

# 827-831 Broadway Buildings



# 827-831 Broadway Buildings

## LOCATION

Borough of Manhattan  
827-829 and 831 Broadway

## LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

## SIGNIFICANCE

These Civil War-era commercial buildings are significant for their associations with prominent artists of the New York School and represent the pivotal era in which post-World War II New York City became the center of the art world.



**827-831 Broadway**  
November 2017





## 827-831 Broadway Buildings

827-829 and 831 Broadway, Manhattan

### Designation List 502 LP-2594

**Built:** 1866-67

**Architect:** Griffith Thomas

**Client:** Pierre Lorillard III

**Landmark Site:** Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 564, Lots 17 and 19 in part consisting of the portions of the lots bounded by a line beginning at a point at the northeast corner of Lot 17; thence running southerly 75 feet along the exterior of the east wall of the 827-831 Broadway Buildings; thence running westerly 93 feet 10½ inches along the southern wall of the 827-831 Broadway Buildings; thence running northerly 64 feet 9 inches along the western wall of the 827-831 Broadway Buildings; thence running westerly 8 feet 6½ inches; thence running northerly 10 feet 10½ inches; thence running easterly 102 feet 3½ inches along the northern lot line of Lot 17 to the point of beginning.

On October 17, 2017, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the 827-831 Broadway Buildings as a New York City Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Public Hearing Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Eighteen people spoke in favor of designation, including Councilmember Rosie Mendez and representatives of Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick,

the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, the Willem de Kooning Foundation, Victorian Society, Historic Districts Council, Society for the Architecture of the City, and Landmark West. Two representatives of the owner spoke to offer other positions on the designation. No one spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission also received written statements of support from Borough President Gale Brewer, Senator Brad Hoylman, the Municipal Art Society of New York, and the New York Landmarks Conservancy.

### Summary

The 827-831 Broadway Buildings are twin, Civil War-era “marble palaces” which drew architectural inspiration from Italian *palazzi*. Designed by Griffith Thomas and built in 1866-67 as a speculative investment for tobacco heir Pierre Lorillard III, the 827-831 Broadway Buildings gained considerable cultural significance after World War II for their associations with the prominent Abstract Expressionist artists Willem de Kooning, Elaine de Kooning, Paul Jenkins, Larry Poons, Jules Olitski, and Herbert Ferber, and with curator William S. Rubin. These handsome structures were the site of significant contributions to the arts and represent the pivotal era in which post-World War II New York City became the center of the Western art world.

The 827-831 Broadway buildings were constructed on Broadway at a time when retail and commercial uses were expanding into the area around Union Square, and have housed a number of notable commercial tenants. Their adaptable interior lofts—with abundant natural light—were ideal studio spaces for artists, and in the 1950s, they began to attract artist tenants as part of a low-rent artists’ enclave that developed between Union and Washington Squares, known as of “Tenth Street.” After World War II, New York City became the cradle of Abstract Expressionism as artists sought refuge from war-torn Europe and museums and

galleries unable to import from Europe during the conflict became eager to showcase new work. The informal association of artists known as the New York School came to be synonymous with Abstract Expressionism.

Willem De Kooning was one of the foremost visual artists of the New York School and a pioneer of Abstract Expressionism. 831 Broadway was the last of his New York City residences before his permanent move to East Hampton. While at 831 Broadway from 1958-63, De Kooning began to experiment with vivid tones—a shift his biographers attribute to the quality of light in his studio—and to deviate in his work from dense urban landscapes to abstract pastoral scenes that anticipated his move from Manhattan. On the third floor, Elaine de Kooning completed her 1962-63 portrait of John F. Kennedy, a commission for the Truman Library.

Paul Jenkins acquired the studio and residence from William de Kooning in 1963 and owned it through 2000. Here, Jenkins painted notable works including *Phenomena 831 Broadway*. Foreign dignitaries and eminent artists attended the gatherings that Jenkins held here, a practice that continued across the hall in architect Richard Meier's renovation of a loft for art historian and MoMA curator William S. Rubin. In addition to pieces by Jackson Pollack, Mark Rothko, Franz Kline, and others, Rubin's loft displayed works by Willem de Kooning, Paul Jenkins, Larry Poons, Jules Olitski, and Herbert Ferber—all one-time residents of the buildings.

The succession of prominent artists who resided in the 827-831 Broadway Buildings is directly associated with the emergence of Abstract Expressionism as the first major American avant-garde movement in New York City in the late 1940s and 1950s, and with its influence on successive movements in the arts. This pair of buildings is culturally significant for its association with the Abstract Expressionist art movement and the artists

who lived and worked there, symbolizing an important moment in New York City history and in the history of art.

## Building Description

827-829 and 831 Broadway, Manhattan

827-829 and 831 Broadway are two four-bayed, four-story, Italian Renaissance-inspired structures designed in the Italianate style with neo-Grec elements, and originally constructed as store and loft buildings. The buildings share a party wall, rusticated cast-iron piers, and matching marble and cast-iron facades—with large recessed windows, engaged Tuscan columns, bracketed cornices, and molded roof pediments—to present a unified ensemble on the west side of Broadway. Both buildings originally featured cast-iron storefronts by George R. Jackson Ironworks and the original cast-iron quoins remain in place on both buildings. The bottommost quoin on 831 Broadway bears the mark “G. R. JACKSON, BURNET & Co. 201 CENTRE St. N.Y.”

### 827-831 Broadway Buildings, East Elevation:

#### Ground floor: Historic:

Rusticated cast-iron quoins on pedestal bases

#### Second through fourth floors: Historic:

Rusticated cast-iron quoins; marble facade; four bays of windows with flat basket arch (pseudo-three-centered arch) openings and recessed window surrounds; two-over-two window configuration on fourth floor; rusticated cast-iron quoins on second and third stories; projecting paneled piers supporting foliated brackets beneath corner urns; decorative Tuscan columns and corner piers with egg-and-dart- molded echinus and projecting pierced pellet-and-lozenge detail on necking; projecting brackets above fourth floor windows supporting projecting, molded roof pediment and framing molded panels

### Alterations, 827-829 Broadway:

#### Alterations before c.1940:

Second floor window configuration altered to current appearance; decorative detail removed above second and third floor column and pier capitals

**Alterations c.1980:** Metal balconies on scrollwork brackets installed at second floor; Art Nouveau storefront installed including paneled bulkhead, fluted cast-iron colonettes with climbing vine motif and composite capitals, curvilinear display and transom window muntins, projecting entrance surround with bulkheads and glass panels, acorn pendant light fixtures, and cast-iron Tuscan column with egg-and-dart echinus; residential entrance door with iron grille

**Subsequent alterations:** Third floor window configuration altered to current appearance; signage; storefront material painted; cast-iron quoins painted to cornice line; awnings above second story windows

### Alterations, 831 Broadway:

**Alterations before c.1940:** Decorative detail removed above second and third floor column and pier capitals

**Alterations between c.1940 and c.1980:** Window configurations on all but three bays of second floor altered to current appearance

**Alterations c.1980:** Art Nouveau storefront installed including paneled bulkhead, fluted cast-iron colonettes with climbing vine motif and composite capitals, curvilinear display and transom window muntins, projecting entrance surround with bulkheads and glass panels, and acorn pendant light fixtures; residential entrance doors with iron grilles. Subsequent alterations: Fourth floor window configuration altered to current appearance; guardrail/parapet installed along roofline; sign board above second and third stories removed; storefront material painted; cast-iron quoins painted to cornice line; awnings above second story windows

## History

827-829 and 831 Broadway, Manhattan

### Development of Union and Washington Squares

The opening of the Erie Canal in the 1820s and the construction of an increasing number of railroads beginning in the 1830s helped establish New York City as the most important center of commerce in the nation.<sup>1</sup> As the city's economy boomed, the blocks at the southern tip of Manhattan were increasingly characterized by business uses, creating the first exclusively commercial district in New York.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the population of New York was increasing rapidly, rising from 125,000 in 1820; to 203,000 in 1830; to 313,000 in 1840; and surpassing a half million by 1850.<sup>3</sup> As business boomed in Lower Manhattan and the population grew, new residential neighborhoods were created at the northern edges of the city.

The city's wealthiest citizens were often at the vanguard of this northward movement, which was aided in large part by the creation of public parks. In 1826 a former potter's field, which had been in active use since 1797, was converted into Washington Military Parade Ground and expanded to nearly nine acres; in 1828 it was landscaped as Washington Square and the blocks below the Square were soon lined with stately row houses.

Similarly, the Commissioners' Plan of 1811 drew a square from 10th Street to 17th Street over the acute angle formed by the "union" of Bloomingdale Road (now Broadway) and the Bowery Road. In 1815, by an act of the State Legislature, this potter's field and squatters' encampment became Union Place and 14th Street

was made its southern extent.<sup>4</sup> The site was authorized as a public place by the State Legislature in 1831, acquired by the City of New York in 1833, and opened to the public in 1839.<sup>5</sup> By the 1850s, through the encouragement of Gramercy Park developer Samuel Ruggles, Union Place was surrounded with the elegant residences of the elite. By that time, however, "the dramatic march of commerce"<sup>6</sup> had begun to colonize the area from lower portions of Broadway, as former Mayor Philip Hone wrote in 1850: "The mania for converting Broadway into a street of shops is greater than ever. There is scarcely a block in the whole extent of this fine street of which some part is not in a state of transmutation."<sup>7</sup> Theaters, hotels, and upscale retailers that had spread northward along the Bowery proliferated in the 1870s and Union Place became Union Square, the center of New York City's most important shopping, entertainment, and hotel district.<sup>8</sup> The expansion of retail activities and the entertainment district—from 10th to 23rd Streets and from 6th Avenue to Broadway—drove the elite residential enclaves further north, to Madison Square, and later closer to Central Park.<sup>9</sup>

The 827-831 Broadway Buildings, which replaced three earlier stores and lofts, were built from 1866-67 as "first class store and storehouse" for Pierre Lorillard III, heir to the New York-based P. Lorillard Tobacco Company—now the oldest operational tobacco company in the United States. From the 1810s to the 1890s, the Lorillards developed sites in what are now SoHo and Tribeca for use in their tobacco production, as well as speculative investments like 827-831 Broadway.<sup>10</sup> The earliest tenants of the 827-831 Broadway Buildings reflect the transition of the area to an entertainment district in their theatrical displays of luxury items and technological wonders.<sup>11</sup> In the 1860s, 827 Broadway was the showroom of the daguerreotypist Harry Glosser; between 1867-77, 827-829 Broadway were the showroom of French

cabinetmaker and importer Alexander Roux, whose elaborate works are in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>12</sup> From 1874 to 1881, 827-829 Broadway were the Wilson's Sewing Machine Rooms, an "elegant, carpeted salesroom of the 1870s, with fashionable ladies and gentlemen scanning the latest model sewing machines".<sup>13</sup> From 1880-1891, 831 Broadway held "the most novel and interesting music ware rooms in the world"<sup>14</sup> for the display of portable, mechanical reed organs by the Mechanical OrguINETTE Co. In 1881, the A. A. Vantine & Company, importer and copier of Asian- and Middle Eastern wares, opened "Vantine's Oriental Store" to the masses at 827-829 Broadway; and in 1886, German garment maker Dr. Jaeger's Sanitary Woolen System Co. opened its flagship American store at 827-829 Broadway to tout pseudoscientific claims about the properties of its merchandise.<sup>15</sup>

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, retailers followed the relocation of the elite north to the area between Union and Madison Squares that became known as Ladies' Mile. By the 1890s, vestiges of the elegant residences, stores, and theaters had been superseded on Union Square by taller buildings that catered to the needs of publishers and manufacturers who had moved to the area. In the early 1900s, the character of the neighborhood began to change as shops, theaters, and hotels moved to Midtown to be closer to the newly completed Pennsylvania Station (1904-1910), Grand Central Terminal (1903-1913), and thriving residential districts uptown. After 1910, commercial areas south of 14th Street began to face increasing competition for tenants by newly-developing districts uptown, with high-quality garment makers and their suppliers preferring to locate to these areas. The decline continued in the years following World War I. Loft floors were subdivided, used for storage, or left empty.<sup>16</sup>

## Marble Palaces and Cast-Iron Storefronts

Throughout the 1830s-1850s, stores and lofts in Manhattan were primarily built in the austere Greek Revival Style. In the United States, the palazzo-inspired store and loft was first brought to New York by architects Joseph Trench and John Butler Snook in the A.T. Stewart Store (1845-1846, a designated New York City Landmark). The white Tuckahoe Marble facade earned the Stewart Store the nickname "the Marble Palace"; against its brick and granite Greek Revival competitors, the Marble Palace became an instant attraction and enormous commercial success and set a precedent for stone-clad stores and lofts throughout Lower Manhattan.<sup>17</sup>

Following the opening of the A.T. Stewart Store, the Italian Renaissance-inspired "commercial palace"<sup>18</sup> model was adopted for a number of different building types, notably the numerous new store and-loft buildings that proliferated on Broadway. Many followed the Stewart store model, employing a storefront with engaged cast-iron columns and pilasters supporting an entablature and upper stories faced with marble or stone. These upper stories were based on Roman and Florentine models; were framed by quoins or paneled pilasters; and had rectangular window openings embellished with molded surrounds and lintels, string courses separating the stories, and a heavy bracketed and/or modillion cornice. With marble fronts on their upper stories and cast iron quoins and columns, the 827-831 Broadway Buildings exhibit the influence of the earlier A.T. Stewart Store while their twin elevations anticipate a later transition to entire cast-iron fronts with repeating elements.

## Architect Griffith Thomas

Griffith Thomas (1818/1820<sup>19</sup>-1879) was born in London and raised on the Isle of Wight, where he began his architectural education. At eighteen, Thomas came to the United States where, after some months in New Haven, he relocated to New York



City to partner with his father, the Welsh-born architect Thomas Thomas, as Thomas & Son.<sup>20</sup> Along with the architects Joseph Trench and John Butler Snook, Griffith Thomas was one of the earliest proponents of the palazzo-inspired “commercial palace” and built numerous Italianate stores-and-lofts on Broadway, retail emporiums, and hotels.<sup>21</sup> In 1856, Thomas built a brownstone mansion for William Backhouse Astor and Caroline Schermerhorn Astor on the southwest corner of 34th Street and Fifth Avenue, spurring a relocation of the elite from Washington Square to Murray Hill<sup>22</sup>; construction of the mansion in the brownstone tradition was meant to evoke associations with the aristocratic elite and thereafter, Thomas became known for his work with prestigious clientele.<sup>23</sup>

Griffith Thomas became the principal designer at Thomas & Son in 1860-61 and promptly embraced Victorian eclecticism. His Continental Insurance Company Building (1862-63; demolished 1894) is thought to have been the earliest Second Empire commercial structure in New York, and his ornament-rich National Park Bank (1867-68; demolished 1960) became a paradigm of Second Empire architecture that was more holistic and imaginative than an Italianate base with a Mansard appliqué.<sup>24</sup>

Though responsible for the design of numerous marble palaces in New York, Thomas was an early and prolific proponent of cast-iron architecture: “He was one of the first to recognize iron as a building material for business structures, and he set to work duplicating forms of stone in that metal until Broadway and the dry goods district of the city are crowded with these metallic-stone constructions.”<sup>25</sup> The 827-831 Broadway Buildings capture Thomas’ transitional work in marble with cast-iron piers and columns, along with contemporaneous Thomas-designed structures like 470 Broome Street (in the SoHo Cast Iron District) which likewise feature cast-iron storefront elements

below a marble or stone facade.

Thomas began to build in entire cast-iron facades in 1869,<sup>26</sup> a shift best exemplified in his 1872-73 addition to his 1868-69 Arnold, Constable & Company Building (within the Ladies’ Mile Historic District), which duplicates the earlier marble-and-iron elevation in cast iron. Thomas & Son were known to have pioneered certain cast-iron framing techniques in their adaptation of the material from industrial technologies to architectural ornament.<sup>27</sup>

At the time of his death, Griffith Thomas was widely considered the most prolific architect in New York: “It is said that by actual count each block on the length of Fifth Avenue to the Park has an average of three of his buildings.”<sup>28</sup> Today, buildings designed by Thomas can be found in the SoHo Cast Iron-, Ladies Mile-, NoHo-, Tribeca West-, Tribeca East-, and Metropolitan Museum Historic Districts, and also include the center section of the Astor Library (1849-52 Alexander Saelzler; 1856-69 Griffith Thomas; 1879-81 Thomas Stent) at 425 Lafayette Street.

## **The Lower Manhattan Arts Scene in the Early 20th Century**

As representatives of the era in which post-World War II New York City became the center of the arts, the 827-831 Broadway Buildings reflect the movement of artists from Greenwich Village to adjacent, less expensive areas between World War I and World War II. Greenwich Village gained a new cultural prominence in the years before World War I, as writers, artists, political radicals, and well-educated, liberal-minded people began to colonize the neighborhood, attracted by cheap rents, the diversity of an ethnic neighborhood, and the atmosphere of Old World charm created by the narrow streets and old buildings.<sup>29</sup> The area increasingly attracted middle-class professionals interested in experiencing, but not necessarily

contributing to, the artistic atmosphere. Thus many artists, writers, poets, and eccentrics—“people with taste, but no money,” as Greenwich House social worker Caroline Ware described them in 1935<sup>30</sup>—were squeezed out of the neighborhood by rising rents that targeted affluent individuals in search of the “bohemian” character. With the advent of World War I, many of those who participated actively in a bohemian way of life and the idealism it represented left the area.<sup>31</sup> The improvements made by the resident artists and the presence of tourists enhanced the physical environment of Greenwich Village so much that, according to some writers, rents increased to the point that the artists and bohemians could no longer afford to live there.<sup>32</sup>

At the end of World War II and into the 1950s, the area experienced another large infusion of creatives looking for acceptance for their alternate points of view. This period marked the arrival of Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, and other writers of the Beat Generation who met and worked in Village bars and coffeehouses. Greenwich Village at that time, however, was too expensive for most of them to actually live there.<sup>33</sup> Instead, in the adjacent low-rent area which came to be known as “Tenth Street,” a generation of European immigrant, American transplant, and native New York artists came upon spacious, inexpensive, often vacant lofts with high ceilings and large windows meant to suit long-gone industries. Former warehouses and vacant lofts became studios, galleries and, often illegally, living quarters.

### **The Tenth Street Artists’ Enclave**

Beginning in the late 1940s, Abstract Expressionism heralded New York City’s influence as the center of the Western art world. While an “uptown group” of artists had chosen to locate closer to patrons and upscale galleries, the experimental core of Abstract Expressionist art was in Lower Manhattan, in

particular in an area known as “Tenth Street,” a low-rent section of Greenwich Village between 8th and 14th Streets and First and Sixth Avenues. In “Tenth Street: A Geography of Modern Art,” critic Harold Rosenberg wrote about the distinction between the Tenth Street area and Greenwich Village—“which is adjacent to it and from which, in a sense, it dribbled down”<sup>34</sup>—as formative for the emergent avant-garde. To Rosenberg, Greenwich Village was “an imitation Paris,”<sup>35</sup> down to its replica of the Arc de Triomphe in Washington Square. As a scenic simulacrum, Greenwich Village became “a distraction for the artist who wished to begin with his own reality. Not so Tenth Street; no one could mistake it for an aesthetic creation. ... The Block of the Artists, in contrast, has hardly the picturesqueness of a slum.”<sup>36</sup> With its anti-picturesque, one-off establishments and structures, the “neutral zone” of Tenth Street became a *tabula rasa* for artists in search of a break from Europe:

Here de Kooning’s conception of “no environment” for the figures of his *Women* has been realized to the maximum ... The modernism of Tenth Street has passed beyond the dogma of “aesthetic space” ... Its studios and its canvases have room for the given and for the haphazard ...<sup>37</sup>

The arrival of artists in search of adaptable, low-rent lofts spacious enough for large-format work made Tenth Street a nerve center of the Abstract Expressionist movement with a remarkable concentration of artists. After a series of studios near Washington, Union, and Madison Squares, Willem and Elaine de Kooning rented apartments at 63 Carmine Street from 1942-46, 85 Fourth Avenue from 1946-52, 88 East 10th Street from 1952-63, and 831 Broadway from 1958-63, all in the Tenth Street area. From 1935-45 Jackson Pollock, and,

from 1942-45, Lee Krasner, rented a fifth-floor apartment at 46 East 8th Street. Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Esteban Vicente, Philip Guston, Conrad Marca-Relli, Milton Resnick and Harold Rosenberg were other residents of the Tenth Street enclave. Throughout the 1950s, new arrivals to Tenth Street were drawn in by the area's artistic cachet, low rents, and constellation of institutions, salons, and artists' haunts, and transformed the low-scale, often vacant lofts throughout the area.

From 1948-49, The Subjects of the Artist School (later Studio 35 at New York University) began a series of lectures and open sessions to cultivate and advance avant-garde ideas in a rented loft at 35 East 8th Street.<sup>38</sup> The founders William Baziotis, David Hare, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, and Mark Rothko hosted speakers like Jean (Hans) Arp, John Cage, Willem de Kooning, Adolph Gottlieb, and Ad Reinhardt.<sup>39</sup>

In 1949, Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, Ad Reinhardt, and others pooled funds to lease a loft at 39 East 8th Street, transform the interior through their collective effort, and form the artists' hangout known as The Club. Though short lived (the building was demolished in 1953) de Kooning reflected on its significance:

We always wanted not exactly to start a club but to have a loft and for years I had it in mind ... We didn't want to have anything to do with art. We just wanted to get a loft, instead of sitting in those god-damned cafeterias. One night we decided to do it—we got up twenty charter members who each gave ten dollars and found a place on Eighth Street. ... We tried but couldn't get a name so we called it the Club. ... The Club came along at just the right time. It was so important, getting together, arguing, thinking."<sup>40</sup>

Meant as a collective space and coffeehouse, The Club grew its membership and focus to become "a mirror for the promise and predicaments of American art"<sup>41</sup> with passionate discussions, lectures and presentations from prominent painters and poets. Playwright and essayist Lionel Abel wrote about the atmosphere of The Club as singular, significant, and electric:

... at the painters' club, in the excitement over the new paintings being produced and the feeling that finally the city had the kind of art that was quite worthy of it, the meeting of the already established and the scarcely known, the already famous and those merely hoping to become that, the skilled, the semi-skilled, and the unskilled, who, however, had aspirations, produced an atmosphere like that around a race track.<sup>42</sup>

In 1951, artists organized a collective exhibition at 60 East 9th Street. After the interior was cleaned, painted, and partitioned by members of The Club, The Ninth Street Show opened with one work by each of almost seventy artists including Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg, Ad Reinhardt, and David Smith. The show became a seminal moment in the formation of the New York School: "It was a historical phenomenon, in short, rather than the expression of a few solitary and eccentric American voices."<sup>43</sup>

The collective spirit of the Abstract Expressionists was manifest in artist-run, low-budget, cooperative Tenth Street galleries meant to contrast the conservative—and far more selective—"uptown" venues on Madison Avenue and 57th Street. In the 1950s and early 1960s, several galleries, including The Tanager Gallery, Camino

Gallery, March Gallery, Brata Gallery, and Area Gallery on East 10<sup>th</sup> Street; and the Hansa and later James galleries on East 12th Street; were important to the evolution of the arts scene in New York City, to the collective atmosphere of the Abstract Expressionist movement, and to the convergence of avant-garde artists in the Tenth Street districts.<sup>44</sup>

Outside of lofts and ad hoc exhibition spaces, more formal avenues for the arts were available in the Tenth Street district. From 1927-1943, the collector, critic, and painter Albert E. Gallatin exhibited his private collection to the public at 100 Washington Square East as the Gallery of Living Art (later Museum of Living Art),<sup>45</sup> the first American institution with an exclusive focus on Modernism, primarily Cubism; the initial collection included the work of thirteen American and twenty-four School of Paris artists, including Georges Braque, Fernand Léger, Juan Gris, and Pablo Picasso. From 1938-58 at 52 West Eighth Street,<sup>46</sup> German artist and educator Hans Hofmann—himself a resident of 77 West Fourth Street—ran The Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts which became one of the most prestigious arts academies in the United States. There, Hofmann taught artists the importance of precision, repetition, and diligent studio practice. With his dynamic brushwork, Hofmann himself was one of the earliest forerunners of Abstract Expressionism.<sup>47</sup> Students of the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts included Lee Krasner, Mercedes Matter, Joan Mitchell, Helen Frankenthaler, Nell Blaine, Ray Eames, Wolf Kahn, and Robert De Niro, Sr., among others.<sup>48</sup>

The ambiance of the avant-garde was at its apex in another incubator of the Abstract Expressionist movement—and one of the most notorious establishments in the Tenth Street district: The Cedar Tavern. At 24 University Place from 1945-63, the Cedar was a favorite haunt of artists. Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko, Franz Kline, Phillip Guston, Mercedes Matter, Allen

Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Frank O'Hara, and innumerable others were often seen at the Cedar, and Lionel Abel's "Scenes from the Cedar Bar" characterizes the significance of the Cedar's atmosphere to evolution of the arts:

... In the Cedar Bar, ideas were in the air. How remarkable that is one will perhaps realize in reflecting on this fact: ideas have not often been in the air in New York City. New York has hardly ever been the place where original ideas were first formulated or expressed. It has been the place ideas visited first, having been generated somewhere else. Also, it has been the place where ideas were welcomed.

... It was drab, grimy, and chaotic, but beneath the noise and the hum of conversation, the talk about art and by the artists—by Philip Guston, Franz Kline, Bill de Kooning, George Spaventa, and Mercedes Matter ... there was an extraordinary optimism, quite American in fact, about painting, and most especially, American painting.<sup>49</sup>

### World War II and the Arts in New York

The systematic destruction of human life and devastation of cities across Europe<sup>50</sup> during World War II was a pivotal moment in international conflict and affairs and its reverberations were felt in the arts as an influx of European artists sought refuge in the United States. Within totalitarian regimes, authority over artistic production, expression, and culture was essential to the maintenance of power and elimination of dissidence; the arts were seen as a means to influence the masses and to present an idealized vision of an ingroup at the exclusion or demonization of others. Under that rubric, German Chancellor Adolf Hitler began a



systematic campaign to impose an official aesthetic and eliminate the art and artists he considered “degenerate”—often Expressionist, abstract, or by Jewish and Leftist artists.<sup>51</sup> Preeminent European artists were driven from Germany and Nazi-occupied territories with a catalytic impact on the development of international modernism: these artists’ settlement in the United States set in motion the establishment of the first indigenous American Art movement: Abstract Expressionism.

While not all artists sought refuge in the United States or chose to remain permanent residents, the aggregation of European and American artists in post-World War II New York effectively shifted dominance in the arts from Paris to the United States. Wartime New York received a diverse influx of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Cubist, Surrealist, and Dada, and other artists, including Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dalí, Piet Mondrian, Max Ernst, Fernand Léger, and Marc Chagall, among innumerable others, as well as German artist and educator Hans Hofmann. These artists joined earlier European asylum seekers like Arshile Gorky and Mark Rothko; opportunists like Willem de Kooning; American transplants like Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, Ad Reinhardt, and Clyfford Still; and first-generation New Yorkers like Adolph Gottlieb and Barnett Newman.

While asylum and refuge were available elsewhere—Bauhaus émigrés Walter Gropius, László Moholy-Nagy, Josef Albers, Marcel Breuer, and Mies van der Rohe were appointed to posts in other American cities—New York offered a uniquely hospitable environment for the creation and exhibition of art. In Manhattan, artists and patrons alike were exposed to European modernist movements through a cavalcade of institutions that had opened from the Great Depression through World War II, including the Museum of Modern Art on 5th Avenue at 57th Street (1929); the Whitney Museum of American Art on West 8th Street in

Greenwich Village (1931); The Museum of Non-Objective Painting (later Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum) on 24 East 54th Street (1939); and Peggy Guggenheim’s *Art of This Century* at 30 West 57th Street (1942). From 1926-1947, the F. Valentine Dudensing Galley (later the Valentine Gallery) on 57th Street was the “temple of modernism” with retrospectives of work by Henri Matisse and Paul Cézanne (1928); the first American solo exhibitions of work by Giorgio de Chirico (1928), Joan Miró (1930), Wassily Kandinsky (1932) and Piet Mondrian (1942); and, in 1939, the American debut of Picasso’s seminal 1937 work, *Guernica*. Galleries likewise became environments in which collectors’ progressive tastes translated to the promotion of avant-garde work.<sup>52</sup>

During World War II, transatlantic shipment became dangerous and American galleries were unable to import European artworks.<sup>53</sup> After the war, the combination of an eager public with a thirst for new work, a concentration of museums and galleries desiring to appear current, a growing nexus of immigrant and American-born artists in Manhattan, and the relative economic vigor of the United States shifted the center of Western art to New York City. This auspicious alignment of factors formed what playwright and essayist Lionel Abel called “the organic conditions that made possible the breakthrough in painting in the late 40’s and early 50’s.”<sup>54</sup> Like Harold Rosenberg, the influential critic who had written “On the Fall of Paris” in 1940, Abel echoed a sense that Europe, war-torn and unable to sustain the artistic experimentation and dynamism born there, had ceded its reign to New York City:

... New York City had provided a new, organic situation for forms of painting which Paris and the Parisian school could no longer nurture, and which had some of their richest, wildest, most fantastic developments in what ten years

before would have seemed the unlikely place—New York City.<sup>55</sup>

In Europe, the emergence of New York as the center of the arts met with resistance and skepticism.<sup>56</sup> In an article about Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning, and Jackson Pollock's contributions to the American Pavilion at the 1950 Venice Biennale, *New York Times* critic Aline Louchheim (later Saarinen) wrote: "Even the most intelligent critic to whom I spoke had spent little time looking at Gorky and De Kooning or trying to understand how their abstract painting differs from what is happening in Europe."<sup>57</sup> A review in *Cahiers d'Art* was more contemptuous: "The masses who were so favorably disposed to engaging with the new painting from the United States ... now wonder if that painting even exists."<sup>58</sup> Even years later, in reaction to the now-canonical exhibition *The New American Painting* in 1958-1959, the critic for *Le Figaro* in Paris, wrote:

Why do they think they are painters?  
We would end up being, I won't say  
convinced—for the only greatness here  
is in the size of the canvases—but  
disarmed if we did not deplore the  
terrible danger which the publicity given  
to such examples offers, as well as the  
imprudence of the combined national  
museums in offering official support all  
too generously to such contagious  
heresies.<sup>59</sup>

Nonetheless, with a sense of triumph at the conclusion of the exhibition, dozens of New York artists met at MoMa to celebrate their symbolic arrival on the international arts scene, as art dealer Irving Blum noted:

Everyone was there, in the garden, and really there were only about one hundred and twenty of us. The art world was just a village then. Yet there was a feeling that something momentous had happened. There had been a breakthrough. It wasn't a matter of the market. There was still hardly any.<sup>60</sup>

## The New York School and Abstract Expressionist Art

A pervasive sense of pessimism, despair, and disillusionment came to the forefront of European art in the immediate aftermath of World War II. Existentialist works with emphases on alienation and fragility, indictments of atrocities and barbarism, and a promotion of raw, instinctive art gave new form to earlier artistic explorations of gesture, expressions of the inner self, and the manipulation of materials to elicit emotion from the viewer.<sup>61</sup> Among the emergent avant-garde in the United States, the sense of despair necessitated a search for new techniques and subject matter, as artist Barnett Newman noted: "After the monstrosity of the war, what do we do? What is there to paint? We have to start all over again."<sup>62</sup> In New York, artists sought to detach themselves and their work from Europe; Willem de Kooning would announce a break from European influence on American art forms in a provocative address at MoMa,<sup>63</sup> and artists like Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, Clyfford Still, Robert Motherwell, Adolph Gottlieb, Barnett Newman, and William Baziotes mined Native American and ancient imagery for inspiration.

In this context, Abstract Expressionism—the first major American avant-garde movement—arose in New York in the late 1940s and 1950s. As the name implies, Abstract Expressionist art is, for the most part, non-figurative but expresses the artist's emotion or inner state with the intent to evoke emotion in the viewer. Some Abstract Expressionist

sought to universalize their work to express the “collective unconscious” described by psychiatrist Carl Jung. Some built on improvisation techniques, like Surrealist “psychic automatism,” to render unconscious forces visible through spontaneous techniques. Because of this mission to extract interior emotion, Abstract Expressionist works often appear raw, spontaneous, and energetic, and are meant to evoke an instinctual response, as artist Mark Rothko wrote:

We assert man’s absolute emotions. We don’t need props or legends. We create images whose realities are self-evident. Free ourselves from memory, association, nostalgia, legend, myth. Instead of making cathedrals out of Christ, man or life, we make it out of ourselves, out of our own feelings. The image we produce is understood by anyone who looks at it without nostalgic glasses of history.<sup>64</sup>

As Abstract Expressionism arose in post-World War II New York, the term “New York School” came into use in the 1940s to suggest the succession of the Manhattan avant-garde over the School of Paris.<sup>65</sup> These Abstract Expressionists are seen as the first authentic American avant-garde, and their work is seen as uniquely American in its monumental scale and celebration of individual expression.

Because of its incredible variation, Abstract Expressionist art is written about in terms of two stylistic tendencies: gestural abstraction or “Action Painting,” which involves energetic applications of pigment; and chromatic abstraction or “Color Field Painting,” which mines the emotional resonance of color. Jackson Pollock’s work, with its rhythmic splatters and exceedingly physical technique is a paradigm of gestural abstraction and its emphasis on

immersion in creative process, as Pollock’s ambition to “literally be in the painting” reflects. While Pollock’s lack of a compositional focus was a significant departure from artistic convention, gestural abstraction also encompasses more figurative works like the *Women* series by Willem de Kooning. Through gestural brush strokes and the energetic application of paint, de Kooning’s figures of women emerge from nests of lines and patches of color, and subvert the idealization of the female figure in the arts. Like Pollock, the process of mark making was tantamount for de Kooning, who would work and rework his canvases—in the case of *Woman I*, over the course of two years from 1950-1952.<sup>66</sup> Harold Rosenberg exalted the intense, visceral approach of pioneers like Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, Philip Guston, Milton Resnick, and others in “The American Action Painters,” in which he wrote about their attempts to get “inside the canvas”<sup>67</sup>:

At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act—rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze or “express” an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on canvas was not a picture but an event. The painter no longer approached his easel with an image in mind; he went up to it with material in his hand to do something to that other piece of material in front of him. The image would be the result of the encounter.<sup>68</sup>

In contrast, the more sober work of the chromatic abstractionists relies on an eloquent use of color to evoke an emotional resonance. Barnett Newman simplified his compositions into single, slightly modulated color fields riven by “zips” which run from canvas edge to edge; these “zips”

invigorate and give scale to Newman's monumental color fields. Another chromatic abstractionist, Mark Rothko, eliminated figurative references to access a sublime, universal "spirit of myth"<sup>69</sup> and focused on color as a vehicle to express "basic human emotions—tragedy ecstasy, doom."<sup>70</sup> Monumental and meant to be seen in close environments, Rothko's canvases are intended to envelop the viewer in confrontation with the work to evoke emotion: "The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them. And if you, as you say, are moved only by their color relationships, then you miss the point."<sup>71</sup>

While the techniques and approaches of Abstract Expressionists were diverse, their work used abstract forms, expressive brushwork, and monumental scale to communicate universal themes that took on particular relevance in the wake of World War II.

### **Willem de Kooning (1904-1997)**

Willem de Kooning was born in Rotterdam in 1904. In 1916, he became an apprentice at Gidding & Zonen, an upscale design firm where, for four years, he was taught paint and surface techniques that came to inform his later work as an artist; with encouragement, guidance, and leftover paints from his employers, twelve-year-old de Kooning began to paint still lifes. While an apprentice housepainter and decorator, de Kooning enrolled in a night course at the Academie van Beeldende Kunsten en Technische Wetenschappen (Academy of Fine Arts and Applied Sciences, now Willem de Kooning Academie) in Rotterdam and was taught classical methods of representational drawing and painting. In 1920, de Kooning became an assistant to Bernard Romein, a freelance designer and art director; through Romein, de Kooning became familiar with artist exhibitions, publications, and philosophical texts to supplement his rigorous technical

education.<sup>72</sup>

To escape an unstable home life, de Kooning found itinerant work on the riverfront docks and in retail signage before stowing away with an acquaintance on a British freighter bound for the United States in July 1926. On arrival in Newport News, Virginia, de Kooning's initial impression of America was one of disappointment: Tidewater Virginia "was a sort of Holland, lowlands, just like back home. What the hell did I want to go to America for?"<sup>73</sup> With interim work as an engine stoker on a ship to Boston, de Kooning took a roundabout series of trains to circumvent the requirements of legal immigration and arrive in Hoboken, New Jersey, where arrangements had been made at the Dutch Seaman's Home.<sup>74</sup> From Hoboken, where he worked as a house painter,<sup>75</sup> de Kooning began to visit New York City and its galleries, unaware of the nascent arts scene in Lower Manhattan:

... I didn't expect that there were any artists here. We never heard in Holland in those days that there were artists in America. There was still that feeling like that was the place where an individual could get places and become well off, if you work hard; art was naturally in Europe. But very soon when I was here for about six months or a year I found out that there were a lot of artists here too. There was a Greenwich Village; there was a whole tradition of painting and poetry; I just didn't know about it, and it must have directed me back to the interests I had when I was fourteen, fifteen, sixteen years old.<sup>76</sup>

De Kooning moved to Manhattan in 1927 and began to paint and draw as soon as he was able to afford supplies on his freelancer's income. In 1935, he left stable employment as a window dresser for the shoe retailer A. S. Beck<sup>77</sup> and enrolled in the



Federal Art Project (FAP), a division of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.<sup>78</sup> The FAP was meant to introduce art and artists into the lives of communities across the United States and to provide work relief for artists, allowing them the freedom to choose their style, media, and subject matter. In operation from 1935 to 1943, the FAP was the largest of the New Deal art initiatives with a workforce of as many as 10,000 artists; as the FAP did not enforce an American citizenship requirement,<sup>79</sup> it employed an assortment of American and immigrant artists, including Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner, Diego Rivera, Mark Rothko, Alice Neel, Berenice Abbott, Stuart Davis, Ad Reinhardt, Joseph Stella, Philip Guston, Thomas Hart Benton, and others. Each week, the paycheck queue at the Works Progress Administration Headquarters on 42nd Street became an impromptu salon for the exchange of stories and ideas; afterwards, artists went to cafes, taverns, and each other's studios to continue their discussions.<sup>80</sup> The atmosphere of collaboration brought about by the FAP is thought to have been a foundation for the collaborative climate of the eventual New York School.

In July 1937, the Federal Government broadcast its intention to require legal American citizenship of all Works Progress Administration employees. Despite a swift departure due to his illegal immigration status,<sup>81</sup> de Kooning saw his participation in the FAP as a decisive moment in his career:

The Project was terribly important. It gave us enough to live on and we could paint what we wanted ... I had to resign after a year because I was an alien, but even in that short time, I changed my attitude toward being an artist. Instead of doing odd jobs and painting on the side, I painted and did

odd jobs on the side. My life was the same, but I had a different view of it. I gave up the idea of first making a fortune and then painting in my old age.<sup>82</sup>

In New York, de Kooning rented a series of apartments, first near Madison Square, which he thought conservative and bourgeois, then closer to Washington and Union Squares, where he came to be a fulcrum of the Tenth Street artists' enclave. There, the concentration of artists meant that even for de Kooning, who avoided the limelight, chance encounters with other artists—like his with Mark Rothko in Union Square and Arshile Gorky in Washington Square—were inevitable. Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, the classically-trained but conversant de Kooning painted both figurative and abstract works. In 1946, he began to experiment with inexpensive enamel paints in an abstract black and white series. Among these works was *Excavation* (1950), one of the first large format canvases of the era and one which critics consider decisive for the emergence of Abstract Expressionism with its dynamic tension between abstraction and figuration. De Kooning's works from the late 1940s and 1950s are touchstones of 20th Century American art. In 1948, the Charles Egan Gallery ran the first solo exhibition of de Kooning's work, a financial failure which nonetheless won de Kooning exposure to a wide audience of critics, collectors, and art enthusiasts. In 1950, works by de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, and Arshile Gorky were chosen to represent the United States at the 25th Venice Biennale; a further twenty-seven of De Kooning's works were later shown at the 27th Venice Biennale. In March 1953, the exhibit "Willem de Kooning: Paintings on the Theme of the Woman" at the Sidney Janis Gallery included six large oils and numerous sketches of a seated woman, a series de Kooning—who had met Elaine Fried (later de Kooning) in 1938 and initially used her as his model, muse, and

inspiration—had begun in 1940. While most other Abstract Expressionist artists forwent figurative representation, de Kooning’s *Woman* series sought to coax the figure from nests of lines and thick, energetic applications of paint. The Museum of Modern Art bought de Kooning’s enigmatic and provocative *Woman I* in 1953; the controversial reception of de Kooning’s figurative works cemented his reputation as a standout of the New York arts scene, though he shifted focus to abstract urban landscapes in the late 1950s and produced figurative portraits at points throughout the seven decades of his artistic career.<sup>83</sup> Along with Jackson Pollack, Willem De Kooning was one of the foremost artists of the New York School. After Pollock’s death in 1956, de Kooning became the reluctant protagonist of the Abstract Expressionist movement and a walk with him through Greenwich Village was like “being with a movie star.”<sup>84</sup>

In late 1958, de Kooning rented the fourth-floor apartment at 831 Broadway and oversaw its interior renovation to suit his practice. Poet Edwin Denby wrote about the interior as “wonderfully airy and light, with slender cast-iron columns, that in the 1870s might have been a department store. The landlord had reconditioned it to suit his tenant.”<sup>85</sup> Photographer Dan Budnik recalled his impression of the interior after a ten-day session with de Kooning in 1962: “Walking into Willem de Kooning’s 831 Broadway studio that Monday morning in 1962 was like entering a New York artist’s dream space. Daylight from the skylights and large front windows reflected off white walls and a polished natural wood floor, creating a proper balance in the ambient light; I was in a photographer’s heaven.”<sup>86</sup> While at 831 Broadway, Budnik produced the photograph *Action Painting, 831 Broadway*, which captures de Kooning at work with vibrant ochre paint—one of what de Kooning called his “circus colors—and *Willem De Kooning, 831 Broadway*, an intimate portrait taken at the moment when de Kooning was

given the news of artist Franz Kline’s death.

831 Broadway was the last of Willem de Kooning’s New York City residences before his permanent move to a custom-built residence in East Hampton.<sup>87</sup> While at 831 Broadway, De Kooning began to experiment with vivid tones—a shift his biographers attribute to the quality of light in the studio—and to deviate in his work from dense urban landscapes to abstract pastoral scenes that anticipated his move from Manhattan. *Door to the River* (1960, in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art), *Rosy-Fingered Dawn at Louse Point* (1963, in the collection of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam) and *Pastorale* (1963, in a private collection) were among the last large-format works de Kooning painted at 831 Broadway and foreshadow his departure: “They’re emotions, most of them. Most of them are landscapes and highways and sensations of that, outside the city—with the feeling of going to the city or coming from it.”<sup>88</sup> In 1964, de Kooning, who had become an American citizen while a resident of 831 Broadway in 1961, was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Lyndon B. Johnson for his significant contributions to the arts.<sup>89</sup>

Willem de Kooning’s work continues to influence generations of artists. His contributions to the culture, atmosphere, and artistic cachet of Tenth Street were essential to the formation of the New York School and establishment of New York City as the center of artistic production.

### Elaine de Kooning (1918-1989)

Elaine de Kooning was born Elaine Marie Catherine Fried in Brooklyn in 1918 and went on frequent, formative visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>90</sup> At nineteen, Elaine left Hunter College to enroll in the Leonardo da Vinci Art School on Tompkins Square, where she “drew all day every day”<sup>91</sup> under the tutelage of Conrad Marca-Relli. Elaine De Kooning withdrew from the Leonardo da

Vinci Art School and enrolled in courses at the American Artists School under instructors Stuart Davis and Raphael Soyer. Through her work as an artists' model, Elaine became an acquaintance of numerous New York artists and became familiar with the currents and ideologies that drove their practice—an experience that came to impact her later work as an educator and magazine contributor.

At twenty, Elaine met thirty-four-year-old Willem de Kooning, who offered her instruction in painting and drawing partly to allay the suspicions of her mother as to the nature of their relationship.<sup>92</sup> Willem and Elaine were married from 1943 until her death in 1989, though the pair separated from 1957 to 1975. Over the course of her career, Elaine de Kooning's work progressed from vibrant likenesses in the 1940s, to less exact, more energetic brushwork in the mid-1940s, to a synthesis in the late 1950s, with portraits that emerge from dynamic brushstrokes. Her evolution as a painter is evident in series with basketball players, faceless men, bullfighters, and Bacchus as subjects and others which drew brushwork inspiration from Paleolithic art and sumi-e ink washes.

In 1948, Elaine de Kooning became a writer for *Artnews* under her close confidant and editor Thomas Hess. As a contributor for four decades, she wrote in accessible terms that brought the ideas of Abstract Expressionism to a wider audience at a time when the movement was met with skepticism: "Elaine was very active in finding a vocabulary with which to speak about the work beginning to proliferate in New York City."<sup>93</sup> Her accounts of artists at work gave exposure to the innovative techniques that were paramount to Abstract Expressionist work. As an artist close to a gamut of other artists, Elaine de Kooning won recognition for the unique rapport evident in her articles on Arshile Gorky, Josef Albers, Andrew Wyeth, Franz Kline, Hans Hofmann, Edwin Dickinson, and others. De Kooning's closeness to other artists made her an

ideal ambassador for smaller downtown galleries—De Kooning was a member in the cooperative Camino Gallery at 92 East Tenth Street—and at the same time, for the creative cachet of the Tenth Street enclave. As an artist, writer, and champion of other artists, Elaine de Kooning was a cultivator of the Abstract Expressionist movement; painter and longtime acquaintance Robert Dash would describe her as "a walking agar solution."<sup>94</sup>

In 1949, Willem and Elaine de Kooning participated in the exhibition "Artists: Man and Wife" with Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner, Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth, and Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp at the Sidney Janis Gallery. While Elaine would later refute an allegation that she had set aside her career to bolster Willem's,<sup>95</sup> she amended her view of the exhibition's aims: "It seemed like a good idea at the time, but later I came to think that it was a bit of a put-down of the women. There was something about the show that sort of attached women—wives—to the real artists."<sup>96</sup> In 1952, the Stable Gallery in New York ran Elaine de Kooning's first one-artist exhibition, and ran subsequent exhibitions of her work in 1954 and 1956.

From 1962-1966, during her separation from Willem de Kooning, Elaine de Kooning rented an apartment one floor below his and with a separate entrance at 827 Broadway.<sup>97</sup> While at 827 Broadway, she began to host bimonthly parties known as "brawls" for dozens of guest painters, poets, and other of her acquaintances.<sup>98</sup> In 1962, Elaine de Kooning's portrait of John F. Kennedy, a commission for the Truman Library now in the National Portrait Gallery, was painted in her third floor studio at 827 Broadway after a two-week session at the Winter White House in West Palm Beach, Florida. As an abstract expressionist, a woman, and an artist with few prior commissions, de Kooning was an unorthodox choice for the commission but was thought to be uniquely able to

capture the essence of her subject—especially one like Kennedy, who was in constant motion. After completing the commission, De Kooning continued to paint and sketch Kennedy from memory for months, until shock at the news of his assassination made her unable to paint for a year: “The assassin dropped my brush.”<sup>99</sup> The artist Paul Jenkins spoke about de Kooning’s intense attachment to both the profusion of portraits on the walls and to the workspace at 827 Broadway itself in the wake of the assassination:

In 1963, I had arranged to rent Elaine de Kooning’s studio for three months. Crossing the Atlantic by ship, I learned of the assassination of JFK. When I arrived in New York, I was met at the dock by Irving Sandler, who took me directly to Elaine’s loft. Inside I saw throngs of portraits of JFK. Elaine said, “Now do you see why I can’t rent my studio to you?”<sup>100</sup>

Elaine De Kooning was the only artist to paint Kennedy from life and her individualistic, dynamic brushwork captured the President as youthful, intense, and energetic. De Kooning was a significant contributor to both the atmosphere and artistic output of the New York School. Her works have been shown in over fifty exhibitions in the United States, some as a result of retrospective recognition of her influence in the last decade of her life.

### **Paul Jenkins (1923-2012)**

William Paul Jenkins was born in Kansas City, Missouri where regular visits to the Asian and Southeastern collections at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (then the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art) imbued him with a “sense of mystery about the universe”<sup>101</sup> and appreciation for

expansive scale and radiant washes of color.<sup>102</sup>

Jenkins’ work at a ceramics plant as a teenager later influenced his tactile paint application techniques and expertise with color washes and effects.

A pharmacist’s mate in the United States Naval Air Corps from 1944-46, Jenkins used the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act to enroll in the Art Students League of New York as a student of Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Morris Kantor from 1948-52. As Jenkins’ work gained note, his first solo exhibitions were held in Paris in 1954, in the United States in 1955, and in New York at the Martha Jackson Gallery 1956.

In 1959, Jenkins’ studies of Kant and Goethe—particularly their writings on color and perception—inspired him to title his subsequent works *Phenomena* with a geographic or descriptive identifier.<sup>103</sup> At the same time, Jenkins began to use an ivory knife given to him as a gift as a means to guide thin washes of acrylic paint across primed canvases: “The substance of ivory acts like an invisible tool—it is organic and leaves no marks or traces of itself on the canvas.”<sup>104</sup> As with Jackson Pollock, Jenkins’ technique became evident in, and essential to, both his mythos and his work: Jenkins would hoist a canvas “as if it were a sail,”<sup>105</sup> tilt it to manipulate thin washes of paint, and coax wet pigments with his ivory knife to create luminous effects. Like other Abstract Expressionists who forwent brushwork for instinctive and spontaneous techniques, Jenkins encouraged the element of chance in the evolution of his works: “I try to paint like a craps shooter throwing dice, utilizing past experience and my knowledge of the odds. It’s a big gamble, and that’s why I love it.”<sup>106</sup>

From 1960-63, Jenkins kept a small studio at 537 East 12th Street, on the eastern fringe of the Tenth Street enclave. In 1963, he rented the fourth-floor apartment at 831 Broadway from William de Kooning and painted there until the expiration of his lease in 2000. For Jenkins, 831 Broadway was closer



to the heart of Tenth Street and a provided a more spacious, light-rich workspace; in reference to the abundant natural light in the apartment—and in the midst of construction of his own custom-built residence in Springs, New York—de Kooning wrote to Jenkins, “With your color and things like that ... I feel the place will serve you good.”<sup>107</sup> While at 831 Broadway, Jenkins painted notable works including *Phenomena 831 Broadway* and the apartment became a magnet for artists and dignitaries: “The first lady of France, Danielle Mitterrand, once visited the studio, and the party he gave for her was attended by guests like Paloma Picasso, Robert Motherwell and Berenice Abbott.”<sup>108</sup> The 1965 documentary short film *The Ivory Knife: Paul Jenkins at Work*, was partly filmed at 831 Broadway in 1964, was shown at The Museum of Modern Art, and received the Golden Eagle Award at the Venice International Film Festival. Portions of the 1978 film *An Unmarried Woman*, in which Jenkins’ work and studio stood in for those of a fictional artist, were shot at 831 Broadway. Jenkins kept his studio books in an armoire, a “vast closet painted in blue, yellow and pink by Bill de Kooning” and built by de Kooning while in residence here; as de Kooning and Jenkins had agreed, Jenkins took the armoire with him on his departure from 831 Broadway in 2000.

While at 831 Broadway, Jenkins was a frequent customer of The Strand bookstore across the street; the bookstore dedicated a window to Jenkins on the occasion of his death in 2012. Jenkins’ works are in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art in New York, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and dozens of other museums around the globe.

### **Herbert Ferber (1906-1991)**

The Abstract Expressionist sculptor Herber Ferber was born Herbert Ferber Silvers in New York in 1906.<sup>109</sup> As a requirement of his education at the Columbia University College of Oral and Dental

Surgery, Ferber drew anatomical sketches and was encouraged to hone his innate artistic talent as an extracurricular interest. From 1927 to 1930, Ferber enrolled in night courses in sculpture at the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design while a full-time student at the College of Oral and Dental Surgery. After his graduation in 1930, Ferber became a part-time dentist and part-time instructor in dentistry; Ferber did not cease to practice dentistry until 1977, well after his international rise to prominence as a sculptor.

Throughout the 1930s, Ferber primarily made figurative works in carved wood and stone. In the mid-1940s, Ferber began to experiment abstract forms in steel-reinforced concrete, running a gas torch from his kitchen stove to solder metals together. By 1949, with the aid of a blowtorch, Ferber came to abandon the figure and to create some of the earliest works of Abstract Expressionist sculpture. In 1950, after nine months of work moving in and around the pieces of his sculptural relief for the facade of B’nai Israel Synagogue in Millburn, New Jersey, Ferber began to appreciate the viewer’s variable experience of a work in three dimensions and to explore the possibilities of viewer interaction. For the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1961, Ferber made one of the first indoor environmental installations; the piece, entitled *Sculpture as Environment*, sought to delineate the interior of an entire room into spaces that visitors were able to enter or circumnavigate.

From 1965-1970, Ferber rented an apartment at 827 Broadway. In 1968, while Ferber was a Visiting Professor at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, his environmental work *Sculpture to Create an Environment* was installed in the Ferber Lounge at the Rutgers University Art Gallery (now Zimmerli Art Museum) and built upon his earlier experimentation with viewer interaction. In 1968 and 1969, Ferber’s work was included in “Dada, Surrealism, and Their

Heritage” and “The New American Painting and Sculpture: The First Generation” at the Museum of Modern Art, curated by William Agee and Ferber’s neighbor at 831 Broadway, William S. Rubin.

Ferber’s work is in the collections of the Jewish Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and many others.

### **William S. Rubin (1927-2006)**

William Stanley Rubin was an art historian, curator, and influential director of the painting and sculpture department at the Museum of Modern Art from 1973-1988.<sup>110</sup> Rubin’s contributions to the museum include his organization of the exhibitions “Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage” (1968), “Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern” (1984), and “Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism” (1989). At MoMa, Rubin built upon the work of Alfred Barr, Jr., the first director of the museum, in fortifying the definition and lineage of Modern Art; under Rubin’s direction, the museum’s collection came to include emblematic works by Matisse, Miro, and Picasso—including Picasso’s landmark sculpture *Guitar* (1912), itself a gift from the artist to Rubin—as well as major Abstract Expressionist works by Jackson Pollock and Barnett Newman and Color Field painters Anthony Caro and Frank Stella.

From 1966 to 1974, while a curator at MoMa and Professor at Sarah Lawrence and the City University of New York, William S. Rubin rented a fourth-floor apartment at 831 Broadway, across the hall from the apartment Willem de Kooning had let to Paul Jenkins. In 1967, Rubin commissioned architect Richard Meier to renovate the interior into “a flowing, sky-lit space articulated by free-standing partitions.”<sup>111</sup> Rubin’s loft became host to both artists and their work. On the walls were works by Willem de Kooning, Paul Jenkins, Larry Poons, and Jules Olitski—all one-time residents of the 827-831

Broadway Buildings—as well as pieces by Jackson Pollack, Mark Rothko, Franz Kline, and others. On the floor, in addition to works by Agostini and Seymour Lipton were two sculptures by Herbert Ferber, then a resident of 827 Broadway. A feature in *Vogue* described the apartment and artists’ enclave now known as Tenth Street:

... Its interest is heightened by the fact that its light, silence, and space are those of a loft—a loft with a difference, to be sure—in that commercial area of lower Broadway to which a cab driver very recently hesitated to take me because it was presumably uninhabited, except for irresponsible types, the sort who "abandon wives and children to go off to the South Seas." The assertion involved, of course, a complex form of hyperbole and distortion but it did reflect an obscure awareness of the fact that lower Broadway and the area extending south to Houston Street and beyond have become for New York ever so roughly what Montmartre and Montparnasse successively were for Paris. The neighbourhood is unique in providing the spacious and spatially flexible quarters the artist's work most generally demands, and Mr. Rubin, who has been predominantly engaged, both as scholar and connoisseur, with the art of the modern world, has there installed his canvases and sculptures, living, so far as possible, amidst the artists who made them.<sup>112</sup>

The images in *Vogue* show the space as salon: artist Frank Stella, historian critic Barbara Rose, and their infant son Michael sat alongside Larry Poons, Lucinda Childs, William S. Rubin, and Wilder

Green, between and beneath works from Rubin's collection. Rubin lent works from his collection to exhibitions worldwide and undertook periodic reorganizations and substitutions of the works in the apartment. Rubin's curatorial experiments at 831 Broadway were microcosms of the sorts of exhibitions that would earn him renown as a "curator who transformed MoMa."<sup>113</sup>

### **Jules Olitski (1922-2007)**

Jules Olitski was born Jevl Demikovsky in Snovsk, Russia (now Schors, Ukraine) in 1922, months after the execution of his commissar father by the Soviet government.<sup>114</sup> After a brief escape to Gomel, Russia, Olitski and his mother sought asylum in New York City in 1923. In 1939, Olitski won a scholarship from a department store to enroll in courses at the Pratt Institute. From 1940-42, Olitski studied portraiture at the National Academy of Design and, at night, sculpture at the Beaux Arts Institute, both in New York.

In 1942, Olitski was drafted into the United States Army. While there, Olitski became an American citizen and adopted his stepfather's surname, Olitsky; he would later adopt the spelling "Olitski" from a misprint in the catalog of his first one-artist exhibition in New York. Between 1945 and 1949, Olitski experimented with vibrant Fauvist likenesses, chiaroscuro portraits, and semi-abstract sculpture at the Educational Alliance Art School under Chaim Gross. From 1949-1951, under the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, Olitski went to Paris to paint in deliberate isolation from both the Old Masters and his contemporaries, painting blindfolded for months to break from his academic conventions. In 1951, the Galerie Huit in Paris ran Olitski's first one-artist exhibition of works from this experimental and introspective phase.

On his return to the United States, Olitski earned his Bachelor of Science and Master of Arts degrees in Art Education from New York University

and began to paint monochromatic works with dynamic value changes near the margins. In 1958, the Zodiac Gallery in New York ran Olitski's first one-artist exhibition in the United States of impasto canvases. The exhibition won the attention of critic Clement Greenberg, who invited Olitski to participate in a show at French & Co., an art dealership for which Greenburg was a consultant, along with Friedel Dzubas, Adolph Gottlieb, Morris Louis, Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, and David Smith.

Olitski's work from the 1960s shows the influence of his cohorts at French & Co. and of Clement Greenberg's interest in surface flatness. In 1960, Olitski made an abrupt departure from his abstract impasto surfaces and began to stain his canvases with areas of thin, vibrant dyes like the European tachistes of the 1950s and some of his American peers. These works were shown at another French & Co. exhibit in April 1961, and thereafter, Olitski's work was shown in numerous venues, won a prize at the Carnegie International, and began to be sought by museums.<sup>115</sup> By 1965, Olitski began to spray atmospheric blankets of pigment on his canvases, at first with subtle value changes near the margins and later with acrylic paint drawn across the canvases' edges. Olitski was one of four artists to represent the United States at the Venice Biennale in 1966 and in 1969, became the first living American artist to be given a one-artist exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

From 1971 to 1980, Olitski rented a large apartment at 827 Broadway as his residence and studio. While at 827 Broadway, Olitski began to use smaller and vertical canvases and to roughen the surfaces with gel-thickened pigments to form a skin on the canvas surface. Olitski would then use a roller or squeegee to scrape thick paint in muted colors across the surface and achieve gradations in opacity and transparency. In some works, Olitski sprayed color on top of the paint surface or brushed the

edges. In 1973, Olitski began to use Cor-ten steel in his *Ring* sculpture series, the MoMa acquired his painting *Willemite Vision*, and a retrospective of 60 of his works traveled to the Whitney Museum of American Art. While critics were less receptive of these later works, ascendant avant-garde painters like Larry Poons—himself a resident of 831 Broadway since 1974—acknowledged Olitski’s overwhelming influence on their work.

Olitski’s explorations with the texture and application of paint and with the evocative effects of color were major influences on his Abstract Expressionist peers and successors. Olitski’s works are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, among others.

### **Larry Poons (b. 1937)**

Lawrence “Larry” Poons was born in Tokyo, Japan to American parents and came to the United States in 1938.<sup>116</sup> From 1955-56, Poons attended the New England Conservatory of Music for music composition. In 1957, he entered the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston but left for New York City after six months. Although he forwent a career in music to paint, Poons was a guitarist for The Druids, a “short-lived avant-garde noise music art band”<sup>117</sup> with Jasper Johns as the lyricist, Patty Mucha (then Patty Oldenburg) as the vocalist, Walter de Maria as the drummer, and LaMonte Young as the saxophonist. In his earliest work, Poons sought to transpose musical structures into abstract geometrical compositions:

I’d been working on graph paper for years, mapping shapes, making progressions, I didn’t trust myself. I couldn’t draw, so I made rules. I’d take a canvas and grid it off and map points onto it and paint in the shapes with

complementary colors. But I wasn’t happy with it. One time I remember someone told me, ‘Larry, keep it simple’, so I thought, well if I made this simpler, I’d just paint the points.<sup>118</sup>

In 1962-63, Poons’ experimentation gave rise to his “dot” works, large, horizontal canvases with monochromatic color fields plotted with single-color points in grid formations. At the time, Poons was a resident of Coenties Slip, an area at the tip of Lower Manhattan that became an enclave for artists like Ellsworth Kelly, Agnes Martin, Robert Indiana, and Jim Rosenquist in the late 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>119</sup> Further north on Bleecker Street, Poons, in partnership with other painters, ran the coffee shop Epitome, which became a favorite for Beat Generation artists and writers, including Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, and in which Poons’ canvases on the interior walls began to attract notice.<sup>120</sup> In 1963, the Green Gallery in New York ran Poons’ first one-artist exhibition. From 1964, Poons’ work became more complex compositionally with the introduction of ellipses, the expansion of his color palette, and experiments with alignments to the vertical axis. In 1965, Poons’ work was shown in the Museum of Modern Art’s exhibition, “The Responsive Eye,” which drew parallels from Poons’ work to optical art (“op-art”) rather than Abstract Expressionism in the effects that his color relationships and compositions seemed to elicit:

Much the youngest of the five artists is Larry Poons, who paints coin-sized discs on a grid of squares. The discs are distributed according to an occult system related to musical form and, thanks to optical reflex, they seem suspended in evocative constellations.<sup>121</sup>



After the exhibition, Poons began to paint in a looser, more abstract manner with more apparent brushwork. In 1967, in part through the influence of Jules Olitski—later a resident of 827 Broadway—Poons began to work with larger, looser, more irregularly distributed lozenges of color and to depart from his gridded structure. One of these works, *Brown Sound* (1968), was featured as the cover image of *Artforum*'s Summer 1968 issue. In 1969, Poons was the youngest artist whose work was shown in the momentous retrospective "New York Painting and Sculpture, 1940-1970" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the only artist in the exhibition given an entire room in which to exhibit.<sup>122</sup>

In 1974, Poons rented William S. Rubin's former apartment at 831 Broadway, where he and his wife, painter Paula DeLuccia Poons, remain at the time of this writing. While at 831 Broadway, Poons continued the experimentation with more direct, immediate applications of paint that had begun to characterize his work in the 1970s, splashing, pouring, and throwing paint to create cascades of color. Poons would paint on an entire roll of canvas suspended from a room-sized, circular armature; once the canvas was full—sometimes after weeks of active work—Poons would crop individual sections from the roll. In the latter half of the decade, Poons began to build the surface of these canvases with additives like foam, rubber, rope, and typewriter paper to create heavier, more three-dimensional surfaces. Poons' active techniques meant that the interior of his workspace at 831 Broadway became thick with paint, as a 2015 interview notes:

Even the floor of Larry Poons' Manhattan loft studio is thick with art. Thirty years of flinging paint onto canvases has congealed to leave a brightly textured husk that covers every

surface. "The whole room's a painting", says Poons. "I ought to cut it up and sell it."<sup>123</sup>

Poons' varied works reveal the broad range of his technical experimentation but share a sense of rhythm, an all-over unity of surface, and a dynamic sense of color and luminosity.

## Later History

In the 1970s, 831 Broadway was the location of the Pratt Institute's Graphics Center Gallery, and from the 1970s to 2010s, the 827-831 Broadway Buildings were contributors to Broadway's Antique Row.<sup>124</sup> In 1980, Sherbee Antiques at 827-29 Broadway and Michael Capo Antiques at 831 Broadway were succeeded by Howard Kaplan Antiques, which was at 827-831 Broadway from 1980-2015; Kaplan's partner, David Kyner, ran D. Barton Kyner Antiques from 1988-2009 at 827-29 Broadway. As "the antique dealer to the stars,"<sup>125</sup> Kaplan rose to prominence as an importer of housewares from France and owner of Howard Kaplan's French Country Store at 35 East 10th Street; the installation of Art Nouveau storefronts in 1980-1981 coincided with Kaplan's purchase of the buildings and is likely a reflection of his taste for French antiques.<sup>126</sup>

## Conclusion

Designed by Griffith Thomas in 1866-67 for tobacco heir Pierre Lorillard and executed in marble and cast iron in the model of "commercial palaces" of the era, the 827-831 Broadway Buildings historically housed the workshops and showrooms of manufacturers and retailers. In the late 1950s, as the area south of Union Square was transforming into a noteworthy center of artistic activity known as "Tenth Street", their spacious and light-filled loft space attracted a significant succession of influential artists. These buildings are culturally significant for

their association with prominent Abstract Expressionist artists Willem de Kooning, Elaine de Kooning, Paul Jenkins, Larry Poons, Jules Olitski, and Herbert Ferber, and represent the pivotal era in which New York became the center of the art world after World War II. The ensemble symbolizes an important moment in New York City history and in the history of art.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Much of this section was adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission, *South Village Historic District Designation Report (LP-2546)*, (New York: City of New York, 2013), 7-34.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Hone, *The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1927), 203.

<sup>3</sup> Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 576; Charles Lockwood, *Bricks and Brownstone: the New York Row House, 1783-1929, An Architectural and Social History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 75.

<sup>4</sup> The 1817 *Longworth Explanatory Map & Plan* captures the area gridded but with scattered settlements, primarily along the Bowery. David Thomas Valentine, ed., *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York* (New York: D.T. Valentine, 1857), 480.

<sup>5</sup> I. N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909*, vol. 5 (New York, 1915), 13.

<sup>6</sup> M. Christine Boyer, *Manhattan Manners: Architecture and Style, 1850-1900* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 45.

<sup>7</sup> Hone, *The Diary of Philip Hone*, 384. Hone was a former Mayor of New York City from 1826-27.

<sup>8</sup> This section on the later development of the Union Square/Ladies Mile district are based on Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Ladies Mile Historic District Designation Report (LP-1609)*, (New York: City of New York, 1989), 11-13; Boyer, *Manhattan Manners*, 73-79, 105-18, 113-124; Stephen Garmey, *Gramercy Park: An Illustrated History* (New York: Rutledge Books/Balsam Press, 1984), 98-151.

<sup>9</sup> Boyer, *Manhattan Manners*, 43; Andrew S. Dolkart, "Biography of a Tenement House" in *New York City: An Architectural History of 97 Orchard Street* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Distributed for the Center for American Places, 2006), 10. By the 1840s, affluent residents had moved to the Union Square and Gramercy Park areas, then to Murray Hill in the 1850s—in part the influence of Griffith Thomas' construction of a residence for William Backhouse and Caroline Schemehorn Astor—to Midtown in 1860s and

1870s, and to the Upper East and Upper West Sides during the later 19th century.

<sup>10</sup> Lorillard's Snuff Manufactory occupied most of the block between Broome, Spring, Wooster and West Broadway, as the SoHo Cast Iron District Designation Report notes: "Between 1867 and 1890 most of this block was developed by the Lorillard family for use in their tobacco industry, replacing earlier buildings they had occupied since 1852. The diarist Philip Hone wrote on the occasion of the death of Peter Lorillard on May 23, 1843: 'He was a tobacconist and his memory will be preserved in the annals of New York by the celebrity of Lorillard's Snuff and Tobacco. He led people by the nose for the best part of a century, and made his enormous fortune by giving them that to chew which they could not swallow.' The Lorillard buildings served a variety of functions: stores, warehouses, and factories for the various tobacco manufacturing processes. Throughout this period the Lorillards retained the same architect, J. B. Snook, for all their buildings on this block."

<sup>11</sup> At the time of construction, 827-831 Broadway were adjacent to the Irving House hotel, earlier known as Willard's Hotel, a further reflection of the entertainment and hotel district context in which it was built.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Roux was the leading cabinetmaker in 1850s New York. Items in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art bear the Roux atelier's earlier 481 Broadway address, which was vacated in 1867. See: *New York Tribune*, Monday, April 15, 1867, 5: "Alexander Roux has removed from No. 479 Broadway to the new marble stores, Nos. 827 and 829 Broadway. Beside an entirely new assortment of rich furniture, a lot of first-class goods of the old stock will be offered at great reduction."

<sup>13</sup> Grace Rogers Cooper, *The Invention of the Sewing Machine* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1968), 2.

<sup>14</sup> From a trade card, copyright M. F. Tobin, N.Y., "Compliments of the Mechanical OrguINETTE Co." 831 Broadway, New York, 1881, Museum of the City of New York, Ephemera Collection, F2012.99.259.

<sup>15</sup> For more information, see: Dr. Jaeger's Sanitary Woolen System, Co., *Illustrated Catalogue of the Dr. Jaeger's Sanitary Woolen System Co. : Sole Importers and Exclusive Manufacturers of All Goods Constructed Under and Pertaining to the Sanitary System of Dr. Gustav Jaeger, Eighth Edition* (New York: Dr. Jaeger's Sanitary Woolen System Co., 1889).

<sup>16</sup> *NoHo East Historic District Designation Report (LP-2129)*, (New York: City of New York, 2003), 13-14. Real

Estate Record and Guide (June 22, 1912), 1334.

<sup>17</sup> For more information, see Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Sun Building Designation Report (LP-1439)* (New York City: City of New York, 1986), prepared by James Dillon, 5.

<sup>18</sup> After the A. T. Stewart Store became known as the Marble Palace, marble, brownstone, and cast-iron retail structures on Broadway and its side streets were referred to as marble palaces, commercial palaces, commercial palazzos, mercantile palaces, Italian(ate) palaces, Renaissance palaces, and other terms, as architectural historian Winston Weisman described in “Commercial Palaces of New York: 1845–1875,” *Art Bulletin*, v.36, iss. 4 (1954): 285-302. The terms “marble palace” and “commercial palace” are used in this report to suggest a stylistic and functional similarity to the Marble Palace. For more information on the influence of the Marble Palace, see Harry E. Resseguie, “A.T. Stewart’s Marble Palace—The Cradle of the Department Store,” *New-York Historical Society Quarterly*, 48(April 1964), 131-160.

<sup>19</sup> While numerous obituaries date Thomas’ birth to 1820, his grave marker at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York, lists the date as 1818.

<sup>20</sup> The firm appears in directories as Thomas Thomas & Son from 1839-41, T. Thomas & Son from 1842-58, and Thomas & Son from 1859-70. In 1871, Thomas went into practice with his own sons Griffith B., and Charles F. Thomas as Thomas and Sons but is listed as “Griffith Thomas, architect,” from 1875-1879.

<sup>21</sup> A number of these buildings, which were some of Griffith Thomas’ best-known in his lifetime and influenced other architects’ work, no longer exist. Among these are the St. Nicholas Hotel (1853, demolished in stages), Fifth Avenue Hotel (1858, demolished 1909), National Park Bank Building (1868, altered 1905, demolished 1961), and Pike’s Opera House (1868, demolished 1960).

<sup>22</sup> Wayne Craven, *Gilded Mansions: Grand Architecture and High Society* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 35.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

<sup>24</sup> Bryant Franklin Tolles, *Resort Hotels of the Adirondacks: The Architecture of a Summer Paradise* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2003), 31. “Career of a Successful Architect,” *Carpentry and Building*, vol. 1 (February 1879): 29.

<sup>25</sup> “Career of a Successful Architect,” *Carpentry and Building*; “The Death of Mr. Griffith Thomas,” *American Architect and Building News*, V (1879): 29.

<sup>26</sup> Winston Weisman, “Commercial Palaces of New York,” *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 36, no. 4 (1954): 289-290. “Thomas Thomas and Griffith Thomas” in Adolf Placzek, ed., *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 204.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> “The Death of Mr. Griffith Thomas,” *American Architect and Building News*.

<sup>29</sup> Caroline Ware, *Greenwich Village, 1920-1930* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965). 14, 23.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>31</sup> Leslie Fishbein, “The Culture of Contradiction: The Greenwich Village Rebellion,” in Rick Beard and Leslie Cohen Berlowitz, eds., *Greenwich Village: Culture and Counterculture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 225-226.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Neville, “This Town is No Fit Place for an Artist,” *New York Tribune* (New York), August 28, 1921: D3.

<sup>33</sup> Barry Miles, “The Beat Generation of the Village,” in Rick Beard and Leslie Cohen Berlowitz, eds., *Greenwich Village: Culture and Counterculture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 165.

<sup>34</sup> Harold Rosenberg, “Tenth Street: A Geography of Modern Art” in Harold Rosenberg, *Discovering the Present: Three Decades in Art, Culture, and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 102, originally published in *Art News Annual*, The Art Foundation Press, New York, 1959.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 104. De Kooning would immortalize this conception of “no environment” in *Backyard on Tenth Street*, a 1956 depiction of a backyard between de Kooning’s studio and Robert and Mary Frank’s, above which was photographer John Cohen’s loft.

<sup>38</sup> After the closure of the Subjects of the Artist School in 1949, the venue was taken over by three professors from New York University’s School of Education as a studio and exhibition space that closed in 1950.

<sup>39</sup> Mark Stevens and Annalyn Swan, *De Kooning: An American Master* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 277.

<sup>40</sup> James T. Valliere interview with Willem de Kooning in James T. Valliere, “De Kooning on Pollock: An Interview,” *Partisan Review* 34, no. 4 (Autumn 1967):



604.

<sup>41</sup> Stevens and Swan, *De Kooning*, 286.

<sup>42</sup> Lionel Abel, "Scenes from the Cedar Bar," *Commentary* 74 (December 1982): 38.

<sup>43</sup> Stevens and Swan, *De Kooning*, 319.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 398. For more information on these galleries and others, see Melissa Rachleff, *Inventing Downtown: Artist-Run Galleries in New York City, 1952-1965* (New York: Grey Art Gallery and DelMonico Books, 2017).

<sup>45</sup> As a result of a family connection with New York University, Gallatin was able to organize a small show and, in December, to open his Gallery of Living Art in the south study hall of the university's main building on Washington Square

<sup>46</sup> Hofmann first opened his school in 1934 at 137 East 57th, moved in 1936 to 52 West 9th Street, and found its final home from 1938-58 at 52 West Eighth Street.

<sup>47</sup> Hofmann's accounts of the avant-garde in Paris and Germany were a significant influence on critic Clement Greenberg, an attendee of Hofmann's lecture.

<sup>48</sup> Stevens and Swan, *De Kooning*, 130.

<sup>49</sup> Lionel Abel, "Scenes from the Cedar Bar," 38.

<sup>50</sup> The American "strategic bombing" of Japan did not spur a widespread immigration to the United States in part because of American treatment of Japanese citizens and Japanese Americans during World War II. World War II was the deadliest conflict in human history, marked by 50-85 million deaths, massacres, the genocide of the Holocaust, strategic bombing, disease, starvation, and the first use of nuclear weapons in history.

<sup>51</sup> Artists who chose to remain in German-occupied territories or were unable to flee were forced to join the Nazi government's Reich Chamber of Fine Arts (Reichskammer der bildenden Künste), a subdivision of Goebbels' Cultural Ministry (Reichskulturkammer). Membership was mandatory for all artists in the Reich and had to promise to paint only inoffensive landscapes. This circumstance is sometimes known by the controversial term "innere emigration," or inner emigration.

<sup>52</sup> *De Kooning: A Retrospective*, ed. John Elderfield (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 53-57, 80-82.

<sup>53</sup> No new work by Picasso, for example, was shown in the United States between 1940 and May 1946. *De Kooning: A Retrospective*, 81.

<sup>54</sup> Lionel Abel, "Scenes from the Cedar Bar," 38.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> The earliest exhibitions, like the 1950 *Young Painters in the United States and France* at the Sidney Janis Gallery, were meant to acclimate incredulous viewers to the work of New York artists by placing it alongside the more canonical work of European artists. *The New American Painting* exhibition of 1958-1959 marked a departure, as Andre Chastel wrote in *Le Monde*, January 17, 1959: "It is not only a question of bringing to the public's attention a few American names to slip in next to the 'Parisians', but--more profoundly--of coming to an interesting and opportune awareness of the 'modern adventure' in painting, thanks to the remarkable forms it is taking on the other side of the Atlantic."

<sup>57</sup> *De Kooning: A Retrospective*, 240.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>59</sup> Claude Roger-Marx, *Le Figaro Litteraire*, Paris, January 19, 1959.

<sup>60</sup> Irving Bloom quoted in Carter Ratcliff, *The Fate of a Gesture: Jackson Pollock and Postwar American Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1996).

<sup>61</sup> Works from this period by Alberto Giacometti, Francis Bacon, and Jean Dubuffet are prime examples of these tendencies.

<sup>62</sup> Newman continued: "We felt the moral crisis of a world in shambles, a world destroyed by a great depression and a fierce World War, and it was impossible at that time to paint the kind of paintings that we were doing—flowers, reclining nudes, and people playing the cello." Barnett Newman, "Response to the Reverend Thomas F. Mathews" in *Revelation, Place and Symbol* (Journal of the First Congress on Religion, Architecture and the Visual Arts), 1969.

<sup>63</sup> This address was entitled "What Abstract Art Means to Me" and was delivered at the Museum of Modern Art symposium, "What is Abstract Art?" in New York on February 5, 1951. A transcript was printed in the Museum of Modern art Bulletin, Vol.XVIII, Spring, 1951.

<sup>64</sup> Mark Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb, quoted in Edward Alden Jewell, "The Realm of Art: A New Platform and Other Matters: 'Globalism' Pops Into View," *New York Times*, June 13, 1943: 3.

<sup>65</sup> As with the Hudson River School, Ashcan School, and other historic groups in the arts, the word "school" in both the New York School and the School of Paris is not a reference to a particular institution but to a sense of similar aims, philosophies, subject matter, methods, or materials, and suggests something closer to a school of thought. A "school" typically shares a location, type of location, or region while a "movement" is usually more

dispersed or widespread.

<sup>66</sup> *De Kooning: A Retrospective*, 30.

<sup>67</sup> “The American Action Painters” in Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New* (New York: Horizon Press, 1959): 25.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Mark Rothko quoted in David Anfam, *Abstract Expressionism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 81.

<sup>70</sup> Mark Rothko quoted in Selden Rodman, *Conversations with Artists* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1957), 93-94.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *De Kooning: A Retrospective*, 50-51, 60-61. Stevens and Swan *De Kooning: An American Master*, 3-57.

<sup>73</sup> De Kooning quoted in Bert Schierbeek, *Willem de Kooning: A Portrait* (Leiden Menhen Kasanded & Wigman Uitgevers, 2005), 24.

<sup>74</sup> This organization is referred to by a number of names including Christelijk Tehuis Voor Hollandsche Zeelieden en Immigranten, Christian Home for Holland Seamen and Immigrants, and Holland Seamen Home & Immigration Bureau.

<sup>75</sup> Though he worked temporarily as a commercial artist, de Kooning returned to his work as a house painter because it offered far greater pay than commercial artwork did.

<sup>76</sup> Willem de Kooning, interview by David Sylvester, March 1960, transcript from David Sylvester, “Willem de Kooning,” in *Interviews with American Artists* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 43-57.

<sup>77</sup> De Kooning was employed at Beck from 1929-35. To qualify for the FAP, artists had to prove that they had no substantive means of support, which the Artists’ Union, founded in 1934, provided. Under the FAP and other WPA programs, the government paid artists’ salaries while local municipalities found sponsors to pay for supplies and materials.

<sup>78</sup> Willem de Kooning worked in the mural division of the FAP on a mural directed by Fernand Léger—who, as a French citizen, was ineligible for FAP but went without payment for the opportunity to paint in the United States. In 1936, a panel from an unrealized mural by de Kooning was exhibited in “New Horizons in American Art” at the Museum of Modern Art. The Hall of Pharmacy at the 1939 New York World’s Fair included Medicine, an FAP mural by de Kooning.

<sup>79</sup> Sheila D. Muller, *Dutch Art: An Encyclopedia* (New

York: Routledge, 2011), 16.

<sup>80</sup> For artists to be considered for the Federal Art Project, they first had to apply for Home Relief to confirm they were impoverished, and then submit samples of their work to demonstrate that they were actively creating art. Once approved, an artist’s stipend was \$24 per week.

<sup>81</sup> While Gorky, Rothko, and other non-native artists \_\_\_\_ on the slowness of the Government to enforce the citizenship requirement and continued to paint under the FAP, de Kooning left the program in 1937.

<sup>82</sup> Willem de Kooning quoted in Irving Sandler, *From Avant-Garde to Pluralism: An On-the-Spot History* (Stockbridge, Massachusetts: Hard Press Editions, 2006) 35.

<sup>83</sup> Gotham News (1955-56), Backyard on 10th Street (1956), and Montauk Highway (1958) are some of the abstract urban landscapes that prefigured the abstract pastoral landscapes de Kooning would paint at 831 Broadway and before his departure from Manhattan. This section is based on *De Kooning: A Retrospective*, 122-193.

<sup>84</sup> Lionel Abel quoted in *De Kooning: An American Master*, xiv.

<sup>85</sup> Edwin Denby “My Friend de Kooning,” *Artnews Annual* 29 (1964):87.

<sup>86</sup> Dan Budnik in Willem De Kooning, F. Lanier Graham, and Irwin Hollander, *De Kooning: Printer’s Proofs from the Collection of Irwin Hollander, Master Printer* (New York: Salander-O’Reilly Galleries, 1991), 124.

<sup>87</sup> In 1959, de Kooning bought 4.2 acres of land in Springs on which to build a custom residence and studio, which was not complete until 1969.

<sup>88</sup> Willem de Kooning in “Willem de Kooning,” in David Sylvester. *Interviews with American Artists*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 53. Recorded March 1960 in New York City.

<sup>89</sup> *De Kooning: A Retrospective*, 345.

<sup>90</sup> Information from this section is based on Cathy Curtis, *A Generous Vision: The Creative Life of Elaine de Kooning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Brandon Brame Fortune, Ann Gibson, and Simona Cupic, *Elaine de Kooning: Portraits* (Washington, D.C.: DelMonico Books and Prestel for the National Portrait Gallery, 2015); and Lee Hall, *Elaine and Bill: Portrait of a Marriage* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993).

<sup>91</sup> Elaine de Kooning quoted in Lee Hall, *Elaine and Bill*,

25.

<sup>92</sup> A strict tutor, Willem insisted that Elaine draw and redraw a subject with greater precision and would destroy sketches that he thought to be unsatisfactory; nonetheless, Elaine de Kooning's boyfriend at the time, artist Milton Resnick, would later remark that de Kooning "seduced her by teaching her art." Milton Resnick quoted in Carol Strickland, "Shining a Light on the Other de Kooning," *New York Times* (New York), November 21, 1993.

<sup>93</sup> Jane Wilson quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>94</sup> Robert Dash quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>95</sup> Elaine de Kooning famously replied, "I don't paint in his shadow, I paint in his light" as quoted by Brandon Fortune in Susan Stamberg, "For Artist Elaine De Kooning, Painting Was A Verb, Not A Noun," *National Public Radio*, May 13, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=405934531>.

<sup>96</sup> Elaine de Kooning quoted in Lee Hall, *Elaine and Bill*, 86-87.

<sup>97</sup> After her separation from Willem de Kooning, Elaine de Kooning took on a series of short-term appointments at universities to support herself. She taught at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, the University of California at Davis, Carnegie Mellon University, Southampton College, the Cooper Union, Pratt Institute in New York, Yale University, Rhode Island School of Design, Bard College, the University of Georgia, and the New York Studio School in Paris.

<sup>98</sup> Curtis, *A Generous Vision*, 111-113, 128.

<sup>99</sup> Elaine de Kooning, *The Spirit of Abstract Expressionism: Selected Writings* (New York: George Braziller, 1994).

<sup>100</sup> Paul Jenkins in Ira Goldberg, "Live Dangerously: An Interview with Paul Jenkins," *Linea, Journal of the Art Students League of New York*, vol. 12, no. 1, (Spring 2008), 4-8.

<sup>101</sup> Paul Jenkins, *Anatomy of a Cloud* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1983), 40.

<sup>102</sup> Information from this section is based on *Paul Jenkins in the 1960s and 1970s: Space, Color, and Light* (New York: D. Wigmore Fine Art, Inc., 2009); Paul Jenkins, *Paul Jenkins: Paintings from the 1960s and 1970s* (London: Redfren Gallery, 2011); and Alain Bosquet *Paul Jenkins* (Paris: Éditions Prints Etc. and Georges Fall, 1982).

<sup>103</sup> As a result, Jenkins described himself as "an abstract

phenomenist" rather than an Abstract Expressionist.

<sup>104</sup> Paul Jenkins interview with Philippe Bouchet III, *Œuvres Majeures*. (Lille, France: La Fondation Demeures du Nord, 2005).

<sup>105</sup> Randy Kennedy, "Paul Jenkins, Abstract Painter, Dies at 88," *New York Times* June 19, 2012, A24

<sup>106</sup> Paul Jenkins in *The Ivory Knife: Paul Jenkins at Work* (1965), quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>107</sup> Letter from Willem de Kooning to Paul Jenkins, 1963-64.

<sup>108</sup> Randy Kennedy, "Paul Jenkins, Abstract Painter, Dies at 88."

<sup>109</sup> Information from this section is based on E. C. Goossen, *Herbert Ferber* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1981) and William C. Agee, *Herbert Ferber: Sculpture, Painting Drawing, 1945-1980* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1983).

<sup>110</sup> Rubin was a curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at MoMa from 1967-1973 and director from 1973-1988. His residence at 831 Broadway bridged his curatorship and directorship.

<sup>111</sup> Annette Michelson, "An Art Scholar's Loft: The New York Apartment of William Rubin," *Vogue* 149, March 1967, 142.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-155.

<sup>113</sup> This section is based in part on Roberta Smith, "William Rubin, 78, Curator Who Transformed MoMA, Dies," *New York Times*, January 24, 2006.

<sup>114</sup> Information from this section is based on Kenworth Moffett, *Jules Olitski* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1981); and Henry Geldzahler, Tim Hilton, and Dominique Fourcade, *Jules Olitski* (New York: Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, 1990).

<sup>115</sup> William S. Rubin, Olitski's neighbor at 831 Broadway, later gave the sculpture *Wheels Up* (1968) to the Whitney Museum of American Art.

<sup>116</sup> Information from this section is based on *Larry Poons: Paintings 1963-1990* (New York: Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, 1990).

<sup>117</sup> Lefevre Fine Art, "Jasper Johns," <https://www.lefevrefineart.com/jasper-johns/>.

<sup>118</sup> John Cooper, "Larry Poons' Radical Surface," *Glass* 6, July 24, 2015, <http://www.theglassmagazine.com/larry-poons-interview/>.

<sup>119</sup> Holland Cotter, "Where City History Was Made, a 50's

Group Made Art History,” *New York Times* January 5, 1993, C11, C16.

<sup>120</sup> Larry Poons interview with David Ebony, “At the Speed of Light: Larry Poons Paintings of the 1960s,” *Brooklyn Rail*, November 1, 2016, <http://brooklynrail.org/2016/11/criticspage/at-the-speed-of-light-larry-poons-paintings-of-the-1960s>.

<sup>121</sup> Museum of Modern Art, “Recent Acquisitions—Seven American Paintings,” Thursday, November 5, 1964.

<sup>122</sup> Other artists with works in the exhibition were Josef Albers, Milton Avery, Alexander Calder, John Chamberlain, Joseph Cornell, Stuart Davis, Willem de Kooning, Burgoyne Diller, Mark di Suvero, Dan Flavin, Helen Frankenthaler, Arshille Gorky, Adolph Gottlieb, Philip Guston, Hans Hofmann, Edward Hopper, Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Ellsworth Kelly, Franz Kline, Gabe Kohn, Roy Lichtenstein, Morris Louis, Robert Morris, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Isamu Noguchi, Kenneth Noland, Claes Oldenburg, Jules Olitski, Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg, Ad Reinhardt, James Rosenquist, Mark Rothko, George Segal, David Smith, Tony Smith, Frank Stella, Clyfford Still, Bradley Walker Tomlin, and Andy Warhol.

<sup>123</sup> John Cooper, “Larry Poons’ Radical Surface.”

<sup>124</sup> Mentions of the Pratt Graphics Center at 831 Broadway are in issues of *New York Magazine* and the *New York Times* throughout 1972-75.

<sup>125</sup> Anna Stewart, “Howard Kaplan Is Likely to Find Jackie O, Faye, or Even a Raging Bull in His Antique Shop,” *People* (May 11, 1981), <http://people.com/archive/howard-kaplan-is-likely-to-find-jackie-o-faye-or-even-a-raging-bull-in-his-antique-shop-vol-15-no-18/>.

<sup>126</sup> Laura Caparrotti of the website Jazz Near You writes: “In 1981, the noted designer Howard Kaplan redesigned the space to replicate the environment and ambience of La Belle Epoque— ‘the gilded era,’ as it’s called, ‘when Paris was the civilized world’s capital of elegant entertaining, artistic genius and stimulating conversation.’” <https://nyc.jazznearyou.com/la-belle-epoque.php>.



## Findings and Designation

### 827-831 Broadway Buildings

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the 827-831 Broadway Buildings have a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and culture characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among their important qualities, the 827-831 Broadway Buildings were the site of significant contributions to the arts and represent the pivotal era in which post-World War II New York City became the center of the Western art world; that the 827-831 Broadway Buildings were built from 1866-67 as a speculative investment for Pierre Lorillard III, heir to the New York-based P. Lorillard Tobacco Company, and have housed numerous commercial tenants; that their prolific architect, Griffith Thomas, was an early proponent of cast-iron architecture and the 827-831 Broadway Buildings capture his transitional work in marble with cast-iron piers and columns; that their marble fronts and cast iron quoins and columns exhibit the influence of the A.T. Stewart Store; that their lofts began to attract artist tenants as part of a low-rent artists' enclave known as of "Tenth Street" that developed in the 1950s; that they gained considerable cultural significance after World War II for their associations with the prominent Abstract Expressionist artists Willem de Kooning, Elaine de Kooning, Paul Jenkins, Larry Poons, Jules Olitski, and Herbert Ferber, and with curator William S. Rubin; that the artists Willem de Kooning, Elaine de Kooning, Paul Jenkins, Larry Poons, Jules Olitski,

and Herbert Ferber made significant contributions to the arts while residents here between 1958 and the present; that Willem de Kooning began to experiment with vivid tones, a shift his biographers attribute to the quality of light in his studio, while at 831 Broadway from 1958-63; and that Elaine de Kooning completed her 1962-63 commissioned portrait of John F. Kennedy for the Truman Library at 827 Broadway.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the 827-831 Broadway Buildings and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 564, Lots 17 and 19 in part consisting of the portions of the lots bounded by a line beginning at a point at the northeast corner of Lot 17; thence running southerly 75 feet along the exterior of the east wall of the 827-831 Broadway Buildings; thence running westerly 93 feet 10½ inches along the southern wall of the 827-831 Broadway Buildings; thence running northerly 64 feet 9 inches along the western wall of the 827-831 Broadway Buildings; thence running westerly 8 feet 6½ inches; thence running northerly 10 feet 10½ inches; thence running easterly 102 feet 3½ inches along the northern lot line of Lot 17 to the point of beginning, as its Landmark Site.

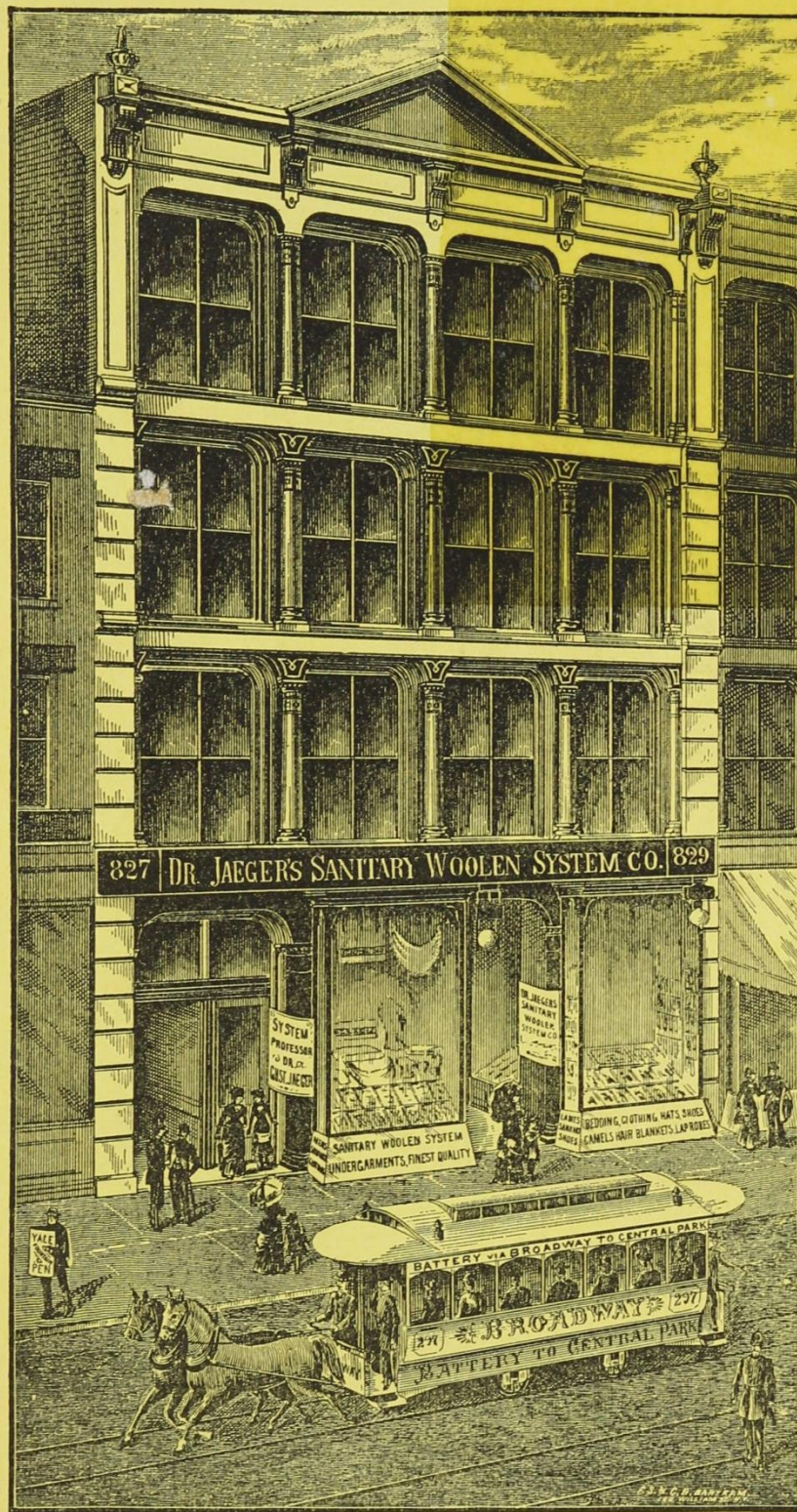
### Meenakshi Srinivasin, Chair

Adi Shamir-Baron  
Frederick Bland  
Diana Chapin  
Wellington Chen  
Michael Devonshire  
Michael Goldblum  
John Gustafsson  
Kim Vauss  
Commissioners



**827-831 Broadway**  
August 2017





DR. JAEGER'S SANITARY WOOLEN SYSTEM CO.  
827-829 Broadway,  
NEW YORK.

# Catalog illustration of 827-829 Broadway

Illustrated catalogue of the Dr. Jaeger's Sanitary Woollen System Co., Eighth Edition, 1889

Thomas J. Watson Library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

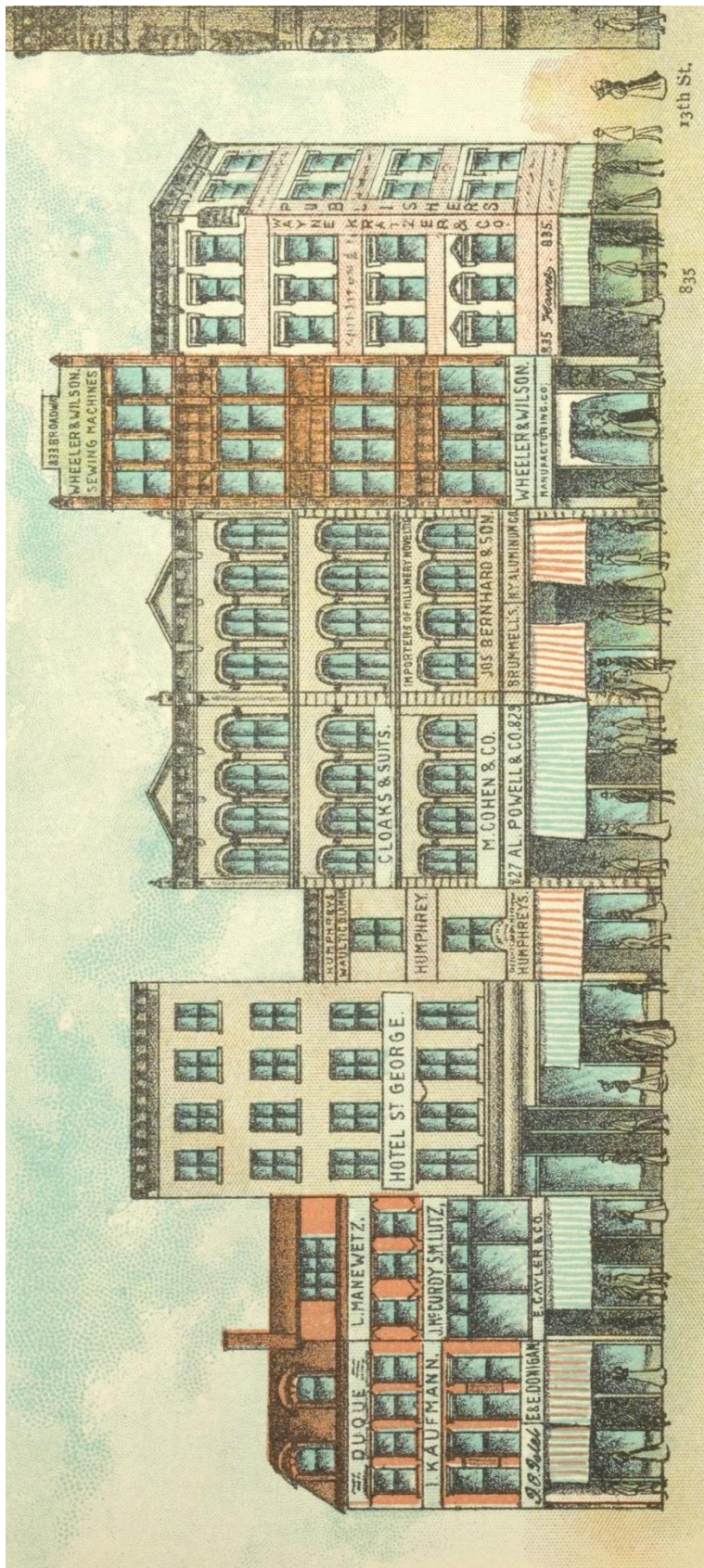




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**827-831 Broadway**  
November 2017

