

“It keeps coming back to a sense of community. This real sense of community that existed for everyone on that particular night and that they needed to come back on that particular night because everyone was so open. You would walk in and there would be a stranger sitting at a table and you could go and sit at that table and you’d have an amazing conversation, you’d have dinner together, maybe you’d see them the following week and maybe they would introduce you to their friends. You would just meet so many people and you ended up becoming friends with them and they are still friends years later. There was something special that was happening there.

I think there was also something special happening in the East Village at that time. So many artists lived in the East Village. It really was a sense of community and a neighborhood. You would walk out the door and run into people you knew and it was affordable and there was this synergy of artistic energy and queerness and being out. It was also on the heels of so many men who had died from AIDS so there was this feeling of coming together and really trying to be together and help each other and push each other forward and support each other. I think we’ve lost that somehow. Technology has shifted that idea of face-to-face support and conversation. The armchair thing is happening where folks think it’s enough to post something or to sign-off on a petition online but it’s not enough.

Initially the idea for [Sundays at Cafe] Tabac was that it was going to be a salon. It was a combo – a salon where you could dance (the gay boys would do the runway thing) or you could tuck yourself into a corner and talk to a designer, hairdresser, artist or whatever. Since it was a Sunday night people would always ask whether anybody had jobs in this community but most of us were creatives so our hours were flexible. We had a lot of hairdressers who were off on Mondays (laughing). Anyway, it was just a really special time.”

Wanda Acosta, 2018