A Finding Aid to the Artist Tenants Association Records, 1959-1978, in the Archives of American Art

Judy Ng

Funding for the processing and digitization of this collection was provided by Terra Foundation for American Art

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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives of American Art
Title: Artist Tenants Association records
Identifier: AAA.artitena
Date: 1959-1978
Extent: 1 Linear foot
Creator: Artist Tenants Association (New York, N.Y.)
Language: English
Summary: The records of the Artist Tenants Association measure 1.0 linear feet and date from 1959 to 1978. They document the Association’s efforts to alter New York City building codes to permit artists to live in lofts, initiating the development of SoHo as an art center. Records include business correspondence, founding documents, memoranda and press releases, member lists, financial records, clippings, and a scrapbook of clippings pertaining to the organization.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information
The records were donated to the Archives of American Art by Ruth Fortel, the financial secretary of the Association, in 1978 and 1979.

Related Material
Also found in the Archives of American Art are the SoHo Artists Association Records, 1968-1978.

Alternative Forms Available
This collection was digitized in its entirety in 2012 and is available via the Archives of American Art’s website. Blank pages and duplicates have not been scanned. In most cases, the cover, title page, and individual relevant pages have been scanned from published materials.

Processing Information
The collection was fully processed, arranged, and described by Judy Ng and digitized in 2012 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation
Restrictions on Access
Use of original papers requires an appointment.

Ownership and Literary Rights
The Artist Tenants Association records are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

Historical Note
The Artist Tenants Association was loosely formed in the early 1960s to petition the office of Robert Wagner, then mayor of New York, for permission to live in manufacturing districts not officially zoned for residence. The city eventually agreed to an Artist in Residence (A.I.R.) program, which led to a more formal movement to legalize artists' occupation of studio spaces in the neighborhood "South of Houston," shorted to SoHo.

On March 31, 1965, the Association acquired a formal certificate of unincorporation, although they had been operating in an unofficial capacity since the fall of 1961. In addition to negotiating with the city, the Artist Tenants Association served as a centralized information resource by disseminating information to artists, proposing boycotts and other actions early in the negotiation process, and raising funds to support artists and building projects. Between 1964 and 1968, the Association was central to the negotiation of the A.I.R. Agreement, which received approval in 1964 and officially passed as an amendment concerning Artists' Centers and Studios in March 1968.

Influential artists who supported the Association's first artist boycott in protest of the city's 1961 studio-loft evictions include Helen Frankenthaler, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Ad Reinhardt, and Richard Stankiewicz.

Scope and Content Note
The records of the Artist Tenants Association measure 1.0 linear feet and date from 1959 to 1978. They document the Association's efforts to alter New York City building codes to permit artists to live in lofts, initiating the development of SoHo as an art center. Records include business correspondence, founding documents, memoranda and press releases, member lists, financial records, clippings, and a scrapbook of clippings pertaining to the organization.

The correspondence in the collection includes a handful of letters from artists regarding the availability of lofts, letters from the New York City Housing and Development Administration, and information from other co-housing projects in the city. In addition, there is a report, "Arts Administrator Need and Potential in New York State," drafted by George Alan Smith for the New York State Council on the Arts.

Administrative records include a legal resolution of unincorporation, meeting announcements, press releases and memoranda, member lists, and phone messages. Financial records include checking and savings account books, canceled checks and check memos, bank statements, and receipts related to Association activities. The clippings in the collection relate to coverage of Association activities and topics relevant to their objectives.
The scrapbook of clippings chronicle housing needs of New York City artists, press coverage related to the Association, and supplementary articles tracing the development of the SoHo neighborhood as an integrated artists' live and work community.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 5 series:

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1967-1969 (Box 1; 12 folders)
- Series 2: Administrative Records, 1961-1969 (Box 1; 10 folders)
- Series 3: Financial Records, 1961-1969 (Boxes 1-2; 0.2 linear feet)
- Series 4: Printed Material, 1967-1978 (Box 2; 4 folders)
- Series 5: Scrapbook, 1959-1976 (Box 2, BV 3; 0.2 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:
- Art -- Societies, etc. -- New York (State) -- New York
- Artists -- Housing -- New York (State) -- New York
- Artists' studios -- New York (State) -- New York

Types of Materials:
- Scrapbooks
The correspondence in the collection includes a handful of letters from artists regarding the availability of lofts, letters from the New York City Housing and Development Administration, and information from other co-housing projects in the city. In addition, there is a report, "Arts Administrator Need and Potential in New York State," drafted by George Alan Smith for the New York State Council on the Arts.

Letters are alphabetically arranged by business name or last name of correspondent. The series has been scanned in its entirety.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 1</th>
<th>Artist Tenants Association Members, 1967-1968</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 2</td>
<td>Business Executives Move for Vietnam Peace, 1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 3</td>
<td>City of New York, Housing and Development Association, 1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 4</td>
<td>Cooper Square Community Development Committee and Businessmen's Association, 1968-1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 5</td>
<td>Encyclopedia of Associations, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 6</td>
<td>Henry Street Studio Apartments, 1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 7</td>
<td>New School for Social Research, 1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 8</td>
<td>New York City Attorney General's Office, 1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 9</td>
<td>New York State Council for the Arts, 1967-1969</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 10</td>
<td>Park Slope North Improvement Corporation, 1968</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 11</td>
<td>Timney, John J., 1967</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Box 1, Folder 12 Peace and Freedom Party, 1968
Image(s)

10 Folders (Box 1)

These records include a legal resolution of unincorporation, meeting announcements, press releases and memoranda, member lists, and phone messages.

The material in each folder is arranged chronologically. The series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 1, Folder 13  General Resolution of Unincorporated Association, 1965
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 14  Meeting Announcements, 1966-1967
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 15  Member Address Book, circa 1964-1969
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 16  Member Dues Book, 1964
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 17  Member Lists, 1967
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 18  Press Releases and Memorandum, 1961-1968
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 19  Notes, General, 1961-1968
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 20  Notes, ATA Secretary (Ruth Fortel), 1965-1967
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 21  Phone Messages, 1967-1968
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 22  Phone Messages, 1967-1968
Image(s)

0.2 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

These records include checking and savings account books, canceled checks and check memos, bank statements, and receipts related to Association activities.

The material in each folder is arranged chronologically. The series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 1, Folder 24  Checking Account, Bank Statements, 1961-1965
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 23  Checking Account, Bank Statements, 1966-1969
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 25  Checking Account, Canceled Checks, 1961-1964
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 26  Checking Account, Canceled Checks, 1965-1966
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 27  Checking Account, Canceled Checks, 1967-1969
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 1  Checking Account, Deposit Slips, 1961-1967
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 2  Checking Account, Memorandum, 1961-1965
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 3  Checking Account, Monthly Charges, 1963-1969
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 4  Savings Account, Deposit Book, 1964-1966
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 5  Receipts and Statements, circa 1961-1967
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 6  Receipts and Statements, 1961
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 7  Receipts and Statements, 1962
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 8  Receipts and Statements, 1963
Box 2, Folder 9  Receipts and Statements, 1964
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 10  Receipts and Statements, 1964
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 11  Receipts and Statements, 1964-1965
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 12  Receipts and Statements, 1966
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 13  Receipts and Statements, 1967
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 14  Receipts and Statements, Petty Cash, 1966-1967
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 15  Receipts and Statements, NY Telephone, 1964-1969
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 16  Receipts and Statements, Telephone Exchange, 1966-1968
Image(s)

4 Folders (Box 2)

Clippings in the collection relate to coverage of Association activities and topics relevant to their objectives.

The material is arranged chronologically. The series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 2, Folder 17  Clippings, 1967-1968
                 Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 18  Clippings, 1975-1976
                 Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 19  Clippings, 1977
                 Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 20  Clippings, 1978
                 Image(s)
Series 5: Scrapbook, 1959-1976

0.2 Linear feet (Box 2, BV 3)

The scrapbook of clippings chronicle housing needs of New York City artists, press coverage related to the Association, and supplementary articles tracing the development of the SoHo neighborhood as an integrated artists' live and work community.

The series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 2, Folder 21  Scrapbook, 1959-1967
Image(s)
Oversized material housed in BV 3

Box 2, Folder 22  Scrapbook, Additional Clippings, 1966
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 23  Scrapbook, Additional Clippings, 1966
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 24  Scrapbook, Additional Clippings, 1967-1968
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 25  Scrapbook, Additional Clippings, 1975-1976
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 26  Scrapbook, Additional Material, 1961-1974
Image(s)

Box BV 3  Scrapbook, 1959-1967
Oversized material scanned with Box 2, F21

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