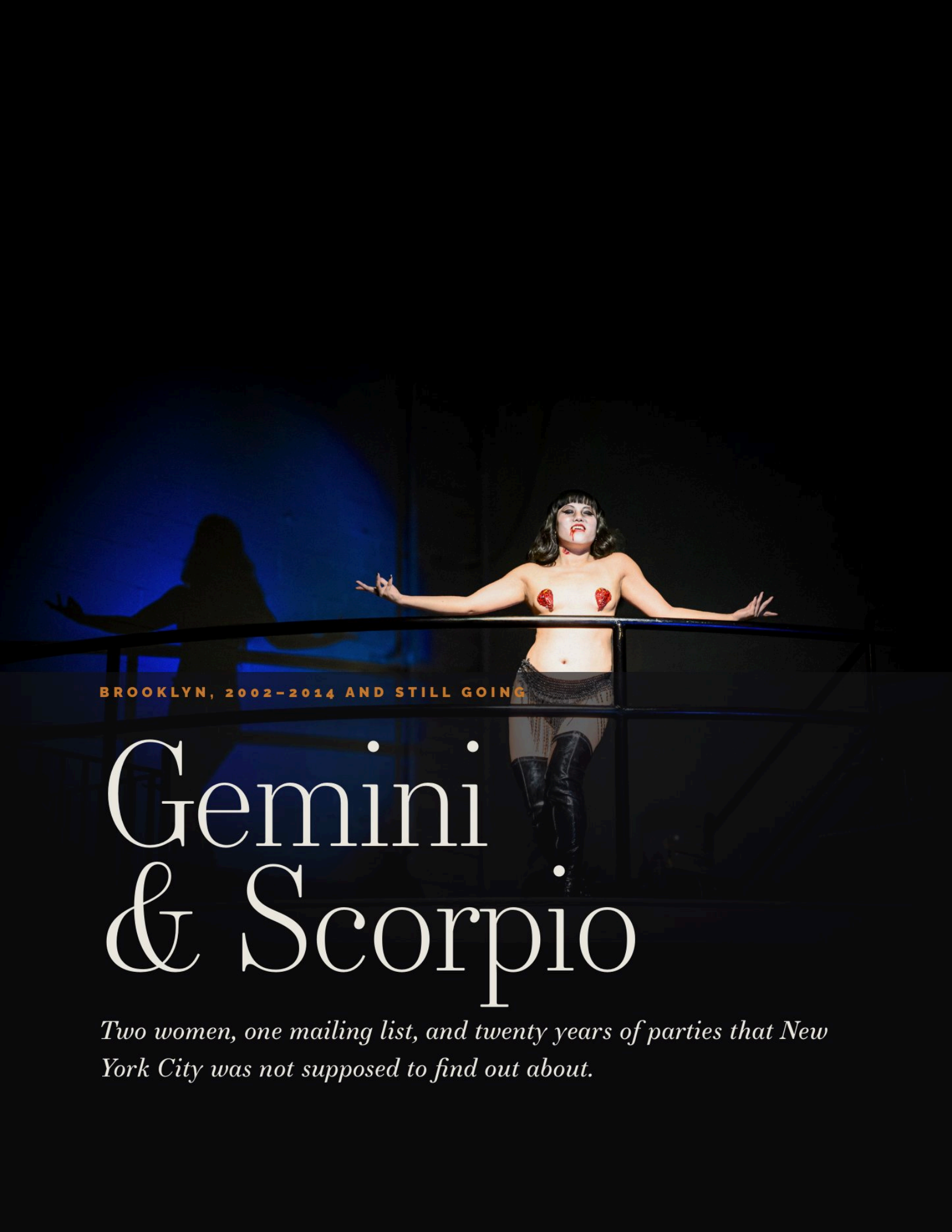




BROOKLYN, 2002-2014 AND STILL GOING

Gemini & Scorpio

Two women, one mailing list, and twenty years of parties that New York City was not supposed to find out about.

The proposition

Gemini & Scorpio have been running the second-largest non-commercial events list in New York City since 2002 — spreading the word on underground happenings you'd otherwise never hear about.

That is the quiet half. The loud half is the parties: themed costume events with live entertainment, drawing between two hundred and a thousand costumed people at a time. Wild circus throwdowns. Vintage dance socials with live 1920s hot jazz. A dance party in a Russian bathhouse, which nobody else has ever been given permission to do.

The recipe barely changes. An offbeat theme. Fantastic costumes. Music nobody else is booking. Burlesque and circus performance. Art and decor made for the night and struck the next morning. Dancing until it is light outside.

“Expect a setting that’s both festive and whimsical, featuring art installations, roving performers, cheap drinks and DJ sets that run late into the night. Guests dress to the nines, whatever the theme: steampunk glamour, circus riot, faux fur or neon bling.”

AM NEW YORK, “NIGHTLIFE TRENDS 2011”

They have been written up in The New York Times, the New York Post, The Village Voice and Time Out New York. What follows is a decade of it, in the order it happened.



The two of them

“Queen of last-minute loft spaces for rock shows.”

AMANDA PALMER

MISS SCORPIO — LARISA FUCHS

An attention-getting, opinionated, stylish and intellectual artist who has worked for high-powered design firms and travelled with carnivals and gypsy bands. A brazen Scorpio, she regularly talks to strangers.

She weaves through New York's cultural landscape — world music, circus, puppets, burlesque, underground parties — knowing a little of everything and nearly everyone behind it. That knowledge is the list. She has edited it, and produced every G&S party, since the site began in 2002.

MISS GEMINI — JAMIE KIFFEL-ALCHEH

An old-world mystic, Bollywood deity and rock star bottled within the body of Tinkerbell. A fan of both Buddha and Hello Kitty. An unstoppable Gemini, she regularly double-turns herself into the ground — only to find the earth intriguing enough to merit further study.

Ten years as entertainment and features editor for Bauer Publishing, a frequent contributor to National Geographic, and once — while managing a newspaper — she fended off a burglar while simultaneously finishing the layout.



“A celebration of the extravagant and grotesque, complete with live music, face and body painting, circus arts, fortune-tellers, fire and general absinthe-fueled debauchery.”

PAPER MAGAZINE



The Lost Circus. Aerial, burlesque, fire spinners, stilt walkers and live drummers, in a 1920s wood-and-mirrors travelling tent.

PHOTOGRAPH BY WINSLOW PORTER, 2011

The parties

They are named things, not dates. People say “the Drowned Ball” the way you would say the name of a place you have been.

The Lost Circus

2010, 2011, 2012, 2014 — a wild circus throwdown in a 1920s wood-and-mirrors travelling tent.

Masquerade Macabre

Every Halloween from 2009 to 2014. The Village Voice called them “experts of Halloween.”

The Bootleggers' Ball

New Year's Eve 2009, 2010, 2013. Live 1920s hot jazz, Depression glamour, hobo-chic.

The Drowned Ball

April 2012.

Meet Me in Paris

2012 and 2014 — a costumed ball referencing turn-of-century Paris salons, held in a 19th-century Gramercy Park mansion. Jean-Paul Gaultier came, and paid.

Cantina at the End of the Universe

May 2014.

The Court of the Snow Queen

New Year's Eve 2014.

Speakeasy Dollhouse · The Glitter Ball ·
Voodoo Culture Clash · The Vault of Golden
Vapors · Hobos & Mermaids on the High Seas
· Nouvelle Époque Cabaret-Salon · Black &
White Masked Ball · Radiate Fire!

And the first-ever NYC Steampunk Weekend, three days in August 2013, for their tenth anniversary.



The bathhouse

The only public dance parties ever thrown at the oldest bathhouse in New York.

Brooklyn Banya, 602 Coney Island Avenue, Kensington. They take the whole place. Russian, Turkish and Swedish steam rooms, a jacuzzi and a cold plunge pool, a poolside dance floor, a rooftop smoking deck, a hookah lounge, and a private restaurant room with a view of the dancing.

Some of New York's best Balkan and brass bands have played these in their skivvies, and sometimes in the jacuzzi: the Hungry March Band, Slavic Soul Party, The Sway Machinery, Zlatne Uste, Raya Brass Band, Luminescent Orchestrui, Romashka.

“This is the kind of party you always imagine, but can never quite find in real life — and may be the only one you'll come out of cleaner than when you came in.”

GEMINI & SCORPIO, ON THEIR OWN BANYA PARTIES

The Village Voice named it Best — and Only — Russian Bathhouse Dance Party in its Best of 2006.



“Gatsby never attended a party this good.”

24/SEVEN BROOKLYN, 2010



Swing House. A monthly vintage dance social that ran from 2008, with live 1920s hot jazz and 1940s swing bands, bawdy burlesque, and lessons for anyone who turned up unable to dance.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GABE HOLLOMBE, 2008

What the press said

“Live music, dancing, absinthe and the dark arts.”

THE NEW YORK TIMES, 2010

“Take a Tim Burton film. Now make it darker (if possible) and sexier (yes, please)... In a stroke of maniacal genius, they are bringing steampunk fantasy to life.”

THE VILLAGE VOICE, 2010

“These are the types of parties that boggle the mind: fire-eaters, moonshine cocktails, topless mermaids, secret locations and all-night ragers.”

JEWCY, 2010

“Gatsby never attended a party this good.”

24/SEVEN BROOKLYN, 2010

“Gemini and Scorpio do Ringling one better.”

THE NEW YORK POST, 2010

“Brooklyn’s mistress of decadence.”

MOLLY CRABAPPLE

Time Out: Best Secret Parties in NYC, 2013.

Best of NYC, 2011. Essential New York, 2010.

Buzzfeed, number three in Top 10 Steampunk

Parties, 2012. The New York Times feature

“Decorating the Night in Brooklyn,” 2010. The

Village Voice Best Of, 2006.





The Loft

Five thousand square feet in Gowanus, Brooklyn. Oversized windows, eleven-foot ceilings, exposed brick, wood floors, exposed beams.

They had the first one at 255 Douglass Street for a decade, and lost it in the pandemic. They looked all over the city for a new location — and ended up three doors down, at 267 Douglass Street, in the same beloved neighbourhood.

Zones that connect to each other: stage and dance floor, lounge, bar. A 12×15-foot stage of platforms that reconfigure, with a dressing room opening straight onto it. A hundred smart bulbs on a house iPad, so the room can be any

colour the night needs. A snow machine aimed over the dance floor.

Woman-, immigrant- and LGBTQ-owned.

HIRE THEM

A decade of production left them a database of close to a thousand acts, artists, makers and resources. BBC America had them build a 1920s speakeasy in an abandoned warehouse that turned into a futuristic nightclub mid-evening, with a fire show at the moment of the change. AdWeek called it “a Dionysian party.”

They staged a bank heist for J.J. Abrams’ Alcatraz with 42 Entertainment. They built the music stage Maker Faire New York did not have. They were FIGMENT’s sole press coordinator from 2010.

Everything, in order

2004 — Get Off...Line II: Code Red

2005 — Get Off...Line III: Say Cheese · Exotica: Tiki Lounge Shindig · Halloween Parade Afterparty: Mardi Gras

2006 — Halloween Parade Afterparty II: Devils n Dolls

2007 — Radiate Fire!

2008 — Get Off...Line VI: Roaring 20th · Swing House monthly · Voodoo Culture Clash · Halloween Vintage Masquerade Ball

2009 — Swing House 1-Year · Luminous Flux · Hobos & Mermaids on the High Seas · Nouvelle Époque Cabaret-Salon · Masquerade Macabre · The Bootleggers' Ball

2010 — The Vault of Golden Vapors · JaNk! · Swing House 2-Year · The Lost Circus · Masquerade Macabre · The Bootleggers' Ball

2011 — Swing House · Lincoln Center's Midsummer Night Swing · The Lost Circus · Black & White & Red All Over Ball · Masquerade Macabre · Speakeasy Dollhouse · The Glitter Ball

2012 — Meet Me in Paris · The Drowned Ball · The Lost Circus · Masquerade Macabre · Black & White Masked Ball

2013 — G&S 10th Anniversary: first-ever NYC Steampunk Weekend · Masquerade Macabre · The Bootleggers' Ball

2014 — Meet Me in Paris · Cantina at the End of the Universe · The Lost Circus · Masquerade Macabre · The Court of the Snow Queen

Ongoing — Russian Banya Parties, Brooklyn Banya

PHOTOGRAPHS

Winslow Porter · Gabe Hollombe · Linus Gelber · Filip Wolak · Michael Falco · Caroline Voagen Nelson · Caryn Waechter · Andrew Janke · Larisa Fuchs.
Every photograph in this article is credited on the page it appears on.

