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# TIBOR DE NAGY GALLERY

EXHIBITION CELEBRATES GALLERY'S PIVOTAL ROLE IN LAUNCHING  
NEW YORK SCHOOL OF POETS AND FOSTERING COLLABORATION BETWEEN  
PAINTERS AND POETS IN POST-WAR NEW YORK

*"Tibor de Nagy Gallery Painters and Poets" Marks Gallery's 60th Anniversary;  
Opens January 15, 2011*

TIBOR DE NAGY GALLERY PAINTERS AND POETS  
JANUARY 15 – MARCH 5  
Tibor de Nagy Gallery  
12th Floor, 724 Fifth Avenue (56th/57th)  
Tuesday – Saturday, 10:00 AM – 5:30 PM

Opening Reception: SATURDAY, JANUARY 15, 4:00 – 6:00 PM

*ALSO: "The New York School of Poets and Their Milieu," a series of programs celebrating the Tibor de Nagy Gallery's 60th anniversary and the artistic ferment of 1950s and '60s New York*

*AND: Tibor de Nagy Editions presents the first-ever stand-alone edition of Larry Rivers' and Frank O'Hara's "Stones," "the very first 'hands-on' poet/painter collaboration ... and probably the most ... successful work ... in that genre" (Bill Berkson)*

NEW YORK, NY: December 21, 2010 — The Tibor de Nagy Gallery marks its 60th anniversary with "*Tibor de Nagy Gallery Painters and Poets*," an exhibition celebrating the gallery's pivotal role in launching the New York School of Poets and fostering a new collaborative ethos among poets and painters in post-War New York. The exhibit focuses on the gallery's first two decades, the 1950s and '60s, when its vibrant, salon-like atmosphere and director John Bernard Myers' passion for both art and poetry gave birth to these unique partnerships.

The show features paintings by Helen Frankenthaler, Alfred Leslie, Trevor Winkfield, Nell Blaine, Joe Brainard, Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell, Jane Freilicher and Fairfield Porter; poetry collections published by the gallery's imprint, Tibor de Nagy Editions, and featuring work by Frank O'Hara, Kenneth Koch, James Schuyler, John Ashbery, Barbara Guest and others, with

illustrations by Tibor de Nagy artists; photographs and films by Rudy Burckhardt; letters, announcement cards and other ephemera; and archival photographs of leading cultural figures of the day by John Gruen and Fred McDarrah.

*“Tibor de Nagy Gallery Painters and Poets”* runs from Saturday, January 15 - Saturday, March 5. An opening reception will be held on the 15th from 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM; regular gallery hours are Tuesday - Saturday, 10:00 AM - 5:30 PM. Tibor de Nagy (pronounced *TEE-bor dih-NAJ*) is located on the 12th floor of 724 Fifth Avenue, between 56th and 57th Streets.

*“The New York School of Poets and Their Milieu,”* a series of complementary events organized to celebrate the gallery’s anniversary, further illuminates the avant-garde milieu of the period:

- *January 1, The New York Festival of Song Presents “The New York School”* — Chicago’s WFMT radio broadcasts a concert (also available via webstream at [www.wfmt.org](http://www.wfmt.org)) featuring poetry by Frank O’Hara, John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch and other poets who came of age in the 1950s and ‘60s set to music by William Bolcom, Ned Rorem, Vernon Duke, Virgil Thomson and others.
- *January 31, The New School Presents “60 Years of Tibor de Nagy Painters and Poets: A Celebration of the Legendary Gallery”* — An evening of poetry, film clips and reminiscences about the Tibor de Nagy Gallery’s role in shaping New York’s post-War literary and artistic vanguard. With poets John Ashbery, Bill Berkson and Ron Padgett; artist and filmmaker Alfred Leslie; and scholars Jenni Quilter and Douglas Crase, whose essays comprise the catalog for the exhibition *“Tibor de Nagy Gallery Painters and Poets.”*
- *February 25 - 27, Anthology Film Archives Presents Newly-Restored Prints of Rudy Burckhardt’s “Money” (1968) and “The Climate of New York” (1948)* — Screenings of recently restored prints of the classic Burckhardt films *“Money”* (1968), in which renowned dance critic Edwin Denby leads a cast of ‘60s art- and poetry-world stars, and *“The Climate of New York”* (1948), in which Burckhardt paints a portrait of the city and its inhabitants in luminous black-and-white and saturated color.

*(For complete details, see “The New York School of Poets and Their Milieu,” below.)*

## **JOHN BERNARD MYERS, THE NEW YORK SCHOOL OF POETS, AND THE CREATION OF A CULTURAL COTERIE**

While the Tibor de Nagy Gallery’s seminal role as a locus of the era’s artistic and literary avant-garde is not widely known, recent scholarship suggests that the gallery was as influential as the

more frequently cited catalysts for the new movement — the Artists' Club at 39 East 8th Street, founded in 1949 and a gathering place for both established and up-and-coming artists and writers; the Hamptons, where many artists and writers lived or vacationed; and *ARTnews* under the leadership of Thomas Hess.

The “creation” of the New York School of Poets by Tibor de Nagy director John Bernard Myers is a central part of the story. The genesis of the group, long a focus of literary scholarship and the subject of increasing attention, was considerably less auspicious than its name suggests. Myers coined the term in 1961 as a way of identifying the literary upstarts he had discovered, including O'Hara, Ashbery, Koch, James Schuyler and Barbara Guest, whose first volumes were published under the gallery's imprint, Tibor de Nagy Editions, starting in 1951.

If not entirely commercial, Myers's goal was wholly promotional. The allusion to the well established New York School of Artists guaranteed that the label would resonate among the literati and other cultural taste-makers, conferring immediate recognition and respect on this group of young Turks. It made no difference to him that many of the artists to whom these writers were closest were *figurative* painters in no way connected to the Abstract Expressionists who comprised the New York School of Poets' visual-arts counterpart and predecessor.

The power of the label went one step further. As Jenni Quilter notes in her essay for the exhibition, placing these writers within a specific cultural milieu in which the gallery itself featured prominently was a way to market the largely unknown American *artists* who were the gallery's bread and butter (Helen Frankenthaler, Larry Rivers, Grace Hartigan, Harry Jackson, Alfred Leslie, Robert Goodnough, Jane Freilicher, Michael Goldberg, Fairfield Porter, Nell Blaine and, later, Elaine de Kooning). That milieu was the post-War New York cultural vanguard comprised of what critic Karen Wilkin has characterized as “a cat's cradle of cross-ties woven among colleagues, friends, lovers, spouses (current and ex-) and supporters of various kinds.”

A networker extraordinaire, Myers knew and attracted them all. “We were all drawn to his charismatic personality . . .,” Jane Wilson has said. “Poets, musicians, dancers, actors, as well as painters, sculptors, an architect or two, curators, literary editors and a growing collection of collectors made up his ever-widening circle.”

Through his wide acquaintanceship, his fondness for gossip, and his keen eye for talent, Myers created “a kind of salon” (Jane Freilicher), “a place to be, to show (if you painted), to have a book (if you were a poet)” (Kenneth Koch). It was this highly charged atmosphere that yielded the rich trove of work by the gallery's artists and writers. “[T]he early careers of the painters and poets, their first masterpieces and chapbooks [small books or pamphlets], could not have transpired as they did without the gallery as a channel of introductions, theater of events, and generator of the ambient scene,” writes Douglas Chase in his essay for the exhibition.

## THE EVOLUTION OF A NEW COLLABORATIVE ETHOS

With these myriad cross-currents and with Myers determined to promote both the gallery's poets and its painters, cross-pollination was bound to occur. Myers got the ball rolling with Tibor de Nagy Editions. Between 1951 and 1970 the gallery published 18 limited-edition

collections of poetry under this imprint, many with covers and interiors illustrated by de Nagy artists. Among these pairings were Frank O'Hara and Larry Rivers, O'Hara and Grace Hartigan, Chester Kallman and Rene Bouche, Kenneth Koch and Nell Blaine, John Ashbery and Jane Freilicher, Ashbery and Trevor Winkfield, Barbara Guest and Robert Goodnough, and Kenward Elmslie and Ron Gorchov. (*For a list of Tibor de Nagy Editions publications, contact Alix Friedman, [prmaven1@gmail.com](mailto:prmaven1@gmail.com) or 646 468 4269.*)

Barbara Guest has recalled that both Myers and Tibor de Nagy himself "showed an instinctive ability to select painters and poets whose art was congenial and stimulating to one another." In a foreword to the catalog for the gallery's 50th-anniversary show John Ashbery wrote that his career "began at Tibor's with a 1953 pamphlet designed by Nell Blaine and illustrated by Jane Freilicher." He called the project "probably my greatest publishing experience."

The Tibor de Nagy Gallery's dual focus on poetry and art set the standard for the day. It was soon emulated by others who sought to capitalize on the excitement of the de Nagy scene; both Tiber Press and Universal Limited Art Editions came out with books uniting *de Nagy* poets and painters.

Reconstituted in 2001 as an imprint of the newly-established Tibor de Nagy Foundation, Tibor de Nagy Editions continues to publish. In honor of the gallery's 60th anniversary the gallery will issue the first-ever stand-alone edition of "Stones," the 1960 set of prints by Larry Rivers and Frank O'Hara all 12 of which are included in "*Painters and Poets*." Poet and critic Bill Berkson has written that this partnership was "the very first 'hands-on' poet/painter collaboration (not counting the *cadavers exquis*es of the Surrealists) and probably the most thoroughly successful work ever in that genre."

Other collaborative efforts in the exhibit include what might be called poem-paintings and -drawings — by Grace Hartigan, inspired by Frank O'Hara's poem cycle "Oranges"; by Joan Mitchell, inspired by James Schuyler's poetry; by Joe Brainard and, individually, (poets) Ted Berrigan, Larry Fagin, Ron Padgett and Kenneth Koch; by Larry Rivers, Red Grooms and Koch; by George Schneeman and, separately, Bill Berkson, Lewis MacAdams, Larry Fagin and Padgett.

Portraits of one another were another kind of collaboration and "*Painters and Poets*" features several examples: Fairfield Porter's and Jane Freilicher's (separate) paintings of Kenneth Koch, George Schneeman's painting of Ted Berrigan with Ron Padgett, Larry Rivers' bust of Frank O'Hara, Nell Blaine's drawing of O'Hara and her portrait of Freilicher, Fairfield Porter's painting of James Schuyler with John Ashbery.

The movies of photographer and filmmaker Rudy Burckhardt, a vital part of the de Nagy circle, were often collaborations in their own right, improvisations starring Burckhardt's art- and literary-world friends, many of whom the gallery represented. *"Painters and Poets"* includes two of these films: "Mounting Tension" (1950) and "Money" (1968). (From February 25 - 27 Anthology Film Archives will also screen "Money" as well as "The Climate of New York," from 1948. See *"The New York School of Poets and Their Milieu,"* below.)

As the letters exchanged by John Myers and the gallery's artists and poets suggest, these men and women were intimately involved in each other's lives. "They intertwined and inspired one another's work," says Tibor de Nagy Gallery principal Eric Brown. "They were each other's most enthusiastic fans and sounding boards long before they were discovered by the wider world."

### A LONGSTANDING ALLEGIANCE TO NEW WAYS OF SEEING

Theories abound regarding who came up with the idea for the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, but it is generally agreed that Peggy Guggenheim's shuttering of her avant-garde gallery, Art of This Century, in 1947 was an important contributing factor. The influential critic Clement Greenberg, with input from Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner, Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline, suggested what became the gallery's initial roster of young artists: Frankenthaler, Rivers, Hartigan, Jackson, Leslie, Goodnough, Freilicher, Goldberg, Porter, Blaine and later, Elaine de Kooning.

The gallery's embrace of this new breed of post-War New York painters (and poets) was a natural outgrowth of its founders' original vision. "We want, and will do our best to make, a gallery that will be unique because it is a spot where people will come a little out of their way because something *must be seen* [italics mine]," they declared in the announcement of the gallery's opening in 1950. Along with the legendary Stable and Hansa galleries, de Nagy was among the first to showcase "an audacious and varied schedule of new and untested talent," as Jane Freilicher has put it.

The Tibor de Nagy Gallery's enthusiastic support of these artists, many of whom were responding to Abstract Expressionism, helped legitimize their efforts. "Suddenly there was a new ripple — The New York School [of Artists] Second Generation," Helen Frankenthaler has recalled. "The gallery was lively and inventive, taking chances. There was a strong feeling of camaraderie and energy, experimentation." Frankenthaler herself directly benefited from this adventuresome spirit: the gallery mounted her first show during its inaugural season. She was 23.

Today the Tibor de Nagy Gallery is recognized for a stable of artists whose work reflects both the gallery's early support of Abstract Expressionism and its later and ongoing support of Realism and Representational Art. Work by long established artists like Fairfield Porter, Rudy Burckhardt and Joe Brainard receives as much attention as the output of exciting new talent like Kathy Butterfly, Tom Burckhardt (Rudy Burckhardt and Yvonne Jacquette's son) and Richard Baker.

Although the gallery moved many years ago from its original home, a modest 53rd Street space in a cold-water tenement near the Third Avenue El, its commitment to exhibiting “timeless art,” as Tibor de Nagy himself put it, remains unchanged. Owners Andrew Arnot and Eric Brown, who worked with de Nagy and whom he chose as his successors (de Nagy died in 1993; Myers left to start his own gallery in 1970 and died in 1987), remain committed to their predecessors’ vision of the gallery as a “beckoning vision,” a place dedicated to that “special intangibility that is the love of looking.”

*For information on how to obtain IMAGES (Web and print), archival PHOTOGRAPHS, BACKGROUND materials, a list of exhibition WORKS, or a list of TIBOR DE NAGY EDITIONS publications, please see “Additional Information” below.*

## THE NEW YORK SCHOOL OF POETS AND THEIR MILIEU

January 1 – March 5, 2011

*A series of programs celebrating the Tibor de Nagy Gallery’s 60th anniversary and the artistic ferment of 1950s and ‘60s New York*

*Sat, Jan 1; TIME TBA; FREE*

**Concert Broadcast — THE NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG PRESENTS “THE NEW YORK POETS”**  
WFMT-Chicago Webstream at [www.wfmt.org](http://www.wfmt.org)

Chicago classical-music station WFMT (98.7-FM) broadcasts “*The New York School*,” a New York Festival of Song (NYFOS) program of works by leading poets of the ‘50s and ‘60s, including Frank O’Hara, John Ashbery and Kenneth Koch, set to music by William Bolcom, Ned Rorem, Vernon Duke and others. The performers are Amy Burton, soprano; Joseph Kaiser, tenor; and Steven Blier and Michael Barrett (NYFOS artistic director and associate artistic director, respectively), piano. Part of “*No Song Is Safe from Us*,” a 13-part series of NYFOS concerts broadcast by WFMT and hosted by Frederica von Stade. “*No Song Is Safe from Us*” is made possible by the support of the Lynne & Richard Kaiser Family Foundation, Paul and Elizabeth DeRosa, Martha J. Fleischman, and The Julian Astry Foundation.

*Sat, Jan 15 – Sat, Mar 5; Tue – Sat, 10am – 5:30pm; FREE*

*Opening Reception: Sat, Jan 15, 4 – 6pm; FREE*

**Exhibition — “TIBOR DE NAGY GALLERY PAINTERS AND POETS”**

*Tibor de Nagy Gallery, 12th Fl, 724 Fifth Ave (b/w 56th + 57th Sts), [www.tibordenagy.com](http://www.tibordenagy.com)*

The Tibor de Nagy Gallery marks its 60th anniversary with “*Tibor de Nagy Gallery Painters and Poets*,” an exhibition celebrating the gallery’s pivotal role in launching the New York School of Poets (Frank O’Hara, James Schuyler, John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch and Barbara Guest) and fostering a new collaborative ethos among poets and painters in post-War New York. The

exhibit focuses on the 1950s and '60s, the gallery's first two decades, when its vibrant, salon-like atmosphere yielded these unique partnerships, and on the equal weight that gallery director John Bernard Myers gave to both art forms. Featuring art, film, illustrations, archival photographs, Tibor de Nagy Editions publications, and ephemera.

*Mon, Jan 31, 7:00pm; FREE*

**Panel Discussion — “60 YEARS OF TIBOR DE NAGY PAINTERS AND POETS: A CELEBRATION OF THE LEGENDARY GALLERY”**

*Theresa Lang Center, 2nd Fl, 55 West 13th St (b/w 5th + 6th Aves), [www.newschool.edu](http://www.newschool.edu)*

The New School presents an evening of poetry, film clips and reminiscences that brings together poets John Ashbery, Bill Berkson and Ron Padgett, and artist and filmmaker Alfred Leslie, all members of the de Nagy circle of the 1950s and '60s. Together with scholars Jenni Quilter and Douglas Crase, whose essays comprise the catalog for *“Tibor de Nagy Gallery Painters and Poets,”* they discuss the gallery's role in shaping New York's post-War literary and artistic vanguard.

*Fri, Feb 25 – Sun, Feb 27; 7:30pm; \$9/adults, \$7/students, seniors and children 12 and under (no advance reservations; box office opens 30m before show time)*

**Film — NEWLY-RESTORED PRINTS OF RUDY BURCKHARDT'S “MONEY” (1968) AND “THE CLIMATE OF NEW YORK” (1948)**

*Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave (b/w 1st + 2nd Sts), [www.anthologyfilmarchives.org](http://www.anthologyfilmarchives.org)*

Anthology Film Archives (AFA) presents two newly-restored films by photographer/filmmaker Rudy Burckhardt (1914-1999), part of the creative circle surrounding the Tibor de Nagy Gallery in the '50s and '60s. Over seven decades Burckhardt made over 100 films many of which were collaborations with his artist and writer friends:

- **“Money”** (1968, 45m, 16mm) — The marvelously loopy storyline of this largely improvised cult classic, played out in silent-film style with text by artist-poet Joe Brainard, concerns the hazards of wealth and the freedom offered by poverty. Legendary dance critic Edwin Denby leads a cast of 1960s art- and poetry-world stars, including John Ashbery, Red Grooms, Mimi Gross, Yvonne Jacquette, Alex Katz, de Nagy Gallery director John Bernard Myers and Katie Schneeman. *“Money” has been preserved by Anthology Film Archives with support from Sony Pictures Entertainment.*
- **“The Climate of New York”** (1948, 21m, 16mm) — Burckhardt said this film showed “the relation of New Yorkers to their monumental environment, their nervous movement against the solid calm of their architecture, and the almost impossible difference in scale between the two.” Scenes shot in luminous black-and-white and saturated color of Times Square at night, a chaotic midtown, life below ground in the subway, and the silence of the suburbs to create an indelible image of the metropolis. *“The Climate of New York” has been preserved by Anthology Film Archives through the Avant-Garde Masters program funded by The Film Foundation and administered by the National Film Preservation Foundation.*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For the following resources please contact Alix Friedman, [prmaven1@gmail.com](mailto:prmaven1@gmail.com) or 646 468 4269:

- A list of WORKS in “*Tibor de Nagy Gallery Painters and Poets.*”
- IMAGES from “*Tibor de Nagy Gallery Painters and Poets.*”
- Archival PHOTOGRAPHS of John Bernard Myers, Tibor de Nagy and the artists and poets whose work is featured in “*Tibor de Nagy Gallery Painters and Poets.*”
- A list of books published by TIBOR DE NAGY EDITIONS from 1951 to the present.
- The following BACKGROUND materials:
  - EXHIBITION CATALOG: *Tibor de Nagy Gallery Painters and Poets* (2010). Contains “A Hidden History of the Avant-Garde,” by Douglas Crase, and “The Love of Looking: Collaborations Between Artists and Writers,” by Jenni Quilter – *Book and PDF*
  - ESSAY: “A Hidden History of the Avant-Garde,” by Douglas Crase. From *Tibor de Nagy Gallery Painters and Poets* (2010) – *PDF*
  - ESSAY: “The Love of Looking: Collaborations Between Artists and Writers,” by Jenni Quilter. From *Tibor de Nagy Gallery Painters and Poets* (2010) – *PDF*
  - ESSAY: “Reaching Back to the 1950s,” by Hilton Kramer. From *Tibor de Nagy Gallery: The First Fifty Years, 1950 – 2000* (2000) – *PDF*
  - ESSAY: “The First Fifty Years,” by Karen Wilkin. From *Tibor de Nagy Gallery: The First Fifty Years, 1950 – 2000* (2000) – *PDF*

For the Tibor de Nagy Gallery’s current **roster of artists** and for information on recent exhibits please visit [www.tibordenagy.com](http://www.tibordenagy.com).

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