

apexart

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tuesday–saturday, 11–6 pm

AVANT-GUIDE TO NYC:
DISCOVERING ABSENCE
Curated by Sandra Skurvida
November 4 – December 19, 2009

Opening November 4, 6–8 pm

Including work by Julieta Aranda, caraballo-farman, Kabir Carter, Dexter Sinister, Eckhard Etzold, Andrea Geyer, Pablo Helguera, Nancy Hwang, Pia Lindman, Anna Lundh, Nina Katchadourian, Carlos Motta, Angel Nevarez & Valerie Tevere, Hatuey Ramos-Fermin, Katya Sander, Ward Shelley, Xaviera Simmons, and Alex Villar.

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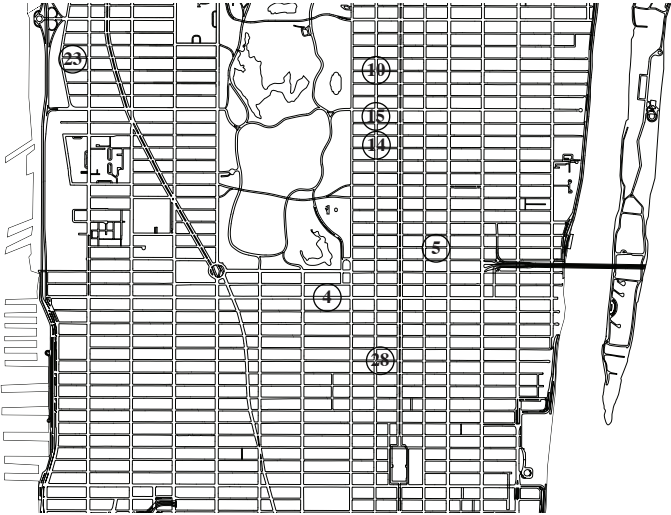
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On December 3, 1919, Marcel Duchamp wrote a check to his dentist for \$115 from The Teeth’s Loan & Trust Company, Consolidated, located at **2 WALL STREET (1)**. In 1942, he rented a studio on the fourth floor of an apartment building, **210 WEST 14TH STREET (2)**. In 1965, he got another studio at **80 EAST 11TH STREET 4TH FLOOR, SUITE 403 (3)**, where he secretly worked on *Étant Donnés: 1 la chute d’eau 2 le gaz d’éclairage* . . . all the while keeping the other studio to support his claim that the artist is not working.

Upon her return to New York in 1942, Peggy Guggenheim rented two adjacent tailor shops on the top floor of **30 WEST 57TH STREET (4)**,

which she and the architect Frederick Kiesler converted into The Art of This Century museum and gallery. For her residence, Peggy rented a triplex apartment in a townhouse at Beekman Place, **153/155 EAST 61ST STREET (5)**. She commissioned Jackson Pollock to paint a *Mural* for the lobby, which did not fit; when summoned to help with the installation, Duchamp cut 8" off the canvas — a myth that Francis V. O’Connor has, unfortunately, repudiated.

On their arrival to New York City, John and Xenia Cage were put up at Peggy’s house. After the break up of their marriage, John Cage rented a loft at a tenement building, now demolished, at **236 MONROE STREET**, known as Bozza Mansion **(6)**. Isamu Noguchi said, “An old shoe would look beautiful in this room.” **ECKHARD ETZOLD** rebuilt the space in 3D



on the computer and painted it on canvas—*Monroe Street* 236. In the 1980s Cage and Merce Cunningham moved to the loft at **625 WEST SIXTH AVENUE (7)** where they lived until they died — Cage in 1992, Merce in 2009.

When Robert Rauschenberg’s downtown loft at **128 FRONT STREET (8)** was being fumigated for bedbugs, he stayed at Cage’s loft on Monroe, and made a painting as a gift. When Rauschenberg moved out of Front Street studio, Öyvind Fahlström and Barbro Östlihn moved in, with the help of Billy Klüver, a fellow Swede who made technology a part of art. **ANNA LUNDH** recently joined the Swedish diaspora in New York and retraced Östlihn’s photographically recorded movements around the city — *Front-Time Reworkings* (*framtid*, normally translated from Swedish as “future,” literally translates as “front-time”).

Apart from the visual landmarks that help us navigate through space, there are other markers such as sounds and smells. Max Neuhaus took his audiences on field trips through Consolidated Edison Power Stations and Hudson Tubes, and stamped their hands with the word LISTEN. **ANGEL NEVAREZ & VALERIE TEVERE** walk through these environments while listening to new sounds in their *LISTEN de novo: Field Trips Thru Sound Environments* (1966/2010).

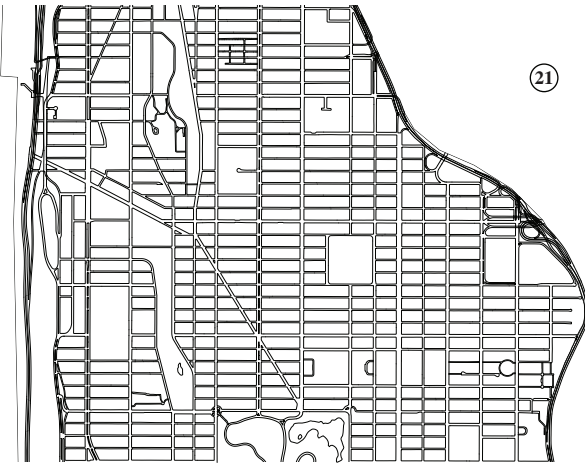
Yoko Ono and La Monte Young organized concerts of new music and performance events in 1960–61, entitled *Chambers Street Loft Series* in Ono’s cold water flat on the top floor of **112 CHAMBERS STREET (9)**. Their program overlapped with exhibitions and events presented by George Maciunas at AG Gallery uptown, at **925 MADISON AVENUE (10)**, where Ono had her first solo show. The gallery’s name is made up from the first initials of the founders’s first names (“Almus” and “George”), and incidentally also stands for “Avant-Garde.” Maciunas himself, having sold derelict lofts to many artists through his real estate company in the largely abandoned manufacturing area that has become SoHo, lived at **349 WEST BROADWAY (11)**.

Artists from various fields met under the roof of Judson Church, which housed Judson Dance Theater in the basement and Judson Gallery in the adjacent space with entrance at **239 THOMPSON STREET (12)**. Allan Kaprow directed the gallery in 1959, where he presented first environments with performances by Jim Dine and Claes Oldenburg.

The same year, Kaprow had his first public showing of happenings at the Reuben Gallery, **44 EAST 3RD STREET (13)**, after developing the form in Cage’s class at the New School for Social Research. Happenings soon exploded on the

New York art scene, moving uptown in 1961 with Kaprow’s *Yard* installed at the Martha Jackson Gallery, **32 EAST 69TH STREET (14)**, which remains a gallery to this day; and *Words* at Smolin Gallery, **19 EAST 71ST STREET (15)**. Kaprow’s work with words as things that happen in space, differently every time, opened up possibilities for interpretations of his works by other artists. **PIA LINDMAN** knitted Kaprow’s words in 3-D patterns with colorful wool yarns, situated them in a three-dimensional space, and performed *BOOM CRASH!* with her own body — body language, dressed in space.

Applications of text to the body and the resulting translations are key to the works of both Ono and Vito Acconci, whom **XAVIERA SIMMONS** connects through her own, self-inscribed use of language and body. She reads, writes, views, and performs aspects of their scores within and outside the original sites, including Sonnabend Gallery at **420 WEST BROADWAY (16)** and the basement at **93 GRAND STREET (17)** — *Situation, Activity and*



Records, General Circumstances and Specific Circumstances (Someone To Cling To): Looking at Works by Yoko Ono and Vito Acconci.

Many artists detoured from happenings toward solitary activities or the market. Oldenburg opened *The Store* at **107 EAST 2ND STREET (18)**, where he made and sold baked

potatoes, hamburgers, women’s legs, etc. He also wrote plays and staged them in the backroom on weekends. Friends performed and attended.

The storefront sensibility flourished in the East Village in the 1980s, with so many galleries opening, closing, and moving around the neighborhood. Gracie Mansion had an eponymous gallery at **15 ST MARK’S PLACE (19)** and then at **337 EAST 10TH STREET (20)**, among other locations. **CARABALLO-FARMAN** followed her to these addresses (one of which is a restaurant, another a knick-knack shop) and shared in the new functions of these places — *KNOCK KNOCK WHO’S THERE: Gracie Mansion Revisited.*

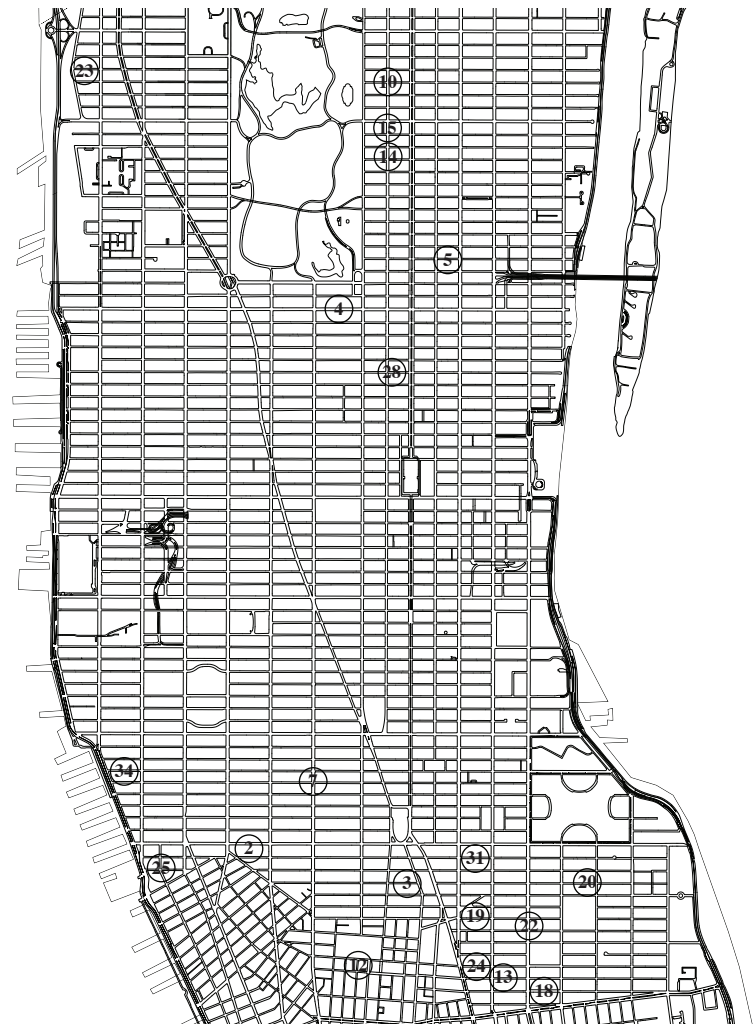
Violent swaying between “high” and “low” took artists to the South Bronx, where Stefan Eins opened Fashion Moda in 1978, at **2803 THIRD AVENUE (21)**. **HATUEY RAMOS-FERMIN** refashioned both highs and lows in his exhibition at the site (now occupied by On Time Security Guard Training School), where the painted plaster cast of the school’s owner,

Craig Howard, made by John Ahearn for this occasion, now hangs.

Swapping spatial functions goes both ways, as demonstrated in the most curious relocation of Kim’s Video from **124 FIRST AVENUE (22)** to Salemi in southwest Sicily. Kim’s, which lost business because of on-line video rentals and sales,



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embodied the alternative crossover spirit of Gracie Mansion, Fashion Moda, and, more recently, e-flux — a spirit that the mayor of Salemi hopes to transplant to his city. **KATYA SANDER** investigates the possibilities of such import/export in her *Drama, Horror, Science Fiction, Experimental, Etc.*

“Where to go from here?”, John Cage asked in 1957, and answered, “Towards theater. That art more than music resembles nature.” The reclamation of the theater of the everyday in the 1960s was fueled, on the one hand, by the desire to get back in touch with the mystical, and on the other hand, by the emerging activism of the street. The first ten-

dency, apparent in happenings, also led to cultish associations, such as the Sullivan Institute, located at **314 WEST 91ST STREET (23)** and **79 EAST 4TH STREET (24)**. **PABLO HELGUERA** will stage the play, *The Conditions of Halcyon*, in the former Sullivan space, now occupied by the New York Theater Workshop. Alternately, such tendencies facilitated the performative realization of identity in gay clubs frequented by artists and theorists, including Robert Mapplethorpe and Michel Foucault — the non-public places of shared jouissance such as The Mineshaft at **835 WASHINGTON STREET (25)** that **CARLOS MOTTA** revisits

in *A Brief History of Leather and S&M Bars, Clubs, and Stories in New York City*.

The increasingly blurred boundaries between the public and private activities of the gallery evolved it into a space for gathering, performance, and sharing food. Gordon Matta-Clark, with friends, opened the co-op Food in 1971 at **127 PRINCE STREET (26)**. Communalism nourished the potential for protest, which manifested in Matta-Clark’s “anarchitecture” and its many variations — “Anarchy Torture,” “An Arctic Lecture,” “Anarchy Lecture,” and “An Art Collector.” **ALEX VILLAR** conflates Matta-Clark’s anarchitectural *Window Blow-Out*, 1976, with more recent scenes of economic protesters breaking through the glass plate windows of stores and banks, and performs *Broken Window* at the Lucky Brand store on Prince Street, the former site of Food.

Around the corner, Joseph Beuys shared food and a cage with a coyote at René Block Gallery, **157 SPRING STREET (27)**. Like Block, other international curators, writers, and art entrepreneurs found gallery space and alternative space

to be nearly interchangeable in the 1970s. Seth Siegelaub pushed toward the dematerialization of art from his gallery at **44 EAST 52ND STREET (28)**. In the meantime, Alanna Heiss appropriated vacant city-owned spaces and remade them into art spaces forever: Coney Island Sculpture Factory; Idea Warehouse at **22 READE STREET (29)**; Clocktower Gallery at **346 BROADWAY (30)**, and PS1. **NANCY HWANG** asked Heiss to retrace her moves that led to the new radio venture, transmitted from the old Clocktower.

Several, mostly artist-curator-run galleries continued this double trajectory of “conceptually alternative” since the 1980s — Group Material in the Village, **244 EAST 13TH STREET (31)**; American Fine Arts in SoHo, **40 AND 22 WOOSTER STREET (32)**; Thread Waxing Space, **476 BROADWAY (33)**; **THE WRONG GALLERY**, **516A 1/2 WEST 20TH STREET IN CHELSEA (34)**; Orchard on the Lower East Side, **47 ORCHARD STREET (35)**, and others still in operation.



Actuality is when the lighthouse is dark between flashes: it is the instant between the ticks of the watch: it is a void interval slipping forever through time: the rupture between past and future: the gap at the poles of the revolving magnetic field, infinitesimally small but ultimately real. It is the interchronic pause when nothing is happening. It is the void between events. — George Kubler, *The Shape of Time* (1962)

This exhibition is a viewfinder trained onto the specific sites of the cultural fabric of New York City. The past, represented by the memory imprint of an artistic activity that occurred at a certain site, is “covered” by a current artwork focused on the same site. Through this double take, the past and the present collapse onto each other on a city map. Our intention is to draw precise and living connections between artists, their work, and environments across times — such connections converge into a topography of the exhibition.

An itinerary drawn from the mind to the street, from time to time, has become the *AVANT-GUIDE TO NYC*. She began as a map of one art-historically inclined mind; as others took it to their special places, it expanded to a cartography of linked minds. In fact, it only approaches the “historical” through this database of shared content. The history presented in this project remains amateur — that is, a creative history. It may even be faulty. However, by virtue of it being in the process of its own making, it would always be the right one for any given moment. It is neither complete nor comprehensive. It can be finished at any time, and then unfinished again. It befits an exhibition that displays its own making.

Earlier history was involved in reconstruction of the past. Nowadays, new information lands on the Web every second, while old information is being saved and updated; unilateral Websurfers across the globe burrow through it and inject jolts of personal content along their paths, resuscitating bits of history. As virtual and real traces become enmeshed in this ever-expanding living archive, what are the possibilities that the present will forever replace the past — that time will be continuous, as long as it lasts? An interface of history may come to resemble the Freudian mind as described in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, “in which nothing once constructed had perished, and all the earlier stages of development had survived alongside the latest.”

How many maps may be drawn to deal with a given space? The theorist Henri Lefebvre puts a number at “instant infinity.” **ANDREA GEYER** designs a loving map of NYC sightings of likenesses in bronze and stone of model Audrey Munson (1891–1996) — her life is documented in Geyer’s book, *Queen of the Artist’s Studios*. **KABIR CARTER** generated an acoustic survey of electronic music and sound, which takes us to Max Neuhaus’ Times Square, The Loft, Paradise Garage, Continental Baths, and The Gallery era dance floors, presented in the form of an open-ended archive where documentation and composition merge — *Soho Versus Disco*.

WARD SHELLEY has been mapping various art worlds in his idiosyncratic, hand-drawn diagrams, including specific sites of this project. **DEXTER SINISTER** contributed the exhibition publicity image *Watch Scan 1200 dpi* (opposite), captioned with a quotation from George Kubler and also created the map for this brochure. There are others — for example, this on Google Maps: <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?msa=0&msid=103210152545273965093.00046c957a8584ea90c77>.

Directions, anyone? Going about our daily business in the city, we navigate among the interconnected pasts and presents of people, places, and events. Marcel Duchamp’s studio, Peggy Guggenheim’s Art of This Century, and Group Material — where are these places, and what are their current functions? Visits to many notable addresses prove that their mystique is only imaginary. On the other hand, a personal experience occurring at any place whatever can result in the personal and non-historical becoming shared and quasi-historical via the memory imprint in the artist’s work — such as when a stranger jumps out the window of the apartment building where **NINA KATCHADOURIAN** also happens to live; or when industrial towers in Brooklyn explode symmetrically to the WTC towers, with the symmetry established through **JULIETA ARANDA**’s studio window. As John Cage observed, as memories get disconnected from experiences that produced them, then “each thing that we see is new, as though we have become tourists and we’re living in countries that are very exciting, because we don’t know them.” As spaces get dislodged from their predetermined coordinates, they become transformed into what Lefebvre termed representational spaces, embodying complex symbolisms — sometimes coded, sometimes not — linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life and art. Art praxis, acting in this potential space, re-forms the social space. Fluidity between the social and the personal allows us to locate the known and unknown places of the mind on the city map. — Sandra Skurvirda