

In an interview in the *Informher*, Miami's Lesbian newsletter, we shared these thoughts: "Our comfort level is geared to self-love," and "Our politics of Lesbian music is a different ladder of success." Our intention for our music is that it be heard by only Lesbians. Our communities, alive and well, still thrive in our hearts and memories.

Supportive, interweaving stories

Making time, in rhythm, in song

Dreaming on to our place and other inspirations

Day to day and still grounded in the music



The Friday Night Women's Group concert, April 15, 1988, Barbara Ester (left) and Bairbre (pronounced "Barbara").

EGO, VANITY AND FRIENDS, A LESBIAN PERCUSSION GROUP

Martha Ingalls

Ego, Vanity and Friends, we call ourselves, a group of lesbian percussionists that over the years has resonated the passion of many cultures. Some share the rhythm for one night, and others' participation spans two decades. We gather not to perform pre-conceived structural melodies and rhythms but to create them spontaneously, instinctively and intuitively. I know I will drum again with the lesbians at Something Special—an experience that will root my feet in the ground and send my soul flying.

I wrote that description of Ego, Vanity and Friends in 1997 for Barbara Ester's *Day to Day* recording with Ego, Vanity and Friends at Something Special in Miami. There should be a herstorical marker at Something Special that reads: On this spot from 1987–2011, F. Louise Griffin and Maryanne Powers served food and fun to women from all over the world. Something Special, located in Liberty City, was a lesbian owned and operated, women-only, vegetarian restaurant and gathering place, with lesbians being the majority of the patrons.

The cultural mix of Miami peppered with transient lesbian travelers created a never-ending flow of lesbians at Something Special. And the instruments we played and the beats we created reflected that spicy mix. Ego, Vanity and Friends and the Something Special experience in its entirety were the ultimate blending of worldly cultures—both dominant and subcultural, vegetarian and carnivore, rich and poor—both spiritually and economically. And that I think is the essence of lesbian culture, a blending of many with the common bond of women loving women.

Ego, Vanity and Friends created rhythm from the late 1980s through 2011. Nestled in Miami's notorious Liberty City,

Something Special raised the vibration of the neighborhood with its laughter, song, and rhythm, and served its food, always, with love. Venturing to Something Special required courage on the part of some women who would have never crossed economic and/or racial boundaries into the inner city of riots, drugs, and poverty except to be with “their kind.”

SOUTHERN LESBIAN FEMINIST ARTISTS AND CRAFTSWOMEN

Merril Mushroom

Southern lesbian craftswomen created their own community through networking, artistry, craftswomanship, feminism, and activism—a community based on Southern lesbian values of support, affirmation, cooperation, equity, human rights. Networking was the key to finding opportunities in one’s craft, and an essential part of networking was the festival circuit, especially so in the days before electronic communication. Festivals were the primary places where lesbian craftswomen got support and affirmation, and were a primary means for communication and networking with each other.

Robin Toler, herself an artist, interviewed nine Southern lesbian artists and craftswomen about their work created in the last part of the twentieth century.¹ Who are these Southern Lesbian Feminist artists and craftswomen? By and large, as Toler writes:

They are alternative individualists; unconventional, emotionally driven, always questioning. They were often politically aware and motivated to make changes in social policy and practices. Southern lesbian artists were often called pushy, aggressive, unfeminine, and dykeish; they were known as demanding, obnoxious, and loud. They challenged the status quo. They crafted their own role, . . . being true to yourself on one hand and making items of art that would

¹ Robin Toler conducted interviews with the following Southern artists and craftswomen: Jenna Weston (Hawthorne, FL, June 10, 2015), Mary-Ellen Maynard (Canon City, CO, September 21, 2015), Daphne Mushatt (Baton Rouge, LA, August 14, 2015), Turtle Girl (Metairie, LA, September 3, 2015), Victoria Singer (Nashville, TN, August 19, 2015), Phyllis Free (Atlanta, GA, July 14, 2015), Susan LosCalzo (Rutherfordton, NC, June 27, 2015), Phyllis Parun (New Orleans, LA, November 20 and 25, 2015), Joa March (Gainesville, FL, July 6, 2015). All were conducted by phone. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from these interviews. Rose Norman’s October 16, 2015, interview with Phyllis Free is also archived.