

OUR PAST AND OUR FUTURE

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.

Black & White Project Space will prominently feature site specific installations stressing the links between the indoor and outdoor environments by dedicating the entire space to a single artist or group of artists. In order to create a deeper understanding of the projects presented in the space, exhibitions will be on view for longer periods of time moving away from the tendency simply to show and tell. To make exhibitions content available to a broader audience, every 3 seasons Black & White Project Space plans to publish a catalogue documenting exhibitions in print.

Integral parts of Black & White Project Space activities will be the artist residency program and local community internship program.