

KINZ, TILLOU + FEIGEN

When I Met Clayton

by Anne Hanavan

excerpted from "Captured: A Film/Video History of the Lower East Side", July 2005

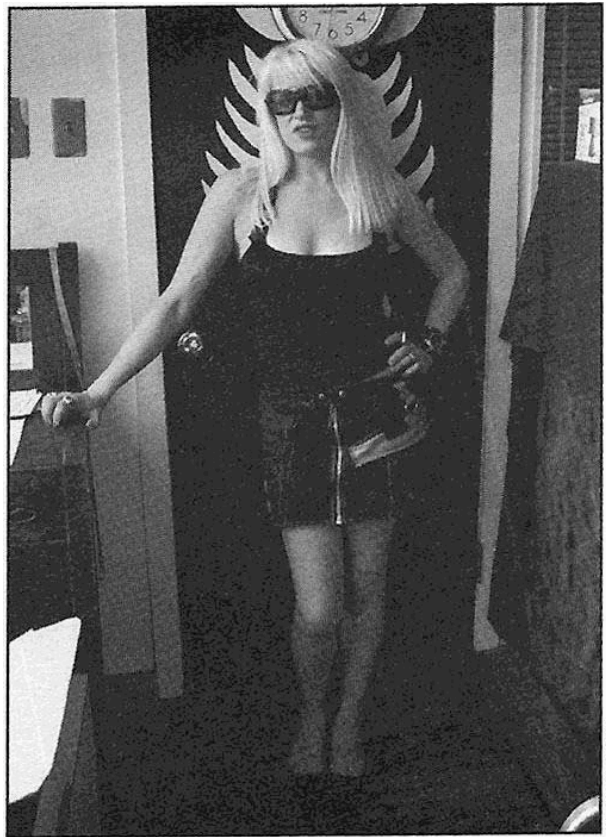
Some things that were going on in the early nineties are still very hazy and some are crystal clear. I know now that I was a mess, though at the time I had no idea. Life had completely closed in and become very small and in some ways had become very simple. Small the sense that I rarely left the Lower East Side and simple because needs were reduced to a bundle of dope, some cocaine and a handful of hypodermic needles a day. Although life as a junkie hooker made things horrific and dangerous, again, it simplified my existence. Gone were any previous dreams and aspirations, except for hooking with the next trick - especially the ones that liked getting high almost as much as I did. They were my favorites.

At the time I was living with the artist Richard Hambleton, with Steven, who used to run a magazine that folded, and this crazy Canadian girl named Bonnie, who I never liked very much. She could usually be heard by our neighbors, and whoever was passing by the building, screaming about being dope sick and slamming doors. Bonnie believed that the louder she would yell the sooner one of us would shut her up with a bag of dope. It usually worked, but on more than one occasion the cops would show up, and at this point were on a first name basis with her. Actually they knew all of our first names and we knew them by their last names. In any case we were all very familiar.

We all lived together in a decent-sized one bedroom on Orchard Street above a store that only sold men's ties that is now *Cafe Lika*. The apartment was a living crime scene. The place always looked like it had been ransacked. Clothes, books, drug paraphernalia, papers, and who knows what else were strewn all over the place. And one of us was always holding. There was blood everywhere; on the walls, floors ceilings, tables, chairs, counters, doorknobs, bedposts, sinks, showers, our shoes, the radio, Steven's TV, Bonnie's dog, Richard's bike, and the windows, too-you get the picture. Coming in you would normally be greeted by me sitting with my foot propped on the kitchen table trying to get a hit in my leg. Steven and Bonnie would be hanging out trying to get you to share what ever drugs you had by pretending they were dope sick. Richard, on the other hand, was painting. He was always painting. His dedication to his work always amazed me. He would use anything including his blood and sometimes mine for his paintings. The living room was converted into his studio. I loved it. As a girl with my occupation, screwing five or more guys a day to feed my habit, I didn't have much room for relationships or a libido but I felt a crazy borderline infatuation with Richard.

One day, after a ninety-eight-hour binge, I fell asleep. I must have been in a coma for two days. I woke up to a video camera aimed at my track marks, held by a huge man who looked like a viking. I flipped. "What the fuck is going on, Richard? Who the fuck is this?" Turns out the viking was Clayton and Richard had invited him over to shoot the studio and I was indeed at that moment part of the studio. Clayton was completely calm and unaffected by the surroundings, I was intrigued. He smiled and introduced himself - he seemed nice enough. I soon learned that Clayton was genuinely fascinated by our lifestyle and had a connection to the subculture. Clayton's name was familiar to me. I had heard about his famous documentation of the Tompkins Square Park riots and the following lawsuits. He was the same Clayton who made Nicky D's cool baseball hat that he always wore to Robots. I decided to like him. Hanging out at his storefront on Essex became a favorite pastime. He and Elsa were always very kind. They were passionate about the Lower East Side. Not only were they documenting the people and events that filled the neighborhood with stills and video but they were also archiving even the dope bags that decorated the streets. This collection is priceless. Each brand of dope had a name and an individual stamp that separated it from any other. Some were simple, others intricate, all were beautiful. This extraordinary couple has preserved these artifacts forever. They have an understanding and acceptance of people from all walks of life.

After getting clean I still enjoy Clayton and Elsa's company. Not only do they help me with putting together some sort of time line to my insanity but also they inspire me. I will always love them for who they are and their mission of preserving the Lower East Side.



Clayton Patterson

529 W. 20TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10011
TEL: 212 929 0500 FAX: 212 929 0065
INFO@KTFGALLERY.COM WWW.KTFGALLERY.COM