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

Judy Ng

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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.

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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.

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**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)

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**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.

Box 1, Folder 1  Artist Tenants Association Members, 1967-1968
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 2  Business Executives Move for Vietnam Peace, 1968
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 3  City of New York, Housing and Development Association, 1968
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 4  Cooper Square Community Development Committee and Businessmen's Association, 1968-1969
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 5  Encyclopedia of Associations, 1967
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 6  Henry Street Studio Apartments, 1968
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 7  New School for Social Research, 1968
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 8  New York City Attorney General's Office, 1968
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 9  New York State Council for the Arts, 1967-1969
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 10  Park Slope North Improvement Corporation, 1968
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 11  Timney, John J., 1967

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
- Box 1, Folder 23: Checking Account, Bank Statements, 1966-1969
- Box 1, Folder 25: Checking Account, Canceled Checks, 1961-1964
- Box 1, Folder 26: Checking Account, Canceled Checks, 1965-1966
- Box 1, Folder 27: Checking Account, Canceled Checks, 1967-1969
- Box 2, Folder 1: Checking Account, Deposit Slips, 1961-1967
- Box 2, Folder 2: Checking Account, Memorandum, 1961-1965
- Box 2, Folder 3: Checking Account, Monthly Charges, 1963-1969
- Box 2, Folder 4: Savings Account, Deposit Book, 1964-1966
- Box 2, Folder 5: Receipts and Statements, circa 1961-1967
- Box 2, Folder 6: Receipts and Statements, 1961
- Box 2, Folder 7: Receipts and Statements, 1962
- Box 2, Folder 8: Receipts and Statements, 1963
Box 2, Folder 9  Receipts and Statements, 1964
Box 2, Folder 10 Receipts and Statements, 1964
Box 2, Folder 11 Receipts and Statements, 1964-1965
Box 2, Folder 12 Receipts and Statements, 1966
Box 2, Folder 13 Receipts and Statements, 1967
Box 2, Folder 14 Receipts and Statements, Petty Cash, 1966-1967
Box 2, Folder 15 Receipts and Statements, NY Telephone, 1964-1969
Box 2, Folder 16 Receipts and Statements, Telephone Exchange, 1966-1968

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