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Chronology | A Brief History of a Legendary New York Art BuildingBy [JEFFREY PODOLSKY](#)

It didn't look like much, but the blocklong building at 404 East 14th Street in New York's East Village was one of the most vibrant artistic hubs in the city during the 1960s. A former button factory, it offered enormous lofts (and \$300 rent) that energized its residents to experiment on a larger scale — and host giddy bacchanalias as well. A new exhibit at [Tibor de Nagy Gallery](#) brings together the paintings, sculpture, photographs, films, correspondence and poetry of its famous inhabitants, from Claes Oldenburg to Allen Ginsberg. Here, a few of their memories about the building's glory days.

1965: The artists [Claes Oldenburg](#) and [Patty Mucha](#) (then [Patty Oldenburg](#)), [Yayoi Kusama](#), [On Kawara](#) and [Herb Aach](#) rent the top three floors.

Oldenburg: We were living at the Chelsea Hotel. Our first aim was to find a studio. Patty and I rented the entire fifth floor.

Mucha: The windows were broken, pigeons were flying in and out. Larry [Rivers, the artist and musician] moved in shortly thereafter.

Oldenburg: Because of the amount of visitors and action, I often worked at night after dinner. ... If Larry was practicing his saxophone, we would go to the other side. It got more difficult when [the sculptor] John Chamberlain moved in with [the artist and Warhol superstar] Ultra Violet and their band at the other end. It was very hard to find a silent spot. Yayoi Kusama was fond of repeatedly playing "Michelle" by the Beatles over and over again to accompany the repetitive design of her soft furniture.

TIBOR DE NAGY GALLERY

ESTABLISHED 1950

Kusama: Joseph [Cornell, the sculptor] always looked like a tramp shambling down the street with holes in his shoes and a crumpled paper bag under his arm. One night, Larry was returning with a bevy of fashion models. The models, apparently thinking a hobo was in their midst, squealed and skittered out of Joseph's way. Later, Larry asked me about the "homeless guy" and was astonished to learn his true identity.

1967: John Chamberlain moves his studio to the third floor.

Ultra Violet: One night at Max's Kansas City, I was there in the back room with a friend and in came John Chamberlain. ... My friend said, "Oh, he's a great artist. You should get him." "O.K., I said." So I got him. We had a relationship.

1969: Oldenburg moves out and Patty Mucha meets the punk musician Richard Hell.

Mucha: I met Richard at St. Adrian's bar. I picked him up. He was 19, I was 35. ... Once Larry drilled a hole in his floor above our bed so he could watch us. ... He was a child. But we found out about it because we were in bed one morning and we looked up and little Emma [his daughter] was pouring oatmeal-flavored cereal down through the hole. He was so into sex.

Hell: Patty told me he called me Tarzan.

1973: The French conceptual artist Jean Dupuy moves into to the south side of the second floor and begins presenting shows and performances above the building's 405 East 13th Street entrance, which include Oldenburg, Rivers, Gordon Matta Clark, Laurie Anderson, Phillip Glass and others.

Jean Dupuy: I put on three "About 405 East 13 St" shows over three years, open to the public for seven days each. Charlotte Moorman performed the cello wearing a mask of Pablo Casals, miming to a record of his she had underneath the seat. I attached a microphone to the wall of the beauty salon next door and played the sounds. They never knew that they were being listened to.

Related video: A clip of Charlotte Moorman's performance, below.

1994: A McDonald's opens in the street-level retail space.

1995: The poet Allen Ginsberg, the painter Tom Burckhardt and the sculptor Kathy Butterly all move in.

Bob Rosenthal (an executor of Ginsberg's estate): Allen was looking to move from his East Village walk-up. Larry and Allen were old friends, and Larry says, "Oh, Allen. Yes, move in. It'll be great. We'll push each other in our wheelchairs. We'll grow old together." Allen said, "Great." Allen absolutely loved this place. ... When Allen was in a coma and dying, Larry came down in his underwear with his saxophone and started playing to Allen and said, "Allen! Wake up!" We were horrified. It was bizarre.

2011: Wes Anderson rents Allen Ginsberg's old loft and edits "[Moonrise Kingdom](#)" there.

"404 E 14th" is on view from June 20 through Aug. 2 at Tibor de Nagy Gallery, 724 Fifth Avenue; tibordenagy.com.