

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Space is New York's number-one preoccupation. From the mythological square footage of old SoHo to the scarcity brought on by the real-estate boom in the 2000s, staking-out, using, talking about, and giving up space defines one's time and place in city's finite geography. It's a physical and psychological necessity turned into a social fabric.

The desire for it drove a now-familiar story. Beginning in the late 1980s, the pursuit of inexpensive studio space led artists from the increasingly unaffordable East Village across the river to Williamsburg, Brooklyn, a backwater of warehouses, working-class neighborhoods, and little else. But by the end of the next decade, studios carved out of industrial sites across the neighborhood would house one of the largest concentrations of artists per capita of any single location in the country. Before a choking demand and unchecked development once again sent artists looking elsewhere for studios, the migration generated exhibition spaces, workshops, screening rooms, artist-run events, a still-growing number of galleries, and many other thriving cultural outlets, all of which have left a lasting mark on the neighborhood.

It was that atmosphere that led Black & White Gallery's founding director Tatyana Okshteyn to Williamsburg in pursuit of a site for her first gallery. Although available industrial space in the neighborhood had already become difficult to find, she happened upon a former garage on Driggs Avenue at North 10th Street that met her needs. Perfectly suited to a gallery, the roughly 2500 square-foot space was equally divided between the indoor space and outdoor courtyard.

For all of its grit, the courtyard is not a street-like space amenable to work that intervenes in public life either. In fact, ignoring the dirt and textured block, it begins to look like an outdoor gallery. It offers all the spatial control of a white cube with—unadorned walls, a straightforward geometry—and as an exhibition space, it functions as if someone had taken the project room at a typical gallery and simply lifted the lid. Since the gallery's inaugural season in September 2002, 17 artists have created 20 site-specific works responding to it.

The most successful projects have contended with the entire space by utilizing its unusual configuration and playing its architecture off the character and history of the surrounding neighborhood.

Combining the entire gallery—indoors and out—into a large project space is a natural evolution of this most unique site in the city. In this path, Black & White Project Space was launched.

DESCRIPTION OF ORGANIZATION AND ITS ACTIVITIES

Black & White Project Space was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation in the state of New York in 2007 and since 2008 is a sponsored organization of the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA). NYFA is a 501(c) 3, tax exempt organization founded in 1971 to work with the arts community throughout New York State to develop and facilitate programs in all disciplines. NYFA will receive grants on behalf of Black & White Project Space, ensure the use of grant funds in accordance with the grant agreements, and will provide program or financial reports as required.

Black & White Project Space was launched as an experimental, art project related platform in October, 2008. This is a new phase in the evolution of Black & White Gallery's Williamsburg location. Building on the successful foundation established by Black & White Gallery in Williamsburg over the past 6 years, Black & White Project Space offers substantial resources to artists and makes the exhibition content available to a broader public. While the curatorial focus is exclusively on the emerging field of site-specific installations spotlighting the individual artist, organizational activities have expanded in order to better serve the artists, audience and community.

Black & White Project Space prominently features site specific installations stressing the links between the indoor and outdoor environments by dedicating the entire space to a single artist

or artist collective. In order to create a deeper understanding of the projects presented in the space, exhibitions are on view for three months.

To carry forward our mission we have developed two core interrelated programs:

Exhibition/Artist-in-Residency Program

We want to preserve and further develop the creative environment by supporting socially conscious contemporary art and artists to the benefit of the local community and audience at large by offering substantial resources to artists, such as production cost sharing, studio space and additional assistance through the High School Internship Program. Our progressive approach alternating between exhibition and studio space under one roof truly addresses the notion of "site-" and "community-specific" aspects of our organizational philosophy. We will present two exhibitions per year, one in the fall and one in the spring. The resident artist will have the use of the space as a studio in the winter and summer.

High School Internship Program

We hope to become a highly desirable place for young people to spend their time after school. During this time, we hope to stimulate collaboration, creativity and critical thinking by providing opportunities for high school students to be in a professional environment, learn important job skills, and engage with works of art. In addition to performing particular tasks as artist and gallery staff assistants, young people will spend time reading and writing exhibition documentation and participating in gallery events. This innovative after school program will draw young people into a creative nonschool learning environment and serve as an inspiration for the inner-city neighborhoods throughout the city.

HISTORY

Since Black & White Gallery first opened its doors in Brooklyn in 2002 it has become a thriving cultural outlet leaving a lasting mark on the neighborhood. In 2006, the Gallery followed the path of many established neighborhood galleries and opened a second location in Chelsea. Neighborhood fans of the Gallery feared that, like the many other Williamsburg galleries who made move to Chelsea before it, Black & White Gallery would shutter the original storefront in Brooklyn. Rather than closing the site, "Brooklyn stalwart" (as noted in the New Yorker in the summer of 2006), has been operating both locations. From the outset, the Gallery cultivated innovative young artists in the initial and more advanced phases of their careers exploring contemporary themes and concepts through multiple mediums. During the 2002-2008 seasons, the Gallery produced 80 exhibitions and presented the work of 175 artists. Artists under the Gallery representation have exhibited widely at art centers and museums around the world. Their work has been reviewed in national and international newspapers, magazines, and catalogues and was acquired by major public and private collections, such as The Margulies Collection, Hubert Neumann Collection, Progressive Art Collection, George Soros Foundation, Ellen and Jerome Stern Collection and The West Collection. Their work has been included in museum exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY, Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, NY, Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, El Museo Del Barrio, New York, NY, Centro Cultural Palacio La Moneda in Santiago de Chile, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI, California Museum of Photography, Riverside, CA and Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, IL.

AUDIENCE

Historically, our audience has been comprised of members of the unique local community of art industry personnel that makes up Williamsburg's social fabric, and a diverse range from outside the local community's bounds, such as college and high school students, museum and private tour groups, as well as hoards of domestic and foreign tourists. In the past 5 years tens of thousands of people have come through the gallery. Over the next decade, 28,000 luxury housing units will be constructed in the Williamsburg area. This translates into at least 50,000 new residents making Williamsburg their home. Because of the gallery's established reputation, Black & White Project Space will remain a desired destination and only stands to gain more members of its ever-broadening audience from this influx. It is conveniently located near major public transportation hubs and en route to such important cultural institutions as P.S.1, Sculpture Center and Socrates Sculpture Park.