



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the SoHo Artists Association Records, 1968-1978, in the Archives of American Art

Amanda Louie

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

April 27, 2011

Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	SoHo Artists Association records
Identifier:	AAA.sohoarti
Date:	1968-1978
Creator:	SoHo Artists Association
Extent:	0.4 Linear feet
Language:	Collection is in English.
Summary:	The records of the New York City SoHo Artists Association measure 0.4 linear feet and date from 1968 to 1978. They document the Association's lobbying efforts to change New York City zoning laws to allow artists to live and work in SoHo lofts. Found within the collection are correspondence, reports, founding documents, notes, publicity and printed material, photographs, and a sound recording of the first meeting of the Association in 1970.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The records were donated to the Archives of American Art by Gerhardt Liebmann, a member of the SoHo Artists Association, in 1979.

Related Archival Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art are the Artist Tenants Association records, 1959-1978.

Available Formats

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.

The sound recording in this collection was digitized for research access in 2009 and is available at the Archives of American Art offices. Researchers may view the original sound tape reel for the archival notations on it, but the original reel is not available for playback due to fragility.

Processing Information

The collection was fully processed and a finding aid prepared by Amanda Louie in 2011. The collection was digitized in 2012 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

SoHo Artists Association Records, 1968-1978. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

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Biographical Note

The SoHo Artists Association was loosely formed in 1968 to centralize lobbying efforts to change New York City zoning laws to allow artists to live and work in SoHo loft spaces zoned for manufacturing. At that time, spaces that were vacated by manufacturers were being converted to studios by artists drawn by cheap rents, expansive spaces, and available natural lighting. Many artists also began to occupy their studio spaces, although zoning laws did not permit residency. The group voted to call itself the SoHo Artists Association at the same time they shortened the area designation on a city planning commission map from "South of Houston." The name for the neighborhood stuck and became a model for other neighborhood acronyms in New York City.

The Association acquired its incorporation certificate on June 2, 1970 and held its first "official" meeting a few days later. In addition to negotiating with the city, the SoHo Artists Association built community support and membership through community events and festivals. They also sought financial and foundation support for artists and extended those funds to purchase buildings for artists' residences as well as exhibition and performance spaces.

During negotiations and public hearings, the City placed a moratorium on evictions to allow more time to resolve the situation in a legal manner. In 1971 the Zoning Resolution was amended to permit Joint Live-Work Quarters for Artists. This law is still in effect and, for the most part, only visual artists and their families are permitted to legally live in converted lofts in SoHo.

Scope and Contents

The records of the New York City SoHo Artists Association measure 0.4 linear feet and date from 1968 to 1978. They document the Association's lobbying efforts to change New York City zoning laws to allow artists to live and work in SoHo lofts. Found within the collection are correspondence, reports, founding documents, notes, publicity and printed material, photographs, and a sound recording of the first meeting of the Association in 1970.

The records contain documentation of the SoHo Artists Association's relationship with other organizations and city commissions, including the Artists Tenants Association, Citizens for Artists Housing, Historic Districts Council, New York City Planning Commission, New York State Commission on Cultural Resources, and Department of Cultural Affairs.

The collection includes a sound recording of the Association's first official meeting held on June 5, 1970 after incorporation. Members discuss the history of negotiations, how to work with commissions and boards, membership growth, the definition of who is an artist, how much minimum space an artist needs, what an artist considers to be adequate living quarters, and how to raise visibility and support. The meeting concluded with a vote, the ballots of which are included in the records.

Publicity records includes festival and tour information, the SoHo Newsletter, clippings, and other materials. Photographs are of the SoHo Artists Association meeting on June 5, 1970.

Arrangement

Due to the small size of this collection the records are arranged as one series.

Missing Title:

- Series 1: SoHo Artists Association Records, 1968-1978 (Box 1; 0.4 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Artists -- Housing -- New York (State) -- New York
Arts -- New York (State) -- New York

Types of Materials:

Photographs
Reports
Sound recordings

Names:

Artist Tenants Association (New York, N.Y.)
Historic Districts Council (New York, N.Y.)
New York (N.Y.). City Planning Commission
New York (N.Y.). Dept. of Cultural Affairs
New York (State). Commission on Cultural Resources

Functions:

Artists' studios -- New York (State)
Arts organizations

Places:

SoHo (New York, N.Y.)

Container Listing

Series 1: SoHo Artists Association Records, 1968-1978

0.4 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: This series contains correspondence, reports, a copy of the incorporation certificate, administrative files, proposals, ballots, artists' certification, publicity, blueprint copies, printed matter, newsletters, clippings, photographs, and a sound recording of the SoHo Artists Association meeting on June 5, 1970.

Arrangement: Material within each folder is arranged chronologically. The sound recording has been digitized for research access and is available at the Archives of American Art offices.

Box 1, Folder 1	Background and History, circa 1968-1973
Box 1, Folder 2	Correspondence, General, 1969-1970
Box 1, Folder 3	Correspondence, General, 1971-1972
Box 1, Folder 4	Reports, Statements, Announcements, 1969-1972
Box 1, Folder 5	Incorporation Certificate, By-laws, Members, Proposals, Plans, Minutes, Referendum, circa 1970-1971
Box 1, Folder 6	SoHo Artists Association Meeting, 1970 June 5 1 Sound tape reel
Box 1, Folder 7	Proposal Ballot, 1970 June 5
Box 1, Folder 8	Artists' Certification, 1970-1971
Box 1, Folder 9	Citizens for Artists Housing, 1971-1972
Box 1, Folder 10	Publicity, 1970-1971
Box 1, Folder 11	Newsletters, SoHo Newsletter, 1970-1973
Box 1, Folder 12	Newsletters, Art Workers, Vols. 1-3, 1971-1973
Box 1, Folder 13	New York City Planning Commission, Laws and Calendars, 1967-1971
Box 1, Folder 14	New York City Planning Commission, Reports and Blueprint Copies, 1968-1971
Box 1, Folder 15	New York City Planning Commission, Preliminary Analysis and Proposed Amendments to Laws, 1971
Box 1, Folder 16	New York State Commission on Cultural Resources, 1971-1972

Box 1, Folder 17 [Historic Districts Council, 1972-1973](#)

Box 1, Folder 18 [Printed Matter, 1961-1971](#)

Box 1, Folder 19 [Clippings, 1970-1978](#)

Box 1, Folder 20 [Photographs, 1970-1971](#)

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