

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

A Bouquet of Group Art Shows Near Houston Street

These expansive exhibitions, in galleries on or near the Lower East Side, create an immersive sense of art and the reawakening art scene.

By Roberta Smith
Aug. 13, 2020



An installation view of the Karma show. From left: Marley Freeman's "Untitled," 2020; two watercolors on paper by Stephanie Crawford, "Flowers on Tablecloth," top, and "Still Life with Lemons," below (both 2016); Andrew Cranston's tiny 2020 work "The Gloaming"; Lois Dodd's "Joe Pye Weed (Eutrochium)," 1995; a grouping of five paintings on plain linen by Tabboo! (2014 to 2018); and, far right, James Harrison's "Walk in Wild Flowers," 2020. Credit Karma, New York

(Nothing but) Flowers
July 30—September 13, 2020

Karma
188 & 172 East 2nd Street
New York NY 10009



Stephanie Crawford, Still Life with Lemons, 2016, watercolor on paper, 22 x 15 inches

What to See Right Now in New York Art Galleries

‘Souls Grown Diaspora,’ a movement’s northern reach

Published Jan. 22, 2020

HOLLAND COTTER



“Souls Grown Diaspora,” a vibrant assemblage of a group show organized by the artist Sam Gordon, proposes that a tradition of African- American self-taught art from the South, represented by the Atlanta-based Souls Grown Deep Foundation, also extends into the northern United States via the early-20th-century Great Migration. Ten contemporary artists chosen by Mr. Gordon eloquently make the case.

About half of the artists chosen by Mr. Gordon are also musicians. In the 1990s, Mr. Willis fronted a punk band called Wesley Willis Fiasco. And the Detroit-born artist Stephanie Crawford, a talented still-life painter now in her 70s, has a much-admired and continuing international presence as a jazz vocalist. Recordings of her performances provide a soundtrack for the show.

And for many years, Frederick Weston has created elaborate collages — some celebrating Ms. Crawford — in single-room-occupancy hotels in Manhattan, moving a substantial and ever- growing pictorial archive to each new address.

(excerpt)

ART

“Souls Grown Diaspora”

This lively, jam-packed exhibition, curated by Sam Gordon, features ten African-American artists, most of whom are self-taught. About half of them are performers, too: music fills the gallery. Highlights include tracks by the jazz singer Stephanie Crawford, whose lovely still-lives of flowers and of boxes of chocolates occupy one wall. Other works range from the speculative (Raynes Birkbeck’s canvases referencing extraterrestrial narratives) to the political (Dapper Bruce Lafitte’s detailed cartographic drawings of a post-Katrina New Orleans). But assemblage is one shared theme, as seen in the mixed-media portraits of the Reverend Joyce McDonald, which incorporate clay, beads, African textiles, and, in one particularly beautiful piece, aluminum foil. Curtis Cuffie, who is best known for his elaborate public installations in the East Village, is represented here by smaller works, such as a shard of lucite held in a vise. In bringing these remarkable works into the same easy conversation, Gordon undercuts stale assumptions about so-called outsider artists while establishing a vibrant alternative lineage.

— *Johanna Fateman*

Through March 7.

 Apexart
291 Church St.
Downtown

212-431-5270

[Website](#)



ArtSeen

Souls Grown Diaspora

By **Ksenia Soboleva**

Installation view: *Souls Grown Diaspora*, apexart, New York, 2020. Courtesy apexart.

It's my first time at the Laurie Beechman Theatre, a cozy basement cabaret space that's been around since 1983 and has retained much of its original charm. A dazzling woman wearing a shiny grey two-piece is scat singing to jazz music, performing the most creative cover of "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life?" that I have ever heard. "I have only one request of your life..." she sings, "that you spend it all with me." The audience laughs. Next to me, the collage artist Frederick Weston is crying. He considers the singer his sister, and the sight of her performing makes him emotional. One table over, the artist and queer icon Tabboo! looks up at the performer in awe—in the 1980s they used to share a stage at the Pyramid Club on Avenue A, where Tabboo! performed as a drag queen. The extraordinary woman in question is Stephanie Crawford, a self-described "76 year old African American post-op transgender vocal jazz musician." She is performing in New York for one night only, in conjunction with the group exhibition *Souls Grown Diaspora* at the nonprofit Tribeca gallery *apexart*, which includes her visual work alongside that of nine other contemporary African American artists, among them Weston himself. (excerpt)



Souls Grown Diaspora, apexart, NY, Stephanie Crawford, 2020, Archival materials, dimensions variable.



Stephanie Crawford, Self-Portrait with Bouquet, 2016, Charcoal on newsprint, 18 x 24 inches

HAUSER & WIRTH

Ursula

The Art of Other Suns: A Consideration of Work Made in the Wake of the Great Migration

By Sam Gordon

Ursula: Issue 5 Winter 2019
(excerpt)



Stephanie Crawford, Still Life with Green Vase, 2016.

Stephanie Crawford (b. 1942)

‘At some point, I realized that I don’t want to paint a masterpiece. I want to be one,’ Stephanie Crawford likes to say. Born in Detroit, with family in Tennessee and other parts of the South, Crawford became part of a group of friends—which include Frederick Weston, Shyvette Williams and the fashion designer Claude Payne that made a splash in the house-party scenes in Detroit, Chicago and New York for their innovative fashion and music. Crawford eventually moved to New York in the 1970s, and at 36, got a scholarship to pursue an MFA at Pratt, where she became close with the influential East Village trans artist Greer Lankton. She then turned her focus to jazz—the music of modernity and self-invention—becoming well known in the ’80s as a singer who bridged the world of blues and drag, performing at the Blue Note in the Village and the Pyramid Club on Avenue A. The artist Tabboo!, who performed regularly at the Pyramid as well, describes Crawford as ‘the Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughan, Dinah Washington of the queer world.’ From 1989 to 1996, she taught jazz vocals in Paris and received the prestigious award ‘Django D’Or’ for Best International Jazz Vocalist in 1993. A practicing Buddhist, Crawford now lives in Oakland, where she continues to perform and teach. ‘Teaching was how I was able to survive,’ she says.

Spin Cycle



EXTRAORDINARY STEPHANIE CRAWFORD

Award-winning trans jazz vocalist returns to New York to debut her acclaimed one woman show. Saturday, January 11, 2020 at the Laurie Beechman Theatre

After more than a decade, acclaimed jazz vocalist Stephanie Crawford will present the New York debut of her one-woman show ***THE EXTRAORDINARY STEPHANIE CRAWFORD*** at the Laurie Beechman Theatre on Saturday, January 11.

The Laurie Beechman Theatre is located inside West Bank Cafe at 407 West 42 Street, just west of Ninth Avenue. There is a full dinner menu and bar available.

Stephanie Crawford is an internationally acclaimed singer, and that rare bird: a black trans vocal musician in the exceedingly straight jazz world. Having studied with the renowned bop pianist Barry Harris in New York, she migrated to Paris where she remained for several years, performing and teaching at prestigious schools of music, various festivals, and venues such as The Duc des Lombards, The Sunset, New Morning, and a host of other establishments. She is also the winner of the prestigious Django D'Or Award for Best International Jazz Vocalist.

In New York, Crawford has performed in such famed venues as Wigstock, The Pyramid, Sweet Basil, The Blue Note, Jazzmania, and Barry Harris Jazz Cultural Theatre, among others. The septuagenarian is a sublime interpreter of the American and Brazilian songbook, performed in the classic jazz vocal tradition of Sarah Vaughan, Carmen McRae, and Betty Carter.

"I have never been openly trans. Nor performed as such," notes Crawford. "Of course there have always been people who knew or guessed or intuited or clocked me. For a man in a dress. Or transvestite. Or just queer. I've been subjected to such a dazzling array of calumny and ignorance and prejudice for so long -- whether for my race, or class, or gender -- that finally I've concluded it really doesn't matter at all what people think of me. It's been such a long harrowing journey working under the radar for so long. And I think I'm ready for my closeup."

Stephanie Crawford's work will also be included in a new exhibition opening in January in Manhattan, **Souls Grown Diaspora** curated by Sam Gordon at apexart (291 Church Street). The exhibition opens January 10, 6-8pm, and runs through March 7, 2020.

Special thanks to Gordon Robichaux, NY and Lady Bunny for their support.



THE EXTRAORDINARY STEPHANIE CRAWFORD

at the Laurie Beechman Theatre, New York City, Saturday, January 11, 2020

In conjunction with SOULS GROWN DIASPORA

at apexart January 11- March 7, 2020

Piano accompanist: William TN Hall, Photo credit: Helane Blumfield

‘Stephanie Crawford is the Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughan, Dinah Washington of the queer world.’ — Tabboo!

"I am an absolutely extraordinary 76 year old African American post op, transgender vocal jazz musician and visual artist. And I have lived long enough to tell it. Or rather sing it. I am no longer ashamed. Or afraid of you. My life story as a gay transgender person of color is at once painful, sublime, ridiculous, heart-stopping beautiful and ultimately victorious." —Stephanie Crawford



Stephanie Crawford: Making herself a masterpiece

By Andrew Gilbert, March 12, 2015, 7 a.m.



Stephanie Crawford will perform Thursday afternoon at the Cheese Board and Sunday afternoon at the California Jazz Conservatory in downtown Berkeley. Photo: CJC

Stephanie Crawford has performed at top jazz clubs in New York City and Paris, but since settling in the East Bay about 15 years ago she's been one of the region's best kept jazz secrets. In recent months lucky Cheese Board patrons have been privy to her vocal artistry (she's there Thursday afternoon with pianist Joe Warner), but Crawford's mainstay is the [California Jazz Conservatory](#), where she returns 4:30 pm Sunday for a performance with Warner, ace bassist Ron Belcher, and versatile drummer Greg German.

It's telling that the North Oakland resident has found a welcome embrace in venues run by vocalists. She was a regular at Anna de Leon's lamented downtown spot Anna's Jazz Island. And Laurie Antonioli, the supremely creative singer who runs the CJC's jazz vocal program, has long championed Crawford, hiring her for gigs as a performer and teacher, where she contributes significant depth to the program.

"Stephanie is a hidden treasure here in the Bay Area," says Antonioli. "Her singing is spontaneous, her phrasing is beautiful, and her choice of material unexpected. We've had her teach at the CJC numerous times and she'll be back this summer. Her

knowledge of the Great American Songbook is encyclopedic.”

It was her command of lyrics that sparked Crawford’s epiphany that music was indeed her calling. She grew up in Detroit surrounded by jazz when the city’s scene still ranked as one of the nation’s most vital, soaking up sounds from Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald and Betty Carter. But she trained as a visual artist, and had just earned a scholarship to the Pratt Institute in New York City when she found herself at a neighborhood dive bar she frequented on Sundays with a gone-to-seed pianist/singer who often stumbled over a song’s words.

“It was this hideous grungy bar,” Crawford recalls. “This lady kept forgetting lyrics and I would call them out. After a while she said why don’t you get your ass up here. Well, I knew all the lyrics, so I did and I caught the bug. I ended up going back every Sunday to sing.”

She was 36 at the time, and though Crawford loved music from her soul, she couldn’t envision a life in the business. But once she landed in New York her MFA studies at Pratt quickly took a backseat to her bandstand education as she haunted the city’s numerous clubs and jam sessions. Crawford found invaluable mentors in saxophonist/composer Frank Foster and Detroit-reared pianist Barry Harris, a brilliant Charlie Parker acolyte beloved for the generosity he’s extended to generations of aspiring musicians.

“I didn’t get to the legitimate stage until I was long in the tooth,” Crawford says. “But after I enrolled in the Pratt Institute things moved fast. New York was jumping in the early 1980s. I met Barry Harris and he was a wonderful teacher. At some point I realized that I don’t want to paint a masterpiece. I want to be one.”

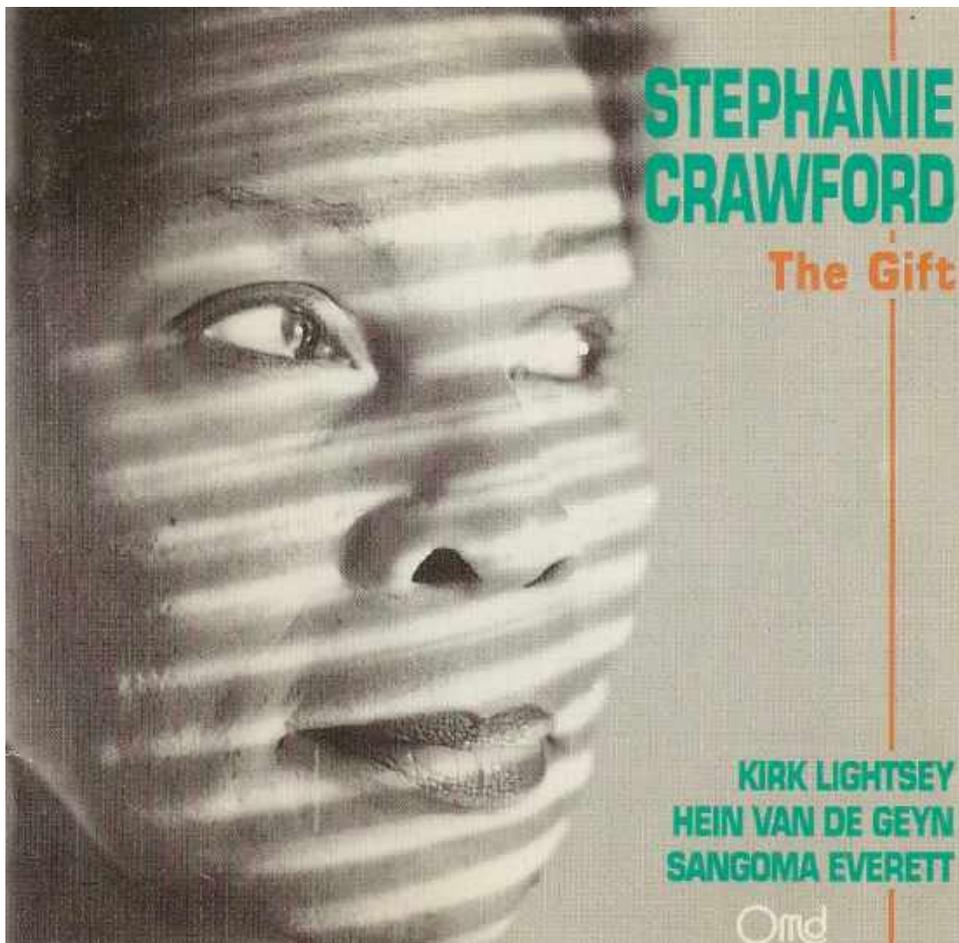
With some French fluency and an understanding that jazz still commanded a strong audience in Paris she lit out for the City of Lights. Crawford ended up spending almost a decade there, earning an avid following and critical plaudits. She made several records and won a prestigious Django d’Or award for Best International Jazz Vocalist in 1993. While she worked steadily, “teaching was how I was able to survive,” she says. “It was great, one of the most intensely creative periods in my life.”

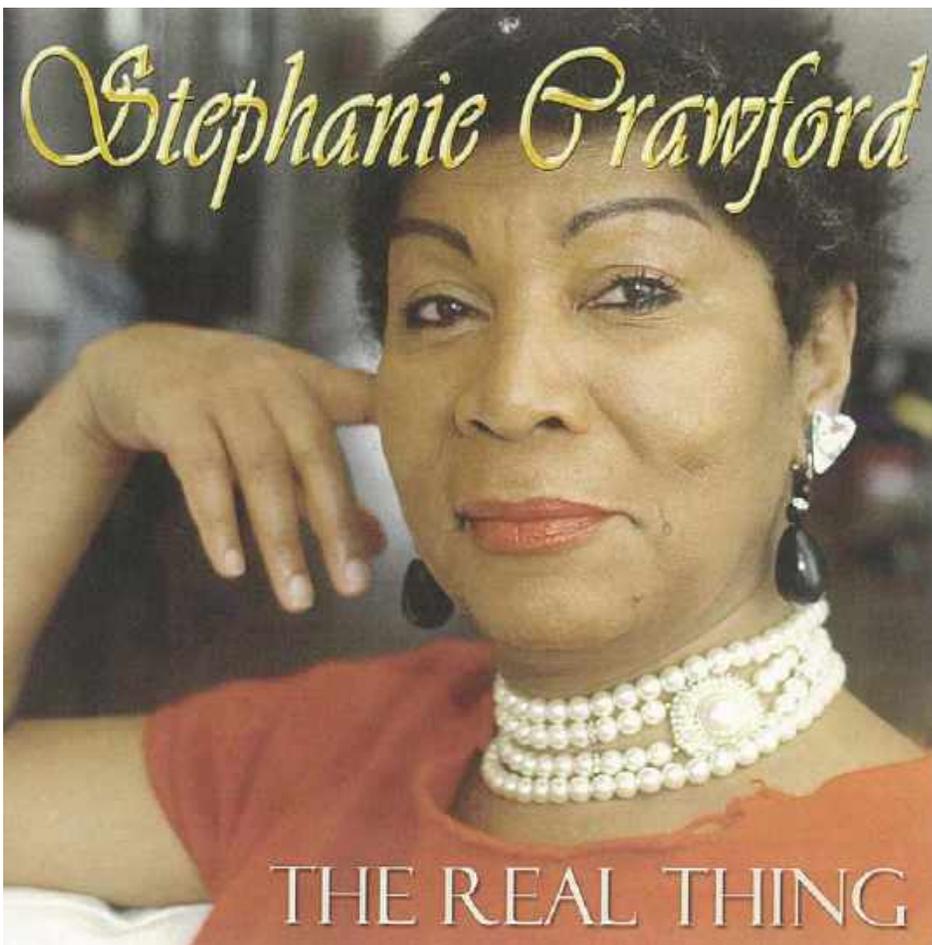
By the mid-1990s she was back in the States. After a brief stint in New York she tried out Chicago, and then moved to the Bay Area when she landed a day job as a wine steward, a position she now holds with Safeway. As an epicurean she’s right at home in the East Bay, and she still has a passion for teaching.

“I try to teach people to really listen,” she says. “You cannot sing without listening. I work with them to repeat exactly what they hear, before they know scales, progressions or even notes. Then I get them into repertoire. I do some techniques on breathing, pitch, projection, and interpretation, how a song can become an extension of your personality and life experience. A lot of it is really what Barry taught me years ago in New York City.”

Turning standards into riveting personal tales is the essence of Crawford’s artistry. In her early 70s, she’s still a work in progress, a vital creative force dedicated to making herself a masterpiece.

“The music never dies inside for me,” Crawford says. “It’s alive as it ever was. My voice has changed, but I’m a better musician now. I say ‘musician’ not ‘singer’ because the great singers I listened to—Sarah, Ella, and Betty—were all exceptional musicians. I do some painting and drawing in my spare time, but music is the all-consuming passion.”





Stephanie Crawford au Vauban

L'éclat d'un diamant noir

Il y a ceux qui chantent bien, et sortent chaque année par dizaines des conservatoires ou encombrant les hit-parades. Et puis il y a celles et ceux qui chantent autrement. Première invitée du programme Jazz à Vauban mitonné par Didier Squiban, l'Américaine Stephanie Crawford appartient à cette catégorie d'artistes capables en quelques intonations de parler à la fois au cœur et à l'âme, assez puissante et inventive pour changer la vie et notre perception du monde à travers la musique.

Équilibre instable

« Beaucoup de chanteuses noires ont été influencées par le gospel et la musique religieuse, moi c'est le cinéma », lance avec délice cette souveraine princesse de Chicago. De fait, dans un habit de lumière, semblant sortie d'une pluie d'or, elle revisite « Stranger in paradise », avec l'élégance altière d'un corps félin, et la voix. Instantanément, malgré les imperfections de ce tour de chauffe, c'est le choc.

La dame, toisant fièrement l'obscurité de son regard de gazelle aux aguets, avec parfois cette absence au monde qui impressionnait tant chez Billie Holiday, caresse la micro. Toujours à



Stéphanie Crawford jeudi soir au Vauban. Un charme, une voix et une présence scénique absolument exceptionnels.

Une impression de bonheur en plus.

Un ange passe

Dans sa bouche aux variations infinies, suçotant les notes, machouillant sensuellement les mots, la malice et le plaisir du verbe pétillent. Parfois le bel ciseau noir semble chuter, en de vertigineux piqués au ras des tréfonds de la gamme, toujours elle se redresse pour prendre une hauteur qui n'appartient qu'aux anges. On aurait presque aimé l'entendre dans une plus stricte intimité sonore, avec contre-basse ou piano seuls. Dans l'exercice périlleux du concert unique (la complicité et les automatismes demandent du temps), le trio Squiban/Stanislawski/Chevalier fit pourtant mieux que se tirer d'affaire.

Leur métier se mettant au diapason du plaisir collectif, les versions émouvantes, subtiles et nuancées de « Island », « Fly high », « Sweet Lorraine » ou « Black Coffee », l'hommage à Michel Legrand et ses « Demoiselles », frôlèrent la perfection, sinon le génie. Ils ont su donner tout son éclat à l'« uncertain feeling » de l'étonnante Stephanie Crawford, talent volatile aussi inclassable qu'incontestable.

Jean-Luc G. Train





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75020 PARIS

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Présidente : Christine MARIENVAL

— INSCRIPTIONS —
(sur rendez-vous)

Du 17 juin au 28 juin 1996
Du 16 septembre au 27 septembre 1996

— COURS —

Début des cours le 7 octobre 1996
Fin des cours le 13 juin 1997

Organisme privé subventionné par :



PROGRAMME VOIX



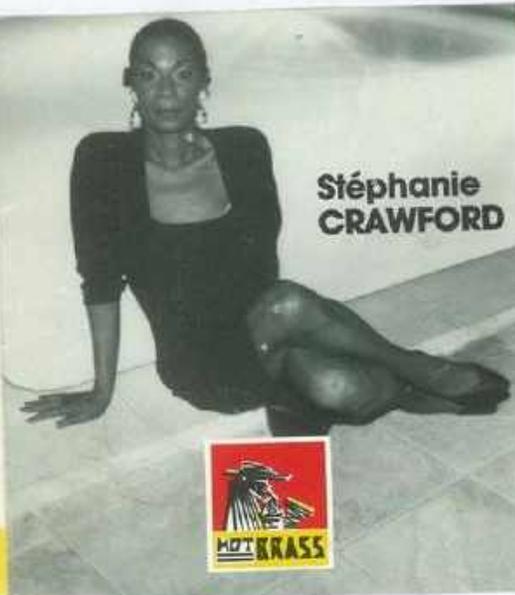
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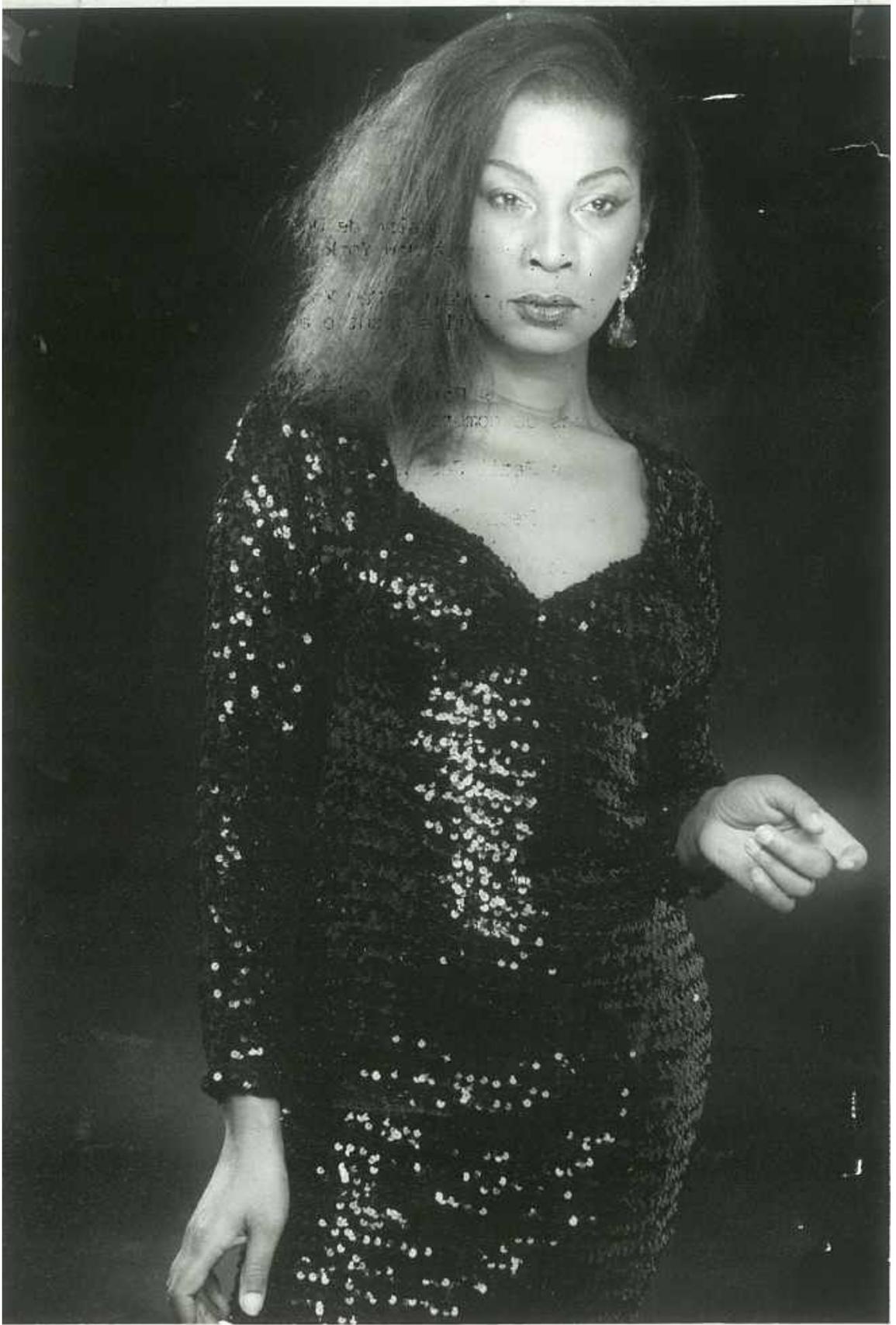
CLUB OUVERT A PARTIR DE 22 H. 30



Stéphanie
CRAWFORD



DECEMBRE 91



STEPHANIE CRAWFORD



(BASS)

BLACK ORPHEUS

- LOUIS BONFI

-S. A- B-7b5 E7b9 A- B-7b5 E7b9

A- D-7 G7 Cmaj7 C#07 A7b9

D-7 G7 CA7 Fmaj7

B-7b5 E7b9 A- B-7b5 E7b9

A- B-7b5 E7b9 A- B-7b5 E7b9

E-7b5 A7b9 D-

D- D-7/C B-7b5 E7b9 A- A-7/G Fmaj7

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D.S. al LAST X ONLY

A- D-7 A-7 D-7 A-7 D-7 E-7

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FINE



STEPHANIE CRAWFORD

- Sings Jazz



\$5
COVER

DUFFY'S
308 W. 40th ST. BTWN 8th & 9th

9:30 $\frac{1}{2}$
11:00 PM

Friday, Sept. 17

927-4700



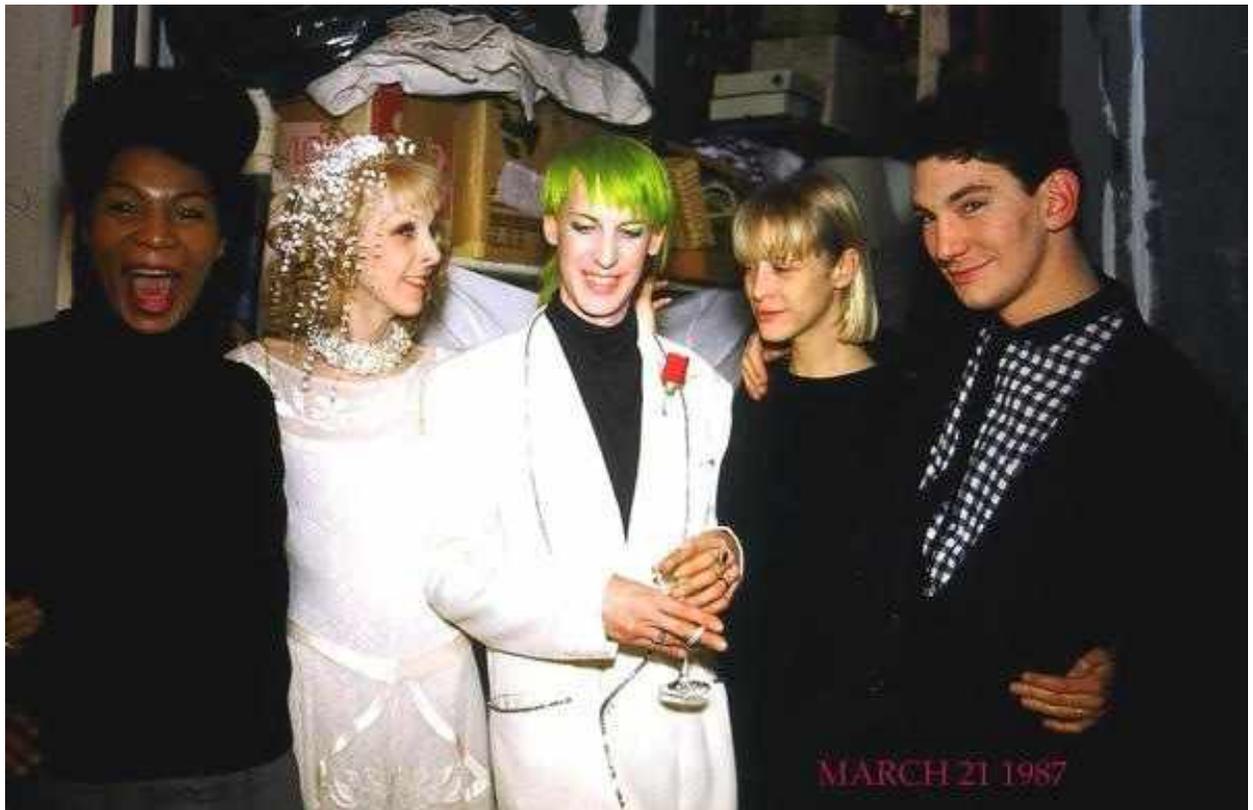
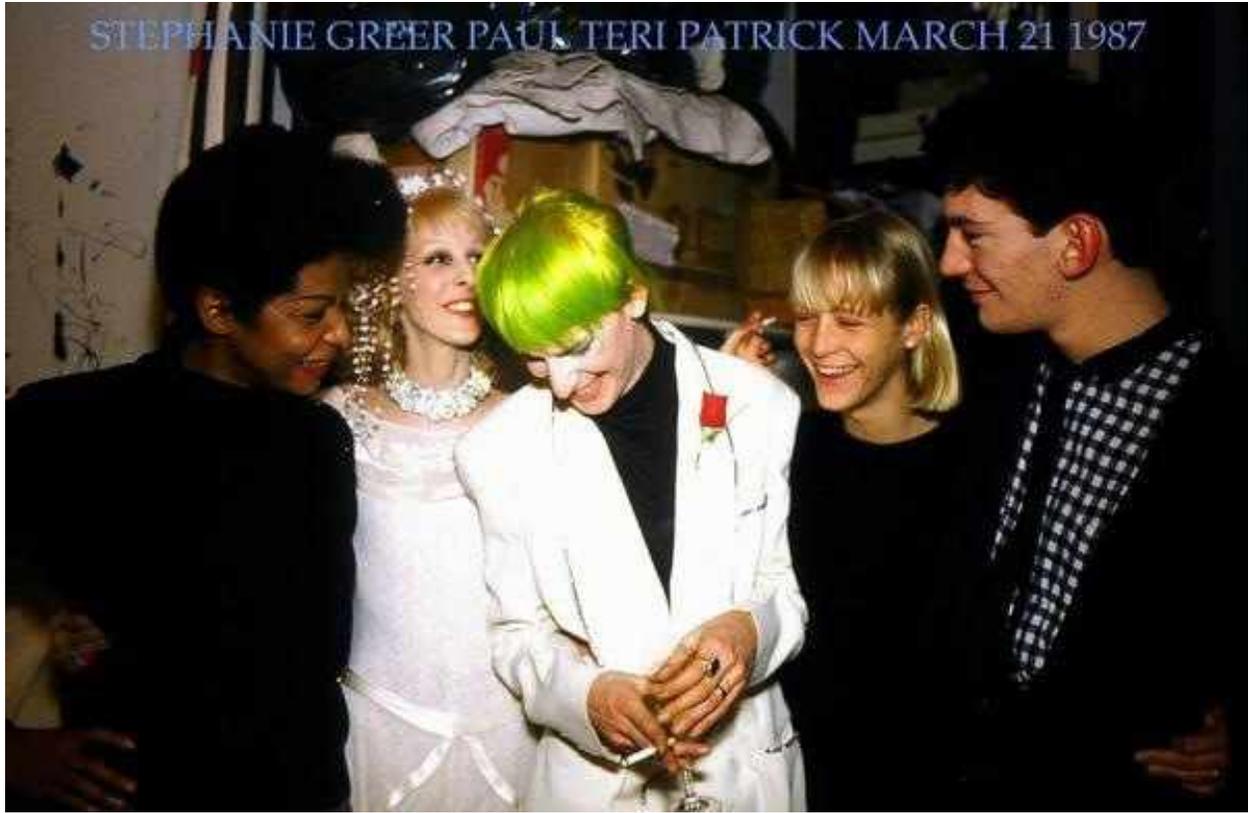
**Crawford with
Tabboo! and
Hapi Phace at the
Pyramid photo:
Clayton Patterson**

**Greer Lankton with
Stephanie Crawford**

**Crawford photo:
Philip-Lorca diCorcia**



STEPHANIE GREER PAUL TERI PATRICK MARCH 21 1987



MADAM ROSS

PROUDLY Presents

STEPHANIE
CRAWFORD

ELAN SHAPIRO ... PIANO

BILL MORING ... BASS

THURS.

JUNE

11, 18,

25th,

JULY
2nd

\$5

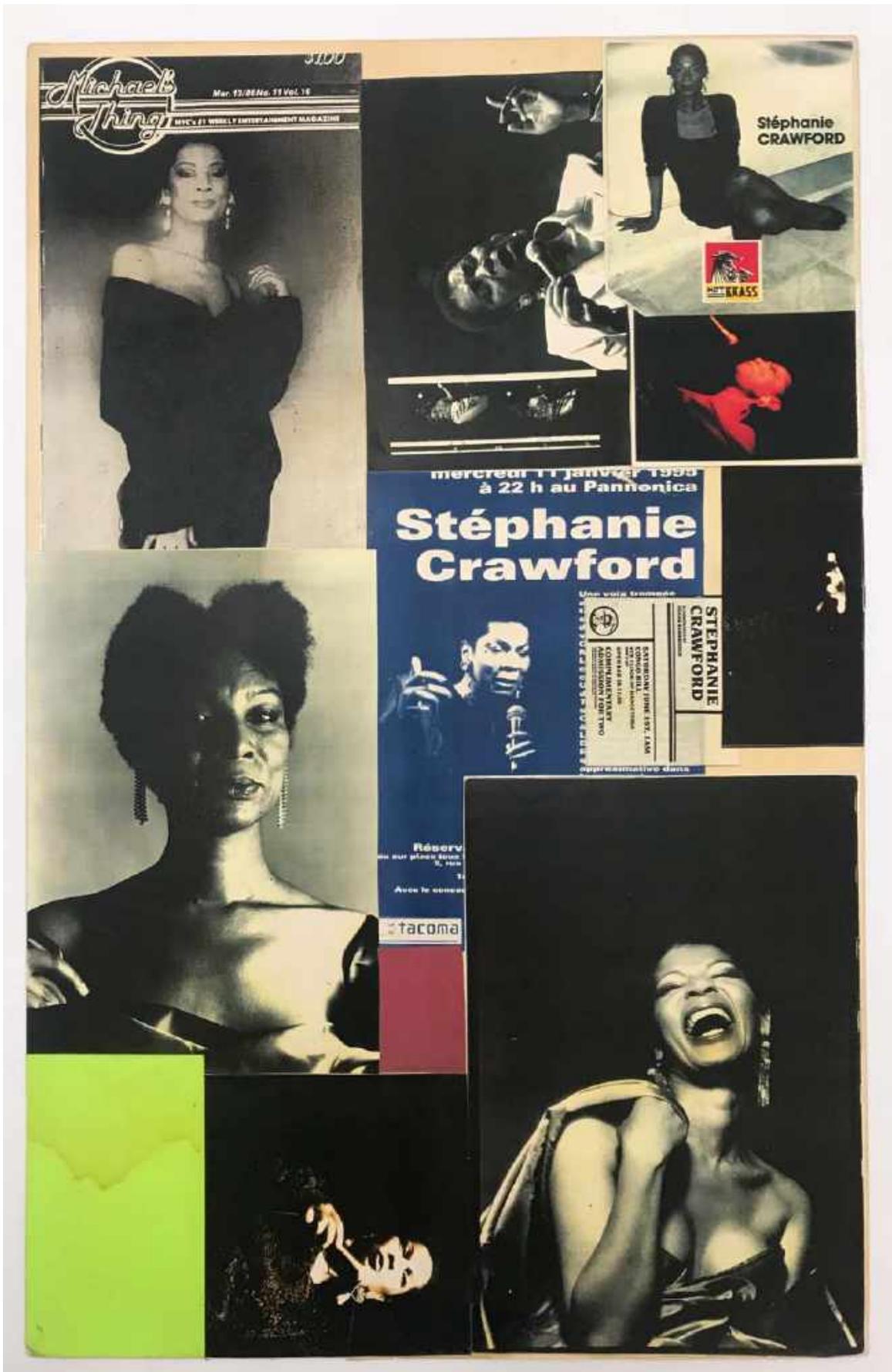
PERFORMANCES
11:30 AND
1:00 P.M.

St. JOHN'S LANE



Stephanie Crawford
wednesday June 5th
1a.m.
PYRAMID 101 avenue a 420-159

Tabboo!, *Flyer for Stephanie Crawford, c.1980s*



Frederick Weston, *Presenting Stephanie Crawford (#1)*, c. 2000



Frederick Weston, *Presenting Stephanie Crawford (#2)*, c. 2000

STEPHANIE CRAWFORD

...Sings Jazz...



DECEMBRE 94

Stéphanie CRAWFORD



STEPHANIE CRAWFORD TR'

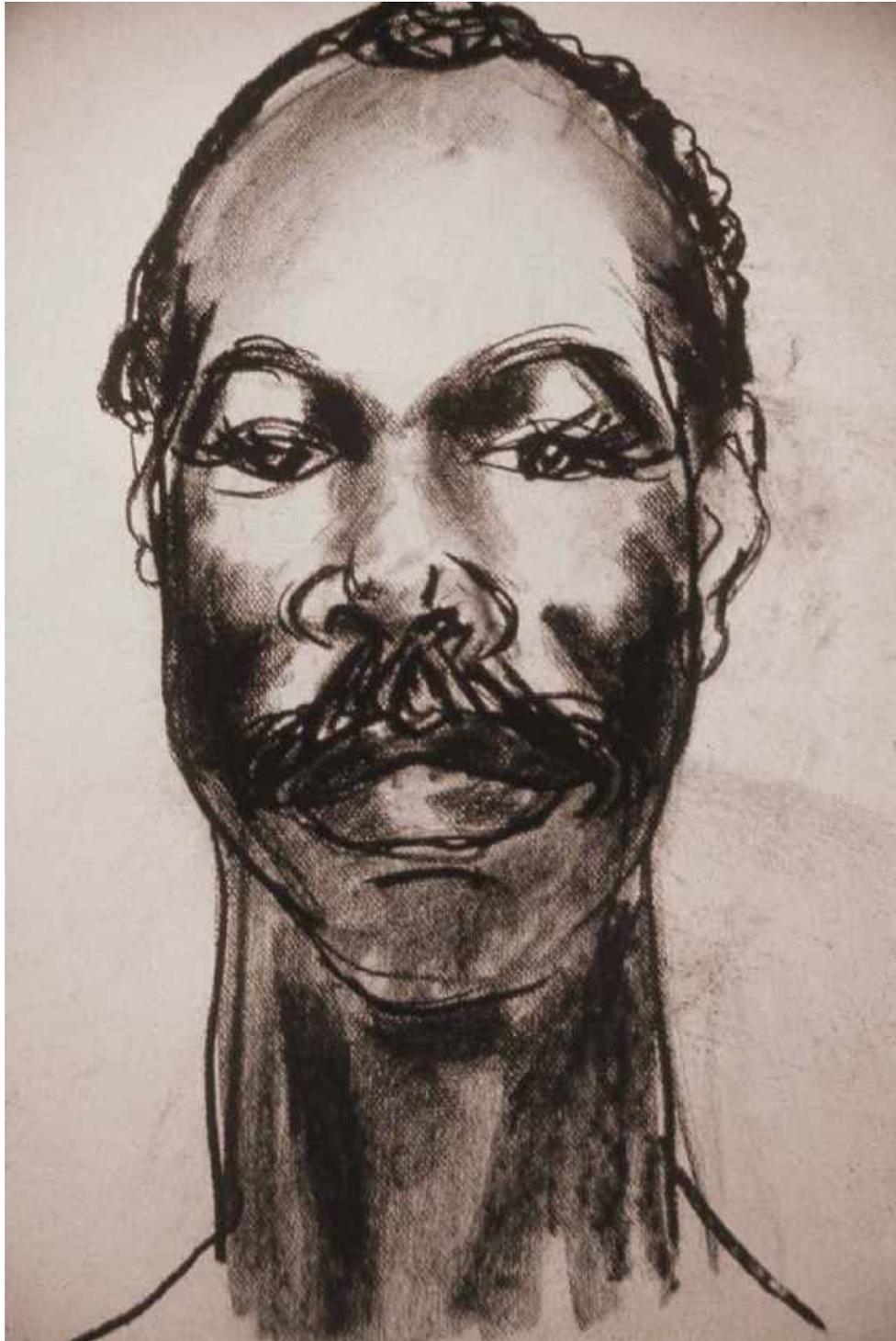


Friday, April 24th 9:00 P.M.

Amy Duncan at the piano • Tony DeChicco on bass



Frederick Weston, *Presenting Stephanie Crawford (#4)*, c. 2000



Stephanie Crawford, *Portrait of Frederick Weston*, c. 1980s
Charcoal on newsprint

