



Cross **Currents** by Wickie Stamps

Queer is in. Clinton loves us, publishing adores us, and the art world is genuflecting before our queer talents.

Fabulous, right? Then why is there a clawing in my queer soul, warning me to be wary of this "we're the apple of the mainstream eye" phenomena?

Perhaps because I have a theory about our queerness. I believe that our queer talents as artists, entertainers, or run-of-the-mill creative-looking dykes or drag queens, emanates from a voice within us that, despite all odds and risks, we uncovered. For many of us, this voice which demands that it be heard, refuses to allow us to live and think like others; it fuels our esoteric identities as outlaws and guides our creativity, unmatched to this day by the mainstream. This same voice demands that we love the same sex and create cutting-edge queer art.

Many of us have paid dearly for heeding our queer voice. It's expression led to our ostracism, revilement or, as in the case of Ann Maria Rosales, age 24, whose last act was kissing other patrons outside a gay bar, to our murders. At all costs, we, in the gay/lesbian community, have heeded our queer voice, expressed our lives and pay our dues.

And, personally, I don't think that the mainstream, i.e. straight world, that now

has a hard on for our queer art, and out queer artists will be satisfied with just these baubles. It will be sniffing around for the place where our voice comes from. Sure, they want our talents, and should have them — if they pay for them. But mainstream is mainstream because they do not have that place in them where all our creativity comes from. They only know how to be robber barons of other's cultures. Just ask the Black and Native communities. They were the fashionable agonies and artists in our decades.

Certainly, I applaud queer art and our artists who are at last getting the recognition they deserve. And, undoubtedly, our legal rights: to exist and practice our sexualities free of violence should top the political agenda.

But, I'm worried. For I believe acceptance and queerness is a contradiction in concepts. And I believe that we, in the queer community must begin to think what price are we going to pay for our so-called "successes." For I believe a friend of mine is right when she says there is always a price to pay.

Sure, the mainstream wants what we have. But they are not willing to do what we have done: risk listening to our own voices and live our lives as queer. •