

# NEW YORK



## Sometimes Maria Striar Just Wants to Sit on Her Ass and Eat Cheetos

**Name:** Maria Striar

**Age:** 41

**Neighborhood:** East Village

**Occupation:** Artistic director of Clubbed Thumb, which is producing *Dot*, *Five Genocides*, and *The Small* at the Ohio Theatre June 6 to 26.

*Photo: Heather Phelps-Lipton*

**Who's your favorite New Yorker, living or dead, real or fictional?** The person who yells at the asshole on the subway, even when the

asshole is twice his or her size.

**What's the best meal you've eaten in New York?** Many contenders. Lately, a glass of Vranac and a Serbian burger with cabbage slaw at [Kafana](#) has been my thing.

**In one sentence, what do you actually do all day in your job?** Read plays, cast, hire, give cautiously calibrated script or run-through notes, scrape the budget for cut-able expenses, rake the outside world for untapped funding sources, write grants and otherwise beg for cash, coin fetching little blurbs, try to convince designers that the things that I want to get rid of in my apartment should be in their sets. Cajole, fume, scheme, pace, juggle. Often with Otto, my 60-pound pit-mix rescue, trying to climb into my lap.

**Would you live here on a \$35,000 salary?** Most of the people I work with do. I don't make much more, and even that is a very recent development.

**What's the last thing you saw on Broadway?** [American Idiot](#). It was fun. I loved the verticality and flexibility of the set. I wish it had ultimately taken a more self-incriminating position about consumer society, but that might have quashed ticket sales. Now, if you like a fun and challenging show, want to pay under \$20, AND want to get a little slice of consumer tragedy, come see our plays and be among the last audiences at the vaunted Ohio Theatre, closing in August, soon to sell luxury yogawear, or something equally gross.

**Do you give money to panhandlers?** No. I give to organizations that I hope provide for those who need it. If I had to address each case of need as I came across it, I would not survive this city. I would crack up.

**What's your drink?** Scotch. Lagavulin, if I'm living high on the hog.

**How often do you prepare your own meals?** It's sporadic. I like baking, which offers a concrete antidote to the ephemera of theater. A loaf of fresh bread is a thing that actually exists, and most people like it.

**What's your favorite medication?** Sleep. If you aren't too overwrought to fall into it, it makes everything at least a little bit better.

**What's hanging above your sofa?** I have a lithograph and a woodcut from the sixties made by my aunt and her boyfriend at the time. They had a horrible, horrible divorce, and for a while I felt I had to hang the pictures far apart. But it looked odd, so on my wall, they are back to that moment in time when they loved each other.

**How much is too much to spend on a haircut?** Whatever you think is going to make you feel okay about the way you look. I went through a phase when I would cut all my hair off with jackknife scissors. Now I go to [Ouidad](#).

**When's bedtime?** Between one and two, after the post-theater wind-down. All our plays are 90 minutes and intermission-less, so you can actually be home by ten, if you so choose.

**Which do you prefer, the old Times Square or the new Times Square?** Why choose when you don't have to? My neighborhood offers both derelict masturbators and tourist sidewalk-cloggers.

**What do you think of Donald Trump?** I resent anyone who makes it harder to see the sun and the sky.

**What do you hate most about living in New York?** The collective ambition that makes you work all the time. I love it, too, of course, but sometimes I want to sit on my ass and eat Cheetos without feeling like I'm dropping the ball.

**Who is your mortal enemy?** The person with six drunk friends shouting "Woo!" under my window at 3 a.m.

**When's the last time you drove a car?** I never really learned to drive and now I am terrified of it. One of my big regrets.

**How has the Wall Street crash affected you?** We depend on contributed income — through individual donations, corporate, government, and especially foundation giving, most of which comes from investments. It has been and will continue to be brutal, for some unknowable time.

**Times, Post, or Daily News?** *Times*.

**Where do you go to be alone?** On a walk with Otto. He's pathologically friendly, so the solitude is not without interruption.

**What makes someone a New Yorker?** Not getting lost in the West Village? In which case I'll never be one.

By: [Vanita Salisbury](#)