

# Time Out

## New York

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Always be positive

DAVID MAMET  
ON HOLLYWOOD'S  
DIRTY TRICKS

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**WHAT REMAINS**  
An opening reception for "Transfigurations," a photo exhibit by Jana Marcus, aims to raise funds for Identity House.

Contino, who curates the gallery's shows. "For someone to come in and possibly see themselves [reflected in the art] has so much more power than I'd even imagined." The current exhibition, "Transfigurations," is the solo show of photographer Jana Marcus, whose black-and-white portraits focus on transmen and transwomen in different stages of change. Past exhibits have dealt with issues including queer families and spirituality.

"The saddest part about moving is the likelihood of not being able to keep the arts program," Griffin notes, since the relocation will most likely put Identity House into a space that's much smaller—if not shared or part-time. "We actually received the news [of the rent hike] the day before we were having our big 35-year anniversary event," she adds. "But we decided to go ahead and

### "It's New York City and it's 2007, and there's no room at the inn."

celebrate all that we had accomplished over the years."

There was certainly plenty to honor, starting with the group of queer therapists and activists who formed Identity House back in 1972—a post-Stonewall era in which a fearful society labeled gay people as mentally ill. "The medical community, and in particular psychiatry... and psychotherapy, was among the most repressive and rigid force determining the pathological nature of homosexuality," wrote Identity House cofounder and board chair Lee Zevy in the anniversary program. That climate inspired LGBT counselors to take on the communal and caring job of helping their own.

Zevy says that now, while the faces of those counseled are different—a white, middle-class clientele has shifted to one that consists more of recent immigrants and people of color—many issues remain the same. "Recently, a new member who was a former client talked about the first time she came here, and how she had to walk by our entrance three times before she had the courage to come in," Zevy says. "That was three months ago."

The "Transfigurations" benefit and opening is Fri 2. See daily listings. See also [identityhouse.org](http://identityhouse.org).

## Identity theft

A 35-year-old LGBT counseling agency looks to art and the kindness of strangers to help keep it afloat. By **Beth Greenfield**

Queer history lives on 14th Street. True, it's hidden on the second floor of a bland office building that's next door to a Quiznos and across the road from a Mande. But it's there, pulsing with an energy that belies its surroundings. Unfortunately, it won't be there for long.

"We are the only LGBT drop-in, peer-counseling agency—and this is New York City and it's 2007, and there's no room at the inn," says Helen Contino, sitting with her head

in her hands in the offices of the 35-year-old Identity House. A therapist-trained peer counselor, Contino is one of several volunteers who offer affordable support-group leadership, therapy referrals and walk-in, on-the-spot guidance to queer people, many of whom have nowhere else to turn. But now the organization may find itself homeless.

In November, the agency received word from its California-based landlord that the \$3,500-a-month rent would double once its ten-year lease expired in April. There's even a new tenant, a real-estate agency, ready to move in.

"We were all hit with the stark reality that we would definitely have to move," recalls former executive

director CJ Griffin, explaining that there was no way the nonprofit would be able to handle the increase. Since then, the two part-time staffers and some of the 150 volunteers have been scrambling to find affordable real estate, or at least a temporary solution, before the vacate date. They've also been seeking donations to help supplement the \$86-a-year dues from Identity House's member-supporters, and to ease the move.

The fund-raising effort reaches its peak this week, with a meet-the-artist benefit party in the agency's IGallery—a space created in 2000 as a way to show the work of queer artists, and also to broaden the scope of therapy. "I'm a huge believer of art being able to heal people, and of art boosting people's self-esteem," says