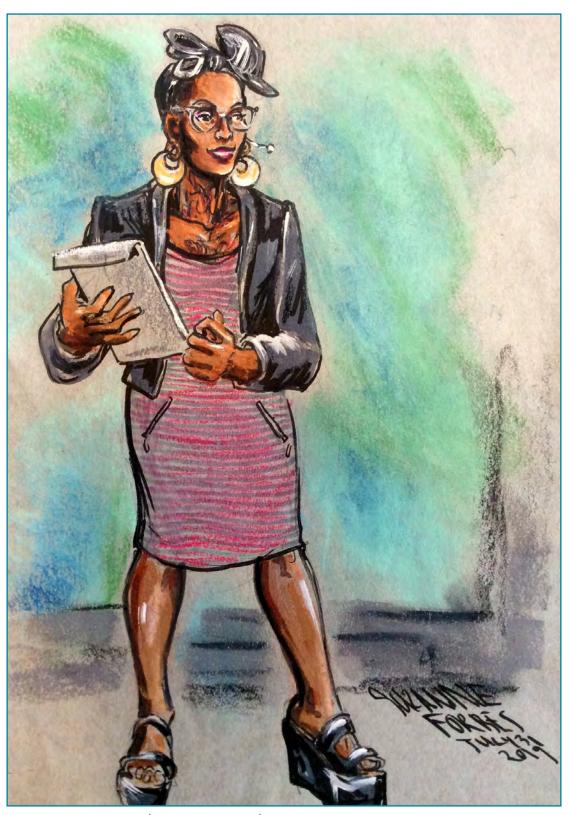
Unfortunately, I hadn't seen the
Instagram post with the guidelines. And if I had, I would probably have assumed they didn't apply to me, because I was "press" and "there to help by documenting". I took the handout I was given as I went in the door, dropped my things on a seat, and walked up to the performers at the bar to find out who I should ask for consent to draw. When I opened my mouth, the performers looked terrified. I was baffled. They directed me to the facilitator, Livia, and I asked her if it was ok to draw. She said yes. Then I sat down, and read the handout, which said that white people were not to address any person of color in the room, to foster a safer space. I had done harm.

The panel was facilitated by Livia Kojo Alour and co-hosted by Denise "Seven" Bailey. The speakers I drew were Sydni Deveraux, Knockout Noire, Kim Khaos, Misty Lotus, Viva Lamore; there may have been more. I am so grateful to all of them for the life-changing talks they shared that day. They were vulnerable and wise, and they told the truths that I had been avoiding all my life.

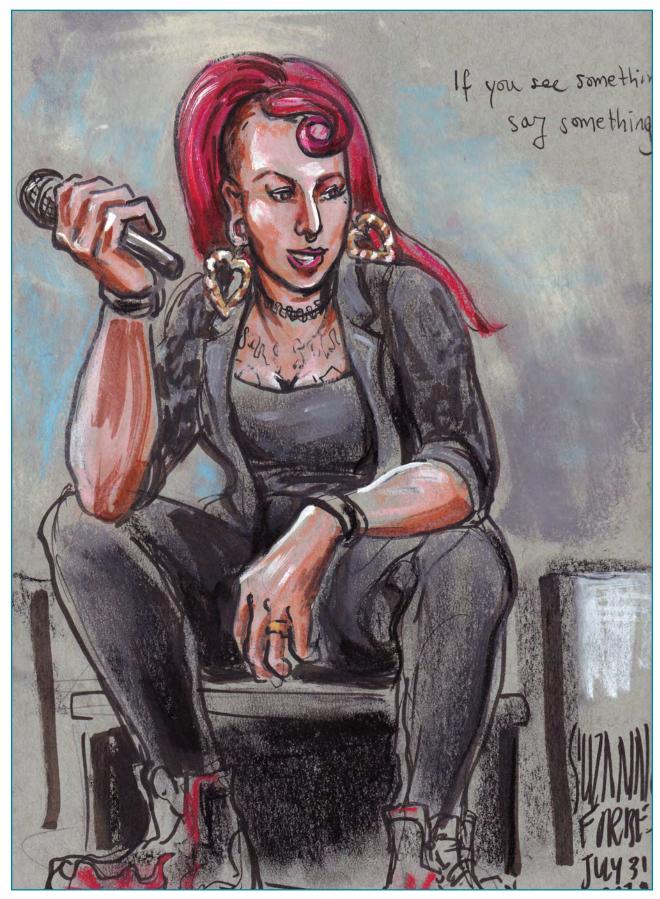


### I walked out of that room determined to do better, with no idea how little I knew.

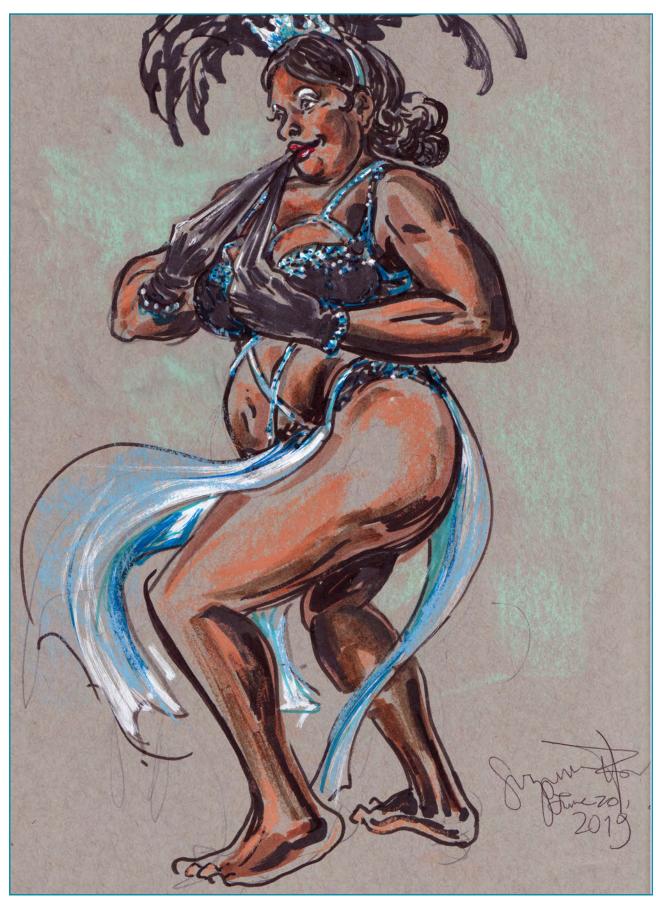
I came back after a little dinner break to draw the Shimmy Shake Newcomers' Show with new eyes. I made one of my best drawings of Noéline la Bouche, and one of the emcee Elsie Marley that she really liked.



Livia Kojo Alour (for MisSa Swords) facilitating at Berlin Burlesque Week 2019



Luna TikTok at Berlin Burlesque Week Performer's Panel on Cultural Appropriation 2019

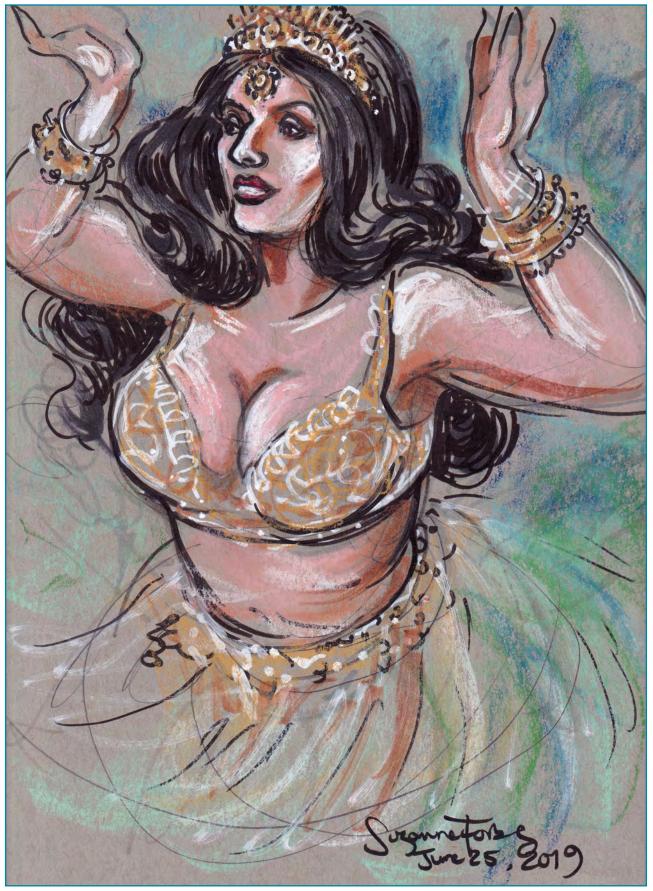


Noéline la Bouche at Berlin Burlesque Week Shimmy Shake Show

I returned the next afternoon. On my way in I saw Noéline sitting with some people outside a cafe; I stopped to proudly show her the drawing. Livia gently told me it was a BIPOC-only meetup, and I at least left promptly, though I didn't know enough to say "Thank you for the information" instead of sorry! I made amends afterwards as best I could. There is always more to learn, and I have been fortunate to work to gain trust from some very wise people.



MC Elsie Marley at Berlin Burlesque Week Shimmy Shake Show 2019



Misty Lotus at Berlin Burlesque Week 2019

I went on into the Ballhaus to draw Jews! Jews! Jews!, the show produced by Berlin Burlesque Week co-producer Lolita Va Voom and her friend Nana Schewitz, who I'd drawn at the Bruisers benefit the month before. What a show! It was spectacular! So many amazing performers to draw. This is my first drawing of Misty Lotus performing; happily I got to see and draw her again.

There were two shows, and I stayed for the next one, a Cabaret of Curiositease. I drew Livia performing, Knockout Noire doing a tribute to Josephine Baker, and more. I drew wonderful Shimmy Shake School mâitresse La Viola Vixen, co-producer of this show, proudly watching the performances in custom Berlin-made Lupae Latex. But there was a performance I was shocked by, and didn't draw. It was performed to "Have you seen

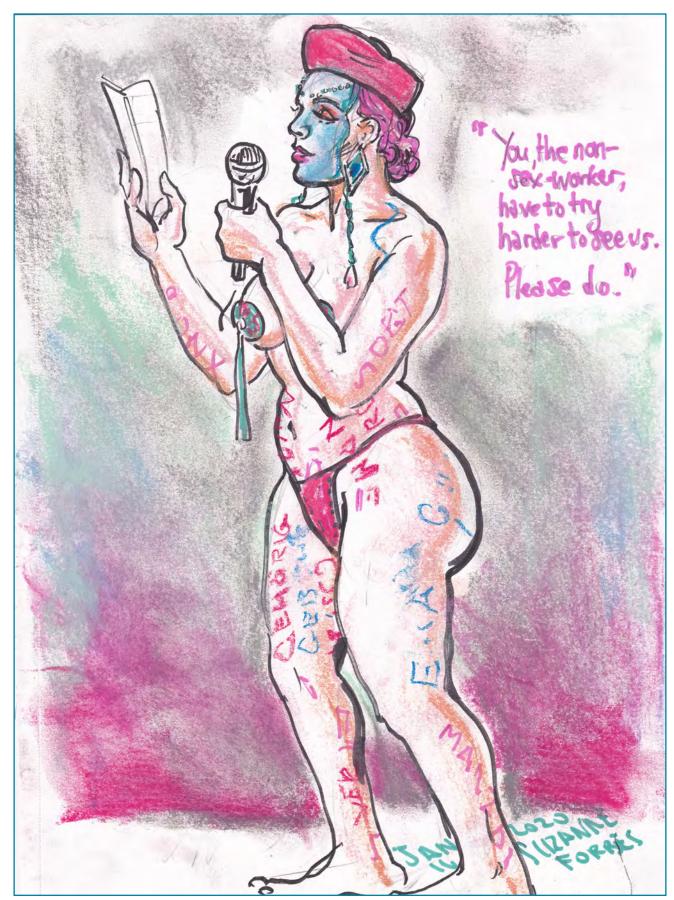
my sister Evelyn" from Amanda Palmer and Jason Webley, part of a concept where they pretended to be conjoined twins. The performers I watched and didn't draw were also pretending to be conjoined twins. I'd begun to spend time in disability community online, and to deeply value the guidance of educator Imani Barbarin. I had begun to understand ableism, and the ways disability is mistreated in the world. Evelyn Evelyn was ableist! I went home thinking a lot.

I joined Sadie at the Schwules Museum for the finissage of an exhibition of sex worker artifacts called "Objects of Desire" on Hurentag, International Whore's Day.

I had crafted little red necklaces that said "Sex Worker Ally" to wear and give out. I had to ask museum staff for a chair, because I could no longer sit



La Viola Vixen at Berlin Burlesque Week 2019



Liad Hussein Kantorowicz performs Unidentified at Schwules Museum 2019

on floors; it was a bit of a drama, as if I was a nuisance. I drew the audience and the performers, including performance artist and activist Liad Hussein Kantorowicz, who performed "Unidentified", a work about the disturbing changes in German law for sex workers.

#### And then it was time for the release party of Jo Pollux's book, "As You Wish my Lady", at Ludwig!

I was so sick, with a raging fever and terrible sore throat. Today, I would no more go to an indoor event while sick and possibly contagious than I would piss in a punch bowl. But then, I felt had to be there for Sadie, and I almost never got other people sick with my sore throats and fevers.

It was a hard night. There was so much love and euphoria around the magnificent book, which was composed of Jo's stunning photos of Sadie with other friends and Sadie's dark prose. But there was also tension. Jo and Sadie were both familiar and uneasy together.

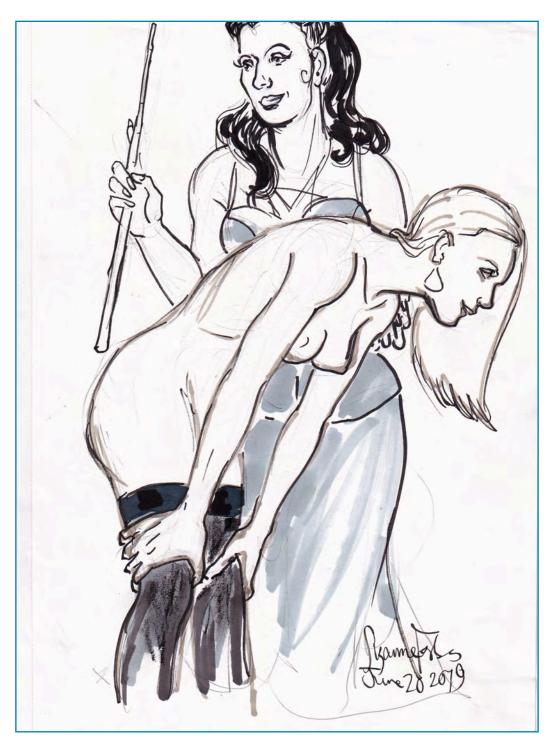




## In the crowded front room I met and drew Axel and AfroDisiac, one of the great artist love matches I have known in my life. Bless them both and their love!

We went into Ludwig's back room for Sadie to perform à la carte acts of play on willing victims, and I asked the whole room explicitly for consent to draw. It was so hot in the back room!

This beautiful girl signed up for caning, and asked Sadie to cane her until—"Until when?" "Until I cry!", she said bravely! The crowd broke into cheers at her courage. She loved the drawing and wanted to buy it, but we never organized it.





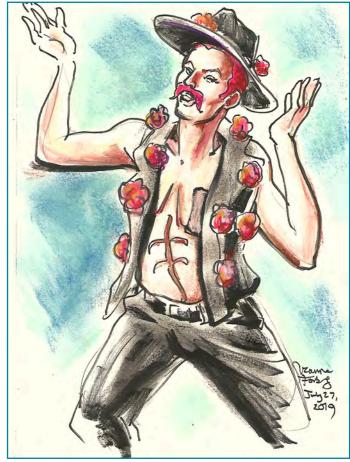
## What a special night of light and darkness, community and kinks, love and pain, on a dark hot summer night in Neukölln.

It turned out I did have strep throat, and bronchitis, so I mostly stayed home the rest of that June and July. I worked on all my new drawings. I was increasingly adding color to my drawings at home after events. I made gay action figures for Pride. I went to draw at my friends Robert and Achim's play, and to draw Martini Cherry Furter and La Lobo Lucia at Zum Starken August. The summer was very hot; I hosted an Anti-Censorship Salon, where I made a sundae bar with my famous homemade ice creams and hot fudge. My friends Dia and Jillian Venter, digital civil liberties experts, gave talks and supported people. And I had the first sitting with Cadbury Parfait for a painted portrait in my salon.

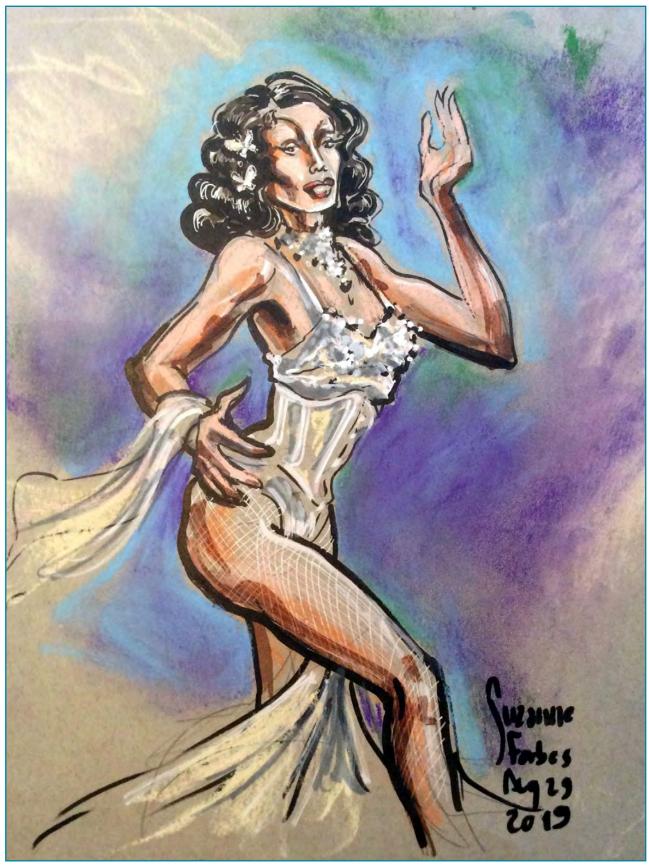
# Cadbury's show Extravagant Shambles was at Monster Ronson's on July 25<sup>th</sup> for its Pride edition, "Pride Not Prejudice."

It was very exciting! There was such a lineup! And I was glad it was at Ronson's because they had some shitty air conditioning, unlike everywhere else in Berlin. There was a terrific showing of local drag kings. I drew HP Loveshaft, left, who became my Beloved Friend-Muse-Patron, and Daddy Sparkles, right, an absolute charmer.

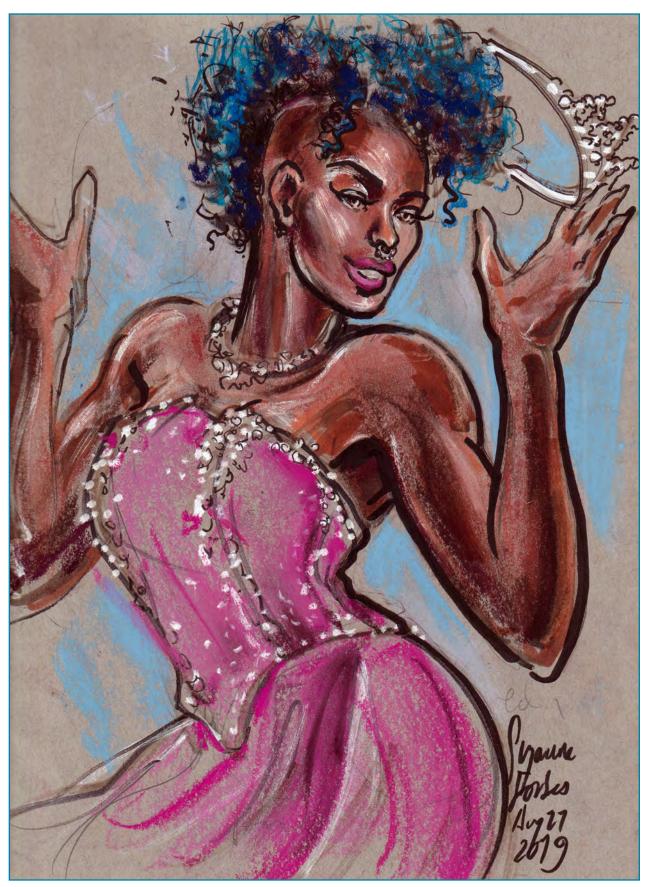




I got to draw Lily Lustre and Betty Fvck again, which was so joyous!



Betty Fvck at Extravagant Shambles Pride Not Prejudice 2019



Eden Lost at Extravagant Shambles Pride not Prejudice 2019



Felicity Felicis at Extravagant Shambles Pride not Prejudice 2019

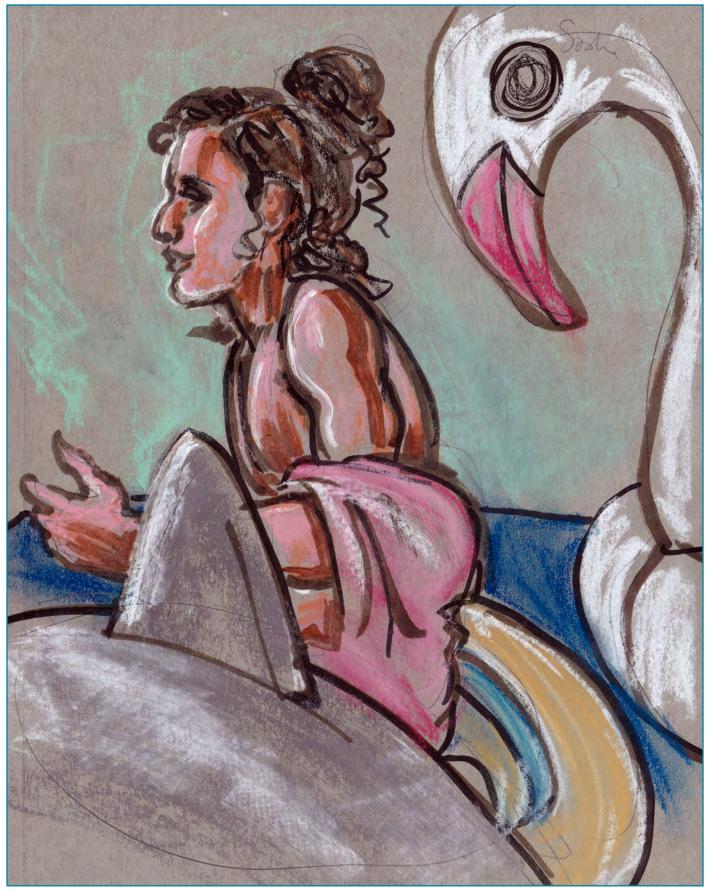
### Bushwig Berlin was the week after, and WHOA that almost did me in.

The famous Brooklyn drag festival Bushwig was doing a Berlin edition, and of course I wanted to be there and had arranged a press pass. And I almost didn't make it! I was so dizzy and stunned from heat and fatigue on the way over, when the bus stopped early and the driver announced "Ersatzbuslinie" I almost gave up. But I staggered to the replacement bus, and made it to Festsaal Kreuzberg, one of my favorite venues to draw in. I got a good seat in the sweltering hall, and even better, next to me was kind young Arthur, who took care of me throughout the show. I really needed drinks brought to me! It was so hot! I worked straight through for over six hours. I just kept drawing, one performer after another.

I desperately wanted to draw Hungry, who I had never drawn. I knew she had a new corset costume by Misty Couture that was magnificent. And she was the very last performer, but I had just enough left in the tank to do something special. I showed it to her later and she was delighted! Bushwig Berlin was one of the hardest, hottest, most fulfilling days I worked in the Berlin drag scene. The lineup of Berlin and Brooklyn performers was incredible. I made twenty-five finished drawings of more than twenty performers. Some Berlin performers I drew include Hassandra, left, and Rhama, right.







Sasha Kills at Bushwig Berlin 2019



Adele Computer at Bushwig Berlin 2019





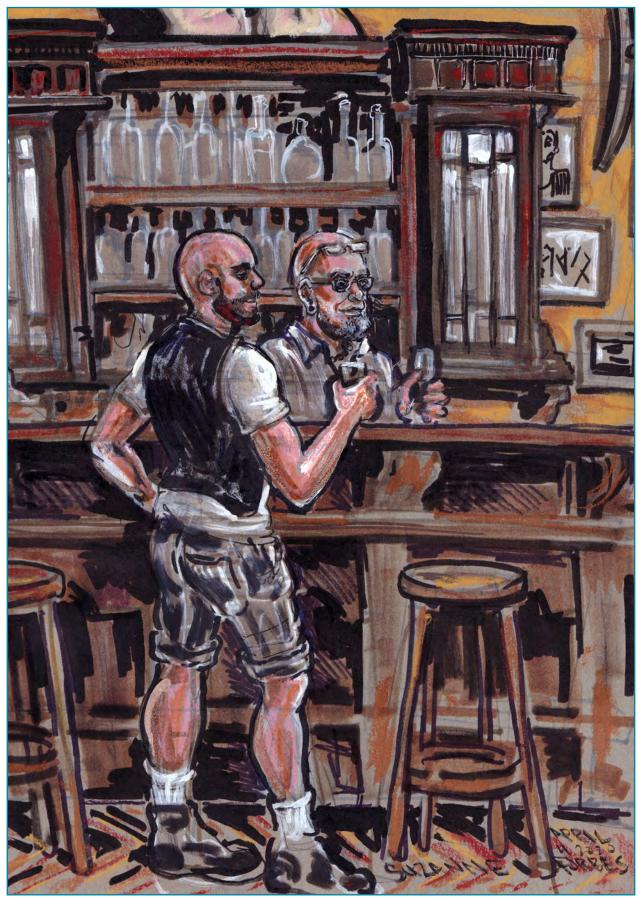
ReveRso, a Berlin icon, put fireworks in their ass, which I had not seen before. It's always good to see a new thing in your life! I loved the nun-to-devil performance of Frida, which includes the penance for barebacking: "Say Five Hail Marys I'm on PREP it's fine". And I am very proud of the drawing of Hungry.

I was working on the Bushwig Berlin drawings for the rest of the year! On August 1 I took a ten-day MakeCation, crafting and sewing, which was wonderful. Then I went to Dr. Sketchy's, which was Barbarella themed, and I had my second sitting with Cadbury Parfait.

The large painting of Cadbury stands unfinished on my easel, along with the other paintings from 2019. I doubt I will finish any of them, unless treatment for ME becomes available.







Ceven and Maurus at Ludwig the last night, 2019

### In September my life blew up.

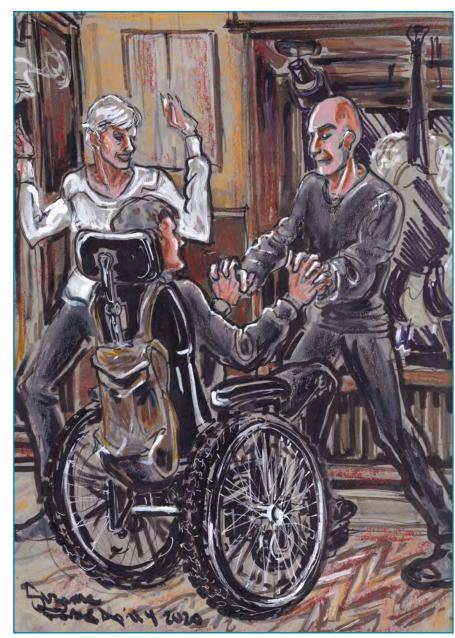
We went to the visa office for what we thought was a routine visit, to renew my artist's visa. Only to learn that the previous official, in granting my visa, had not recorded evidence sufficient for the current officials, who required either proof of my artist standing and income on a much larger scale than I had expected to provide, or a specific type of notarized document from the City Hall at the California capitol, proving our marriage. Until those were handed to the officials, I had just a three-month temporary visa.

Also, I was about to have knee surgery. I went into hard compulsive crisis mode, and managed it all, but I think the terror and stress cost me a lot. It was a good thing I had a stack of drawings to finish and could sit tight and do exactly that.

### Then we went to the last night at Ludwig and it was fucking sad.

My husband came out with me, only the second time he came out in 2019, because, well, it was important. Ceven made a playlist that began with "I Don't Feel Like Dancing", so perfect it seared my heart. Just before the performances were to start, Maurus got a phone call, and suddenly tore into the perfectly set up tables in the front room and pulled them away. A wheelchair user and loved ones arrived and danced in the cleared space. Have I mentioned Ludwig had one of the only accessible bathrooms in a queer space in Berlin at that time?

After the dance dear Transophonix orchestra made a processional to the stage and performed a dirge, resonating in the space. There were lots of acts. You don't know sad 'til you've heard a trans girl sing "Send in the Clowns" on the last night of one of the sweetest spaces you've ever known. Everyone tried to save Ludwig, there were many heartbreaking benefit events, but running a business is brutally hard on small business owners. When we love those people, when they're artists and part of our community, we want them to be saved too, not used up fighting economic and structural forces.





Transophonix at the Last Ludwig Night 2019

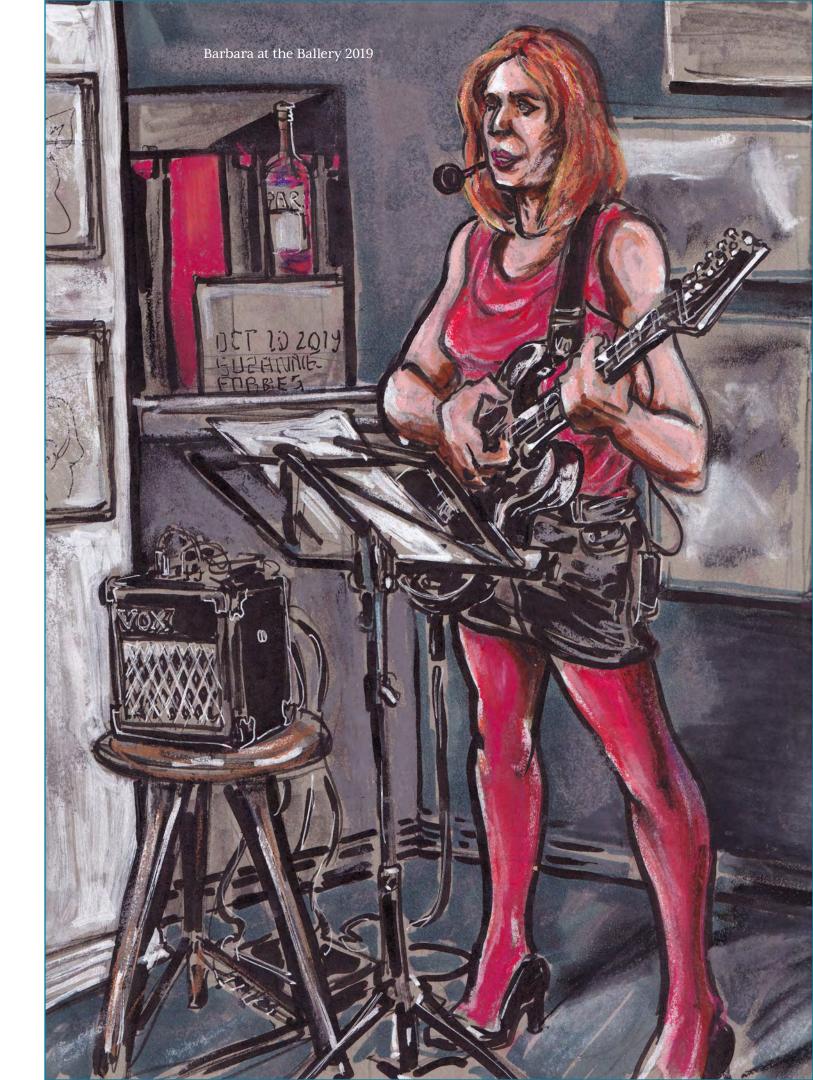
At the September Dr. Sketchy's Berlin, Bishop Black posed in strings of pearls for a Sea Sirens theme, and LaLaVox and Syren Joey sang opera, and that was a great comfort and joy. Things felt delicately balanced between loss and hope in my sense of the city, and upside down in my mind, where I was realizing my whole worldview was built on disinformation. Being a junkie and disabled had given me intersectional experiences, but without guidance from outside my white perspective, I didn't understand those experiences properly. I was reading decolonial crip guidance from Alice Wong and Imani Barbarin and listening hard to BIPOC voices in community.

In October I was in a group show at The Ballery. The show included a radiant series of portraits by photographer Eva Brunner of her spouse Barbara. At the finissage of the exhibit, Barbara played music. I added color when I got home, from memory and scribbly notes on the drawing.

## My mom came to visit, for the third October. She stayed in on the night I went to the PorYes feminist porn awards, although she loves Sadie; too late night for her!

Because Sadie was getting an award, I 'd splashed out and bought a front-row seat for the show, the ten-year anniversary of PorYes. The awards were held in the elegant HAU1 theater of the woman-run Hebbel am Ufer.

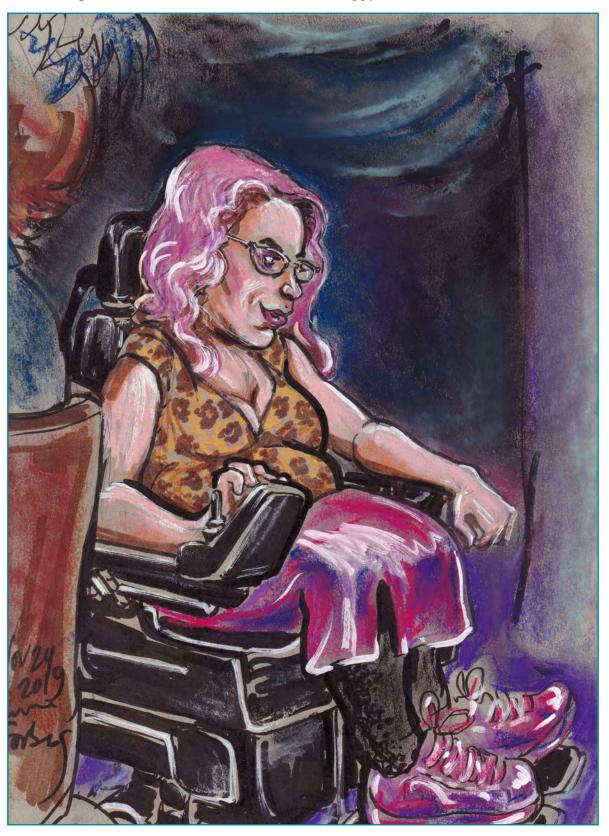
The evening opened with scenes from the work of award winner Nan Kinney, queer elder and lesbian porn pioneer. I loved drawing her.

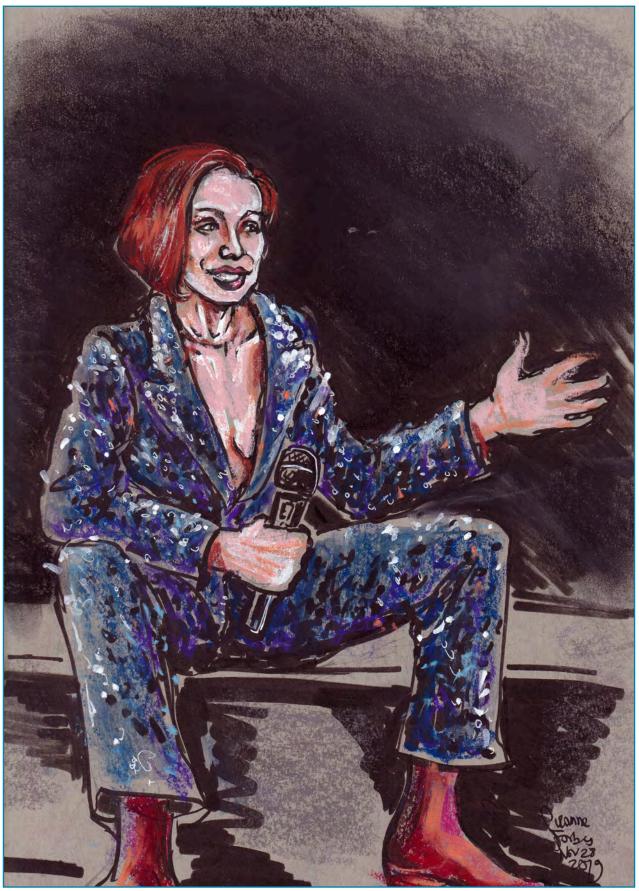




Nan Kinney at the PorYes Awards 2019

I visited with award winner Dr. Loree Erickson and asked consent to draw her. She has done such important work for queercrips! Dr. Loree was just at the October 2024 New York book launch for the new edition of Jiz Lee's book, "Coming out like a Porn Star"; that makes me so happy.





Laura Méritt hosting PorYes awards 2019

PorYes was co-founded by Laura Méritt and Polly Fannlaf. Laura Méritt, communication scientist and legendary activist in the German queer and prostitute movements, was hosting. I'd drawn her before at one of her sex salons and it was easy to get her likeness, hard to draw her glitter suit!

#### On the last day of my mom's visit, I pulled energy from nowhere to make a painting of her for the first and most likely last time. I had a strong intuition it was my only chance.

Halloween was cancelled, Fucksgiving was cancelled, I was on work activities only and barely making it. Having to lie down at least six hours a day was giving me great chunks of time to read liberatory, anti-racist guidance from Black and PoC leadership, so that was good.

## Late October means Porn Film Festival Berlin, and I had a show in the foyer, hanging prints of my drawings on a clothesline with pins like we did at Nude Aid benefits.

My knee wasn't healing properly, I had vertigo as usual, and up on the ladder to hang the art, I realized it was totally unsafe to be doing what I was doing. I never made it back up the terrifying Moviemento theater stairs to any of the film events, but visiting SF friends like Madison were happy to see the drawings.

I committed my limited capacity to two things: finally drawing acclaimed Bay Area independent porn film-

maker Shine Louise Houston, and the premiere of "Spit and Ashes", a film Sadie was in. Shine was teaching a filming workshop, and I had organized with Jiz Lee to draw. I made half a dozen drawings and was so glad to be there; it was extra nice that one model was Bishop Black and I got to say hi. Then I went to Sadie's premiere but had to leave once she had arrived in her majestic witchy regalia. I would have passed out during the film; I was wrecked.

Dr. Sketchy's Berlin came to an end; Lala Vox had poured her heart and soul into it for ten years, creating an event beyond anyone's imaginings, and she needed to let it go. As did co-producer Syren Joey, who had done fantastic work the last couple years. I drove myself savagely to get out the door to the final event, a sweet life-drawing session with Liliana Velásquez modeling, co-hosted by Drink+Draw Berlin in their magical boat. At least the boat had soft chairs.

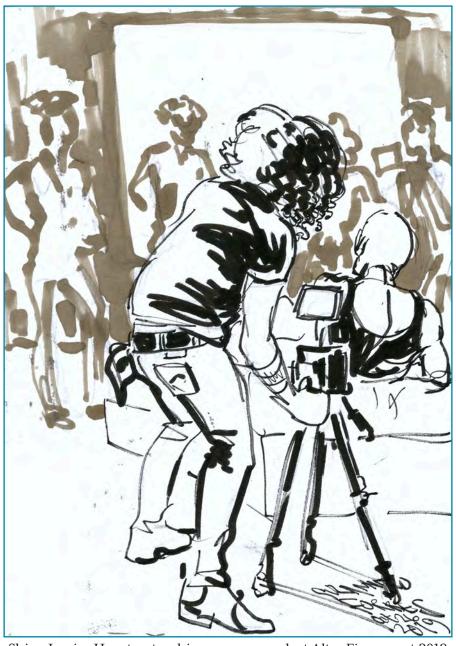


Shine Louise Houston and Jiz Lee 2019

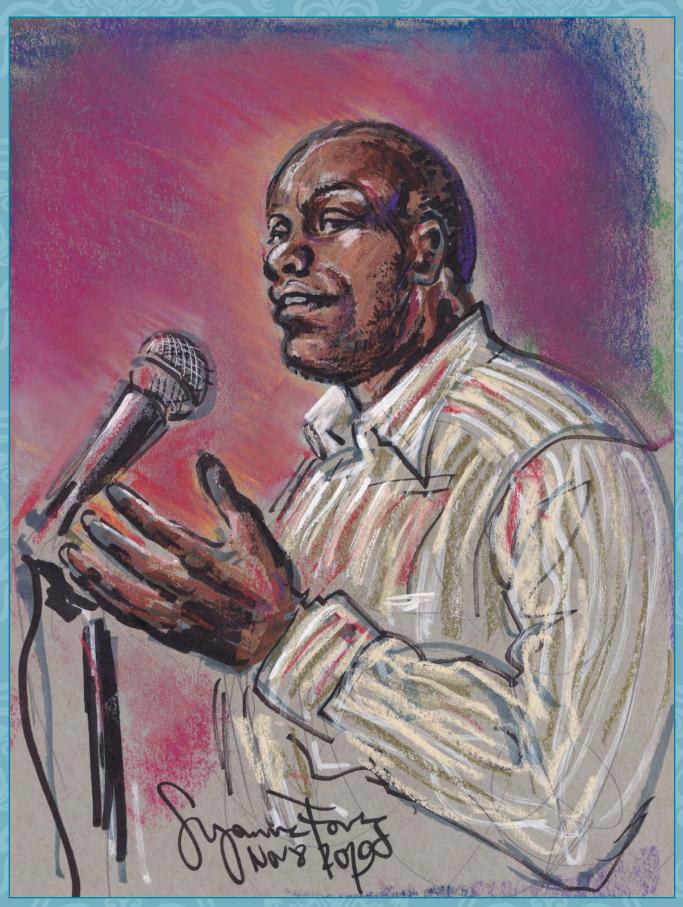
#### I went to my last Extravagant Shambles, held at queer art project ACUD MACHT NEU.

My friend and Patron Daniel Paikov was there taking pictures with his usual sang-froid, managing even though the ACUD Club is a dark cave of bloody light. We nightlife documenters find a way! The show was fantasy-themed, and it was amazing. Darell Haynes, professional opera singer, sang "I See Fire" from the second Hobbit movie. He just filled the room; it was one of those moments that makes the hairs on your arms stand up. Not what I expected in the club where the entrance always smelled a little like piss.

That December I made it to Le Pustra's famous Kabarrett der Namenlosen and drew. I did soothing crafts, finished Bushwig drawings, did a drawing of our friend Jillian Venters as an honorarium for their anti-censorship talk, and began photographing and scanning my art archives. We explained that I wouldn't be drawing at D.'s work holiday party this year, that we could not do guests over New Years, that Epic Brunch on New Year's Day would be only three hours, and I would be in bed for most of it. We were seeing my capacity diminish.



Shine Louise Houston teaching camera work at Altes Finanzamt 2019



Darell Haynes at Extravagant Shambles 2019





was aware there was a new virus loose in the world in January 2020, COVID-19 aka SARS-CoV-2, more than I'd been aware of other 21<sup>st</sup> Century viruses like SARS-1, Ebola, Zika and swine flu. I was watching to see if it would come to Germany, knowing I was vulnerable. I was spending more and more online time in the chronically ill community, like the No End in Sight (NEIS) Void, and connecting to ME people.

No SARS-CoV-2 cases had been reported in Europe yet, and the Berlin Strippers Collective was having life drawing with strippers! Of course I had to go, and it was heavenly, so comfy in the soft booth at the strip club with artist friends, drawing strippers again!

I had a small birthday party at the cafe downstairs, and as the days got longer, I was feeling better! Apparently radical rest, though I didn't know the term then, and not crashing my body over the holidays really helped! I decided Winter 2020 and age 53 would be my midlife nostalgia and taking stock time. I opened boxes and documented a ton of my art archives from the '80s, finding so much lesbian fan art of the New Mutants. I was euphoric that my fan art was going to become canon, with characters Rahne and Dani together in the new film that was about to come out.

#### My friend Sadie's co-parent KAy invited me to his T-Birthday party.

It was my first time at a T-birthday, the anniversary of starting testosterone hormones for a trans or nonbinary person. And I got to see someone get their first ever testosterone shot too! There were lots of Berlin queer legends present, that's Laura Méritt of the PorYes Awards dancing.

I drew loose and sketchy with tonal markers, because the light was mostly red light and fog machine. And I was squished up with a random beret-wearing guy and his friend on a squishy low couch. My pens kept falling between us and then I had to fish them out from under his butt. Normal Berlin night! The underground brick vault of a club, Maze, used to be BangBang, and before that it was storied Queer Berlin club Schwuz. Schwuz is now a huge new place, but KAy and Sadie both remembered the basement days.

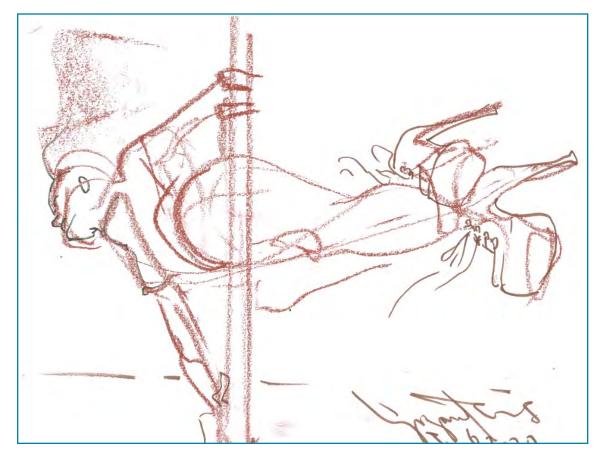
## I'd asked my Patrons for watercolor brush pens for my birthday, to try to add color that way, and thick Strathmore toned paper. I had a new Japanese brush pen for drawing too.

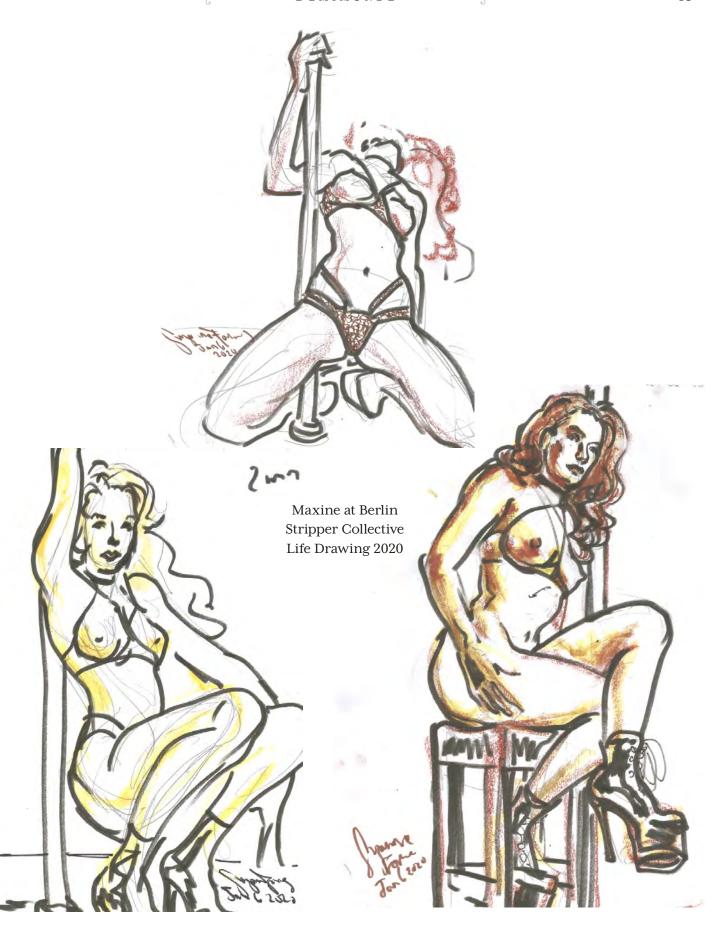
I went across town on a cold night to draw drag house House of Living Colors' show at Sophiensaele, but there were no tickets left. I turned to go home, and saw there was no lift (elevator) to the train, only an endless flight of stairs. I felt despair at the inaccessibility of Berlin.

Another night I saw a post from Chiqui Love, of then fairly new group Berlin Strippers Collective, who said she was about to model for a drawing session from Alexandra Ru.



Maxine at Berlin Stripper Collective Life Drawing 2020  $\,$ 

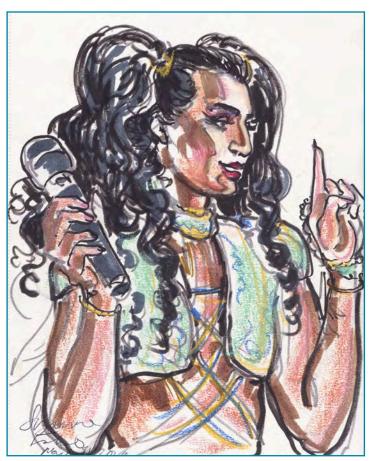




## I had been meaning to go to one of Alexandra's drawing sessions for years!

Alexandra Ru is a terrific artist who has done bar and museum drawing meetups all over town. This session was put on by Alexandra and Liana Gilman, who shared a studio space called Sketcherei, where they hosted drawing. I messaged Alexandra, grabbed my stuff and raced over to a dark bar near Gorlitzer Park. The stairs down to the cellar session were like a ladder made of rubble, scary as hell. Alexandra's Barsketcher crew was mostly young people, who skittered down the coffin-like stairwell like goats and sat comfortably about the underground grotto. Alexandra had reserved the one chair with a back for me.

The lighting was bright and clear. Chiqui is a wonderful model, and she had excellent costumes and tunes. I had no idea how to manage my watercolor brush pens and my water glass for refilling the water reservoir, plus my usual tools. And no idea how to use the brush pens! It was chaos!



Prince Emrah 2020

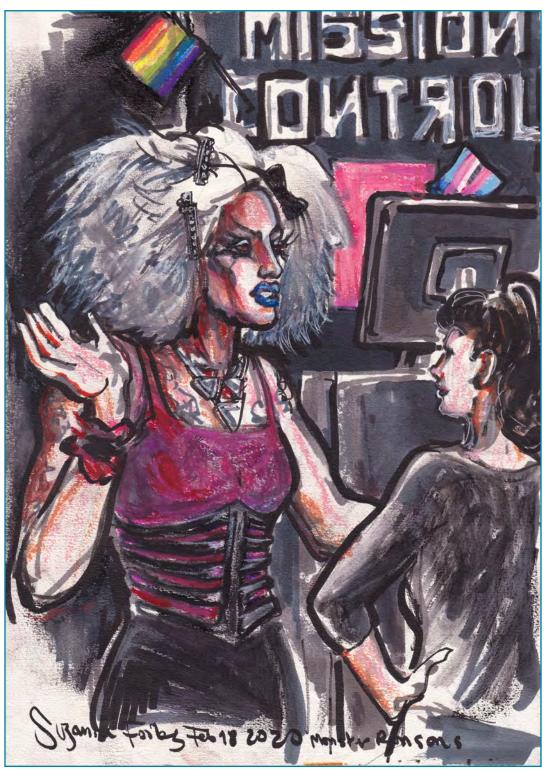


## I had been wanting to draw GodXXX Noirphiles for AGES!

When I saw they were performing at House of Presents in Friedrichshein on a damp January night, I took my regular gear of pens and pencils rather than risk the watercolors. Gieza Poke was hosting The House of Presents in lieu of Pansy who was on vacation. This was the first time I saw Gieza in person barefaced—I hardly recognized her! Gieza let me in early; she'd kindly arranged disability accommodation for me, a reserved seat with a view. My days of drawing standing in a crowded club for six hours straight were over. (When I live-drew Gieza's wedding in 2022, I was given a comfortable drawing table and chair setup right at the front of the church!)

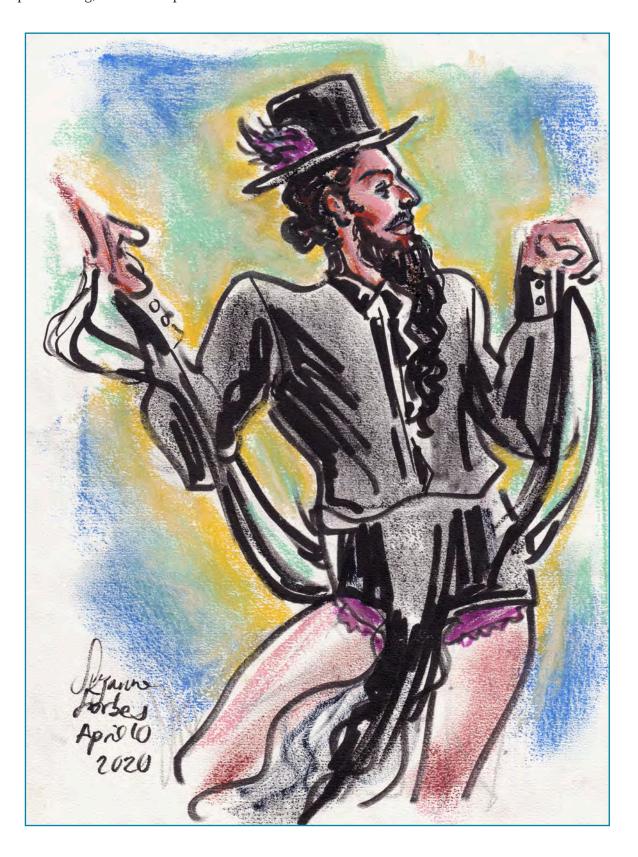
Opener show Gieza's PokeHouse was having a takeover by House of Royals, hosted by the regal Mother of that House, Prince Emrah. It was the first time I drew and met Prince Emrah. Hard to

imagine now, when their inspiration and creative power is so precious to me. (House of Royals is part of the drag family of QueerBerg, a solidarity party with queer refugee and migrant PoC performers; QueerBerg is now called QueerBerg Collective). Many of the performers of QueerBerg have become dear to me, and the collective's mission of solidarity for SWANA (Southwest Asian and North African) queer and trans refugee sex workers lights up Berlin. You will see them later!



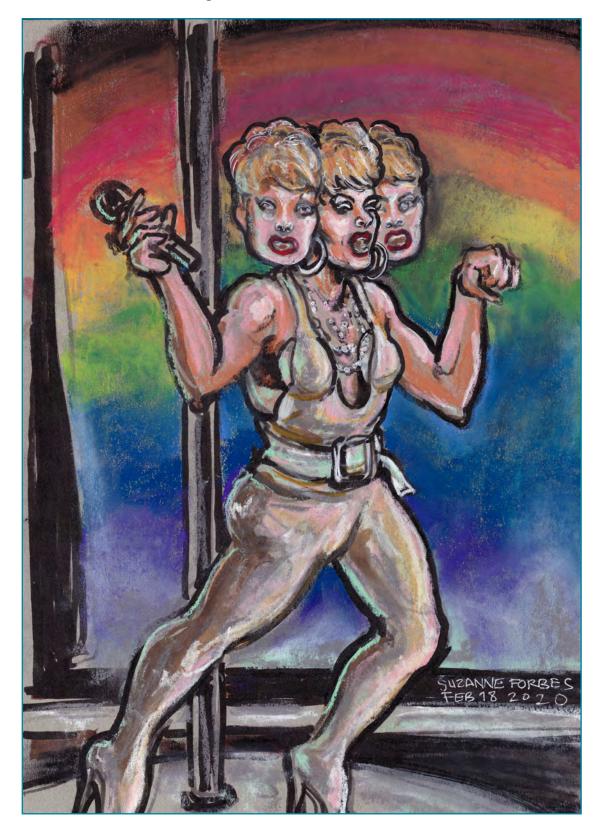
Antina Christ and Dunja von K at House of Presents 2020

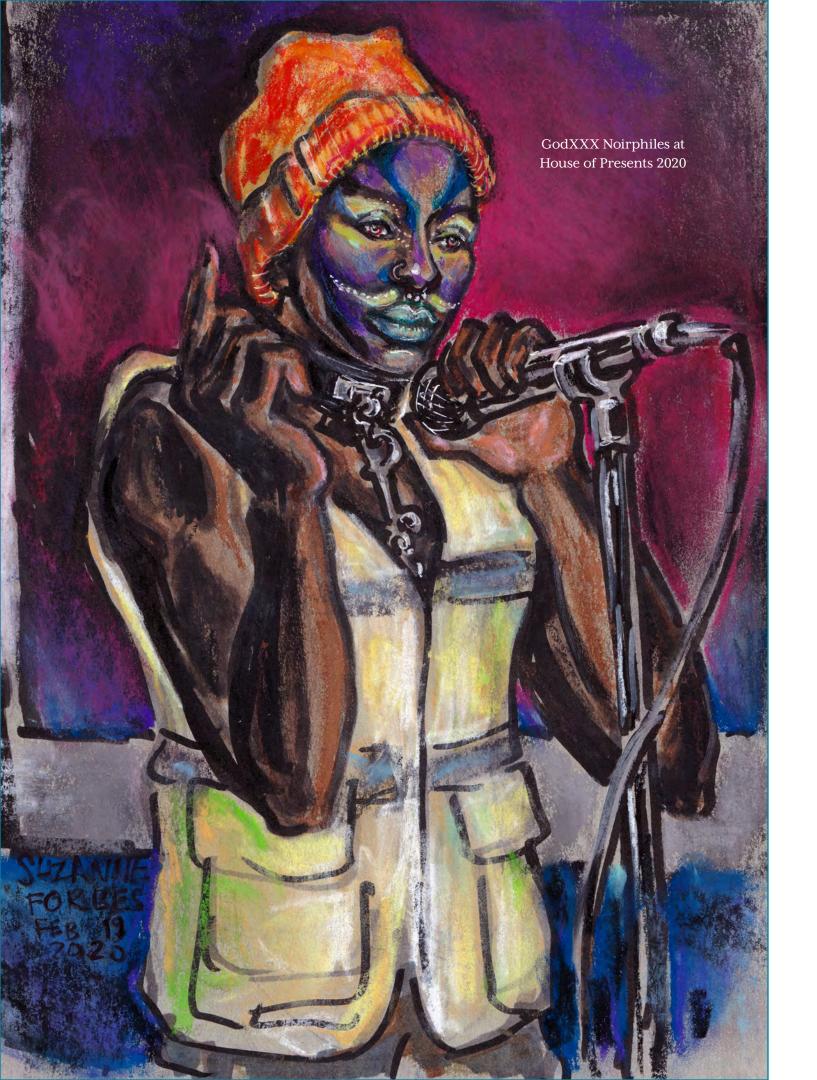
Before the show started I drew goth drag witch Antina Christ and Dunja von K, chatting at the DJ booth. I had drawn young drag king Buba Sababa at the last night of Ludwig, but this was my first time drawing them performing, and what a phenomenon!



At the break between shows, I went to talk to Prince Emrah to show them my drawings and ask consent to finish and share them. We hit it off instantly.

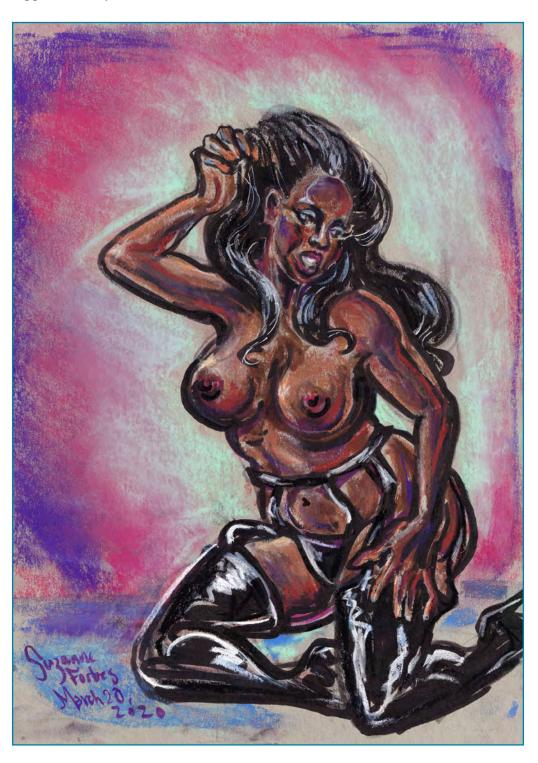
Gieza had an excellent new look involving three heads.

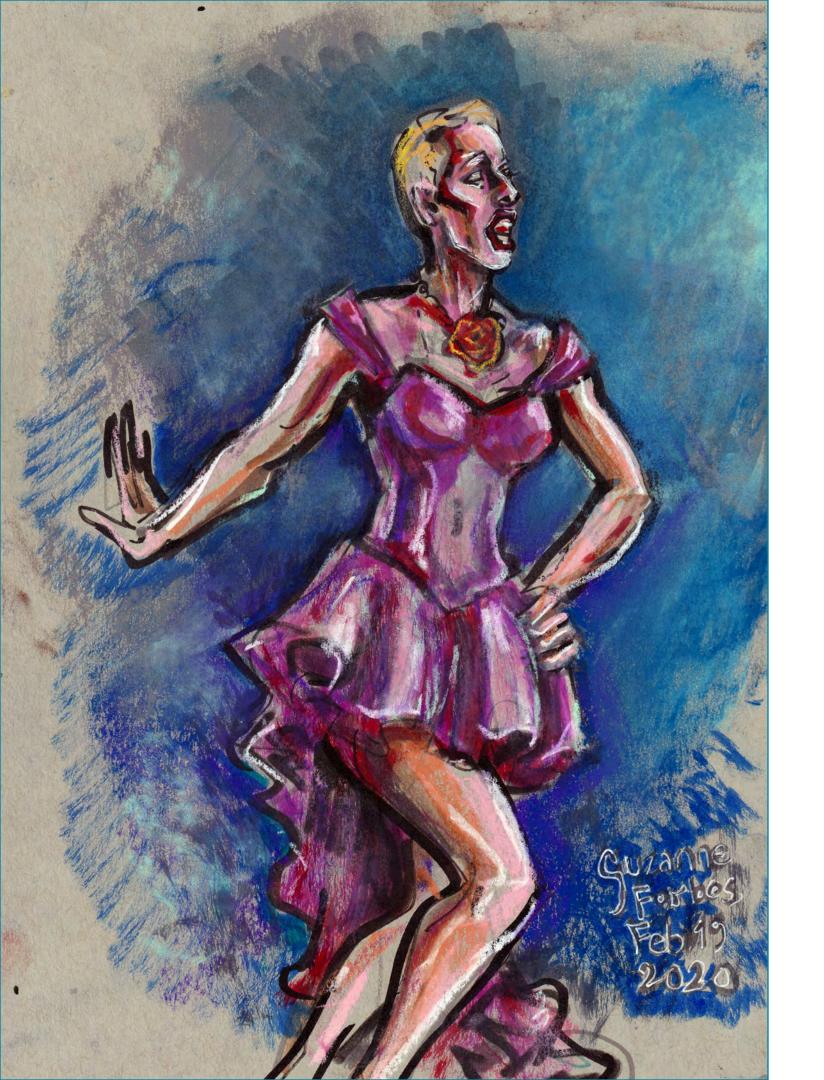




And wow, GodXXX Noirphiles was so good! Fabulous makeup, hilarious performance, a delightful subversion of performance art tropes it turns out we both know very well. GodXXX has also become a big part of my life, and the child they were carrying in this picture dear to me.

And my first time drawing and meeting Akynos, legendary showgirl, artist, activist, cultural critic and founder of the Black Sex Worker's Collective in New York, Berlin and Accra. I couldn't post this on my Patreon, where the censorship was getting worse, or post it on Instagram, where the same thing was happening, without censoring her nipples. Luckily, I still had Flickr!





#### I loved the 80s styling of Gaby Tupper, who I'd never seen perform before.

Gaby has done so many things in Berlin, from volunteering at AIDS organizations and the queer organization AHA, to drag talk shows, to event production, and is a former Sister of Perpetual Indulgence. I ran into her and Gloria Viagra on the subway home! I was bone-weary, but so happy with the work I'd done and the night I'd had.

#### I had no idea what was coming, or how sick I actually was.

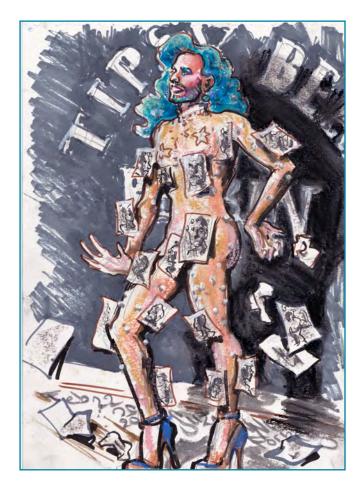
In February I documented stacks more of my old art, from getting sober in '89 and the early 90s, art about addiction and romantic drama. My plan was to finish documenting everything and get it to my art storage locker.

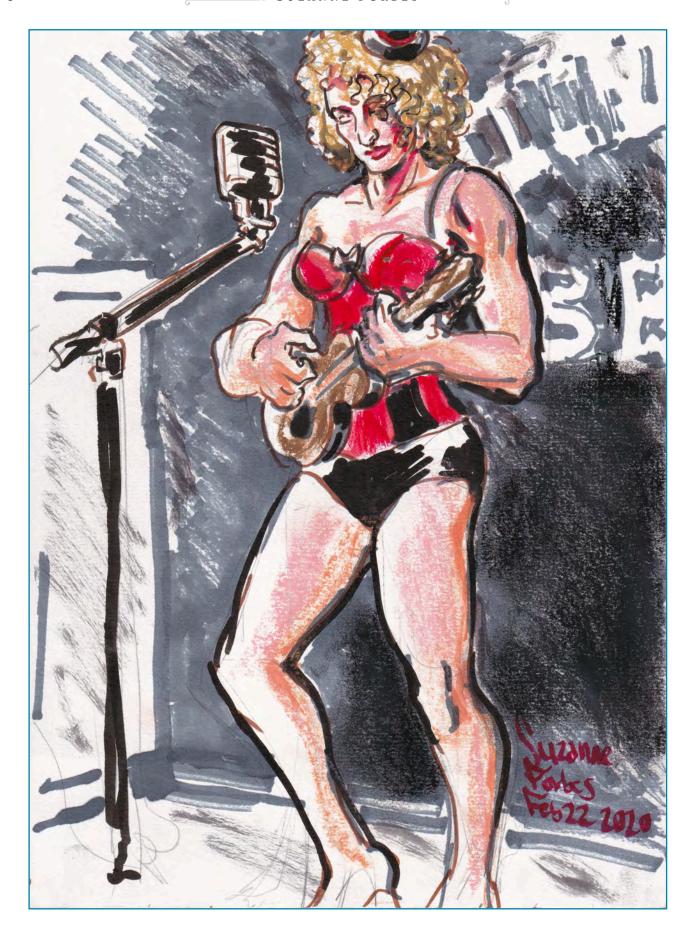
## For Valentines there was Big Broad Revue, a cabaret and comedy show at the fairly new venue in Prenzlauerberg called Tipsy Bear.

It was produced by Liliana and Dotti Moscati, she of the Spermicide bottle at Full Moon Cabaret! D. came with me, and we met our friend Anna, a Beloved Friend-Muse-Patron, there. What a good time we had! We loved the political nature of the show. There was dispute then in Berlin about whether burlesque should be political. We came down hard on yes please! Dotti was one of the very few people doing fat activism at shows, and my fat ass loved it!

Duckie l'Orange, left, performed a very weird and amazing puppet act. Fanny Headaek, right, did a number that lived up to the spectacular wig she made.







I was happy to draw Gorjeoux Moon, who I knew from Uke Boogie, again.

I also finally made it to a Velvet Creepers show at lovely Friedrichshain club Crack Bellmer! I'd had to cancel on this triad of terrific performers twice before for health reasons, and I was so ready to document their Dark Cabaret. They saw I had a comfortable space, drink tickets and good light! I was settled on a soft couch next to



Dotti Moscati at Big Broad Revue 2020



the stage with my friend and colleague, documentary photographer Daniel Paikov.

It was the first test under field conditions of my new live-drawing technique combining watercolor brush pen with my usual pencil, markers, Faber Castell PITT artist's pen and Tombow Dual brush pen. I sketched with the black watercolor brush pen quite a bit and I really liked it.

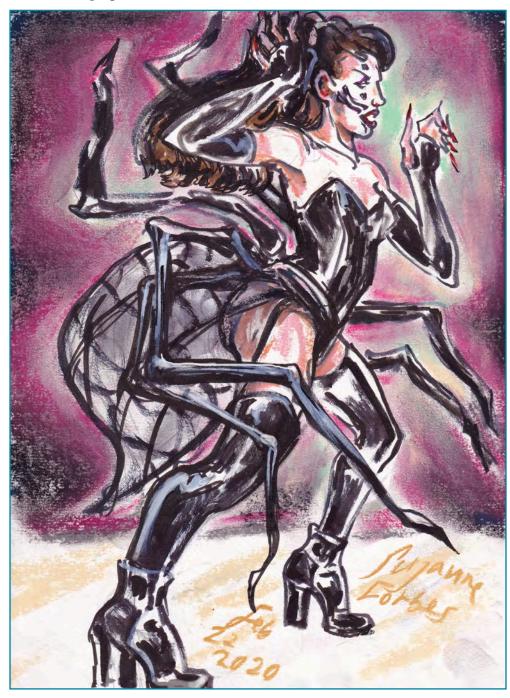
Crack Bellmer is charming and reminded me of many much-loved San Francisco and Oakland spaces of the Oughts. It was a long show, and I had no energy at all, but I was so happy to be sitting with my friend, both of us doing the work we loved. I was aware of the possible risk that Covid-19 was in Berlin, but I wasn't really worried. During the break I looked across the club and saw a lovely femme in one of the best outfits I'd ever seen. Her style and beauty glowed like a lamp against the dark wood of the club.

I walked over and introduced myself to Michele Frances Clark and Sky, extraordinary hula hoop dancers and acrobats. I asked if Michele if I could draw her, and she said yes. You can see Sky's two very long blond pigtails in the drawing. In retrospect, I should have left Michele in peace, because her rhinestone barrettes clearly said Anti and Social! I am a slow learner and an annoying white lady, but at least they both liked the drawing.

The second act Dunja did was one of my all-time favorites. Her Black Widow in latex, shining clawed legs, and black organza spiderweb bustle—it doesn't get any more insectalicious!

Fifi Fantôme did a superb genderqueer "Just a Gigolo" act, and Lily Mortis danced like a vintage siren, swirling in red. What a glamorous show!

It was a great night, and I didn't have to travel home on the U-Bahn alone, because Daniel and his wife live near us, so he and I could ride and chat.





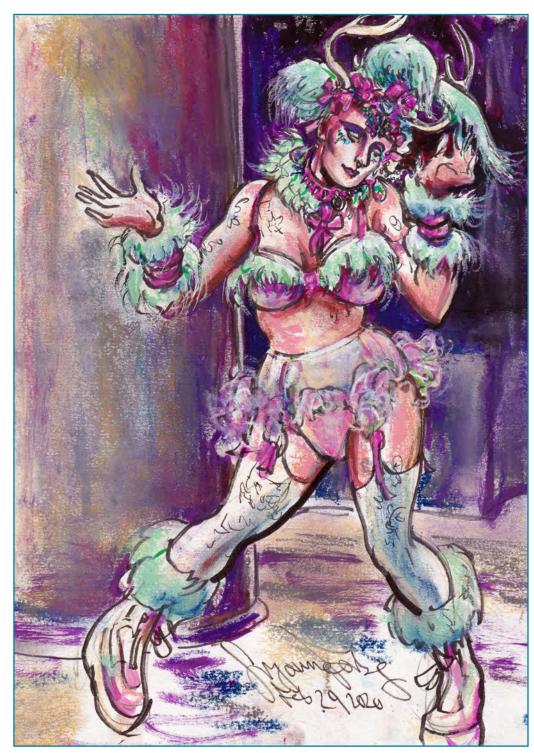
#### In the few days before my next event, everything changed.

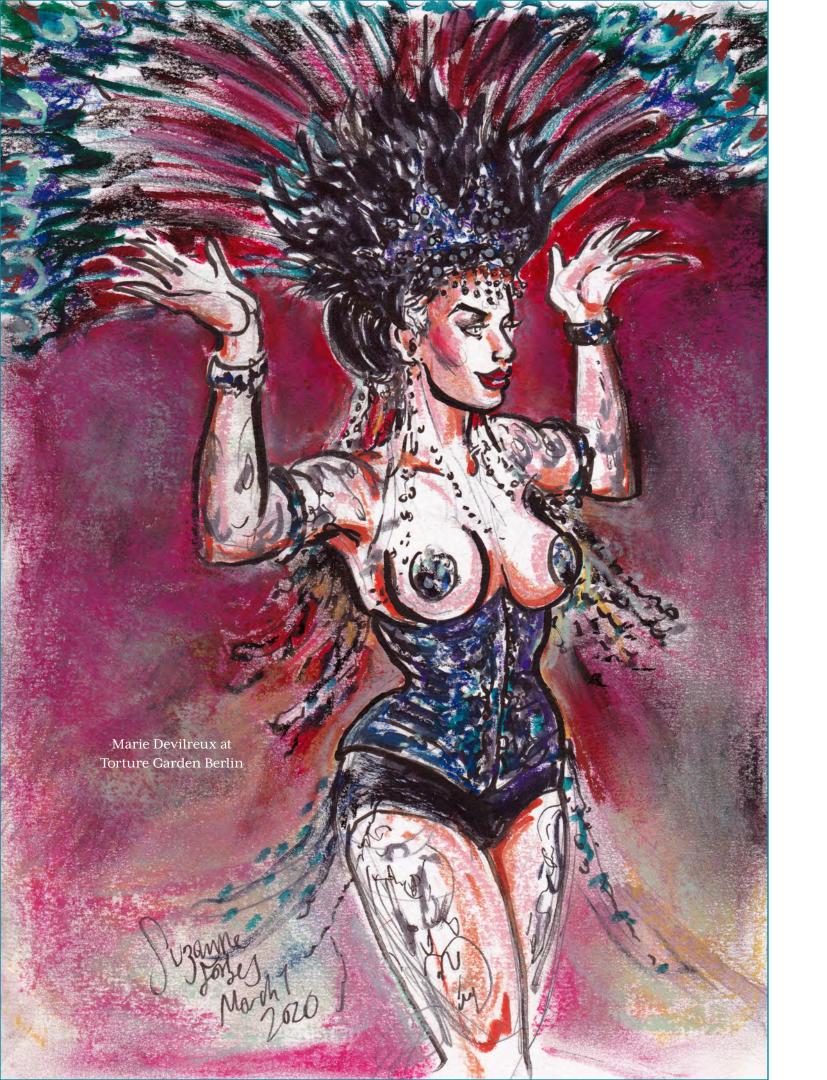
The news I was following so carefully had a new tempo, a new urgency. Suddenly COVID-19, or SARS-CoV-2 as those of us who still care still call the virus, was everywhere. Oh, not in Berlin yet, they said, but soon. Like the headlights of the subway I drunkenly fell in front of the night I left for treatment in 1989.

#### I knew the first Torture Garden Berlin would be my last event for a good while.

I was prepared. It was held at the illustrious, just reopened Art Deco palais The Metropol. I arrived and grabbed my press pass early-not yet ten pm, still dinner hour in Berlin. I wanted to settle myself in a comfy seat by the stage. I was glad to see Puck the Hare, my Beloved Friend-Muse-Patron, hit the dance floor soon afterwards. Puck wants me to be clear: the outfit, which they did themselves, is Cute Kawaii Fetish Jackalope, not the German cryptid called a Wolpertinger!

I drew a sexy older kink couple, and dancers. I was already in energy overdraft, and dreading the length of the night ahead. The music was just too loud for me, which was new. As the crowd grew, I balanced on the back of the slick vinyl couch to see better and slipped off. And then Sadie arrived, just in time for the shows. She held down our station while I tried to get in the groove.





#### I got a great drawing of one of the headliners, fantastic multi-talented Marie Devilreux.

I'd been wanting to draw her for ages! Her Instagram handle is Dressed to Kill You, which delights my 80s Brian De Palma heart. There was a dark exorcism and rebirth by Gina Harrison and Louis Fleischauer. Radiant queen Martini Cherry performed too, and Martini came over and did a sexy dance just for me, which was my favorite part of the night.

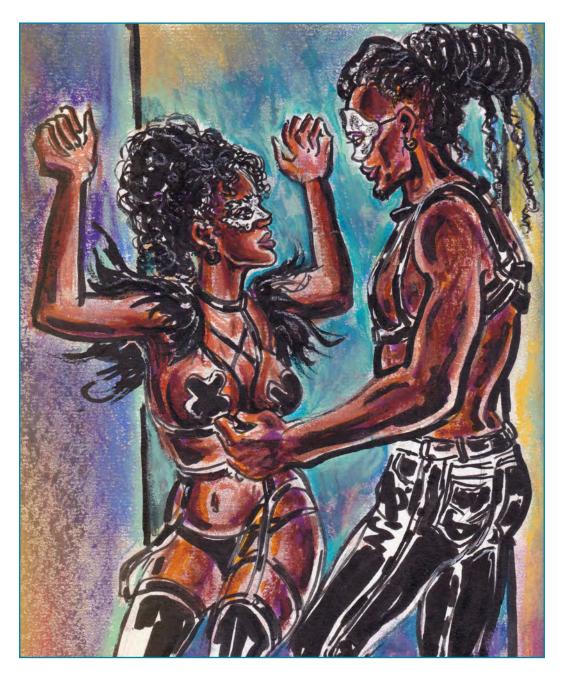


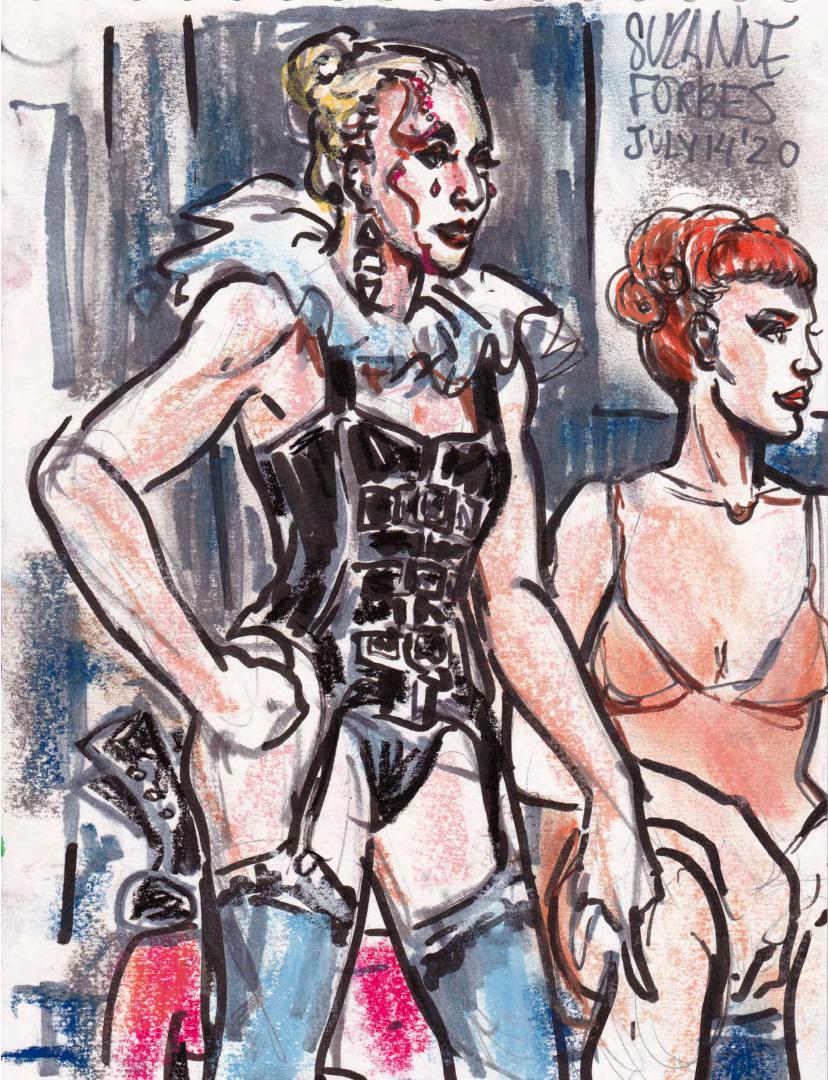
<sup>\*</sup> I made three drawings of the other headliner, but she has left fetish life and I could not contact her for consent, so I did not include them.

I'd said on Instagram that I would be at the event drawing and would prioritize BIPOC people. A gorgeous young couple came and danced in front of us for a nice while so I could get this drawing; then they got into a flirtation with Sadie, and I never got their names or Instagram handles, very unusual at this point! I didn't want to interrupt, but I had to get away from the music.

I went to the dressing room, breaking my own rule, to see my friend Sylva Hattington, who did magnificent costume design for the shows. I drew performers Fifi Fantôme, who was changing from a vintage clown look to shiny corsetry, and Lucille who I knew from her modeling at Dr. Sketchy's Berlin. I was smushed on a soft couch with people lacing arm corsets, in the tiny dressing room, and I could still hear the music.

The night went on and on. Sadie left, then finally Daniel and I left at 4am, drained. But the buses were fucked up, and we wound up on a train and another bus, when it should have been a short trip. I staggered in the door at dawn, on the first day of my self-quarantine.







Self portrait during quarantine livestream 2020

### CHAPTER SIXTEEN

# 2020 after, goodbye to all that, and the next five years.

went into self-quarantine on March 1. I was terrified, and very calm.

My jacked-up Generation X nuclear Cold War brain had been waiting for the other apocalypse shoe to drop my whole life. As an '80s teenager I used to jolt awake in my Chelsea bedroom at a crack of lightning, thinking, "That was it. The bomb."

Online, I was seeing disabled, marginalized, chronically ill and survivor folx talk about how they felt clear and cool. For the first time in a long time, our insides matched the outside. This isn't a good feeling, but it is a different feeling than feeling like you're wrong for how you feel. Or being told you're crazy for how you feel.

#### My nervous system felt lined up with the world in a way that it usually doesn't.

And I felt powerful, endocrinologically in touch with all the bodily threat hormone resources that helped me survive my abusive father, adolescent sexual assaulters, professional harassment, life-long severe depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder and other functional problems. The possibility of death felt restorative, because I was so tired of how hard on me the life I'd built was. I didn't have to go anywhere! I was so, so relieved. Managing my going out and working had been so horribly depleting for so long, I had stopped noticing how afraid of the pain I was. The relief was incredible. It felt like flying, knowing I wouldn't have to walk up club stairs and get to work.

I had the privilege to isolate myself and all my meds stocked up. Who knew that my American habit of hoarding meds, formed in my early forties when for a period before Obamacare I was both uninsured and uninsurable, would come in handy? I knew. Because I'd always expected this.

#### I told my husband that I imagined this time when we signed the lease for our flat.

"You did??" he replied, astonished. Of course I did. This, water wars, dirigibles of starving people from the Global South landing at Tempelhofer Field and taking, deservedly, the food and medicine we stole or withheld for so long. We're all refugees of some terrible part of the timeline or mutilated part of the planet. It's just that the West has never let us admit it, has never wanted us to raise our voices or amplify the voices of all the other sufferers.

When we moved into our flat, August 2015, I was on the balcony with D., visualizing how high flood waters could reach. I turned to him and said, "We'll have a great view when Putin rolls the tanks through the streets."

By March 10, D.'s office went fully remote and he began working from home. He is still working entirely from home, almost five years later, because he cares deeply about protecting me. Here in Germany, at first it seemed the government cared about protecting people too. All restaurants, entertainment venues, and offices were closed. Even many essential workers got a small break, as the world held its breath. The streets were empty.

There was immediate, constant public health messaging, the kind of acknowledgement and awareness we waited so long for with AIDS.

For the first couple weeks, I was absolutely obsessed with crafting. I did bead embroidery fourteen hours a day. I was so energized by the freedom of not having to manage to get somewhere! Everyone was staying safe! Everyone felt like the world was as dangerous as I've always known it is. And at first, it was working! Infections were initially low, almost contained, in some places; people were being saved! There was a great sense of community, people sharing resources. People cheered and banged pots and pans every night at 7pm for the healthcare workers on the front lines. People left bags of food on sharing walls.





Pansy as Troi for the second House of Presents Online 2020







Above left to right: Buba Sababa, Nancy as Camp Dad, and Dornika as Persian Daddy.

#### In Berlin, Pansy and Gieza quickly went online to support performers who were out of work.

Many others did the same. Online shows sprang up all over the world for nightlife people and creatives. Pansy and Gieza were up and running for Tuesday night livestream drag shows on March 24th, using a streaming platform called Twitch that had tipping functionality. Drag performers all over town transmitted themselves from home, and the audience joined and talked giddy trash in the comment stream. Lola Rose flashed the empty streets her hot pink costume in a fabulous number recorded earlier in the day. HP Loveshaft did a sexy number to "Dancing with Myself" from their hallway. Gieza's loving, sassy humor and Pansy's determined message of inclusion, solidarity and social justice were so revitalizing to me. It was truly beautiful, a glorious connecting of Queer Berlin.

Drawing from the screen and from a livestream is very different from drawing from life. I had insisted on drawing and painting only from life my whole life, despising copying photographs. But I got the hang of it quickly. The East London Strippers Collective, pioneers of life drawing with strippers, and the Berlin Strippers Collective started online shows, as did the Berlin drag house The Venus Boys, stripper groups in the US, and many burlesque folks. At the same time, things able bodied people had always said couldn't be done online were instantly switched to the virtual, from offices to universities. Everyone started using a platform called zoom.

## Everything went remote. In the online disability community where I spent most of my time, there was celebration and vindication. But also, cautionary voices.

Disability leaders like Imani Barbarin warned that pandemics lead to eugenics and the rise of fascism; ME and chronic illness advocates were already talking about the people who got COVID in January and had not recovered. In the chronic illness community, we understood you could get a virus, not die, and also never get better. It was clear the stakes for me personally were high.

"As a highly vulnerable person with asthma and autoimmune illness, it seems more important than ever to document my life's work. Not morbid, just pragmatic!" I wrote at the end of March. I knew I was incredibly







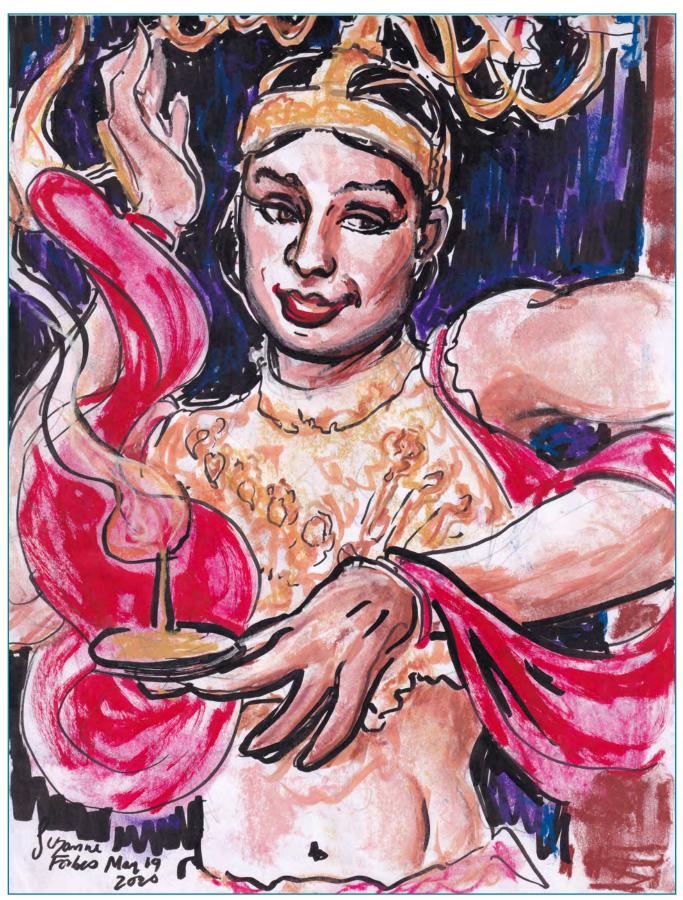
Wizzy for Queerantina 2020

fortunate to have the privilege of staying safely at home, and I expected to stay home for at least a year, maybe two. I documented my art, posted it on my blog, did crafts, and live-drew people I knew and strangers all over the world on twitch and zoom.

In April, Pansy hosted a bright and fierce show of Berlin's refugee and asylum-seeker drag houses, QueerBerg, Queer Syria, Queens Against Borders, and House of Royals. It was called "Queerantina". Pansy explained to the audience that asylum seekers were in a far harder position than the rest of us, not getting the big government "hilfe" check most freelancers had gotten to tide us through, often living in refugee housing where they couldn't express their true gender. I realized that not only was the "America" we left actually always grotesquely cruel for most people, but I also had no idea how "Europe" worked, and it was a lot crueler than I'd imagined.

Prenz Emrah danced with fire on their balcony. I drew Nicky and Patricia, and Julie Dancer livestreaming with a Pride flag from a closed room, and a beautiful young lad named Wizzy with a phenomenal singing voice, who nowadays calls me their Auntie.

That May a man named George Floyd was murdered by a police office, in Minneapolis very near where I finished art college, where I had drawn cops on trial for beating people. A movement inspired by him swelled everywhere, and there was a brief hope of change. I drew Livia Kojo Alour, who had facilitated the Performers' Panel at Berlin Burlesque Week the year before, livestreaming the beginning of what became her book and theater work, The Rising of the Black Sheep, and I listened to her.



Prince Emrah for Queerantina 2020



Livia Kojo Alour livestreaming 2020

## It seemed like a good idea to shut up, listen, be useful; it still does.

I also drew for Livia's online birthday celebration, and that is when I drew iconic sex workers' activist, author, burlesque headmistress and performer Jo "Boobs" Weldon.

I got to draw Midori, my educator and author friend from San Francisco, and Autumn Adamme of Dark Garden, doyenne of corsetry, at online events. It was lovely to draw such well-known faces again; drawing from the screen works best with faces I know.

I was busy and working all the time that whole summer, absolutely hustling to draw as many performers as I could from shows happening every night, then posting them and sharing the performers' names and paypals and how to support them. My life was bounded by the Tuesday night drag shows with Gieza and Pansy, and the silliness in the comments. Gieza came to our flat, thoughtfully masked, to collect some of my handmade craft treasures to raffle for the drag shows, things like



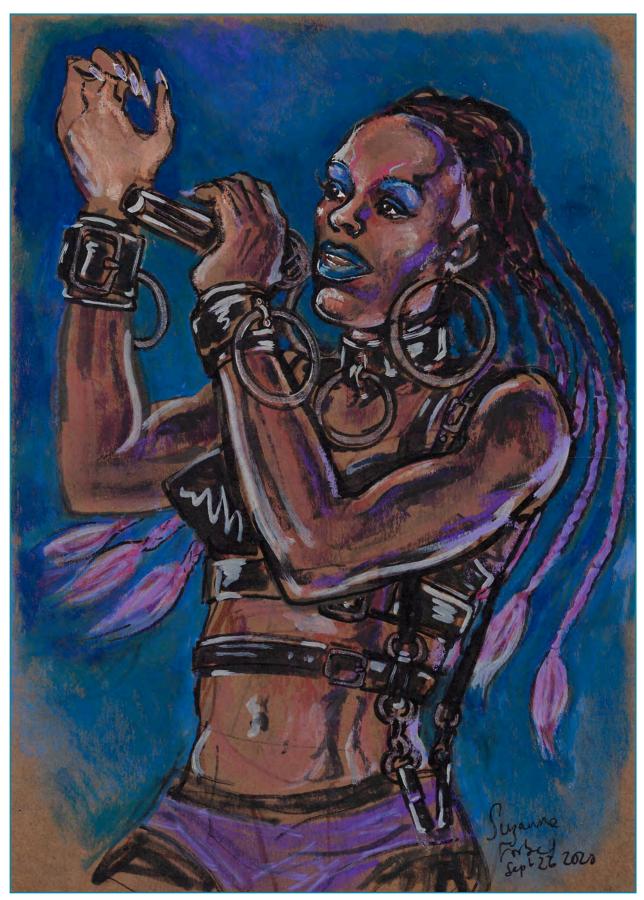
Jo Weldon







La Papi Patacón



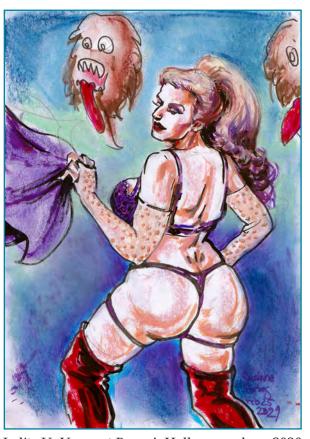
Ixa at Feel Festival 2020



Dick Hunt for Venus Boys 2020



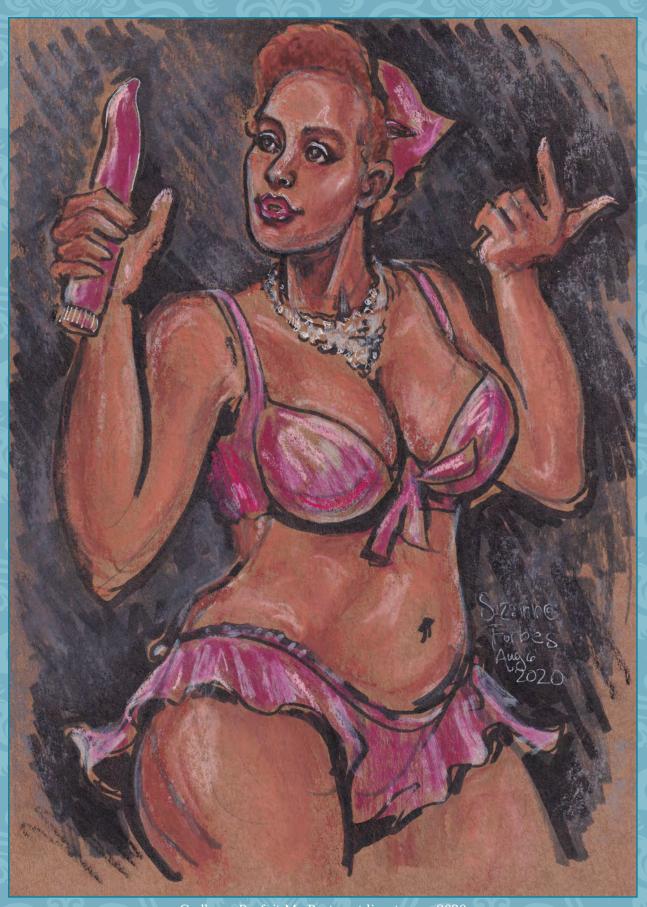
HP Loveshaft at Pansy's Halloween show 2020



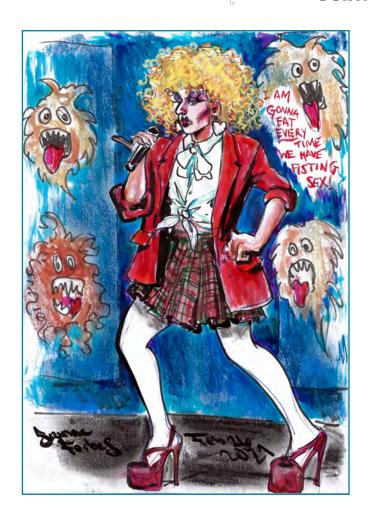
Lolita Va Voom at Pansy's Halloween show 2020



Lola Rose at Pansy's Halloween show 2020



Cadbury Parfait Me Party act livestream 2020





a a trans mermaid doll and a meticulous embroidery of the Berlin Bear logo as the gay Bear Pride flag. I made custom trans girl action figures and staged dollhouse protests. I drew Cadbury Parfait performing her "Me Party" act from one of Pansy's streaming shows: you can see screen drawing worked well with someone I knew.

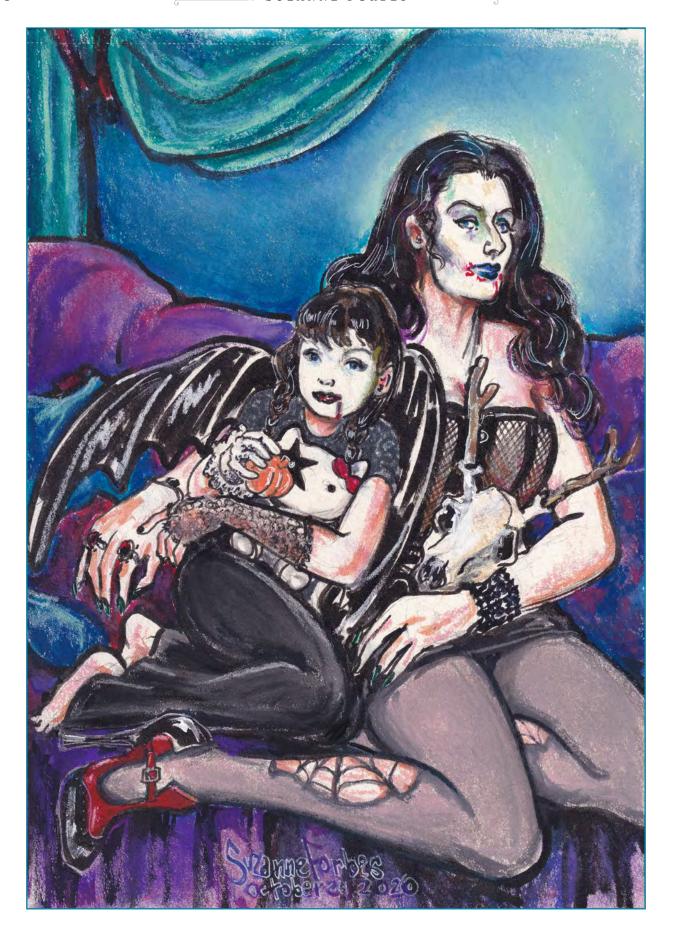
On August 18, the Tuesday night drag shows ended, but other livestreams went on. By September, some Berlin venues were allowed to open, following labyrinthine and ever-changing regulations. I drew amazing La Papi Patacón, a non-binary Drag performer and educator, from a livestream at Neukölln club Silver Future, but the club may have been empty, or the guests weren't allowed to cheer, or had to be six feet apart or something. The concept of "hybrid" shows and events—both in person and livestreamed—was fully established, and we crips were so grateful.

The Halloween shows from Pansy and Gieza were livestreamed, the club stage decorated with monster faces Gieza made from her old wigs. I was very happy drawing Lola Rose's cooking act and Christina Corpse, Antina Christ's artist spouse, in spooky mode.

Nana Schewitz saying "I am always going to eat when we have fisting sex" remains a treasured memory, immortalized by me.

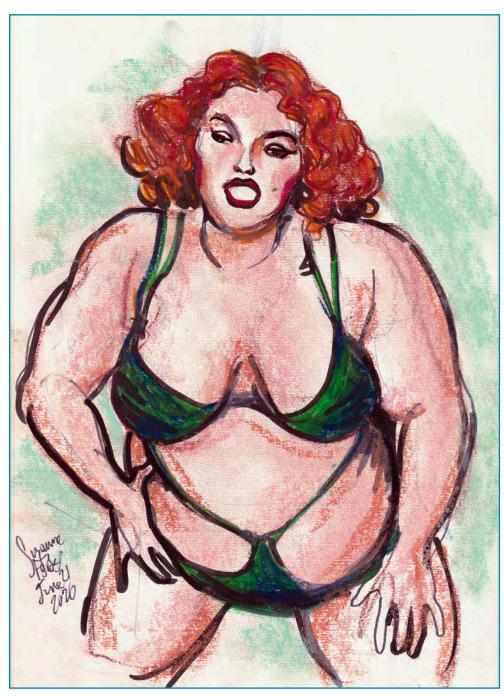
For Halloween I drew Sadie and her older child, "Vampirina" posing at home, over zoom.

There were shows featuring fat performers, and shows celebrating disabled performers, both in the US and the UK. I drew the late Piggy Rox, a magnificent and blazing performer, for Big Fat Burlesque online. May she light the heavens, punk as fuck forever.



D. and I isolated at home through the holidays, other than doctor visits and occasional outdoor friend visits. No Halloween, no Fucksgiving, no Christmas or New Years. This part of what we've done, not so much to keep me from dying as from getting sicker, is very hard for most people to understand. The fact that I haven't eaten a meal anywhere but home, with anyone but D., for almost five years- and only a few bites of cake with my friend Bindy outdoors, on two occasions- is mind boggling to most people. No movie theaters, no house parties, no birthday parties.

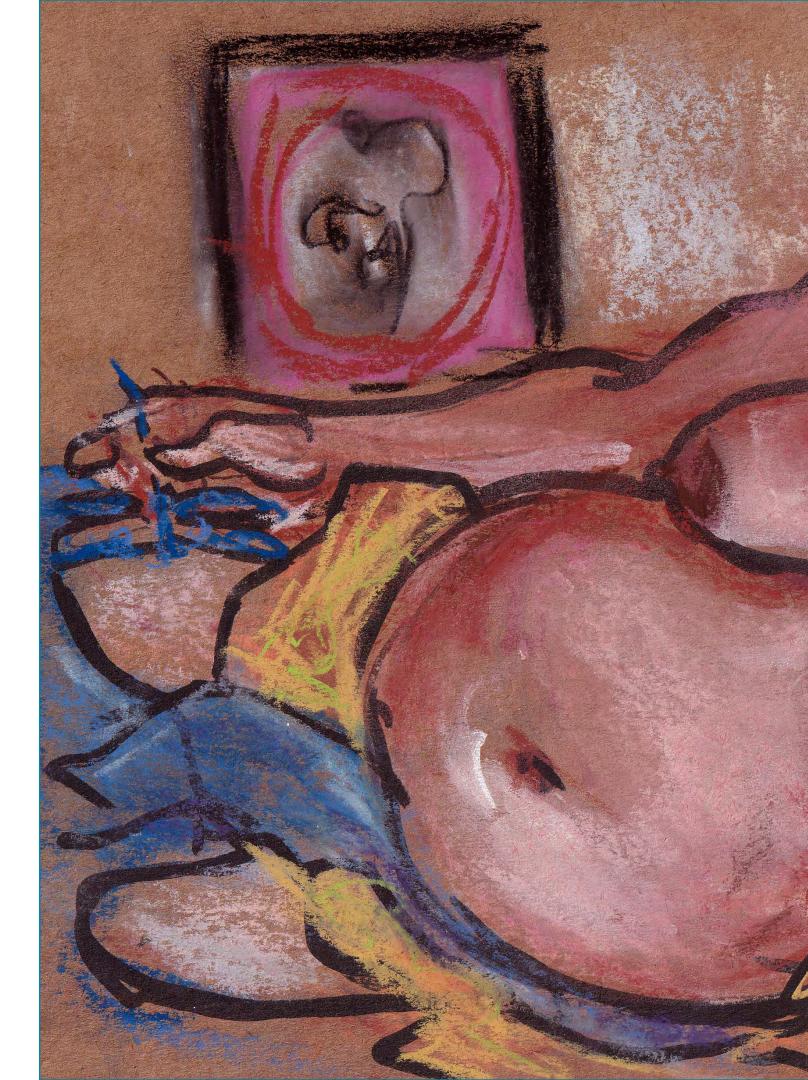
To me, it's sad but not that big a deal. There's several million people out there with the Severe level of the disease I have, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, who are 100% bedbound and go years without leaving their rooms. I have online connection, friends who stand below our balcony and yell up to me, zoom every Sunday with my mom, recovery meetings, and I have been working every minute I could all this time.

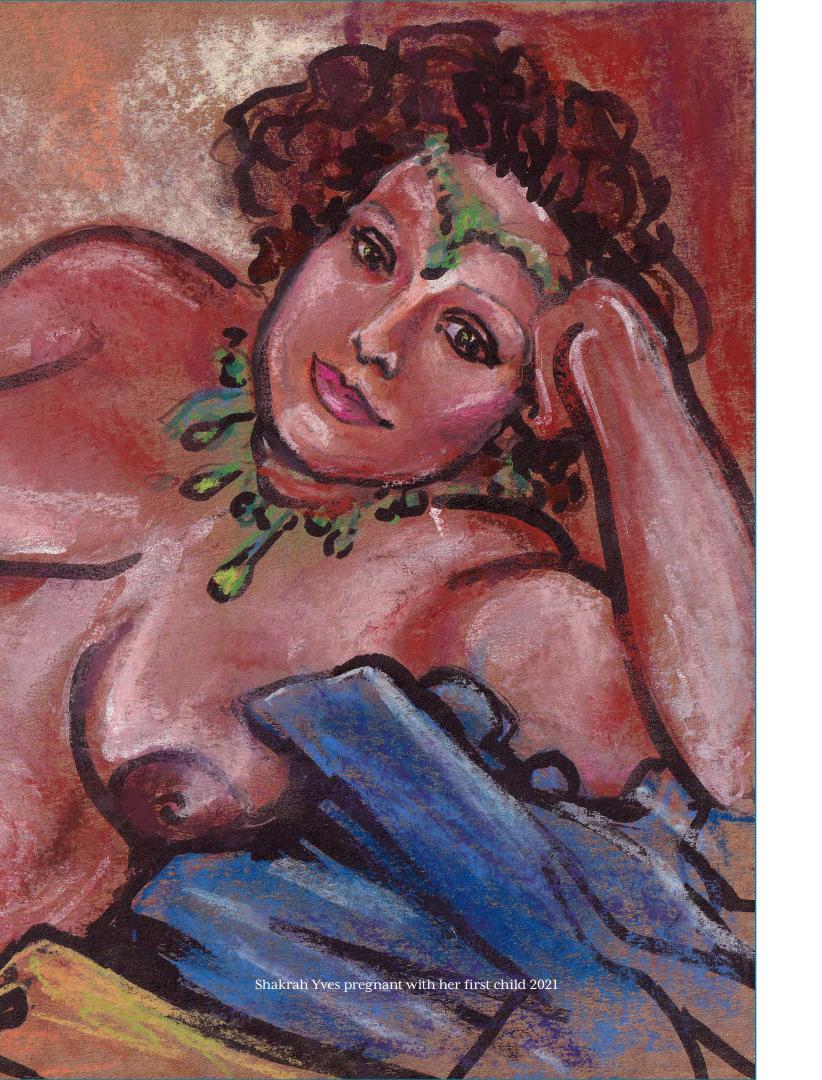


Piggy Rox for Big Fat Burlesque 2020

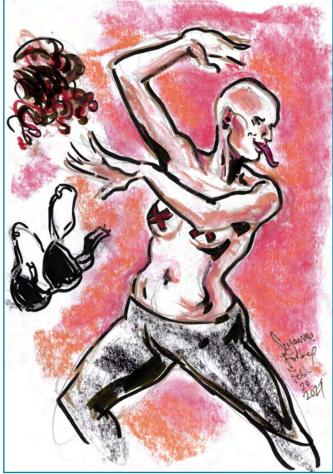
So many people with ME have become so much sicker since Covid infection. I know I am privileged to be able to do the demanding and tedious work of staying safe.

So 2021 was bearable to me, even though the exciting new vaccines didn't become available to us until summer, by which point they had been overtaken by the Omicron variant and were only 40% effective. Online shows continued occasionally in Germany with the waves of re-opening and closing; Germany had much more real lockdown time than most Western countries.









A lovely one for drag king maestro Bridge Markland's 60<sup>th</sup> birth-day saw her team up with The Venus Boys, and I love these silly drawings of those exuberant performances.

#### I got a nice one of Bleach from Venus Boys during that livestream as well.

Life drawing groups developed all over and have continued to thrive; Alexandra Ru now runs Sketcherei with her mom, and still often has a hybrid event with a livestream. These have remained a great comfort to me over the last four years, as online and hybrid events shriveled and disabled people are re-excluded from public life. I drew Sage Sovereign, who I met on the street outside Monster Ronson's pre-pandemic, through a group called Distanced Drawing. Sketcherei continues to support sex workers, fundraise, and generally be amazing. I made my favorite drawing of Akynos at a Berlin Strippers Collective and Sketcherei team-up event.

I'm grateful for online life drawing and for the shows and events that were livestreamed, then and now. My friend Shakrah got married in 2021, when Berlin was locked down again, and I







Sage Sovereign 2021

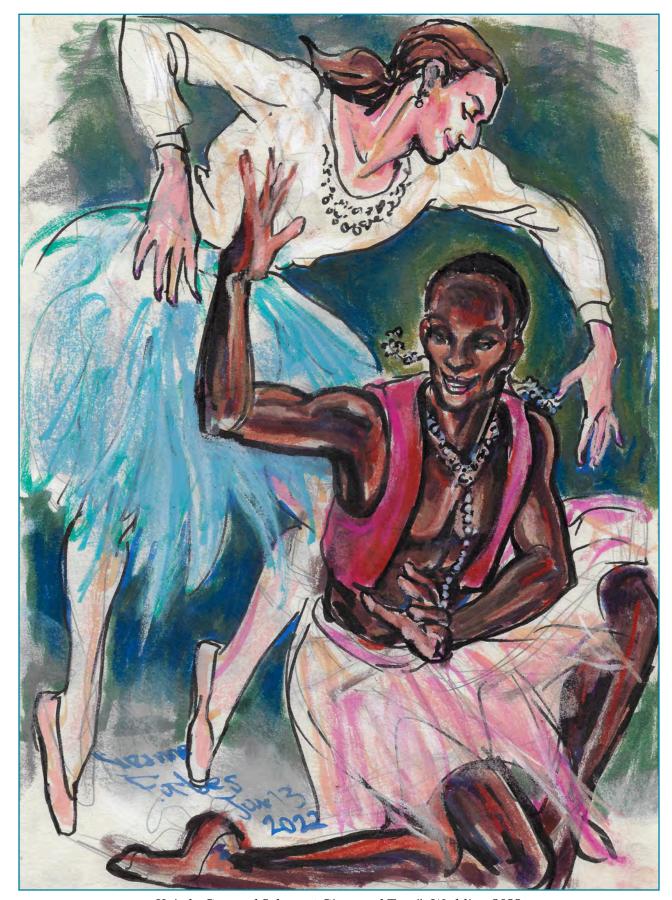
Akynos 2020

drew her reception through zoom as well as her pregnancy portrait. I drew Sadie and the kids through zoom, and a pregnancy portrait of sweet previous clients the same way. I had multiple rewarding zoom collaborations with Noéline modeling, for online events like Black Fae Day. I got to draw Ebony Rose Dark again, through a UK show called Disabilitease. There was much good. And of course, my purpose was to do live documentary drawing of people in person in their lives, at their work or play. So, it took a while, but I did get out to a few more live queer events in the past three years.

#### The first big one was The Big Gay Wedding of Gieza Poke and Tomi Paa, in spring 2022.

Drag queen Gieza and ballet creator Tomi had been married at the courthouse in 2020, but that was not the wedding they deserved! Their Big Gay Wedding was at historic Zionskirche in Mitte, on a bright May day. They set up a chair and table for me in front of the pews, with a perfect view. I booked a carer, Berlin artist Lithe of Shimmies, because I wanted to be sure I had support. I wore a corset handmade by a lesbian business in Transylvania, a fairy godmother hat I made, and a 3M Aura medical respirator. It was the only non-medical indoor event I'd been to in 2.5 years; it was well ventilated at both venues, and I was always N95/FFP3 masked. I felt fairly safe but also weak and hypervigilant.

A wedding is very hard to draw; I'd done three previously, and besides the high stakes, you never get enough time to draw the people getting married properly but you spend a lot of time drawing people you don't know. And I was sorely out of practice. I trusted my skills, but not my body. Nonetheless, I did it. I had to, because the



KaistheGuy and Selene at Gieza and Tomi's Wedding 2022

love was glowing in the air that day. It was the peak of my Queer Berlin documenting career, being there with so many amazing people.

Gieza and Tomi's wedding clothes were hand made by Alexis Mersmann; Alexis hand-marbled sheets of fabric to make the suits and every detail from scratch. Although the theme of the wedding was "Hats and Headpieces", the grooms forgot to plan for their own! Tomi asked me at the last minute, "I know you don't do commissions, but maybe we could borrow pieces you've already made?" "Of course!" I said. I'd been making sparkly headpieces for years!

To get the crowns to the grooms, we organized a Queer Courier mission two days before. I put the crowns in the "art bag" and lowered them down from the balcony to Suz, who transported them across town. The balcony art drop had been one of the few fun parts of our 2.5-year self-isolation, as people came by to buy drawings and

To have two such special people wear art I had made for their wedding was one of the greatest honors of my life, and they looked

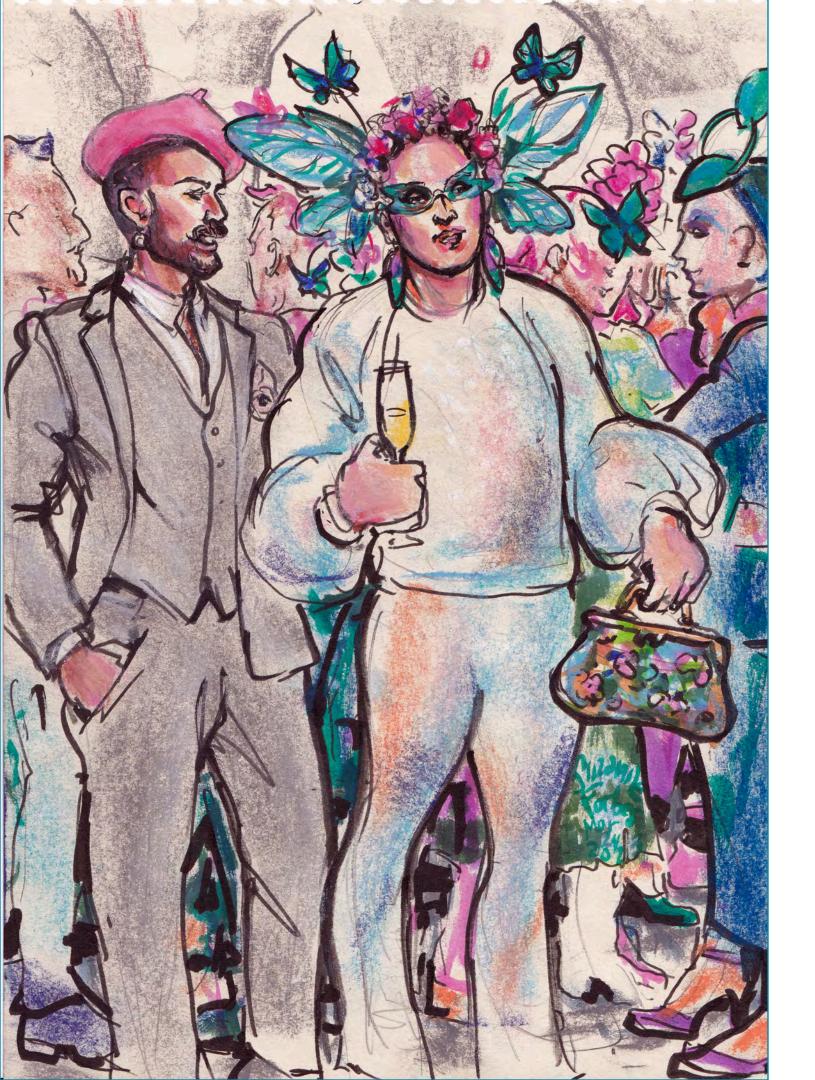
splendificent in them.

I lowered them down.

I had my pastels and watercolor pens on hand to capture the brilliant colors everyone wore. The pews were filled with the most glittering stars of Queer Berlin, everyone dressed to dazzle. Of course, there were performances! Tomi had been a ballet dancer, and after being injured lived in San Francisco, been a Burning Man person, and co-founded KUNST-STOFF theatre production company. Here in Berlin he is a choreographer, director and more. So there were sublime ballet dancers at the wedding! KaistheGuy and Selene danced like angels.

Gieza and Tomi walked down the aisle with their trains held high by family and loved ones. The ceremony was joyful, and everyone cried and cheered.





## It was the most resplendent moment I have ever seen.

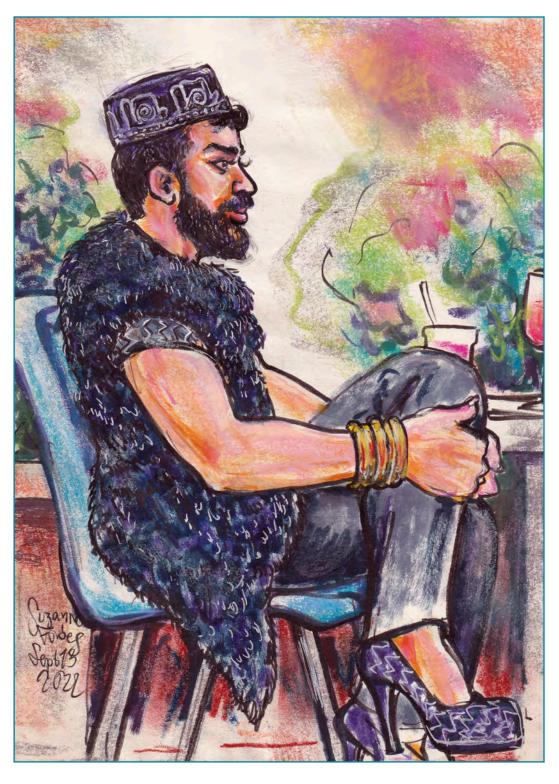
There were flower girls in crowns and during the champagne reception in the foyer, I sat at my table (Lithe brought it out for me) and drew with the little girls. They weren't scared of my mask. Everyone was there! What a celebration!

Lithe and I taxied over to the party venue and set up, and waited for the revelers to arrive. It was a romantic indoor/outdoor venue and I had a good chair.

#### One of my cherished memories is meeting and drawing Aurah Jendafaaq.

We had such a good visit. Aurah just last weekend launched Berlin's first new drag house in ages, TeeHaus!

I worked on the drawings, drew guests and family members until I almost couldn't see, and then Lithe put



me in a taxi and I went home. I grieved not being able to stay and draw the party, which went on all night, but my limits could no longer be denied. Lithe stayed and partied though!

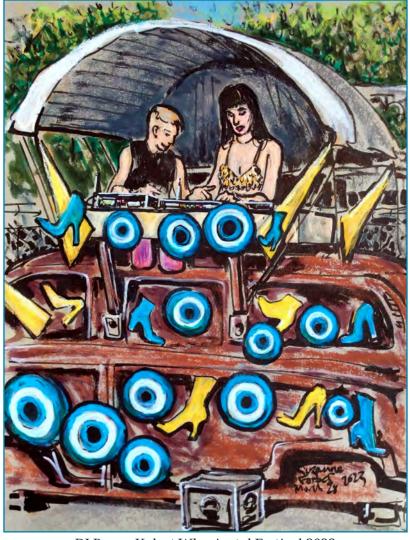
Opposite: The Darvish and Lana Labia among guests at Gieza and Tomi's wedding 2022

#### I made one more event that year, another treasured one I will never forget. I had to go to QueerBerg Collective's first festival, Whoriental!

I'd promised QueerBerg's sweetheart producer Prince Emrah that I would make it to one of their outdoor events that year. And a July cool snap in Germany while the rest of Europe burned meant an opportunity that might never come again. Emrah was bustling around as things got started, filming the scene and posting it. One of many things I love about them is that they are a wonderful archivist, documenting all the events and sharing!

Whoriental Festival (there have been two more now, even bigger and more wonderful!) celebrates and holds space for BIPOC queer, trans, refugee folx and the sex work many of them do. The blue and gold stripper heels and blue and white nazar amulet eye symbols were painted for the event!

Inside the venue, there were sex workerled panels, belly dance workshops, performances, live music, birthday cake for Chiqui Love, DJs, fire-eating, drag shows and more. And in the sunny, shady backyard of Club



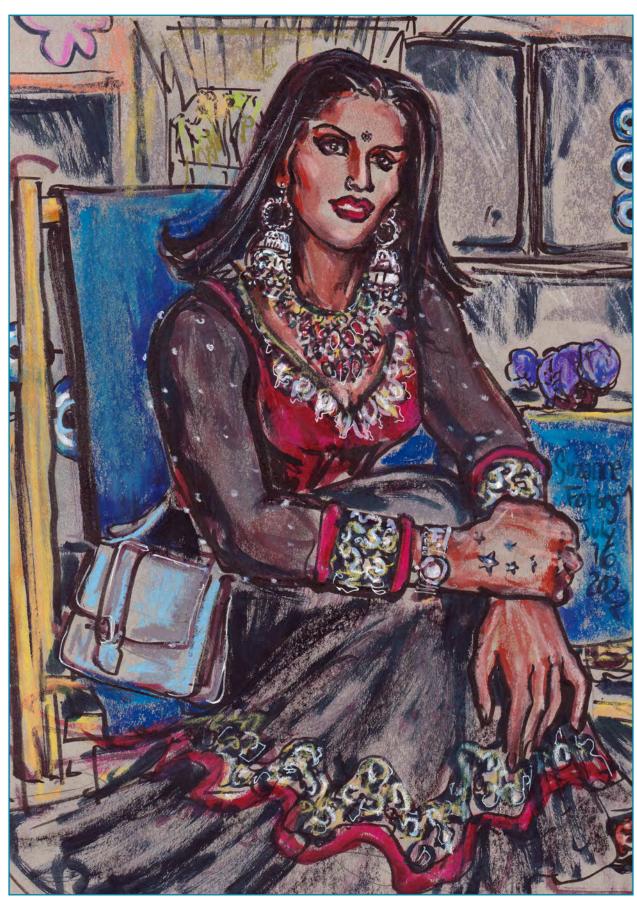
DJ Baran Kok at Whoriental Festival 2022

Gretchen, a bazaar with food, music, shops, henna art, a sex toy raffle from collective store Other Nature Berlin, and tables from beloved Berlin sex worker orgs!

### Emrah always offers to have someone take care of me, they always see me as both a person and a disabled person.

I knew I would feel safe at this event. I was cared for and seen. No-one said anything about my mask and goggles. There was an awareness team, and when I asked someone for help they were there. A crew member walked me to the bathroom for the club's backyard, but unfortunately it was at the top of three straight flights of stairs, and then more stairs. Those stairs looked like Mount Everest to me. "Can you keep it?" she asked. "Gonna try and keep it for a while", I laughed.

I sat and drew Suryani Mahmoud, who was so gracious about sitting with me and posing. She is a superb dancer and makeup artist who has since fallen in love and married; seeing her family pictures on Instagram is one my great joys. While I was sitting and drawing Dina, a henna artist, suddenly my body relaxed. I had not felt safe and present in my body for over two and a half years. I cry a tiny cry now, in my still frozen bodymind, thinking of that sweet moment.



Suryani Mahmoud at Whoriental 2022



We were holding on; D. and I had been vaccinated four times, but the new variants kept outpacing any meaningful protection, and everyone we knew, including my mom, kept getting COVID over and over despite being "fully vaccinated". We were lucky and had the medical privilege of white people; we hadn't lost anyone yet. We got through another winter holiday season, I had another birthday alone at home with D., and by late February I was desperate and reckless. Although there have always been people with ME who were made sicker by vaccinations, and people who got ME from vaccines, there are also documented remission periods. I'd had a week-long one from a vaccine. I knew the shingles vaccine could make me worse, but I got it anyway, and lied to our doctor to get some antivirals. Three days later, I was well again. Or very nearly.

I got to meet in person Kylie Divõn, who I knew online and had drawn at one of the last events I went to in 2020, the House of Royals PokeHouse takeover. It was a treat to draw her again! She is on the right, KA is on left. I asked Kylie to call me a taxi, as I had no phone. She called the cab, and then she walked me out to it, made sure I got in it. I was only at the festival for 2.5 hours, but it meant the world to me, and I'm so deeply, deeply glad Whoriental has grown and thrived.

There were other bright spots in that dark fucking year, the year Putin invaded Ukraine, the year we lost our precious cat Morgan, the year I first went to medical appointments with my friend and saw her treated with hideous cruelty and racism by the German medical system. I met up outside with friends like my friend Lani, drawn in a nearby plaza, and my friend Bindy. It was while I was talking to Bindy about my desperate hope and longing for a book that she said, "You just have to do it. Do it yourself". And I heard her, and that was when I began to really make this book happen. And I had a numinous zoom drawing session with Sadie on The Longest Night, a Winter Solstice together.



Lani at the plaza 2022

#### For four exuberant months I was radically better. I went roaring back to work!

Sharing a cab with Daniel Paikov, I went to a new show from Felicity Felicis, a spectacular showgirl I knew from Cadbury's **Extravagant Shambles** and online Sketcherei sessions. It was at Crack Bellmer, where they had installed a ventilation system to improve air quality! Felicity made me so welcome! She was deeply kind, making sure I had the chair setup I needed by the stage.

And Misty Lotus was there! I was worried about my mask and goggles bothering people; I had been cropped out of Gieza and Tomi's wedding pictures, where I was the only one masked. "Oh, it's Berlin!" Misty said as she hugged me, and I felt so much better. Everyone hugged me; Martini Cherry

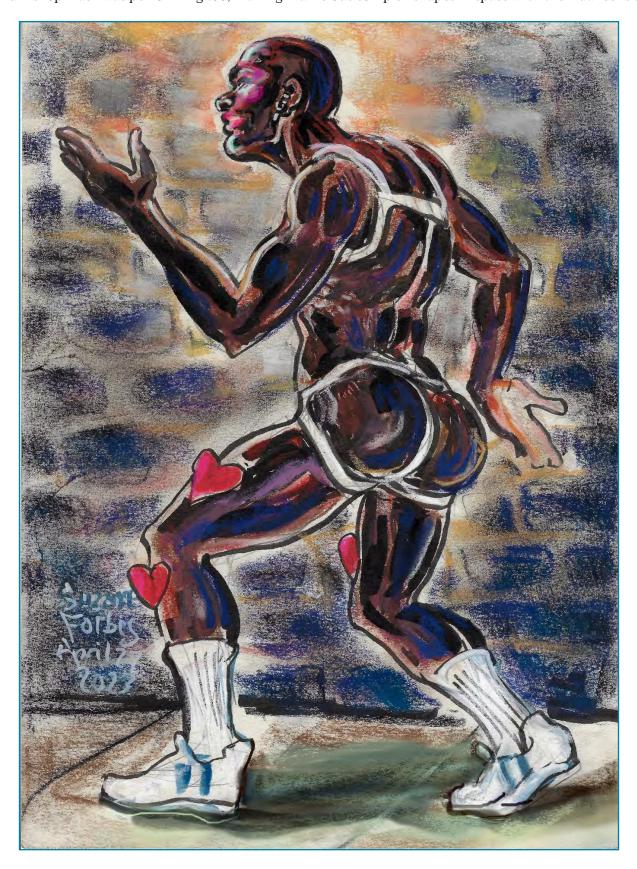


Felicity Felicis at The Sinners Saloon 2023

Furter and Luna TikTok were there, and I was so happy. I drew like a whirlwind, able to move without pain, faster and more smoothly than I had in years. What a glory to see Misty Lotus perform, and to draw her again!



And Bishop Black was performing too, making marvelous complex shapes in space with their dancer's craft!

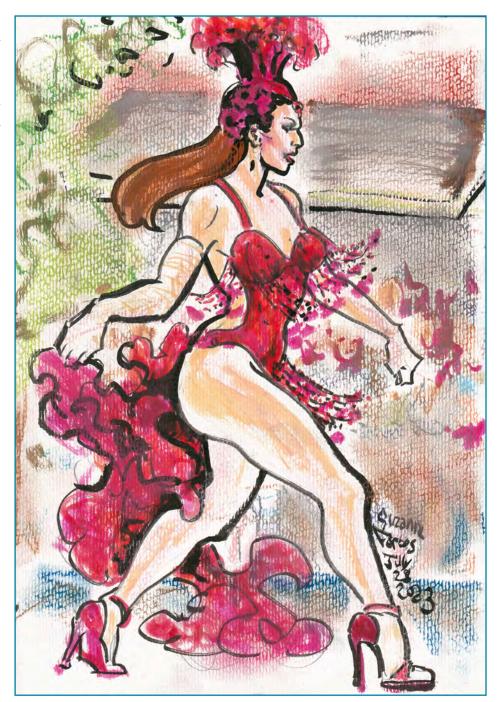


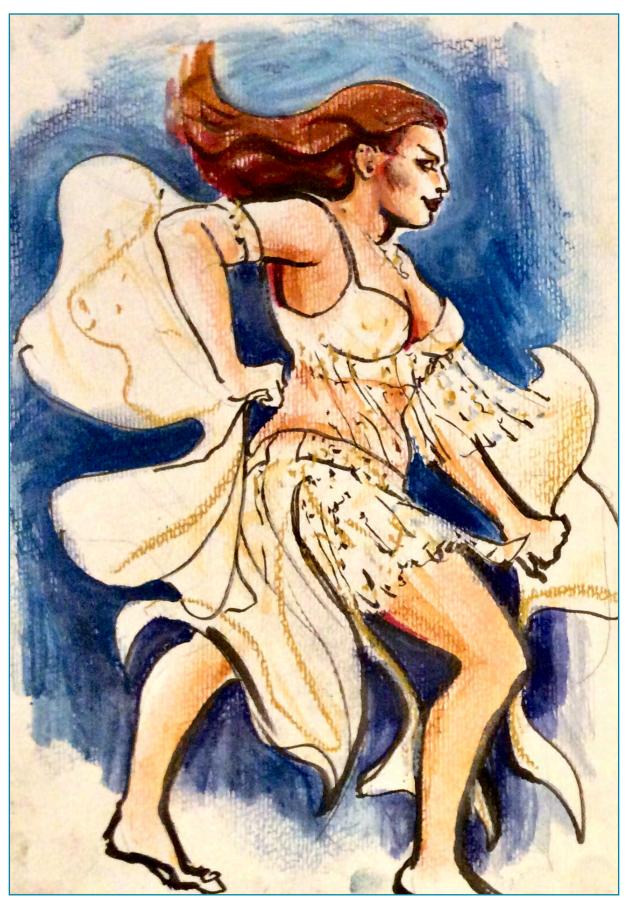
What a night, what a comeback show, what a community of people! And just a few days later, I was back out, in a taxi with Daniel and his wife A., off to a sunny spring day at the Qweer Spring Market, held at another venue I loved, Festsaal Kreuzberg where Bushwig Berlin was!

I hadn't seen these loved ones together in so long. In the intervening years Daniel had done such important work in his mission of documenting Queer Berlin with beautiful photographs. He's shown up for so many events these last five years, and his work is a window into the community's life for me and the others who are still shielding. We sat together at a table surrounded by happy Berlin queers, in the warm sun.

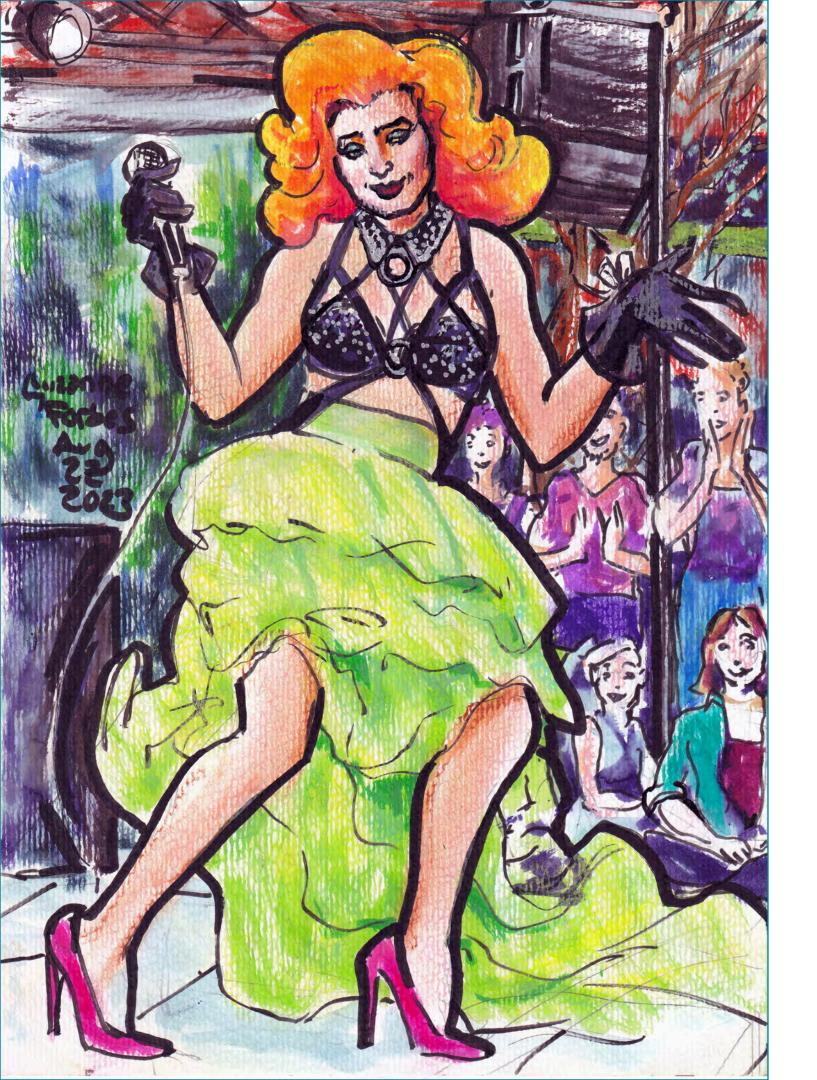
### Chiqui Love was on fire, blazing across the stage.

Dalaa Asham danced and swirled and then came over with Kylie Divon to visit. How good to see people in person! And Prince Emrah was emcee'ing in dayglo colors and dancing with children, lighting up the stage like a star. Was anyone ever as lucky as me, to have met these folx?





Dalaa Asham at Qweer Spring Market 2023



Then a week later i was back out, on the rooftop of the mall in Neukölln at the homespun wooden fairyland of Klunkerkranich, built over the parking garage. Alexander Cameltoe, my friend and majestic drag king, hosted a drag show called Hive Tea, and I was gleeful to finally draw it. I got spooked at how careless young ableds pushed up against me in my mask, but I asked the bar crew to open all the windows and they did, so I took the risk and sat by the stage at the table Cameltoe had prepared for me and drew. And it was tender and funny and communal in the bar with queer Berliners, a magic rising as the performers did their shows that are really stories about

who all of us are. There was a queer proposal too, and she said yes!

#### I had one more dream to come true.

I had hoped, dreamed and tried to plan a way to be in Berlin's parade/ protest for International Whores Day, Hurentag, for years. In 2023 our friend Audrey, fellow former Bay Areaite, made it happen. Audrey rented one of the red-awninged bicycle carriages that tour companies use in Berlin and came to collect me at our door. I rode in comfort in the summer breeze, dressed in red lace dress and red top hat and even red panties, wearing my "Sex Worker Ally" necklace, as Audrey pedaled us to the starting point. I even had a black N95/FFP2 respirator, so my mask wouldn't be so upsetting to people. It was so exciting! I was so glad to be there at last! What a day!

The protest wound through the streets of



Alexander Cameltoe at Hive Tea 2023



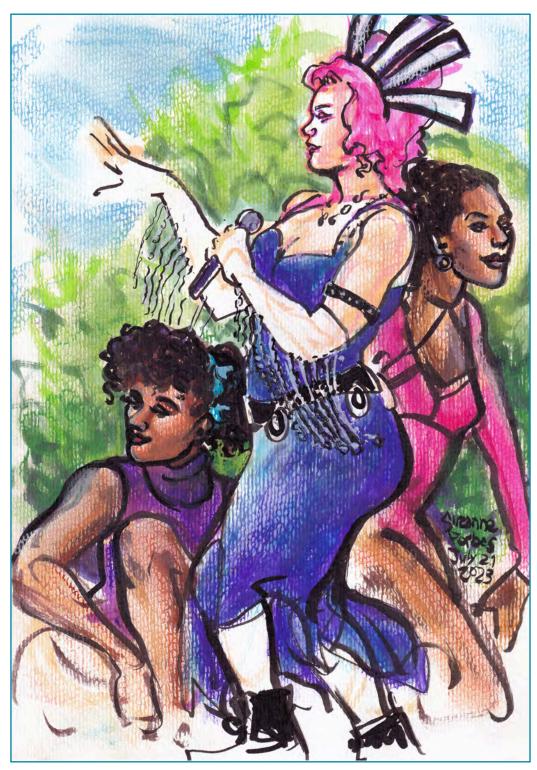
West Berlin, a crowd of red umbrellas (the symbol for sex worker solidarity) and shouting people of all genders in fishnet and boots. We were in the rearguard with the Covid-cautious and disabled, folx transporting friends in cargo bicycles, wheelchairs and the street team cart for sex worker mutual aid org transsexworks, with its wonderful art by Rory Midhani.

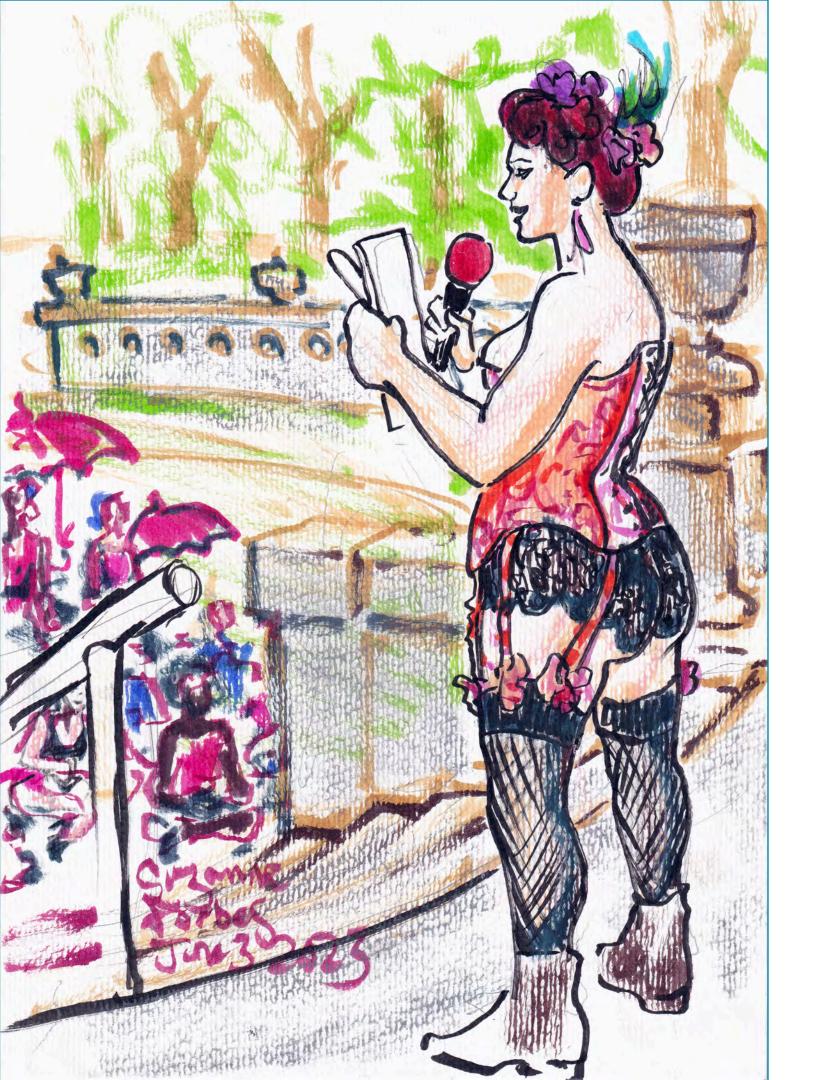
There was a scary moment enroute to the demo site, when a dancer was seized by police, but they were released, and spirits went back up. The weather was grand. We gathered around an open amphitheater in a park for per-

formances and talks. Liad Hussein Kantorowicz, who I'd drawn at the Schwules Museum in 2019, performed with audience members; that's Diosa on the right. I was comfortable in my shaded carriage and had a great view.

Two femmes were performing a hot BDSM chair dance together when what felt like gunshots blew past me. Projectiles hit around the performers and smashed, sounding impossibly loud and violent. Someone was throwing raw eggs, very fast and hard. I was completely freaked out; it was my first protest!

The performers kept going, kissing and holding each other; sex workers are fucking indomitable. Loudspeakers from the event van played music and the show went on. A representative from Paramour Berlin (from San Francisco!) talked about Paramour's work to open an ethical collective brothel. There was hope, and fear, in my heart.





### But on June 10, our family's luck ran out. D.'s little brother, his only sibling, and the only brother I could call my own, died suddenly and without warning.

As I held D. through the nights before he left for the US, all I could feel was rage. Fury and despair and bitterness. I had had a precognition, which is often just pattern recognition, that someone in our family would die that year. Nobody listened to me about the vascular and systemic effects of Covid except D. and strangers on the internet. This young man, one of the best people I'd ever known, hadn't even received enough public health education to know the difference between a surgical mask and a respirator. Working in hospitality, he'd likely been infected at least once. A horrifically senseless death, of someone loved by everyone. And I was helpless in every way. D. went to the US to be with his family, and I stayed in our flat alone, knowing worse was to come.

### And so it was; my mother got Covid for the third time that fall and developed pulmonary fibrosis, a lung disease with a terminal prognosis.

The "good" US president had declared the pandemic over, and so it must be. All remaining precautions were dropped everywhere, as everyone I knew developed "mysterious" new health problems. Wearing a mask became "creepy" and "crazy", even in Germany where it had been required by law for months at a time. Imani Barbarin was right; eugenics and forced infection went public so fast, everywhere, at the same time being unhoused was criminalized. And meanwhile, I went with my friend to more medical appointments and saw her receive vicious, racist treatment from so-called care providers. We were the only ones masked in the famous hospital, at the dialysis clinic, at the West Berlin specialist doctor. We were the stigmatized, "weak" ones.

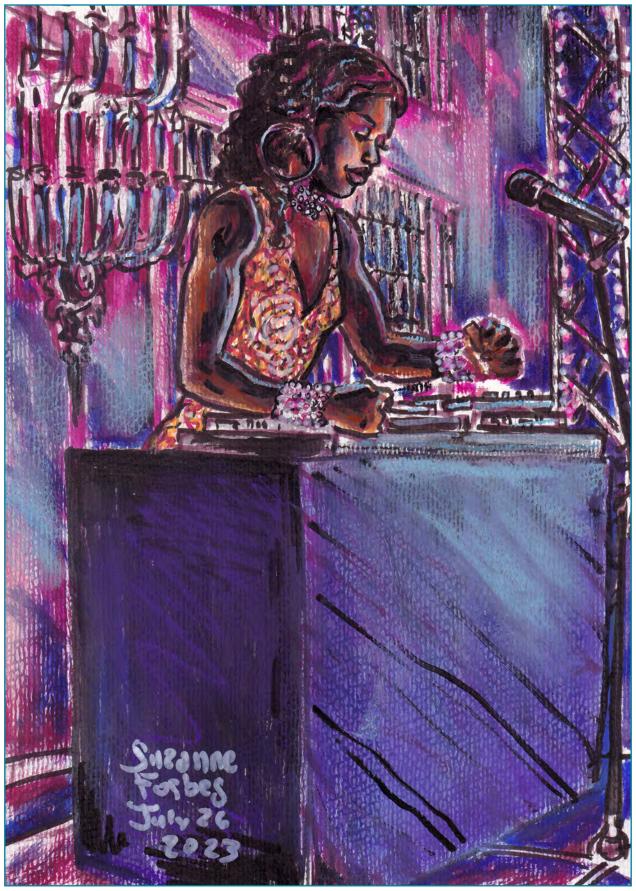
### I didn't give up on queer Berlin, or on my work; I went out once more that summer, to a new party Pansy was doing at a fancy theater five minutes cab ride from our flat.

I dressed up, saw friends and got hugs in my respirator and goggles, worked in a comfortable chair. I worked hard, finally getting a chance to live-draw Ixa, who I adore, performing. I went deep into focus, remembering everything I'd heard at the Berlin Burlesque Week Performers' Panel about how stage lighting affects Black skin, looking to see if Ixa had purple or red undertones or if that was just the lights, working to represent the real person in front of me as truly and beautifully as possible through my goggles, from their cute outfit to their highlights.

### Loving and seeing and honoring people is not enough, but it is the thing I tried to do well. Drag saves lives, and so does community.

There is not much more to tell about my working life. In October of last year, I learned at last what world we really live in. I saw dead children stacked in bombed hospitals, then lost friends and Patrons as I spoke out about genocide. I learned which voices to listen to and what Europe was really built on. I got back to my usual level of sick again, while D. grieved. My explicit refusal to go along with being infected made some people angry, or repulsed, just as my explicit description of myself as disabled repulses some people, since I "look okay to them". But I knew I had to save my work before I could take even the slightest chance of becoming permanently bed-bound and tube-fed and unable to do it.

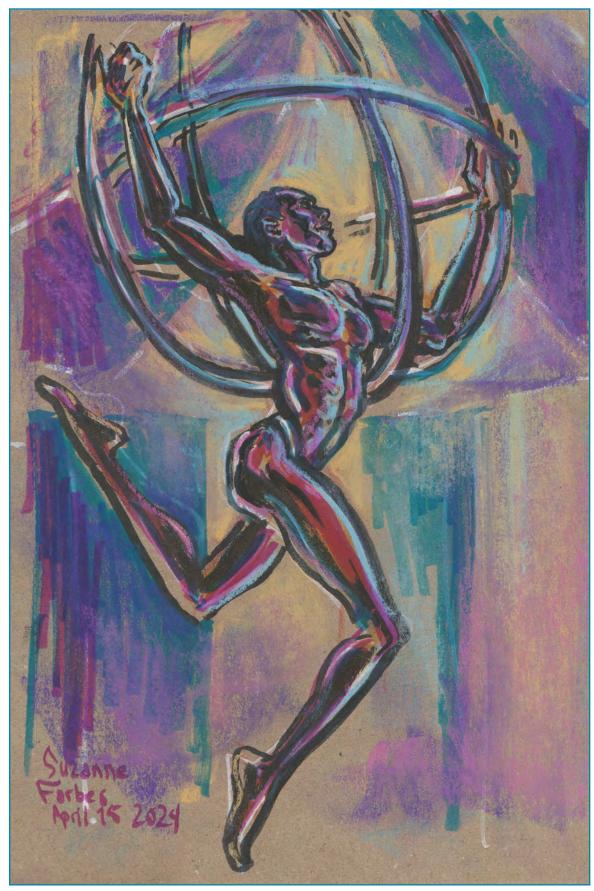
I sent D. back to his parents for Christmas, because it would have been unimaginable not to. I spent Christmas Eve on a zoom call getting Burner friends to agree to drop my body on the steps of the useless Bundesministerium für Gesundheit (health ministry) once I am dead.



Ixa at Pansy's party 2023



Coco Deville for Sketcherei 2023



Jade Lee at Galaxxxy A-Go-Go 2024

#### "Can we do a Weekend at Bernie's thing where we take you through the U-Bahn with a sketchbook in your lap first?" they asked. "Of course!" I said.

This year, 2024, has been a year of firsts, every first time a special day passed without D.'s brother, of first-time-ever heat and flood records, first mask bans, first time being thrown out of a cab for masking, first oxygen device for my mom, of everyone losing someone, of seeing for the first time how much I really didn't know. My first year I couldn't sit up to craft. I now have to spend all but about 40 minutes each day lying down. Our once-beautiful flat is a hoarder mess after five years of isolation, my loss of mobility, and no parties to clean up for.

I haven't ridden the Berlin public transit I loved for almost five years, and the cost of taxis has made going anywhere much harder. The ME and Long Covid communities are finding their own help, because governments have done nothing. We've found medicines that help me some, outside the system, and met other Covid-cautious people and ME sufferers in Berlin.

# My Black and Brown and radical trans Jewish friends who can are leaving Germany.

We went in the spring to see my friend HP Loveshaft's show Pangaea at Crack Bellmer, and I knew it was my last show. I can't go anywhere alone safely now; a fat old lady in a mask is just too infuriating to people in denial. Pangaea was the best show though, with Scotty the Blue Bunny performing Kabbalat Shabbat and HP's vegan challah passed around, and HP delivering a prayer and sermon of determination and hope. Plus sexy drag kings, Luna Tiktok doing a hot dance, and Audrey there taking photographs, documenting our community as always. There were two young artists drawing the performers and showing them their drawings, blessings to them.

I am done grinding for capitalism, done working to live, done using myself up. What I have left I want to give to my loved ones who stayed and to community service more direct than drawing. We have found the helpers, and I want to be one while I can.

As my dear friend HP Loveshaft says, "Thank you, I love you, burn it all down, etc."





Suzanne at Dr. Sketchys San Francisco 2007

#### **AFTERWORD**

#### By Victoria Shestack Aronoff

have known and loved Suzanne since we met in 1975 when she was 8 and I was 9. I don't remember how we became friends, but it was probably because she wasn't picked for sports either so we played hopscotch on the sidelines instead. Also, she loved horses and cats, and I loved horses and cats, and we both had fucked up fathers. She was smarter than anyone I knew, funny as fuck, and had a vocabulary of adult words both profane and erudite that was decades beyond her age.

Even as a kid, she rejected authority, conformity, mediocrity. She tried to be offensive and contrary whenever possible. She and I cut up my dolls and tossed their parts out the window. We plotted to rescue the Central Park carriage horses from their lives of servitude. She would stop people on the street and ask them "would you like to be encased in a giant rubber glove" just to get their reaction. Dressed in her style of spiked chokers, purple jumpsuits and rose-colored aviator glasses, she would walk by an outdoor café, take a fry off of someone's plate, dip it in ketchup and gallop off with it, giggling.

As a young adult she moved onto harder outlets of rage and contrariness: I joined her in a lot of it, because it was so fun to be "bad"- writing graffiti on Soho buildings, jumping the turnstiles, shoplifting makeup and malt liquor, and buying handfuls of Valium and Ativan from junkies walking up and down 14<sup>th</sup> street.

As adults our lives diverged on different paths and coasts. When she lived in the San Francisco Bay Area, I loved hearing about all the crazy events she went to, and I lived vicariously through the colorful life she was leading in comparison with my bland suburban mom existence. "How was your weekend?" I would ask her while catching up on the phone. She replied: "I jumped out of an airplane and had sex in a coffin. How was yours?"

Holy fuck! While I was going to Target and taking my kids to the playground, she was having incredible experiences in the beautiful and extraordinary communities she depicts in this book. I couldn't even imagine some of the things in these artworks. What even is "fisting?" But she made it all look so beautiful.

Despite a difficult childhood, addiction, wonky brain chemistry, chronic illness and many unfair, cruel, and painful challenges, Suzanne has always been committed to beauty-in the way she dresses, in the way she decorates her homes, the food she made (have you seen any of her amazingly decorated cakes?), the intricate crafts she labors on (have you seen her gorgeous embroidered bugs or incredibly detailed goth-superhero-queer utopia-Victorian style dollhouse?). And of course, the evocatively beautiful paintings and drawings in this beautiful book.

How could she have made such a wonderfully crafted book while enduring so much chronic illness and disability? How did she survive all the fucked up shit she has been through? I think it's a combination of her grit and belief in herself, her commitment to unveiling to the world her vision of beauty, and the wonderful community of people who are in this book and who have been lucky recipients of her love and vice versa.

However she got here, I'm so happy this book exists: Because it's important—I am the mom of a trans, nonbinary, gender fluid, neuro-divergent kid with a chronic illness. So I'm grateful whenever the queer and differently abled community is celebrated and chronicled. And because everyone should experience her art—Toulouse Lautrec meets John Singer Sargent meets Tom of Finland meets Bettie Page sprinkled with Suzanne Forbes fairy dust.

I'm sad she is going to stop making art. I'm sad that it is because she is physically suffering. But I know her life will still be DA BOMB, even if she won't be having any more sex in coffins or drawing others doing so. My life would not be as beautiful if I hadn't met Suzanne. Now that you've met her, your life will be more beautiful too.



Suzanne photographed at home by Mirella Frangella 2018

#### THANK YOU FROM SUZANNE

Oh thank you, thank you! I have been given so much love and known so many sweet ones!

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Victoria Shestack Aronoff, my oldest friend, read the manuscript for comprehensibility and errors.

Adrian Blount did the sensitivity read of Chapter 14, where I talk about learning to draw Black people with color drawing tools and my first anti-racism awakening at Berlin Burlesque Week. Paid, of course!

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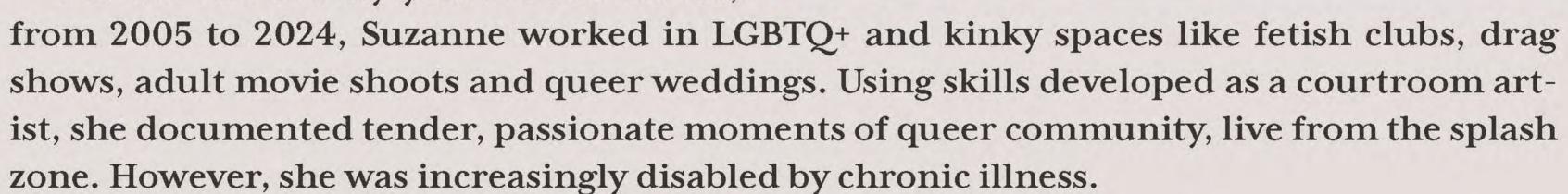
Mirjam Denhoff Shakrah Yves

# LIVE FROM THE SPLASH ZONE: SUZANNE FORBES, DOCUMENTARY ARTIST.

SUZANNE FORBES is a queer, disabled, kinky, sex positive artist. She was born in Manhattan in 1967 and began studying art at the Art Students League at the age of ten. She studied in the Illustration Program at Parsons and the Comics Program at the School of Visual Arts, while being an East Village heroin addict. Suzanne got sober in Minnesota in 1989 and graduated from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design with a BFA in Fine Arts. While finishing college, she was a courtroom artist for the Minneapolis CBS tv station. In 1993 Suzanne achieved her dream of being a regular penciller for DC Comics. She worked on Star Trek TNG and Star Trek The Original Series until the industry crashed in 1995.

After breaking up with the comics industry (and her first husband) in 1995, Suzanne hustled various jobs she was unqualified for, with food and tech companies in San Francisco. In 2005, after a decade of illness and a difficult second marriage, she decided to return to making art.

For the last twenty years of her career,



In 2015 Suzanne moved to Berlin with her third husband. In Berlin, she made over 1200 drawings, featuring the community of Queer Berlin. She live-drew at over 120 events in Berlin as well as teaching drawing at ESDIP Berlin.

Throughout her entire working life as a documentary artist, Suzanne's art has been available free online, on her blogs and on flickr.com via Creative Commons. Though she is now too sick to work, Suzanne's archives will remain online as long as possible. It is Suzanne's hope that if internet spaces that allow scenes of queer life and love disappear, or the internet itself comes to an end, this book will preserve a small portion of the beautiful moments she witnessed and drew.

www.suzanneforbes.com





