35 ARTISTS
RETURN TO ARTISTS SPACE:
A BENEFIT EXHIBITION

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ARTISTS SPACE
December 4-24, 1981
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Max Protetch
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Stefanotti Gallery
Barbara Toll Fine Arts
John Weber Gallery
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Participating Artists
Auste
James Biederman
Jonathan Borofsky
Gary Bower
Troy Brauntuch
Farrell Brickhouse
Gary Burnley
Scott Burton
Cynthia Carlson
Charles Clough
R.M. Fischer
Hermine Ford
Jack Goldstein
Don Gummer
Mel Kendrick
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Barbara Schwartz
Cindy Sherman
Laurie Simmons
Charles Simonds
Jenny Snider
Donald Sultan
Anthony Thompson
John Torreano
Acknowledgements

It is a rare occasion for Artists Space to look to the past, and though this exhibition represents only a very small percentage of the artists who have presented important and vital exhibitions at Artists Space, it reflects much of what Artists Space is and has been—a serious and informed outlet for new art.

It is a well-known fact that small arts organizations are facing an uncertain future. The current political climate appears to be encouraging an increasingly conservative attitude toward government support of the arts—support that has nurtured some of the most exciting creative statements of the past decade. For organizations, agencies and individuals championing the unknown, the unestablished and the experimental, this is a time of questioning, re-evaluation and struggle to survive.

It also seems to be a time of innumerable benefit exhibitions for arts organizations determined to raise funds in order to continue their work. And, Artists Space is no exception. Since it began in 1973, Artists Space has never before organized a benefit exhibition. 35 Artists Return to Artists Space marks our first attempt to generate much needed funds through such an exhibition. All of the 35 participating artists showed at Artists Space at an early and often critical stage in their careers. They now figure among the most innovative and influential artists at work today, and are currently represented by some of New York’s most prominent contemporary art galleries. This exhibition has been made possible through the cooperation and generosity of these artists and their dealers. In contrast to most benefit exhibitions, neither the artists nor the dealers have been asked for a donation of a work of art. Through a unique collaborative effort, a contribution will be made to Artists Space for each work of art sold. As a result, this exhibition includes major work by every artist.

I would like to express our genuine gratitude to the artists and their galleries for their enthusiasm and support in making this important exhibition possible and in helping us to realize our financial goal. I have been singularly struck by the affection expressed for Artists Space, the concern for its future and an eagerness to help it survive.

Among the many other individuals who have contributed significantly to the success of this undertaking in all its phases, I would like particularly to thank Michael Andre and Unmuzzled Ox, Tara Collins of H.O. Gerngross & Co., Donald Droll, Michael Klein, James Kraft, Katherine and Carl Lobell, Metropolitan Printing, Max Protetch, Paul Shanley, Anne Tursyn, Susan Wyatt, Helene Winer and William Zimmer. Michael Klein and Susan Wyatt have been especially valuable in seeing all the details through to completion. William Zimmer, the art critic who writes regularly for the Soho News, responded more than graciously to our invitation to write the catalogue essay. I am very grateful to him for expressing such overwhelming confidence in Artists Space, its past, present and future.

I can only hope that Artists Space will always have such an impressive and loyal group of supporters.

Linda Shearer
Executive Director
Introduction

The title 35 Artists Return to Artists Space has an epic ring to it. It connotes triumphal returns after successes abroad. I can imagine it as the theme of a large painting by Rubens or as a commemorative poem. As a poem, it would ideally have 35 stanzas, each stanza dedicated to an artist from Aoste to Torremo. Each stanza would end, 35 Artists Return to Artists Space, and with each repetition the sense of triumph would build.

But returning to the ground, I am not a poet. Rather, I am a writer for a lively newspaper that intrepidly searches out the new everywhere. It seeks tomorrow’s household names today. Every journalist has his or her trusted sources. My beat is what’s new in the visual arts, and Artists Space is my main listening post. My first Soho News column, early in 1977, contained a review of Donald Sultan’s Artists Space show. I may be feeling nostalgic, but there’s no question Artists Space offers solid fare. The veteran reporter in me commends the artists with a slap on the back.

Yet there is reason to pause amidst the congratulations. Any homecoming is a festive occasion, but this one is for a serious purpose. Each of the artists has conquered the art world in his or her own right, but the fact that they are coming back to Artists Space signals a collective effort.

Even though they may take innovative forms, benefits are undertaken for the purpose of raising money. This benefit is also an irritant. It is a tacit reminder that the arts’ relationship to government, a relationship which had been growing and was on its way to prospering, is now dubious at best. The shaky situation gives everyone qualms.
...However, there is every reason to see the benefit at Artists Space as a genuine blessing. When the monies are coming in and every-thing’s rolling along merrily, the impulse among curators and their audience is to plunge on and exhibit and consider the still newer. This benefit provides an occasion for reflection, for looking back and considering the distance covered in the nine short years of Artists Space’s existence.

In front of me as I type sits the impressive roster of artists who have been asked to contribute to this benefit show. Anyone who scans it will be convinced that a great deal of the most important art of our day was launched at Artists Space. It is truly difficult to imagine these artists as the unknown quantities they once were. The list by itself is clinching proof that Artists Space (and by extension most other alternative spaces) is indispensable to the creation of art in America. Hopefully this big benefit show will make an indelible impression and encourage the belief that the funding of alternative spaces is the soundest way to allocate funds.

I have called Artists Space my main listening post. It leaps over the other alternative spaces, not only because of its record, but also because it is so regal. Regal without being imperial. It is a beautiful gallery and what has come to emphasize its beauty must be an architectural feature which has become something of a symbol: the large oval window looking out over Hudson Street. It is like a vigilant eye. Its rarity attracts you while you’re still on the street; it hints that something unusual is occurring inside. But it also betrays that the place has got class. By philosophy and by plain old reflex I’m an admirer of all alternative spaces. The storefronts and the itinerant alternatives are brave and interesting, as well as responsible to local communities, but Artists Space, even while incorporating the often gritty downtown world it serves, is Tiffany’s.

Artists Space’s beauty is a whole lot deeper than its facade. Its resilient internal structure is what is remarkable and sustaining. It was conceived not for a narrow purpose but out of a democratic imperative. Dance and theater had their publicly-funded showcases, argued Artists Space founders Trudie Grace and Irving Sandler back in 1973, why didn’t the visual arts?

A brief survey of Artists Space’s essential stance from its founding until now, will underscore what a sturdy and broad-based enterprise it is. From the beginning Grace and Sandler were especially watchful that no single faction or school of thought be able to dominate. (How firmly this ethical point has been grounded is revealed in this benefit exhibition, a cornucopia of styles and casts of mind.) Yet there is a single thread, Intelligence and that rarer quality, wit, are constantly striven for in Artists Space undertakings.

The space first occupied by Artists Space was on Wooster Street, and in his essay for 10 Artists/Artists Space, a 1979 exhibition at the Neuberger Museum, Sandler describes this first locale as, “one of the most handsome galleries in New York.” If one eye was always toward fairness, the other was toward first-rate professionalism. Appearances do count.

To implement the ideal of fairness, Artists Space’s first year saw a system of artists choosing artists to select exhibitions. There is a certain fascination inherent in this procedure, for artists are thought to be very self-referential when it comes to their preferences in art. Some in the art community accused the selectors of unabashedly selecting their protégés. Sandler and Grace weren’t entirely satisfied with this procedure either, so they initiated a process whose numbers astonish me: 650 New York artists, most of them affiliated with galleries, were polled for their opinions of who among them would make the best selectors. This was but the second year of Artists Space and the ballots returned exceeded 400, an indication that Artists Space made broad sense among artists.

Because Sandler and Grace didn’t want to leave any stones unturned, any artists shivering in garrets needlessly, as it were, the Unaffiliated Artists File was initiated. Any artist who is a New York State resident can send in slides to potentially attract dealers and curators. The mere fact of the File’s existence has served me well on several occasions. Often a sincere young artist will ask my advice on breaking into the art world, and I’ll recommend sending slides to the File. Even though it offers no immediate results, the act of submitting slides is a definitive step.

Helene Winer came out of California to head Artists Space in 1975. She realized the necessity of devising new methods of selection to reflect what was going on in the art world. New issues were emerging: glamorous in the mid-1970’s and issues can best come to the fore in group shows or theme exhibitions. Often curators or writers, rather than artists, better understand the full import of these new issues. And on occasion during Winer’s tenure, Artists Space organized traveling theme shows. One such exhibition, Pictures in 1977, first brought the work
of Robert Longo, Troy Brauntuch and Jack Goldstein to New York.

To be responsive to pluralism, a development both welcome and chaotic, Artists Space, during Winer’s tenure, began to encompass film, video, and performance. One wondered whether Artists Space was merely reflecting this new diversity or by espousing it, helping to promote it. As a physical space Artists Space contains many rooms; its look reflects a central fact of the art world now, that it is a huge umbrella.

Linda Shearer, who is about to begin her second year as Executive Director of Artists Space, says that the various methods devised by Winer to deal with the heady conditions in the art world will continue and be augmented by new ones. Prior to coming to Artists Space, Shearer was associate curator at the Guggenheim Museum. Going after work of high quality is thus second nature to her, and this museumlike benefit exhibition seems aptly a reflection of this skill.

I wear a Janus face as I survey the list of artists to be in this exhibition. One face looks back to the artist’s original show and if the show is seen dimly, I can at least recall the sensation I had on first seeing it. The other face looks forward and tries to anticipate what each artist will contribute to a benefit. I can guess, but I also know I’m going to be surprised. I am also informed that the gallery will be jammed full (Artists Space has many rooms but a room has just four walls) because the artists plan to submit full-size and in most cases new, and therefore important, work.

The Janus face that looks backward is intrigued by the artists’ selection by artists, the process of Artists Space’s beginning years. I find my self deriving satisfaction from two opposite revelations. Sometimes it is remarkable that those tapped seem very much like those who chose them: Mel Kendrick was picked by Dorothea Rockburne, Judy Pfaff was chosen by Al Held, Ree Morton by Nancy Graves. Yet just as remarkable are the far-fetched linkages. Chuck Close chose John Torreano, Sol LeWitt chose Jon Borofsky. With a little reflection one can find good reason for some of these choices, and they put another dimension on art history. The unexpected choices also reveal how wide the capacity is in artists for appreciation of art far different from their own.

Looking at this list I find my memory is telescoped. The art world doesn’t seem to skip a beat, the list discloses. For in-
Austen
Born 1950
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1979
Represented by Hamilton Gallery

In The Thicket, 1981, oil stick and acrylic on paper, 36" x 53", courtesy of the artist and Hamilton Gallery.
Photo by Eeva-Inkeri

Jonathan Borofsky
Born 1942
Lives Venice, California
First showed at Artists Space 1973
Represented by Paula Cooper Gallery

Motor Mind at 2559701, 1978-79, dayglo paint on masonite, sheet aluminum, motor, 70" x 37"
Collection of Doris and Charles Saatchi, London.
Photo by Geoffrey Clements

James Biederman
Born 1947
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1974
Represented by John Weber Gallery

Jackknife, 1981, oil on wood, 43" x 43" x 29½", courtesy of the artist and John Weber Gallery.
Photo by D. James Dee

Gary Bower
Born 1940
Lives Charlottesville, New York
First showed at Artists Space 1976
Represented by Max Protetch Gallery

Vessel with Hands, 1981, oil paint on ceramic, 24½" x 14½", courtesy of the artist and Max Protetch Gallery.
Photo courtesy of Max Protetch Gallery
Troy Brauntuch
Born 1954
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1977
Represented by Mary Boone Gallery

Untitled, 83" x 31", pencil on paper, courtesy of the artist and Mary Boone Gallery.
Photo by Pelka/Noble

Farrell Brickhouse
Born 1949
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1977
Represented by Max Protetch Gallery

Photo courtesy of Max Protetch Gallery

Gary Burnley
Born 1950
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1979
Represented by Holly Solomon Gallery

Installation view, 1981, Della Robia glaze on hydrostone, courtesy of the artist and Holly Solomon Gallery.
Photo courtesy Holly Solomon Gallery

Scott Burton
Born 1939
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1975
Represented by Max Protetch Gallery

Cast Concrete End Tables, A Pair, 1980-81, cast concrete, 24" x 14½", courtesy of the artist and Max Protetch Gallery.
Photo courtesy Max Protetch Gallery
Cynthia Carlson  
*Born* 1942  
*Lives* New York City  
*First showed at Artists Space* 1974  
*Represented by* Pam Adler Gallery

R.M. Fischer  
*Born* 1947  
*Lives* New York City  
*First showed at Artists Space* 1977  
*Represented by* Stefanotti Gallery

*Seaside Resort Lamp* (wall piece), 1981, plastic, brass, light bulbs, 36” x 42” x 42”, *Low Tide* (floor piece), 1981, steel, brass, light bulbs, 5’ x 3’ x 3’, courtesy of the artist and Stefanotti Gallery.  
Photo by R.M. Fischer

Charles Clough  
*Born* 1951  
*Lives* New York City  
*First showed at Artists Space* 1976  
*Represented by* Pam Adler Gallery

*Rookies*, 1980, enamel paint on paper, 72” x 88½”, courtesy of the artist and Pam Adler Gallery.  
Photo by Kevin Noble

Hermine Ford  
*Born* 1939  
*Lives* New York City  
*First showed at Artists Space* 1976  
*Represented by* Barbara Toll Fine Arts

*Untitled*, 1980, oil on canvas, 70” x 94”, courtesy of the artist and Barbara Toll Fine Arts.  
Photo by Michael Tropea
Jack Goldstein
Born 1945
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1977
Represented by Metro Pictures

Huckleback, 1981, painted wood, 76" x 55½" x 20½", courtesy of the artist and John Weber Gallery. Photo by Linda Davenport

Mel Kendrick
Born 1949
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1974
Represented by John Weber Gallery

Don Gummer
Born 1946
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1974
Represented by Sperone Westwater Fischer

Silk Circle, 1981, painted wood and silk, 66" x 68½" x 13½", courtesy of the artist and Sperone Westwater Fischer. Photo by Alan Zindman

Lois Lane
Born 1948
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1974
Represented by Willard Gallery

Untitled, 1981, oil on graphite on canvas, 60" x 75". Private Collection. Photo by Roy M. Elkind
Thomas Lawson
Born 1951
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1977
Represented by Metro Pictures

Battered Body in Freezer, 1981, oil on canvas, 48" x 48".
courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures.

Allan McCollum
Born 1944
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1977

Installation view of 12 Untitled paintings, 1981, acrylic
on wood, museum board, dimensions variable, courtesy
of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery.
Photo courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery

Robert Longo
Born 1953
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1976
Represented by Metro Pictures

Untitled, 1981, charcoal and graphite on paper, 63" x 72".
Collection of Robert and Doris Hillman, New York.
Photo by Pelka/Noble

Ree Morton
Born 1936
Died 1977
First showed at Artists Space 1973
Estate represented by Max Protetch Gallery

Regional Piece (number 6), 1976, oil on wood with
celastic, two panels, each 20" x 50", courtesy of the
estate of the artist and Max Protetch Gallery.
Photo by Nicki McNeil
Matt Mullican
*Born* 1951
*Lives* New York City
*First showed at Artists Space* 1976
*Represented by* Mary Boone Gallery

Richard Prince
*Born* 1949
*Lives* New York City
*First showed at Artists Space* 1980
*Represented by* Metro Pictures

*Untitled*, 1981, color photograph, 27¼” x 40”, courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures. Photo courtesy Metro Pictures.

Judy Pfaff
*Born* 1946
*Lives* New York City
*First showed at Artists Space* 1974
*Represented by* Holly Solomon Gallery

*Magic*, 1981, contact paper collage on mylar, 89” x 45”, courtesy of the artist and Holly Solomon Gallery. Photo by D.James Dee

Judy Rifka
*Born* 1945
*Lives* New York City
*First showed at Artists Space* 1975
*Represented by* Brooke Alexander, Inc.

*Pretty in blue: Girls and Boys*, 1981, acrylic and modelling paste on canvas, diptych, 72” x 48” each, courtesy of the artist and Brooke Alexander, Inc. Photo by Eric Pollitzer
Walter Robinson
**Born** 1950
**Lives** New York City
**First showed at Artists Space** 1977
**Represented by** Metro Pictures

Photo courtesy Metro Pictures

Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt
**Born** 1948
**Lives** New York City
**First showed at Artists Space** 1974
**Represented by** Holly Solomon Gallery

Photo by D. James Dee

David Salle
**Born** 1952
**Lives** New York City
**First showed at Artists Space** 1976
**Represented by** Mary Boone Gallery

*Untitled, 1981*, acrylic on paper, 40” x 26”, courtesy of the artist and Mary Boone Gallery.
Photo by Bevan Davies

Barbara Schwartz
**Lives** New York City
**First showed at Artists Space** 1975
**Represented by** Willard Gallery

*Wapato, 1981*, casein on handmade paper over wire lath, 72” x 100” x 8”, courtesy of the artist and Willard Gallery.
Photo by Roy M. Elkind
Cindy Sherman
Born 1954
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1976
Represented by Metro Pictures

People Who Live in a Circle, 1972, clay and sticks, 12"
18" x 18" d. (bricks ½" long), Collection Museum of Modern
Art, New York. (This piece was included in Charles
Simonds' 1974 show at Artists Space).
Photo by Rudolph Burkhardt

Charles Simonds
Born 1945
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1974

Jenny Snider
Born 1944
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1977

Laurie Simmons
Born 1949
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1979
Represented by Metro Pictures

Hill Pushed Back (detail, one panel), 1978, oil
pastel on paper on canvas, 6 panels, 48" x 24"
courtesy of the artist. Photo by Jenny Snider
Donald Sultan
Born 1951
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1977
Represented by BlumHelman Gallery

Yellow Iris/Smoke Stack, May-June 1981, tar, plaster and oil on vinyl asbestos tile on masonite, 2 panels, 97½” x 49½”, courtesy of the artist and BlumHelman Gallery. Photo by Roy M. Elkind

Anthony Thompson
Born 1938
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1979
Represented by Hal Bromm Gallery

Untitled, 1979, acrylic, 4½” x 7¼” x ½”, courtesy of the artist and Hal Bromm Gallery. Photo courtesy Hal Bromm Gallery

John Torreano
Born 1941
Lives New York City
First showed at Artists Space 1974
Represented by Hamilton Gallery

Irish Cross, 1981, glass jewels and silicon glue on solid wood, 31½” x 31½”, courtesy of the artist and Hamilton Gallery. Photo by Peik/Noble

Note: Pieces illustrated in this catalogue are not necessarily those included in the exhibition. Dimensions are listed in the following order: height, width, depth.
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A
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