

For Immediate Release

Walt Cessna

So Correct!

Co-curated by Walter Maciel and Jeff Morrical

20 September – 8 November 2025

Opening Reception: Saturday, September 20, 4:00 – 7:00pm

Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present, *So Correct!* highlighting the provocative and visionary work of photographer, Walt Cessna who tragically died in 2017 following a vast career in the fashion and art worlds. The title of the show pays homage to the familiar reply that Walt would immediately give upon any conversation to his liking. The photographs in our exhibition include two distinct yet deeply interconnected bodies of work: *Joy of Hicksville* and *Wolfpack!*. Together, these projects trace the evolution of Cessna's creative practice, from his playful explorations of suburban identity and fashion history to his raw, unfiltered examinations of eroticism, queer culture and personal narrative. The exhibition is co-curated by Walter Maciel and Culver City-based artist, Jeff Morrical.

Conceived in the late 1980s, Cessna's *Joy of Hicksville* series began in his youth when he and his friends - including WMG artist, Maria E. Piñeres - transformed his childhood neighborhood in Hicksville on Long Island into a stage for fictional characters and choreographed suburban dramas styled in vintage 1960s and 70s fashions from his mother, Joy's closet. Each subject became a distinct persona, a unique muse who wandered through the ordinary landscape of Hicksville with a performative flair. The black-and-white photographs fuse nostalgia and satire, exposing the theatrical undercurrents of suburban life. The participants and the escapades that ensued eventually made their way onto the streets of New York City employing traditional techniques of light, exposure, and composition. Within this series of work, Cessna captured whimsical, exaggerated portraits that reveal his enduring fascination with costume, theater and narrative image-making which became the foundation of his photography throughout his life and career.

In contrast, the *Wolfpack!* series represents a bolder and more intimate turn in his work when he began to document his friends and experiences living in urban areas from a queer perspective. These photographs are mostly captured in color and are unflinching in their honesty, portraying young men in poses that blur the lines between seduction, vulnerability and defiance. Through eroticized imagery, Cessna examines themes of beauty, machismo, gay identity and isolation with a raw immediacy that both shocks and entices. His subjects, often adorned with minimal props or accessories, embody a stripped-down intensity that reflects Cessna's mastery of photographic tradition while pushing into the realms of fashion, pornography and journalistic candor. The result is a visual language that seduces the senses while compelling viewers to confront their own voyeuristic impulses.

As a teenager, Cessna met mega fashion photographer, Mario Testino and the two dated for a brief period. He started his career in the fashion industry working as a runner and doing random tasks as needed and eventually worked as a stylist. Cessna's trajectory from fashion stylist and editor—working with publications such as *Italian Vogue*, *Interview*, and *Paper*—to celebrated photographer was inevitable and informs both series. His eye for styling and composition merged with a deeply personal and often transgressive vision of sexuality and identity.

Cessna was initially introduced to our gallery by Maria E. Piñeres and our first exhibition of his work was in conjunction with Piñeres in 2011 when we first featured *Joy of Hicksville*. We did our second solo show of images from *Wolfpack!* titled *I FUKT LA* in 2012 and he published a book of his writings titled *FUKT 2 START WITH: SHORT STORIES & BROKEN WERD* that same year. His writing was raw and fearless, often commenting on life experiences as a hustler, a photographer and a friend. Cessna died unexpectedly at the age of 53 in his apartment in New York City in 2017. He was a savvy and brilliant artist who often battled addiction, ADHD and health crises stemming from an early diagnosis of HIV.

Our exhibition offers a rare opportunity to revisit the evolution of Walt Cessna's work since his untimely death, affirming his place as a fearless chronicler of desire, memory, realness and human complexity. In his own words, the show is *So Correct!*