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# Nature Versus Culture: Lower Manhattan Land Art by Charles Simonds, Walter De Maria, and Alan Sonfist

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**Nature Versus Culture:**

**Lower Manhattan Land Art by Charles Simonds, Walter De Maria, and Alan Sonfist**

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Adviser: Professor Ellen Handy

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Introduction

In the twilight of the postwar years' economic boom and rapid urban transformation, three site-specific land art works were installed within blocks of each other in lower Manhattan (fig. 1). In 1970, Charles Simonds (b. 1945) built a series of temporary clay structures titled *Dwellings* along Greene Street (fig. 2). Walter De Maria (1935-2013) filled a gallery space on the second floor of a converted loft building on Wooster Street with soil, creating *New York Earth Room* (1977; fig. 3).<sup>1</sup> Across Houston Street on the corner of LaGuardia Place, Alan Sonfist (b. 1946) planted a memorial to nature titled *Time Landscape*<sup>TM</sup> (1978; fig. 4).<sup>2</sup> These artworks were fabricated environments composed primarily of earth, which contrasted with the concrete and cast-iron real estate that defined the neighborhood.<sup>3</sup> The installations reflected a growing interest amongst these artists and their contemporaries in expanding the definition of sculpture in ways that conceptually and physically challenged gallery exhibitions. Simonds, De Maria, and Sonfist introduced an element absent to neighborhood residents' daily urban experience—raw earth. In the tradition of the Hudson River School of landscape painters, these works offered scenes of nature as an antidote to the complicated urban present. While visually accessible to audiences, the contained organic landscapes were destroyed conceptually or even

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<sup>1</sup>According to Jim Straton, "A 'loft' is a space or floor in a 'loft building.' A 'loft building' is a structure of more than one story, which was built for storage, manufacturing, or some other commercial use." Jim Straton, *Pioneering in the Urban Wilderness* (New York: Urizen Books, 1977), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Sonfist first describes his concept for *Time Landscape* in his 1968 essay "Natural Phenomena as Public Monument," which he presented as a talk at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1969. Realized on LaGuardia Place in 1978, the work was trademarked in later publications by the artist.

<sup>3</sup> Walter De Maria's *New York Earth Room* was composed of 280,000 lbs. of soil placed inside of a gallery, Simonds' *Dwellings* were composed of clay dug, by the artist, from a pit in Sayreville, New Jersey, and Sonfist's *Time Landscape* used not only the soil sited on the lot at LaGuardia and Houston but additionally brought in soil removed from construction sites in Manhattan. Dia Art Foundation, "Walter De Maria, *The New York Earth Room*, 1977," (2016); Charles Simonds, "Biography," website, accessed September 2016, <http://www.charles-simonds.com/texts.html>; Edward Lucie-Smith, *Art in the Seventies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 106.

literally if entered. The silent ruins, fragrant earth, and whispering leaves—reinforced the idea that nature was separate from the urban experience.

Simonds, De Maria, and Sonfist all lived near to the sites where *Dwellings, New York Earth Room*, and *Time Landscape* were installed. Lower Manhattan—and in particular SoHo—would not have become an artists’ haven in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were it not for Robert Moses (1888-1981). Moses was a powerful master builder of New York City infrastructure for roughly a forty-year period. Moses’ plan for an expressway across lower Manhattan that would funnel bridge traffic from Long Island directly into the Holland tunnel, commonly referred to as Lomex, was first proposed in 1941 (fig.5). After years of fiscal and public pressure and several reconfigurations of the expressway’s construction, New York City’s Board of Estimates finally “de-mapped” the project in 1969.<sup>4</sup> During the nearly thirty-year limbo period, the once flourishing neighborhoods near to the proposed expressway fell into deterioration, and the area became known as Hells-Hundred-Acres. The businesses and small manufacturers who relocated left behind blocks of unoccupied buildings.<sup>5</sup> Landlords began to market their properties as loft studios for artists. The large industrial spaces were attractive to artists and rented for as little as a dollar per square foot. By the late 1960s there were over fifteen

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<sup>4</sup> “De-mapped” is a term used by urban planners to clarify street construction projects halted and marked for removal from the official City Map. Before construction, streets are added on to the City Map through the Uniformed Land Use Review Procedure and can exist in the mapped state for years before construction commences. Colin Reilly, “NYC Streets on Paper,” NYCMap & Beyond, NYC Information, Technology & Communications website, accessed February 28, 2017, <https://nycitymap.wordpress.com/about/> ; Steven Kilian, Ed Rawlings, and Jim Walrod, *Paul Randolph: Lower Manhattan Expressway* (New York: The Drawing Center, 2010), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable observed, “This is the blight that comes from being fingered for an expressway route, with the uncertain future of the area its only certainty. Properties are not kept up; improvements are not made...Twenty-eight years of this can do a lot of damage. Along the Lower Manhattan expressway route there once was a healthy community and its remains are still there—blighted by the expressway before it ever got built.” Ada Louise Huxtable, *Will They Ever Finish Bruckner Boulevard?* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1971), 20.

artists' cooperative buildings in SoHo.<sup>6</sup> An early settler of the neighborhood was Fluxus artist George Maciunas (1931-78). He bought 80 Wooster Street in 1967, named it Fluxus-House #2 and invited fellow artists to invest in the joint ownership of the building. Designed by G. A. Schellenger in 1894, the seven-story former warehouse became home to several artists and an art film collective.<sup>7</sup> By 1969, the next generation of co-op galleries, artist-run spaces that exhibited polemic exhibitions and hosted symposiums and performances began to settle in SoHo.<sup>8</sup> In the spring of 1970, thousands of New Yorkers were flocking to the neighborhood to see what was happening in Manhattan's new left-bank. The era of the master urban planner exemplified by Moses had ended, and a new mode of decentralized, democratic, and community-led urban planning was beginning in lower Manhattan.<sup>9</sup>

The decline of Moses' official power in the late 1960s coincided with the subsequent rise of city, state, and national offices dedicated to community-informed initiatives ranging from public art to community gardens.<sup>10</sup> According to Robert Caro, the urbanscape of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century New York was shaped by Moses' predominately despotic and anti-populace approach to

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<sup>6</sup> Roslyn Bernstein and Shael Shapiro, *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo* (Vilnius, Lithuania: Jonas Mekas Foundation, 2010), 137.

<sup>7</sup> Norval White, Elliot Willensky, and Fran Leadon, *AIA Guide to New York City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 118.

<sup>8</sup> Women member-only galleries A.I.R (1972) and SoHo20 (1973) were located on Wooster and Spring streets. Other early co-op galleries were: 55 Mercer (1969) and Amos Eno (1974) also on Wooster. Alexandra Anders and B.J. Archer, *Archer & Anderson's SoHo, The Essential Guide to Art and Life in Lower Manhattan* (New York: Ain America Books, 1979), 49-53.

<sup>9</sup> Robert A.M. Stern, Thomas Mellins and David Fishman, *New York 1960, Architecture and Urbanism Between the Second World War and the Bicentennial* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), 263.

<sup>10</sup> Some of the agencies that formed in this period include; The National Endowment for the Arts (1965), New York City's Office of Cultural Affairs expanded in 1967 to include public Parks, and Recreation, the Public Arts Council (1970), and Creative Time (1973). Michele H. Bogart, "The Patronage Frame: New York City's Mayors and the Support of Public Art," in *A Companion to Public Art*, eds. Cher Krause Knight and Harriet Senie (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 388-391.

urban planning.<sup>11</sup> More recently, Hilary Ballon characterized Moses as an intermediary between government interests and private investors, who sought to create a thriving and cultural metropolis during the postwar period of suburban drift and urban decentralization.<sup>12</sup> Not all of Moses' urban renewal projects were enacted. Jane Jacobs (1916-2006), a powerful advocate for community informed urban planning, worked to foil many of the projects proposed for lower Manhattan including Moses' Lomex. It was a real battle to oppose Moses as he occupied twelve positions simultaneously, including that of New York City Parks Commissioner, head of the State Parks Council, head of the State Power Commission, and chair of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority.<sup>13</sup> As Michele Bogart noted, "During Robert Moses' tenure it sometimes appeared that the built environment [of New York City] hinged on one man's whims. This situation changed after Moses left office."<sup>14</sup> When Moses vacated his positions, several persons had the opportunity to define the new leadership including Thomas Hoving and Doris Freedman.<sup>15</sup> The shift towards programs that prioritized public empowerment became evident in the policies of the mayoral office. By 1982, New York City's mayor Ed Koch had established the nation's largest Percent for Art program. The program would require artists who participated to

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 19-21.

<sup>12</sup> Hilary Ballon, "Robert Moses and Urban Renewal, The Title I Program," in *Robert Moses and the Modern City, The Transformation of New York*, eds. Hilary Ballon and Kenneth T Jackson (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007), 94-96.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Goldberger, "Robert Moses, Master Builder, is Dead at 92," *New York Times* (July 30, 1981): A1.

<sup>14</sup> Bogart, *A Companion to Public Art*, 388.

<sup>15</sup> As the Parks Commissioner, Thomas Hoving instituted a series of park gatherings — "Hoving's Happenings," a term borrowed from Allan Kaprow — where the public was invited to participate in communal art making or lie in Sheep Meadow to watch a midnight meteor shower. Hoving would later serve as the Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Dorris Freedman served as New York City's first Director of Cultural Affairs (1967-1970) and was the founder of the Public Arts Council (1971) and the Public Art Fund (1977) and Director of City Walls, which installed public murals in SoHo and other NYC neighborhoods.

consider community wants and needs in their proposed public art projects.<sup>16</sup> In the shadow of Moses' retreating regime in 1970, Simonds constructed his *Dwellings* while by 1978, Sonfist broke ground for *Time Landscape* during the budding age of community-planned gardens.

The land art works of Simonds, De Maria, and Sonfist installed in lower Manhattan straddled the outgoing tide of Moses' tenure and the incoming wave of public minded and community informed projects. *Dwellings*, *New York Earth Room*, and *Time Landscape* were located within newly landmarked buildings, gentrifying streets and hotly contested public spaces that neighborhood preservationists and groups such as Artists Against the Expressway and the SoHo Artists Association helped to protect from destruction.<sup>17</sup> The art works presented an alternative view of an urban landscape that did not expedite traffic, support community safety, or house families. They had the appearance of existential responses to both Moses' modernism and Jacobs' anti-modernism.<sup>18</sup> As residents of lower Manhattan, the artists created land art works that took neighborhood spaces and populated them with evocations of nature that excluded people. Simonds' *Dwellings* were miniature buildings in ruins set amidst housing cooperatives for artists. De Maria's *Earth Room* filled a gallery with dirt thereby preventing it from hosting rotating exhibitions by local artists. Sonfist's *Time Landscape* appeared much like a public park or community garden but was not accessible to the public. These site-specific works were memorials to nature in sharp contrast to the contemporary urbanscape, and therefore could be viewed as challenges to the idea of historical agency. Simonds', De Maria's, and Sonfist's

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<sup>16</sup> Eleanor Heartney, "The City as Laboratory: Two Decades of New York's Percent for Art Program," in *City Art* (London: Merrell, 2005), 16.

<sup>17</sup> The City Planning Commission identified 416 buildings, 2,000 housing units, 365 retail stores, and 480 non-retail businesses for removal in order to accommodate the Lower Manhattan Expressway. Charles Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 139.

<sup>18</sup> Harvey categorizes Moses as modernist and Jacobs as anti-modernist. David Harvey, *The Conditions of Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), 71.



installations maintained a similar distance between viewer and nature as that established by the painted landscapes. Like many of the Hudson River School painters of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Simonds, De Maria and Sonfist created landscapes that deliberately excluded modern civilization.<sup>19</sup> Their SoHo earthworks were referencing another time, before the rise of the modern metropolis. By inserting pockets of nature into these contested urban spaces, the artists created a visual break in the linear progression of civilization.

All three artists had observed, directly and indirectly, the failures of Robert Moses' urban planning and the economic degradation of lower Manhattan during the 1960s and 70s. The very streets that fell within the eminent domain of Lomex construction became the living and working spaces of Simonds, De Maria, and Sonfist (fig. 6). Just as Baron Haussmann's grand design for Paris influenced the ascent of Modernism, so too can Moses's reconfiguration of New York's landscape be considered the progenitor of what the critic Rosalind Krauss famously termed "the expanded field of sculpture."<sup>20</sup> While these agents of urban design imagined urbanscapes that banished historic decrepitude, the resultant boulevards and superhighways inspired unforeseen results within the cultural landscapes of Paris and New York. With the goals of expediting military order and ridding the city of pestilence Haussmann's redesign of Paris had the unanticipated result of dissolving previously restrictive social districts.<sup>21</sup> Moses imagined a design for lower Manhattan easily navigable by car and populated by residential tower blocks

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<sup>19</sup> Barbara Novak discusses the editorial choices made by members of the Hudson River School who depicted scenes of American wilderness despite encroaching railroads and industry in "Man's Traces: Axe, Train, Figure," *Nature and Culture, American Landscape and Painting 1825-1875* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 157-200.

<sup>20</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 199), 14-26; Margaret Samu "Impressionism: Art and Modernity," The Metropolitan Museum of Art Heilbrunn Timeline of Art (October 2004); Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded field," *October* 8 (Spring 1979): 30-44.

<sup>21</sup> Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), 143-146.

where citizens retained their privacy and autonomy. The failure of his proposal resulted in a historic district primarily suited for pedestrians. This would appear to be a case of historicism reversed, where a bygone epoch triumphs over technical advancement. This chronological break coincided with the rise in conceptual and minimalist art. Krauss distinguished postmodern sculpture from its modern predecessors because it was primarily a response to architecture and landscape and was therefore expanding the field from what had previously been defined by the creation of independent sculptural objects.<sup>22</sup> Through their collective appropriation of the urbanscape and architecture, homesteading artists-not-Moses, completed the transformation of SoHo from an industrial wasteland known as “Hell’s Hundred Acres” to a thriving community.<sup>23</sup>

Expanding the field of sculpture was an artistic praxis of loft conversions. Artists who settled in lower Manhattan’s industrial districts began to incorporate homesteading issues into their work. Jed Perl argues that the search for habitable space influenced artistic practice: “In downtown New York, where everybody was looking for good, cheap space, that search could become, eventually, a subject in itself, so that Minimalist and Conceptualist art was sometimes just about defining space.”<sup>24</sup> As many of the raw spaces inhabited by artists did not have bathrooms, kitchens, or living spaces, building out habitable working spaces was part of the homesteader’s burden.<sup>25</sup> In addition to architectural concerns, there were legal and bureaucratic intricacies to living in SoHo. Collectives such as *Anarchitecture* created work that questioned the

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<sup>22</sup> Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” *October*, 37.

<sup>23</sup> In 1962 the area below Houston was an industrial slum, littered with debris and deserted at night, by 1980 it was transformed (via the reclamation of the space by artists) into a popular shopping district. Richard Kostelanetz, *SoHo, the Rise and Fall of an Artists’ Colony* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 1; 212.

<sup>24</sup> Jed Perl, *New Art City, Manhattan at Mid Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 548.

<sup>25</sup> In 1974, Joan Kron mocked the homesteading artists in her article for *New York* magazine. She cynically noted that artists, “have ceased resisting the bourgeois life-style. Instead, they’re putting time, money, and creative energy into their environment, often neglecting their art to concentrate on construction.” Joan Kron, “Lofty Living,” *New York* 7 (May 20, 1974): 54-59, 66-69.

restrictive nature of architecture and ownership.<sup>26</sup> Collective member, Gordon Matta-Clark's *Realty Positions: Fake Estates* (1973) highlighted the abstract structure that New York City's real estate market imposed upon the geography (fig. 7). He purchased thirteen odd lots of land in Queens from the city of New York for less than one-hundred dollars each. Often only a few feet wide, the lots were too small to build on or inhabit in any manner. The project playfully questioned the idea of landownership within the bureaucracy of urban landscapes.<sup>27</sup> Artists initially moved to SoHo for economic and real estate reasons but as the community grew and became more actively involved in the neighborhood's development, the public street presence of artists began to define the landscape of SoHo in the form of galleries that had visible storefronts, and community spaces.

When Simonds, De Maria, and Sonfist relocated to lower Manhattan, they confronted a new set of challenges; beyond art making, they were evading restrictive zoning ordinances and tasked with home construction.<sup>28</sup> SoHo was not zoned a residential district and therefore did not have many conveniences like grocery stores and laundromats, nor city services like trash removal and beat cops, and families could not legally enroll their children in public school.<sup>29</sup> Artists who moved to SoHo may have situated themselves in the midst of a bustling metropolis and yet their living conditions were much like those living in the wilderness; the city's

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<sup>26</sup> Sam Gathercole, "'I'm Sort of Sliding Around in Place...ummm...': Art in the 1970s," *A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 60-61.

<sup>27</sup> Jeffery Kastner, ed., *Land and Environmental Art* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1998), 180.

<sup>28</sup> Simonds recounted that he was required to install his own plumbing with help of neighbor Gordon Matta-Clark when he moved into his loft at 131 Chrystie Street in 1969. Teresa Millet, "Interview with Charles Simonds," *Charles Simonds* (IVAM Catalogue 2003), 142.

<sup>29</sup> Kostelanetz, *SoHo*, 20-28. James R. Hudson, *The Unanticipated City, Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 32.

infrastructure and services were not immediately accessible to these urban homesteaders.<sup>30</sup> De Maria converted a former warehouse into an apartment and studio, Simonds too converted a loft and was required to install plumbing, and Sonfist bought a decommissioned police station.<sup>31</sup> The three artists' conceptual change from sculptural projects primarily focused on object making, into the expanded field and in particular land art, was influenced by their proximity and participation in homesteading artists' communities.

Artists living in lower Manhattan were not *flâneurs* gazing down the avenues, but rather what Jacobs called "eyes on the street" communally protecting their real estate claims.<sup>32</sup> By 1970, downtown artists had formed several activist groups to give voice to their shared interests in community and real estate in lower Manhattan (fig. 8).<sup>33</sup> Donald and Julie Judd, who owned 101 Spring Street, were founding members of the group Artists Against the Expressway along with Barnett Newman, Yvonne Rainer, Frank Stella, and Lucy Lippard.<sup>34</sup> While Simonds, De Maria, and Sonfist were associated with and were friends with their activist colleagues their work could be seen as a critique of the ambition to establish community. In the midst of SoHo *Dwellings*,

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<sup>30</sup> Jim Stratton was one of the first authors to liken urban loft dwellers to homesteaders: "Whatever the city, the urban pioneer is one who has homesteaded where all reason demanded he or she should not have done so. Where the wilderness is a loft, it is likely a cast-off warehouse space in an isolated factory area where trucks come and go and Laundromats keep their distance." from *Pioneering in the Urban Wilderness*, 18.

<sup>31</sup> De Maria moved in 1960 to a rented loft on Walker Street (just south of Canal), Simonds moved in 1969 to a rented loft on Chrystie Street (just north of Grand Street), and Sonfist bought a building on Mulberry Street in the late 1960s.

<sup>32</sup> "Eyes on the street" was a term Jane Jacobs used in her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). According to Jacobs, a thriving and safe metropolis was fostered by the activity of citizens monitoring their own streets. Jane Jacobs, "The Uses of Sidewalks: Safety," in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 29-54.

<sup>33</sup> Art Workers' Coalition (1969-71), SoHo Artists Association (1968-78), Artists Against the Expressway (1968-78), Artist Tenant Association (1959-78), Metropolitan Council on Housing, and the Downtown Independent Democrats (1971-present).

<sup>34</sup> SoHo Artists Association records, 1968-1978, Archives of American Art.

*Earth Room*, and *Time Landscape* appeared to challenge all claims on real estate including those recently established by homesteaders.

While Minimalism, Fluxism, Happenings, and Environmentalism informed Simonds, De Maria, and Sonfist's projects, the particularly acrimonious environment of urban planning and gentrification in lower Manhattan has not yet been acknowledged as having any influence upon their urban-sited work. In his survey of land and environmental art, Jeffrey Kastner drew no parallels between the three urban situated land art works. He argued for the minimal interests in De Maria's *New York Earth Room*, which confronted the gallery space (fig. 3), and differentiated Simonds' *Dwellings* (fig. 2) from Sonfist's *Time Landscape* (fig. 4) in that the first was an ephemeral performance work, which related the body to the earth, and the second was a socio-political argument for environmental awareness.<sup>35</sup> Kastner over-looked the site-specific, and even the psycho-geographical implications of these three land art works located only blocks from each other in SoHo. It is particularly curious that Kastner did not examine the projects in relation to their geographic surroundings, as De Maria's and Sonfist's works remain on-site to this day, despite radical changes to the urbanscape and real estate market. Edward Lucie-Smith did see similarities between Simonds and Sonfist in that they both presented a sort of mock-archeology of lower Manhattan sites.<sup>36</sup> While Lucie-Smith addresses site-specificity, like Kastner he does not consider the geographic context of SoHo. John Beardsley found the mock-archeology present in *Time Landscape* problematic as it was historically inaccurate and he wrote, "It reinforces the unfortunate implication that nature is something separate from culture."<sup>37</sup> Beardsley identifies a

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<sup>35</sup> Kastner, *Land and Environmental Art*, 109, 102, 150.

<sup>36</sup> Lucie-Smith, *Art in the Seventies*, 104-106.

<sup>37</sup> John Beardsley, *Earthworks and Beyond, Contemporary Art in the Landscape* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1998), 161.

tension that I agree exists in all three land art works—the construction of nature for urban audiences. Beardsley suggested that Simonds’ *Dwellings* series shared a similar Luddite longing for a preindustrial existence to that expressed in the work of British land artists Andy Goldsworthy, Richard Long, and Hamish Fulton.<sup>38</sup> However, Goldsworthy’s, Long’s, and Fulton’s land art works were not sited or enacted in urban locations. To date no critics or historians have compared the three works that emerged from the context of SoHo’s do-it-yourself artist community and evolved into site-specific commentaries on real estate, community planning, and urban culture.

Urban-situated land art has had a more complicated relationship with its sites than land art situated in the wilderness. Works of art, architecture, and infrastructure located in urban spaces all require regular maintenance in order to counteract the effects of decay. As entropy, or degeneration of matter over time, was one of the aesthetic interests of land art and site-specific sculptures in the later 20<sup>th</sup>-century their location in remote natural settings was temporally matched.<sup>39</sup> When located in the urban landscape, entropic art clashed with the growth-orientated landscape. In most cases earthworks sited in New York City were temporarily installed and did not require maintenance, for example Claes Oldenburg’s *Hole - Placid Civic Monument* (1967) which was created and removed in a single day, or Agnes Dene’s *Wheatfield - A Confrontation* (1982) which was planted in May and harvested in August (fig. 9 & 10). Entropy did come into play in the controversy over Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc* (1981), although it was not the urban

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<sup>38</sup> Beardsley, *Earthworks and Beyond*, 55.

<sup>39</sup> For Robert Smithson’s concept of entropy in land art see *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, Jack Flam ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 105-107.

public's only objection to the work (fig. 11). The rust that accumulated over time on the surface of *Tilted Arc*, was among the list of reasons for its requested removal from Federal Plaza.<sup>40</sup>

The installation in SoHo of *Dwellings*, *New York Earth Room*, and *Time Landscape* was, according to each artist, opportunistic rather than intentional; therefore, these particular works were not originally conceived as wedded to a specific New York neighborhood. De Maria created *New York Earth Room* at the request of the gallerist, Simonds' has said he created the *Dwellings* on Greene Street because his friend had space, and Sonfist initially proposed *Time Landscapes* for multiple sites throughout the city and would later trademark the concept. While the artists may have conceived of their earthworks as part of larger conceptual projects applicable to sites throughout the world, lower Manhattan was the most politically resonant location as it was also the artists' home. After their installation, *Dwellings*, *New York Earth Room*, and *Time Landscape* became site-specific or as Nick Kaye clarifies, works defined by their locality.<sup>41</sup> Each work inevitably revealed the political nature of real estate and geography in SoHo.<sup>42</sup>

This thesis constitutes the first comparison of *Dwellings*, *New York Earth Room*, and *Time Landscape* in the context of the artists' participation in the homesteading of lower Manhattan. Simonds' tiny ruins, De Maria's room of pristine earth, and Sonfist's pocket of wilderness were all claims on New York City's urbanscape that barred human admittance. The first chapter argues that Simonds' *Dwellings* were an alternative response to the utopian visions

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<sup>40</sup> In his testimony against *Tilted Arc* Judge Dominick DiCarlo repeated refers to the rusted surface of the sculpture as one of the aesthetic offensives. American Council for the Arts, *Public Art, Public Controversy: Tilted Arc on Trial* (New York: ACA Books, 1987), 141-142; Harriet Senie, "Richard Serra's 'Tilted Arc': Art and Non-Art Issues," *Art Journal* 48, no. 4 (1989): 300.

<sup>41</sup> Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art, Performance, Place and Documentation* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1.

<sup>42</sup> Douglas Crimp, "Redefining Site Specificity," in *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993), 155; 180-182.

of urban planners, and historic preservationists who sought to define the appearance and purpose of SoHo. The second chapter examines De Maria's *Earth Room* as a critique of the ambitions of lower Manhattan's homesteading artist community to establish a cultural community. The third chapter discusses the changing concept of nature as manifested in the maintenance of Sonfist's *Time Landscape* by neighborhood residents over the course of four decades. Unlike the postwar period's utopian urban plans by master builder Robert Moses, or the community led anti-authoritarian backlash of the 1960s, these three land art works occupied the urban grid with evocations of displaced nature rather than with commercial or residential spaces.<sup>43</sup> The artists' awareness of the politics of space, informed by their participation in the homesteading of lower Manhattan in the 1970s, inspired them to create land art works that playfully inverted the goals of urban development. In their work, like that of landscape artists of previous centuries, nature acts as a *memento mori* to urban audiences; a reminder that this too may pass and return into the earth.

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<sup>43</sup> Anthony Flint, *Wrestling with Moses, How Jane Jacobs Took On New York's Master Builder and Transformed the American City* (New York: Random House, 2009), 31-33; David Pinder, *Visions of the City, Utopianism, Power and Politics in Twentieth-Century Urbanism* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 140.



## 1. Ruinous Architecture, Charles Simonds' *Dwellings*

As the evicted litter blows or rambles down the streets, so people drift through New York, never to return. You daren't pretend to belong there. Urban wisdom demands that you accept the randomness of your apparition in and disappearance from the city.

- Peter Conrad, *The Art of the City, Views and Versions of New York*

While Maciunas was enacting his utopian vision for artist cooperatives on Wooster Street and the SoHo Artists Association was fervently petitioning the city to protect their homesteaded lofts, Charles Simonds was populating neighboring Greene Street with miniature ephemeral land art works that resembled abandoned pueblos (fig.2).<sup>44</sup> Aesthetically out of time and place, Simonds' works, which he called *Dwellings*, were constructed primarily out of clay and other found materials from nature. The *Dwellings* first appeared nestled on window ledges and in the gaps between the gutters and sidewalks of Greene Street in 1970.<sup>45</sup> The choice of Greene Street as the installation site, I will argue, was political. Greene Street was the central corridor for the first arts festival in the neighborhood organized by the SoHo Artists Association the summer of 1970.<sup>46</sup> The festival sought to publicize the plight of artists' fighting to legalize loft living.<sup>47</sup> While Simonds would install variations of the series on the Lower East Side (1971- 77) and in the Whitney's biennial (1975), the first *Dwellings* along Greene Street were indicative symbols of the anxieties which consumed SoHo area residents. The natural impermanence of the

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<sup>44</sup> George Maciunas established Fluxhouse Cooperative II at 80 Wooster in 1967 with funding from the J.M. Kaplan fund, the National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities, and a mortgage from the Miller Cardboard Company (the building's previous occupant). Maciunas also established co-ops at 64 Grand Street, 33 Wooster Street, 451 West Broadway, 131 Prince Street, and 16 Greene Street. Maureen Lynch, "SoHo---From Boho to Bobo: The business establishments of West Broadway," CUNY Master's Thesis (2011), 27-28.

<sup>45</sup> Charles Simonds, "Microcosm to Macrococosms/Fantasy World to Real World: Interview with Lucy Lippard," *Artforum* 12, no. 6 (February 1974): 36-37.

<sup>46</sup> Many of the Association's members had also been active in the group Artists Against the Expressway.

<sup>47</sup> Bernstein and Shapiro, *Illegal Living*, 49.

*Dwellings* on Greene Street challenged not only the commodity status of the art object, but additionally, the idea that architecture represented cultural stability. The delicate miniature constructions were subject to natural elements, including the movements of neighborhood residents, and represented an alternative reality, one counter to the ambitions of the city's urban planners and the homesteading artists' cooperatives.

In 1970, SoHo was a neighborhood teetering on the cusp of obliteration. Despite running his election campaign in opposition to Moses' expressway plans, once in office Mayor John Lindsay supported a re-design of Lomex in 1968.<sup>48</sup> The SoHo Artists Association was gaining public and government approval through the staging of a weekend festival and open-studio event that formally commenced in front of 16 Greene Street, near to the intersection with Canal Street, on May 8, 1970 (fig. 12). The Association was also gaining important allies in the art world. Curators and directors from the Museum of Modern Art, Guggenheim, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Whitney attended the Association's June 8 gala to "raise funds to fight for stabilizing legalization for 2,000 artists."<sup>49</sup> At the same time, the Attorney General's office ordered Maciunas to cease further establishment or maintenance of co-ops in lower Manhattan. The Fluxus artist responded by fortifying his door, wearing disguises when in public, and creating a trap door exit from his building.<sup>50</sup> On June 25, 1970, *The Villager* reported that the Commissions for City Planning and Landmarks Preservation intended to hold a public hearing in September that would consider the legalization of living-loft studios in SoHo.<sup>51</sup> The President of

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<sup>48</sup> Governor Rockefeller truly put an end to the expressway when he ended all state funding for the project in 1971. Lynch, "SoHo---From Boho to Bobo," 26-27.

<sup>49</sup> "SoHo Benefit Well Supported," *Villager* 38, no.9 (June 4, 1970), 3.

<sup>50</sup> Stratton, *Pioneering in the Urban Wilderness*, 31-32; Bernstein and Shapiro, *Illegal Living*, 67.

<sup>51</sup> Legalization was only under consideration for artists who had established residence before May 1, 1970. "Moves Made to Legalize SoHo," *Villager* 38, no. 12 (June 25, 1970), 1.

the Commerce and Industry Association, Ralph Gross issued a statement in protest of the proposed hearing: “Landmark designation on these buildings would discourage and detract from urban renewal and redevelopment efforts, including the proposed Lower Manhattan Expressway.”<sup>52</sup> The tug of war over SoHo as an artists’ enclave or as a site of urban renewal was at its height in the summer of 1970. The City Planning Commission voted to legalize a limited number of former manufacturing buildings in SoHo for residential use in January of 1971.

The conflicting interests in SoHo were apparent in the architectural aesthetics of each group arguing for their real estate claims. On one side were the urban planners and master builders who favored a modernist style while on the other were the preservationists and homesteaders who preferred to maintain the decorative architecture of past centuries. In a last attempt to excite public approval for Lomex, the Ford Foundation invited esteemed architect Paul Rudolph to revisit the project in 1967.<sup>53</sup> Randolph’s designs would have completely transformed lower Manhattan’s topography and infrastructure into a modernist visual utopia (fig. 13). His renderings of Lomex are reminiscent of works of science fiction and ancient architecture, and represent an aesthetic mix characteristic of modernist constructions of the late 1960s (fig. 14). Rudolph’s design required the razing of blocks of buildings that represented the innovations of another century. In the 1880’s SoHo had transitioned from a residential neighborhood filled with low-rise brick buildings to a manufacturing district full of multi-story cast-iron warehouses.<sup>54</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable wrote that Lomex would have decimated Greene Street, “a

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<sup>52</sup> *Villager* 38, no. 15 (July 16, 1970), 4.

<sup>53</sup> Paul Goldberger noted, “Rudolph’s idea, in effect, was to double down on the intervention, to build so much around and atop and beside it that the expressway would seem almost irrelevant.” Paul Goldberger, “Paul Rudolph’s Manhattan Megastructure,” *New Yorker* November 8 (2010) website accessed March 28, 2017, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/paul-rudolphs-manhattan-megastructure>.

<sup>54</sup> The City of New York, “SoHo - Cast Iron Historic District Designation Report” Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs Administration (1973), 7-9.

uniquely intact enclave of iron architecture.”<sup>55</sup> Cast-iron buildings are characterized not only by their material construction but additionally by the panoply of architectural designs which constituted their unique appearance, neatly summarized in the historic designation report as a, “combination of classical elements...so free that no pre-existing stylistic term or terms can be applied directly in describing a particular building.”<sup>56</sup> The cast-iron architecture stood in stark contrast to the architectural preferences of mid-century designers (fig. 15). This contrast was visually evident to pedestrians standing on the corner of Houston and Greene Streets, where to the north stood James Ingo Freed’s and I.M. Pei’s *Silver Towers* (1967) (fig. 16) and to the south Henry Fernbach’s French Renaissance and Greek Revival facades (c.1881-4) (fig. 17).<sup>57</sup> The *Dwellings*’ naïve architecture entered into the debate in SoHo between the new and the old by adding a new category—the arcane.

Simonds began building his *Dwellings* along the southern portion of Greene Street near to Canal Street. Over the course of several months, the work migrated northwards to Houston Street, and then disappeared completely from SoHo.<sup>58</sup> Each *Dwelling* was a unique site, composed of both landscape and structures. The structures, created of half-inch unbaked clay bricks, appeared in various state of ruin often accompanied by rudely constructed wooden enclosures and earthen mounds (fig. 2). It appeared as if the inhabitants of the *Dwellings* had recently vacated the sites, but what compelled them to leave was left ominously unstated.

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<sup>55</sup> Huxtable, *Will They Ever Finish Bruckner Boulevard?*, 21.

<sup>56</sup> The City of New York, “SoHo - Cast Iron Historic District Designation Report,” 10.

<sup>57</sup> Ironically, the Silver Towers were designated a New York City Landmark in 2008. NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, “University Village,” Designation Reports, The City of New York. (November 2008).

<sup>58</sup> The exact time frame for the *Dwellings* on Greene Street is not wholly clear. Simonds has stated that the project began in 1969, and perhaps even in the spring of that year but all photographs of the works are dated 1970. I am working under the assumption that Simonds began working on clay landscapes in his studio in the winter of 1969 and moved outdoors in the spring of 1970 as this correlates with the photographs and the majority of his biographical statements. Charles Simonds, *Dwellings* (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung, 2015), 11.

According to Simonds, the *Dwellings* were the ruins of the migratory “Little People”; the shepherds lived in the gutters and the cliff dwellers on window ledges:

The Little People began to migrate through one street. At this time, there were actually two different peoples who were warring with each other. There were the Cliff dwellers (hunters) who lived on the walls and ledges of buildings; and there were herdsmen who lived on the plains of the street—in the gutters and against the bases of buildings. The cliff dwellers periodically descended to raid the plains people. Finally, the two peoples merged through conquest and assimilation.<sup>59</sup>

The fictitious tension between the warring tribes resembled the urban crisis that existed in SoHo, between idealism and reality, city planners and artist homesteaders. Simonds’ earthworks addressed those observant viewers who were watching the action on the street and changes to the local architecture. The *Dwellings* as temporary visitations on Greene Street were a caveat to neighborhood regulars.

But who exactly were Simonds’ Little People? Moreover, why did he choose to place the indices of their peripatetic existence on the streets of lower Manhattan? According to Arthur Danto, the Little People were the real residents of SoHo.<sup>60</sup> Their buildings which populated and brought attention to areas of urban squalor and neglect—a missing chunk in the paving stones, a brick which had crumbled away—were for Danto a visual allegory similar to one posed by Socrates in Plato’s *Republic*, “a society no other society would care to conquer.”<sup>61</sup> The *Dwellings* represented architecture outside of the debate between city planners and preservationists, the threats posed to their lasting construction were the natural elements and in particular heavy rain, not expressways or arguments for historically significant aesthetic construction. The small claims of real estate made by the *Dwellings* were not even required by

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<sup>59</sup> Simonds interview with Daniel Abadie, in *Charles Simonds* (Buffalo: Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1977), 7.

<sup>60</sup> Arthur Danto, *Charles Simonds: Mental Earth Growth and Smears* (New York: Knoedler and Co., 2011), 6.

<sup>61</sup> Danto, *Charles Simonds*, 7.

the Little People. They readily abandoned each claim to the viewer who stooped to peer into their darkened windows. Derived from a variety of sources both literary and real, John Neff argued that the Little People were evocative of magical visitations by timeless and genderless beings.<sup>62</sup> For Neff and Danto, the Little People represent an ideal and characteristically unhuman society, one that does not covet, conquer, or age. Are the Little People then gods? Kate Linker and Lucy Lippard have noted various anthropological sources for the Little People in mythologies throughout the world, including Norse and Egyptian mythology.<sup>63</sup> However, it is Ann Reynold's suggestion that the term Little People—frequently used by journalists to describe communities of disempowered tenants affected by real estate developments—was appropriated by Simonds to resonate with the political tensions on the streets of SoHo that I find most compelling.<sup>64</sup> In this framing, the Little People live under the threat of the master builder—someone who imposes order rather than assimilating to nature's offerings.

Little People represent not only a physical scale but also a scale of awareness. They are concerned with their own small area of geography, the activities of their block, while the master builder imagines the future of not a single neighborhood but a whole city or even nation. Marshall Berman wrote that it was “a romance of the small” or the disenfranchised populations that inspired neighborhood activism against megalomaniac planning.<sup>65</sup> Jacobs' observations of the small activities of her neighborhood—daily gatherings on stoops, the exchange of corner store gossip—exemplify her theories of healthy cities in *The Death and Life of American*

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<sup>62</sup> John Hallmark Neff, “Charles Simonds's Engendered Places: Towards a Biology of Architecture,” in *Charles Simonds* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1981), 16, 19-20.

<sup>63</sup> Lippard *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 70; Kate Linker, “Charles Simonds' Emblematic Architecture,” *Artforum* (March 1979), 33-34.

<sup>64</sup> Ann Reynolds, “Dwelling as a World,” in *LandscapeBodyDwelling: Charles Simonds at Dumbarton Oaks*, ed. John Beardsley (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2011), 70.

<sup>65</sup> Marshall Berman, “Emerging from the Ruins,” *Dissent* 61, no.1 (Winter 2014), 61.

*Cities*.<sup>66</sup> Simonds had said that he is the only ‘little person,’ however as the creator of the *Dwellings* his role is literally that of the master builder for the Little People.<sup>67</sup> As the artist, only he could see the whole picture. Gilles Tiberghien asserted that the miniature scale of Simonds’ *Dwellings* made it impossible for the viewer to have a gestalt relationship with the work.<sup>68</sup> The detail consumed the attention of the viewer’s eye. As size prevented viewers from entering the world of the Little People the work could only be observed. As Simonds has continued to work on the *Dwellings* and installed them throughout the world, the question of the Little People remains fluid. In 2015, Simonds wrote that, “making a *Dwelling* is an incantation to invite the Little People into existence, and an invocation of a home for myself.”<sup>69</sup> However, in 1970 on Greene Street the Little People were an allegory of a fragile society that lives close to nature and could exist, though only temporarily, outside of urban real estate squabbles.

Geographic location was important to Simonds. In each of his artist’s statements, he carefully notes his addresses chronologically. As Hilton Kramer has wryly noted, “Not since Picasso...have we been vouchsafed the addresses of so many studios and residences associated with an artist’s career.”<sup>70</sup> Simonds returned to Manhattan in 1969 after studying on the west coast and teaching at Newark State College in New Jersey.<sup>71</sup> When he moved into 131 Chrystie Street, a non-residentially zoned building populated by artists’ studios, he asked his neighbors

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<sup>66</sup> Jane Jacobs describes these small activities as “the ballet of Hudson Street” in chapters titled: The Uses of Sidewalks: Safety, and The Need for Mixed Primary Uses in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) 29-54 and 152-177.

<sup>67</sup> Linda Cathcart, “Charles Simonds,” in *Charles Simonds* (Buffalo: Albright-Knox Gallery, 1977), 2.

<sup>68</sup> Gilles A. Tiberghien, *Land Art* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995), 71.

<sup>69</sup> Simonds, *Dwellings*, 29.

<sup>70</sup> Hilton Kramer *Revenge of the Philistines: Art And Culture, 1972-1984* (New York: Macmillan Inc., 1985), 357.

<sup>71</sup> Neff, “Introduction,” in *Charles Simonds*, 9.

Gordon Matta-Clark and Harriet Korman for help installing plumbing (Matta-Clark's work *Pipes* [1971] may have been inspired by this experience).<sup>72</sup> Matta-Clark and Simonds became close friends and assisted each other with the creation of many outdoor art projects, including casting parts of bridges.<sup>73</sup> Matta-Clark wrote from Europe to Simonds, "I feel you and I in different ways are part of that N.Y.C place...working for or about it while it goes on its way changing and remaining the same."<sup>74</sup> For Matta-Clark, artists were visitations upon New York's timeless landscape. While Simonds chose to move to Lower Manhattan for the large industrial space that complimented his studio practice, it is ironic to note that within a year he had moved to working on the streets and abandoned studio projects, particularly after the efforts made to renovate his space. The shift to working on the street was inspired by his collaborations with Matta-Clark, and by his interest in the activities of the neighborhood, "It was springtime and my exuberance was shared through my windows by the crowds in the Chrystie Street park, which I named my Champs-Èlysée because of the 'Arc de Triomphe' of the Manhattan Bridge at its end"—a parkway designed by Moses at the beginning of his career in the Parks Department.<sup>75</sup> While Simonds claims the installation of the *Dwellings* along Greene Street was opportunistic—as a friend lived there—his choice of site would appear to have more psycho-geographic weight.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Simonds moved in to 131 Chrystie Street in 1969. Teresa Millet, "Interview with Charles Simonds," in *Charles Simonds* IVAM Catalogue (2003), 142.

<sup>73</sup> The bridge casting became part of a series by Simonds titled *Fragments of Forgotten Dreams*. Video recording of Charles Simonds' talk "Artists at the Institute," hosted by the Institute of Fine Art, New York City (2015) <https://vimeo.com/108378706>;

<sup>74</sup> Gordon Matta-Clark letter to Charles Simonds (1975), website accessed March 28, 2017, <http://www.charles-simonds.com/texts/letters/clark.pdf>

<sup>75</sup> Simonds, *Dwellings*, 12; Caro, *The Power Broker*, 375-376.

<sup>76</sup> Simonds frequently cites the fact that he had a college friend living on Greene Street whose building had a window ledge that was the site of the first outdoor *Dwelling*. David Colosi, "The Legend of Charles Simonds," The Center for Three-Dimensional Literature, 3Dlit.org (2013), 6.



While geography is how Simonds delineates his own biography, with the exception of Matta-Clark and Lucy Lippard he rarely refers to his peers. Despite being one of many homesteading artists, Simonds saw himself as separate from other lower Manhattan artists, and preferred to position himself in the role of builder.<sup>77</sup> In his accounts of working on Greene Street on the *Dwellings* Simonds cites the encouragement and interactions with non-artists as the most meaningful to his sense of artistic purpose.<sup>78</sup> As James Hudson has noted, artists felt a particular affinity with the blue-collar workers who toiled in SoHo loading trucks and in the industrial shops.<sup>79</sup> In the tradition of Bauhaus, workers and artists shared a kinship in their role as laborers. One of the founding editors of *Art-Rite*, a magazine closely associated with the downtown post-minimal artist community, Edit deAk wrote how Simonds maintained a role outside of the art world, “he has achieved the esteemed status of not being called an artist in the real world while consistently making art productions.”<sup>80</sup> Simonds would likewise claim to have learned more from his interactions with people on the street than with art world figures or “large-brained architects.”<sup>81</sup> Further, he states, “I’ve always thought of my work as transsocial, transpolitical, transsexual, and transparent(al).”<sup>82</sup> Here we see the artist assuming an ambiguous outsider status to the artist scene, despite his participation in the homesteading of lower Manhattan and

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<sup>77</sup> Simonds interview with Daniel Abadie, in *Charles Simonds* (Buffalo: Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1977), 7.

<sup>78</sup> “As I worked, I often had the joy of the truckers and workers cheering me on. They would stop and happily proclaim, ‘Yeah! Man, that’s great! Beautiful.’ ‘Oh, yeah. I know about them Little People.’ Simonds, *Dwellings*, 14.

<sup>79</sup> Hudson, *The Unanticipated City*, 49.

<sup>80</sup> Edit deAk, “Vernacular Myth,” *Art-Rite* (Summer 1974), 11.

<sup>81</sup> Simonds quoted in “Situation Esthetics: Impermanent Art and the Seventies Audience,” *Artforum* (January 1980), 29.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

involvement in community activism since his days as a student at Berkley.<sup>83</sup> His role as the creator of the *Dwellings* is similarly ambiguous, as he was one of the Little People as well as their master builder.

As a master builder, Simonds chose a material that insured that his outdoor structures would not last more than a few days. Clay, when fired becomes a stable medium but while it retains its moisture, it has a volatile and temporary structure that is inclined to return its natural unformed state. According to Simonds, he chose clay as his primary means of personal expression for two reasons: early childhood encounters with building figurines and seeing adobe pueblos while traveling in the southwest, and because of the essential or primordial aspects of the medium.<sup>84</sup> One of his first major works in clay *Birth* (1970) was a performance piece in which the artist climbs out of, or is born from, a clay-pit in Sayreville, New Jersey (fig. 18).<sup>85</sup> The filmed performance was framed very tightly on the artist emerging from what appears to be a landscape bereft of any growth or structure beyond earth. The aesthetic of landscape purity or minimalism is reminiscent of De Maria's *New York Earth Room* (fig. 3). Simonds would use Sayreville clay to create the half-inch unfired bricks and landscapes of his *Dwellings*. The clay pits had, since 1850 been the property of Sayre & Fisher Brick Company, one of the largest brick

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<sup>83</sup> Michael Coffey, "I Build Ruins": Charles Simonds and the Dwellings of his Little People," *Artcritical*, the Online Magazine of Art and Ideas (December 31, 2015), website accessed March 28, 2017, <http://www.artcritical.com/2015/12/31/michael-coffey-on-charles-simonds/>.

<sup>84</sup>In his personal timeline, Simonds noted "1951- Runs away for the first time while on family vacation in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Makes "Indian fire pit" in Frijoles Canyon. 1952-Makes Rabbit Reading Newspaper." He was six in 1951. Frijoles Canyon is the site of Bandelier National Park where numerous Native American cliff dwellings and adobe ruins are located. Charles Simonds, "Biography", website accessed December 2016, <http://www.charles-simonds.com/texts.html>; Neff, "Charles Simonds's Engendered Places: Towards a Biology of Architecture," in *Charles Simonds*, 14.

<sup>85</sup> Simonds graduated from Rutgers in 1969.

manufacturers on the east coast (fig. 19).<sup>86</sup> Many buildings in New York were composed of their bricks, including the base of the Statue of Liberty (1875), the Brooklyn Academy of Music (1906), the Empire State Building (1930), and Rockefeller Center (1931) (fig. 20).<sup>87</sup> By 1969, the same year Simonds received his M.F.A. at nearby Rutgers University, the Sayreville pits had become an abandoned industrial site.<sup>88</sup> The artist's choice to draw clay from Sayreville was more than just geographic and economic convenience. As Kelly Baum has noted many artists affiliated with Rutgers including Allan Kaprow, Robert Whitman, and Geoffrey Hendricks were interested in ruins and the aesthetic of desolation.<sup>89</sup> Simonds' choice to make the *Dwellings* from Sayreville clay was at once anti-commerce and anti-real-estate, the antithesis of the actual uses to which the pit's former output of bricks were put. As Linda Cathcart noted, the artist's use of clay conveyed an archeological and political meaning to viewers: "the idea of using free and natural material—the original material for all dwellings—seems consistent with making things that have no owners."<sup>90</sup> Cathcart and viewers who encountered the *Dwellings* on Greene Street were not informed of the poignant origin of the clay. While appearing rustic and even anthropological, Simonds' *Dwellings* were from the same material used to create the architectural monuments that define New York City. However, given time, his unfired clay structures and landscapes would dissolve back into earth.

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<sup>86</sup> Scott Volz, "Between Here and There: The Ambiguous Ecologies of Charles Simonds," Master's Thesis, Stony Brook University (2014), 2.

<sup>87</sup> Sayreville Historical Society, *Images of America: Sayreville* (Charleston S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2001), 9; "The New Brooklyn Academy of Music," *The Brick Builder* 17, no. 10 (October 1908), 238.

<sup>88</sup> Sayreville Historical Society, "A Timeline of Sayreville History," website accessed January 2017, <http://www.sayrevillehistory.org/timeline>.

<sup>89</sup> Kelly Baum, "On the Road," in *New Jersey as Non-Site* Kelly Baum ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 2013), 27.

<sup>90</sup> Cathcart, *Charles Simonds*, 1.

In the nineteenth century, American artists championed the beauty of the new world's unspoiled wilderness as a means of differentiating their work from established European painters. Thomas Cole asserted that the sublime was visible in the American landscape in ways unavailable to European painters, "The painter of American scenery has, indeed, privileges superior to any other. All nature here is new to art."<sup>91</sup> In the twentieth century, earthwork artists such as Simonds, De Maria, Sonfist, and Michael Heizer were similarly preoccupied with depicting what they believed was the American landscape, albeit a more western orientated view than the Catskills. In his pursuit of an authentically American art, Heizer left New York's landscape, dominated by European influences, for the desert wilderness of the southwest.<sup>92</sup> As Tiberghien noted, "earth is used as a material [by land artists] to evoke an era prior to urbanization, even prior to the European invasion of America."<sup>93</sup> Simonds' *Dwellings* evoked a southwestern landscape as well, with their pueblo styled structures and sandy red terrain. The ruinous state of the structures alludes to the dark side of American ambition, and the decimation of indigenous populations by European settlers.<sup>94</sup> De Maria's *Earth Room* is the antithesis of Cole's sublime; here nature is edited to its most pure form and presented in a contained, mathematical, and flat manner. De Maria's landscape is not clearly American but is clearly not of New York City. Sonfist on the other hand examines an American landscape distinctly of New York City. Unlike many of his land art contemporaries, Sonfist preferred east coast flora and fauna. However, his romanticism of the pre-colonial environment in *Time Landscape* points to

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<sup>91</sup> Thomas Cole, Journal entry, July 6, 1835, Thomas Cole Papers, 1821-1863, New York State Library, manuscript collections, SC10635.

<sup>92</sup> Yates McKee, "Land Art in Parallax: Media, Violence, Political Ecology," in *Nobody's Property: Art, Land, Space, 2000-2010*, ed. Kelly Baum (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 2010), 45.

<sup>93</sup> Tiberghien, *Land Art*, 71.

<sup>94</sup> Simonds noted that the *Dwellings* ruinous state as a nod to the decimation of indigenous populations during the period of Manifest Destiny. Lippard and Simonds, "Microcosm to Macrocosm," 38.

an interest in redefining what is a pure American landscape. Each artist used earth as the material of their lower Manhattan art works as means of revealing what is under the city, or as Simonds noted of one of his later projects, “the form merely reinstated an image of the earth rising from beneath the city.”<sup>95</sup> In each case, the absence of modern architecture, infrastructure, and urban cultural environments, clarifies what the artists perceived as the true American landscape.

Simonds was interested in the role of the artist as historian and oracle. The temporary visitations of the *Dwellings* were a portent of civilization’s eventual decline. He hoped the constructions would inspire creative speculation that over time might grow into a mythos.<sup>96</sup> He wrote that the *Dwellings* were, “emblematic of lives lived in an area where the buildings of the city are undergoing constant transformation.”<sup>97</sup> As a metaphor for the transient nature of urban living, the *Dwellings* asserted the eventual decay of all culture and architecture. The influence of natural elements ensured that the ephemeral rustic constructions would, without maintenance disappear over time, some more rapidly than others. For instance, the *Dwellings* constructed inside Jeffery Lew’s Gallery at 112 Greene Street and Holly Solomon’s Gallery at 98 Greene Street lasted longer than the outdoor installations (fig. 21). Thomas Cole (d. 1848) presented a similar portent or wishes for civilization’s demise in his series *The Course of Empire* (1833-36) (fig. 22). The five paintings in the series present a cyclical view of history starting with an unsettled landscape, the establishment of civilization, its demise and return to nature. The final scene, *Desolation* is composed of overgrown and abandoned architectural ruins.

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<sup>95</sup> Charles Simonds interview with Daniel Abadie, in *Charles Simonds* (Buffalo: Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1977), 14.

<sup>96</sup> Ethan Swan, "Video Interview Charles Simonds" Bowery Artist Tribute Interview (June 21, 2012) website accessed March 1, 2016, <http://www.charles-simonds.com/texts.html>.

<sup>97</sup> Simonds, *Individuals*, 293.

The arcane architecture of the *Dwellings* was a visual specter of American ambition, where one culture is cyclically conquering and replacing another. The mobilization against the master plans of Moses and Randolph had succeeded in recasting the definition and aesthetic of urban utopia. In 1970s Greene Street was the central corridor of the homesteading artists' community who lived in repurposed real estate. Simonds' miniature adobe ruins sited along Green Street were intentionally ephemeral structures. Simonds was both the *Dwellings*' master builder and one of the Little People. He utilized SoHo's unclaimed spaces, the cracked paving stones, and deep windowsills designed by architects from another century. His benign architecture was made of earth, a constant element that remained beneath the ever-changing metropolis. The ambitions of great builders like Moses or small residents like the homesteading artists were like Simonds' *Dwellings* ephemeral.

## 2. Displacing Culture, Walter De Maria's *New York Earth Room*.

“The dirt (or earth) is not there just to be seen, but to be thought about! God has given us the earth, and we have ignored it!”

- Walter De Maria, “The Land Show”

Walter De Maria first became inspired to create land art while he was living and working in lower Manhattan. It was in the city, amidst the thriving downtown art scene, that the recently established artist, with a gallery and acclaimed reviews, became interested in the antithesis of the urban experience—wilderness.<sup>98</sup> His first work, *Mile Long Drawing* (1968) was enacted in the Mojave Desert (fig. 23). An ephemeral piece, documented in photographs, the work consisted of two mile-long parallel lines drawn in chalk directly on to the ground. De Maria appeared to reenact the flat and barren terrain of the western American landscape in his later land artwork *New York Earth Room* (1977), where the wilderness was contained within the urban gallery (fig.3). A confluence of events and influences led De Maria to consider the expanded field of sculpture, work that eschewed sculptural object-making in favor of sited environments which landed somewhere in the spectrum between architecture and landscape. While Jane McFadden has identified Fluxus influences within De Maria's land art works, and Jeffery Kastner has said they were the result of the artist's rejection of the gallery system, I will argue that De Maria's earthworks were additionally a reaction to the ascendancy of New York City's cultural scene and the burgeoning downtown art market.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Transcript, Oral History with Walter De Maria (October 4, 1972) Archives of American Art.

<sup>99</sup> Jane Porter McFadden, “Practices of Site: Walter De Maria and Robert Morris, 1960–1977,” PhD diss., University of Texas, Austin, 2004. Jeffrey Kastner, “Alone in a Crowd: The Solitude of Walter De Maria's *New York Earth Room* And *Broken Kilometer*.” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 2 (2000), 69.

In 1971, Walter De Maria wrote to gallerist Richard Bellamy that city life was detrimental to one's health and perpetuated bad habits such as chain smoking.<sup>100</sup> He urged Bellamy to leave the city in order to restore his health. He was not speaking of cities in general, but of New York City which seemed to represent to De Maria, a place that could cause moral decrepitude. In other letters, he wrote of the virtues of metropolises like Munich that had clean air and silence, and London that was full of polite people and has "a light feeling."<sup>101</sup> While De Maria was a New York artist, he originally hailed from northern California—the locus of the back-to-the-land movement.<sup>102</sup> In a 1972 interview De Maria, asserted his preference for west coast sensibilities: "California culture is superior to New York culture because it is more ... in contact with nature."<sup>103</sup> This geographic polarity would eventually inform his interest in the tension between nature and urban landscapes and the creation of gallery installations such as the *Earth Room*.

Some of De Maria's early works, which manifested his conflicted relationship with New York City and urban living, were the "invisible drawings" titled *The Large Landscape*. *The Large Landscape* was exhibited at Cordier & Ekstrom gallery in 1966 (fig. 24).<sup>104</sup> Eight large sheets of paper hung on the gallery walls, each displaying a single word written lightly in pencil: SUN, SKY, CLOUD, MOUNTAIN, RIVER, TREE, FIELD, GRASS. As Molleen Theodore

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<sup>100</sup> Letter from De Maria to Richard Bellamy, September 13, 1971. Richard Bellamy Papers, [III.H.4]. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

<sup>101</sup> De Maria to David Bourdon, December 15, 1968. David Bourdon Papers, [I.12]. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

<sup>102</sup> Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog* was essential reading for those interested in self-sufficiency and environmentalism in California's bay area from 1968-1972. Northern California saw an explosion of interest in communal living and organic self-sufficient farming in the late 1960s. Timothy Miller, *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 41-56.

<sup>103</sup> Oral history Walter De Maria, 1972, Archives of American Art.

<sup>104</sup> Molleen Theodore, "Beyond 'Meaningless Work' The Art of Walter De Maria, 1960-1977," PhD Dissertation CUNY The Graduate Center (2010), 102.



pointed out, *The Large Landscape* challenged viewers to visualize the written but pictorially absent terrain.<sup>105</sup> The absence of semblances of nature in the artwork confronted viewers and challenged them to conjure their own memories in order to construct the landscape. Michael Benedikt recalls the gallery installation as theatrical and inspired by De Maria's involvement with Happenings in downtown Manhattan and an interest in architectural structures.<sup>106</sup> David Bourdon characterized the viewing experience as "disturbingly provocative" in its activation of associative images within the audience by means of the most sparse form of drawing.<sup>107</sup> I believe De Maria's series was intended to impress upon the viewer the distance their urban environment and the galleries white walls placed between themselves and nature. The works did not provide a window onto an untamed wilderness but rather, somewhat humorously, reminded viewers how far away the views of mountains, rivers, and fields were. Unlike the landscape artists of the previous century, De Maria did not embrace his artistic responsibility to recreate nature for the viewer. In his *Essay on American Scenery* (1836), Thomas Cole stated that the goal of the painter was to convey the beauty of the wilderness and its capacity to reveal God's creation as a metaphoric Eden.<sup>108</sup> While Cole painted Eden-like landscapes that invited viewers to imagine a place bereft of modernity, De Maria removed the frame and view completely. Playing with historical precedents of landscape exhibitions, the view De Maria provided was an awareness of the gallery space.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> In 1967, art critic Michael Fried used the term theatrical to describe the confrontation between the viewer and minimalist works. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5 (June 1967): 12–23; Michael Benedikt, "Sculpture as Architecture: New York Letter 1966-67," Gregory Batcock, ed., *Minimal Art, A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 71.

<sup>107</sup> David Bourdon, "Walter De Maria: The Singular Experience," *Art International* 12, no. 10 (December 20, 1968), 43.

<sup>108</sup> Thomas Cole, *Essays on American Scenery*, reprinted in Marshall Tymn ed., *Thomas Cole: The Collected Essays and Prose Sketches* (St. Paul, Minnesota: The John Colet Press, 1980), 12.

At the time of the Cordier & Ekstrom exhibition De Maria had already played a role in the homesteading of SoHo, repurposing loft buildings for artists' use, and participating in social activities centered on creating a critical new bohemian community. In 1960, he moved from northern California with La Monte Young to lower Manhattan to pursue a career as an artist.<sup>109</sup> His first apartment was an industrial space on Walker Street, which he had to renovate in order to make a livable studio.<sup>110</sup> This area of Tribeca contained cast iron buildings constructed at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century for light-industry businesses such as dry goods, stationers, bookbinders, and printers.<sup>111</sup> De Maria utilized basic carpentry skills acquired while working for the Chicago Bauhaus-inspired designer Martin Metal to build a domestic space for his wife and himself.<sup>112</sup> With Robert Whitman, De Maria founded a gallery at 9 Great Jones Street in 1963 in order to exhibit their work, curate film programs, present theater programs, and a mixed media-discothèque.<sup>113</sup> He participated in events at Yoko Ono's Chamber Street series and used his own loft to host a lecture by Henry Flynt titled, "From 'Culture' to Veramusement" (fig. 25).<sup>114</sup> The lecture was attended by approximately twenty people who upon entering De Maria's loft, symbolically trod upon the face of *Mona Lisa*.<sup>115</sup> The day before, February 27, 1963, De Maria had participated with Flynt and one other artist in picketing Philharmonic Hall, the Museum of

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<sup>109</sup> Franz Meyer, *Walter De Maria* (Frankfurt: Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1991), 8.

<sup>110</sup> Roberta Smith, "Walter De Maria, Artist on Grand Scale, Dies at 77," *New York Times* (July 26, 2013): A20; Robin Finn, "Walter De Maria's Grand and Gritty Home," *New York Times* (January 31, 2014): RE2.

<sup>111</sup> David M. Breiner and Margaret M.M. Pickart, "Tribeca East Historic District: Designation Report," (NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, December 1992), 188.

<sup>112</sup> Oral History Walter De Maria, 1972, Archives of American Art.

<sup>113</sup> Dia Art Foundation, "Artist's Biography," Walter De Maria, *The New York Earth Room*, 1977, website accessed March 5, 2016, <http://www.diaart.org/sites/page/52/1599> ; Boudon, *Art International*, 41.

<sup>114</sup> Henry Flynt, *Down With Art* (New York: Fluxpress, 1968), sections 4-7.

<sup>115</sup> Flynt, *Down With Art*, section 4.

Modern Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where the *Mona Lisa* was on exhibition. Their signs read” “Demolish Concert Halls!/Demolish Lincoln Center!; Demolish Art Museums!/No More Art!; Demolish Serious Culture!/Destroy Art!”<sup>116</sup> In a letter to Flynt De Maria wrote, “Yes I certainly do see the harmfulness of serious culture.”<sup>117</sup> De Maria felt in seeking to ascend its cultural prominence, through up-market exhibitions and performances, New York City was stepping upon true artistic expression. While De Maria did not sign the petitions generated by groups such as Artists Against the Expressway, he benefited from the decline of the Moses’ era of power. In the real estate vacuum left in the wake of Lomex, De Maria and his circle found space to build their own community, one that sought to critique the master plan and top down structure of the post-war period.

By his own account, 1968 was a pivotal year for De Maria. It was when he became fed-up with the New York downtown arts scene, stopped playing music, and left to travel throughout the Western United States, Europe, and Africa.

It actually had to do with the true crises, my realization of crises of the cities in '67. . . doing of your work in New York depended on the state of your studio and it depended on the state of your gallery. It meant that your work was to be judged within the context of the space of the gallery. I mean I liked Ekstrom's gallery because it was very good spatially but if you had to think of doing another show there and then another show and another show, always working with that space, it was a realization that it wasn't only your object, but it was the object in the context, in the social and spatial context it was given.<sup>118</sup>

De Maria expressed his interest in challenging the gallery context—the space of the art market. His first *Earth Room* (1968) created in Munich, Germany was a sabot, in the form of dirt, which he tossed into the gears of the gallery mill. The installation—a gallery filled with dirt—attempted

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Flynt, *Down With Art*, section 7, letter from De Maria to Flynt, March 12, 1963.

<sup>118</sup> Oral History Walter De Maria, 1972, Archives of American Art.

to stop the gallery's revolving display of artists' works, and insert an eternal element, earth.

Theodore has speculated that the post-war rubble of Munich inspired De Maria to fill the gallery with earth, but rather it was De Maria's artistic interest in pure forms, which existed outside of cyclical time, that led him to the inspired installation.<sup>119</sup> A poster advertising the exhibition stated "NO OBJECT ON IT/ NO OBJECT IN IT/ NO MARKINGS ON IT/ NO MARKINGS IN IT/ NOTHING GROWING ON IT/ NOTHING GROWING IN IT."<sup>120</sup> By placing two feet of dirt inside of the gallery, a symbol of metropolitan culture, De Maria transformed the "social and spatial context" into a minimalist view of nature. An unforeseen result was to make real estate that had previously served artists, both economically and socially inaccessible.

De Maria's *New York Earth Room* first opened at Heiner Freidrich's gallery in SoHo in October 1977, nearly ten years after the Munich installation.<sup>121</sup> The gallery was located at 141 Wooster Street, one of several building the Landmarks Preservation Commission listed in its 1973 historic designation report for the cast-iron district.<sup>122</sup> Located on the second floor, the 3,600 square feet of gallery space was filled to approximately knee height with 280,000 pounds of soil from Long Island.<sup>123</sup> A glass barrier prevented the earth from pouring into the public viewing area and kept viewers from entering the vast, fertile, and humid, dirt-filled space. The gallery on Wooster Street had been renovated and all interior decorative elements removed in favor of minimal white walls and utilitarian light fixtures. The interior scene was aesthetically

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<sup>119</sup> Theodore, "Beyond 'Meaningless Work'," 126-127.

<sup>120</sup> Theodore, "Beyond 'Meaningless Work'," 129.

<sup>121</sup> Grace Glueck, "Art People," *New York Times* (November 23, 1979): C23.

<sup>122</sup> The City of New York, "SoHo - Cast Iron Historic District Designation Report," 170.

<sup>123</sup> The dirt may have been removed from one of the de Menil family's Hampton estates. Philippa (nee' de Menil) and her husband Heiner Fredrich owned a house in Bridgehampton, Long Island. Grace Glueck, "The De Menil Family: The Medici Of Modern Art," *New York Times Magazine* (May 18, 1986):28-46; Dia Art Foundation, "Walter De Maria," *The New York Earth Room, 1977*, (2016); Phoebe Hoban, "Medicis for A Moment, the Collapse of the Dia Dream," *New York Magazine* (November 25, 1985): 55.

opposite to the building's cast-iron exterior (fig. 26). This was De Maria's third *Earth Room* installation; the two other iterations of the concept, both temporary, and of varying proportions were in Munich and Darmstadt (1974), Germany (fig. 27, 28 & 29). All of the *Earth Room* projects are described as "minimal, interior, horizontal earth sculpture," followed by details of their dimensions: "*Munich Earth Room*: 1,765 cubic feet of level dirt in 755 square feet at a depth of 23 5/8 inches; *The Large Earth Room, Darmstadt*: 2,991 cubic feet of level gravel in 1,784 square feet at a depth of 19 3/4 inches; *The New York Earth Room*: 250 cubic yards of earth, peat and bark in 3,600 square feet at a depth of 22 inches."<sup>124</sup>

The context of the final *Earth Room* sited in lower Manhattan's burgeoning artist district had a different political resonance than the German installations because of De Maria's residence and involvement in the SoHo art community, and the subsequent long-term stewardship of the work by the Dia Art Foundation. More than just a minimalist rejection of the art market, *New York Earth Room* was additionally at odds with the efforts of the artist community to create a thriving and growing community. In 1977 when the exhibition opened, artists and art galleries, such as A.I.R., O.K. Harris, and Paula Cooper's Gallery, and the cooperative artist-run restaurant FOOD, populated Wooster Street.<sup>125</sup> Before De Maria's installation, the gallery on the second floor of 141 Wooster Street had functioned as an artists' salon—serving free lunches of red-cabbage-and-apple salad, hosting weekly meetings attended by artists and prominent collectors, and staging the Dream Festival, a three-month-long series of concerts in 1975 (fig. 30).<sup>126</sup>

According to gallery co-founder Philippa de Menil, "we gave over our space so that Walter De

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<sup>124</sup> Gagosian Gallery, "Walter De Maria Biography," (2005) the Museum of Modern Art Artist Files, 300297358.

<sup>125</sup> Paula Cooper was the first gallery to open in SoHo in 1968. Since the commercially zoned neighborhood did not have any residential businesses, such as grocery stores, illegally residing artists began cooperatives like FOOD to support the new community's needs. Hudson, *The Unanticipated City*, 32-33.

<sup>126</sup> Hoban, "Medicis for A Moment," *New York Magazine*, 55.

Maria's *Earth Room* could become a permanent exhibition."<sup>127</sup> One of the artistic cohort who had attended the salons, De Maria created a gallery installation that became a barrier to access for the community that had regularly convened in the space.

Artists who moved to SoHo were interested in the expansive raw space available to them as loft homesteaders. De Maria's *Earth Room* appeared as a visual pun on raw space—a room ripe with potential for growth. The gallery space and the dirt that filled it, both represented geographic opportunities. The room would appeal to the homesteading artists of SoHo, while the earth would perhaps summon forth their early American ancestors.<sup>128</sup> Of course, no visitor to the *Earth Room* arrived via Conestoga wagon and yet there is something of the unsettled American mid-west in the flatness of the fictive landscape. Regardless, De Maria was making an assertion in this site-specific work about claims on space.

Critics focused on three aspects of the *Earth Room*: as site-specific, as theatrical minimalism, and as metaphor. In her 1977 *Times* review of the installation, Vivien Raynor recalled her urge to “scamper” around the installation.<sup>129</sup> She also perceived the installation as an “act of aggression.”<sup>130</sup> By filling the entirety of the gallery space with dirt the artist was in fact keeping people out, or excluding them from the vast, fertile, and sensorial space. Viewers stood outside of the work viewing the environment rather than experiencing it. Raynor's response is that of a quintessential New Yorker—one who longs for access to even the scantest

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> De Maria worked for several years in the New York Public Library's American History, Local History, and Family History Room. This reading room is where researchers went to conduct genealogical studies. De Maria would assist researchers to locate their family's place in time and geography. Oral History Walter De Maria, 1972, Archives of American Art.

<sup>129</sup> Vivien Raynor, “Art: Dig He Must,” *New York Times* (Nov. 23, 1977): C23.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

bits of nature and empty real estate. Roberta Smith noted the primacy of the sensorial experience of visiting the *Earth Room*, the damp scented air. The work, according to Smith, was a presentation of an unnatural landscape that used unprocessed material in a way that did not induce metaphorical conclusions. She critically summarized De Maria's interests as grandiose, inaccessible, and fixated upon measurement.<sup>131</sup> In his descriptions of the work, De Maria limited his artist statement to the dimensions of the work as determined by the installation's architecture.<sup>132</sup> According to Franz Meyer, De Maria's work explored, "the polarity between self-reference and the experience of the sublime... [and evoked] a greater awareness of the earth as our planetary home, as landscape and as matter."<sup>133</sup> For Meyer, the *Earth Room* was both a gallery simply filled with dirt, but additionally a purist empty landscape, sublime in its barren state. Was the barren earth a portent of the future, or a view of the first day of God's creation? De Maria stated in his essay "On the Importance of Natural Disasters" (May 1960):

Put the best object you know next to the grand canyon, niagra falls, the red woods. The big things always win. Now just think of a flood, forest fire, tornado, earthquake, Typhoon, sand storm. Think of the breaking of the Ice jams. Crunch. If all of the people who go to museums could just feel an earthquake. Not to mention the sky and the ocean. But it is in the unpredictable disasters that the highest forms are realized. They are rare and we should be thankful for them.<sup>134</sup>

However, *Earth Room* was hardly reminiscent of a natural disaster, so how did it reflect the sublime or awe-inspiring aspects of nature? The dirt, removed from the earth and placed in an

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<sup>131</sup> Roberta Smith, "De Maria Elements," *Art in America* (May/June 1978), 105.

<sup>132</sup> The press release for the exhibition starts by stating: 22 cubic yards of earth, 3,600 square feet of floor space, 21" depth of material, 220,00 lbs. Weight of material (The breakdown of earth and soil materials is as follows: 180 cubic yards of earth mix (peat and bark) weighing 97,00 pounds; and 42 cubic yards of earth weighing 123,000 pounds for a total weight of 220,00 pounds. Transportation and installation of earth by Cityscape Landscaping.) as quoted in typescript from Heine Friedrich, Inc. (1977) MoMA Artists files, Walter De Maria.

<sup>133</sup> Franz Meyer, *Walter De Maria* (Frankfurt: Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1991), 8.

<sup>134</sup> Walter De Maria, "On the Importance of Natural Disasters," published in *Anthology of Chance Operations*, edited by LeMonte Young and Jackson MacLow (1962).

urban gallery became, because of its context, a symbol of nature. Wim Beeren noted that De Maria's work made "profound reference to life on our planet," and that the, "earth in the *Earth Room* is sculpture, but by virtue of its excessive mass it is theatre as well."<sup>135</sup> Each critic noted the juxtaposition of the contained and abstracted natural landscape within an urban setting but did not pinpoint this obvious site-specific tension—dirt could have a gallery where artists could not.

By inserting a work of Land Art into a gallery in lower Manhattan, De Maria created a view of the American landscape that mimicked many but not all aspects of landscape painting. It presented a landscape extracted from nature, with a view prescribed by the artist, which remained unaffected by the passage of time. The text in the gallery, provided by Dia and the artist did not apprise viewers of the origin of the dirt and therefore stressed the universal quality of the medium.<sup>136</sup> While Cage's idea of the audience as participant was influential upon De Maria's work, *New York Earth Room* was much less participatory than *Lightening Field* (1970), which required the audience to walk through and experience the work over the course of twenty-four hours (fig. 31). *Earth Room* visitors observed the work from a single fixed viewing point, demarcated by the gallery's architecture and a barrier of glass.<sup>137</sup> The timeless and contained landscape of the *Earth Room* required regular maintenance to protect it from the natural cycles of growth and entropy characteristic of land art works in the wilderness such as *Mile Long Drawing*, which disappeared shortly after it was completed and is only known as a photographic document. The Dia Foundation's gallery manager Bill Dilworth maintained the site for over thirty years, regularly watering and raking the installation to prevent dust and to keep the loamy soil dark,

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<sup>135</sup> Wim Beeren, "Exposé," in *Walter De Maria* (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, 1988), 8.

<sup>136</sup> Kastner, "Alone in a Crowd," *Afterfall*, 71.

<sup>137</sup> The gallery press release clarified that the work was for sale and that could be installed in other locations with multiple viewing points as long as "the earth flows congruously throughout the space." Heine Friedrich, Inc. (1977) typescript, MoMA Artists files, Walter De Maria.



damp and absent of plant matter.<sup>138</sup> Like an unsown field, the dirt on display was abundant with potential for growth but never manifested life. Similar to *The Large Landscape*, De Maria was providing audiences with the most minimal signifiers of landscape, clarifying the distance that existed between the urban site and the thriving natural landscape.

Where De Maria did pose a radical break from landscape painting, is that the *Earth Room* presented an actual site—the landscape was in the room with the viewer—and did not exist in another geographic location. Even Robert Smithson (1938-73) referenced the geographic origins of his series of *Non-Sites*, clarifying that the piles of earth or rocks on display in the gallery were abstracted from New Jersey (fig.32). In his 1967 essay “A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey,” Smithson starts his day’s journey buying a copy of *The New York Times* and a science-fiction novel titled *Earthworks* (1965) by Brian W. Aldiss.<sup>139</sup> Smithson summarized the premise of Aldiss’s dystopian novel as “about a soil shortage.”<sup>140</sup> The novel inspired the title of the seminal 1968 exhibition at Dwan Gallery and set the curatorial tone—a Malthusian portent of environmental destruction.<sup>141</sup> De Maria exhibited a series of photographs documenting the Munich installation of the *Earth Room* (or *Land Art Show*) in the Dwan exhibition.<sup>142</sup> According to Brian Wallis, the Land Art works on display in the gallery exhibited a dispirited and dysfunctional sense of place. The *New York Earth Room* differed from the works in the Dwan

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<sup>138</sup> The dirt is the original dirt that De Maria placed in the gallery in 1977. Anne Raver, “A Big Room in SoHo, Full of Earth,” *New York Times* (November 11, 1993): C8.

<sup>139</sup> Robert Smithson, “A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic New Jersey,” *The Collected Writings*, 68.

<sup>140</sup> Smithson, *The Collected Writings*, 69.

<sup>141</sup> Brian Wallis, “Survey,” in *Land and Environmental Art*, 23-24.

<sup>142</sup> James Nisbet cites the photographs as part of *Earthworks* but perhaps the inclusion was a later addition as the gallery price list does not include the documentary photographs but rather a painting titled “The Color Men Choose When They Attack the Earth.” Dawn Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art, Series 2: New York Exhibition Files, 1965-1971, after 1982, Box 3, Folder 18. James Nisbet, “Surface/Sphere: Walter De Maria’s Geopolitical Dimensions,” *Art Bulletin* 90, no. 3 (September 2016), 377.

Gallery show in that it did not represent another site, but *was* the site itself. Similarly, Charles Simonds' series of *Dwellings* on Greene Street and Alan Sonfist's *Time Landscape* on the corner of Lafayette and Houston Streets are contained landscapes rather than documentations of other sites.

In 1980, the Dia Art Foundation under the direction of Friedrich, decided to maintain the site at 141 Wooster Street for perpetuity. Unlike De Maria's work *Lightning Field*, the *Earth Room* was not originally intended as a long-term installation.<sup>143</sup> To date the earth on display remains untouched by humans and without plant growth, while the neighborhood directly outside the gallery continues to change. Visitors to the gallery have expressed an appreciation for the sanctuary and quiet meditative experience of their time experiencing the work.<sup>144</sup> Ann Raver listed visitors varied reactions to the installation in 1993, from regulars who came by to refresh their spirits and humor to one who speculated on the work as a relic—"in 200 years, this might be the only untainted earth on the East Coast."<sup>145</sup> De Maria begs the question, is nature a cultural construct in the city? By placing earth in a gallery, he reversed the paradigm of civilization—nature displaced culture. The earth made static a gallery space that otherwise would have been a place for numerous artistic activities. The era of the master urban planner had ended, but amidst the new wave of community-led planning, De Maria asserted, "God has given us the earth, and

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<sup>143</sup> Walter De Maria stated that *Lightening Field* was a permanent installation in "The Lightening Field," *Art forum*, (April 1970), 57, reprinted in *Land and Environmental Art*, 232-233; Interview with *New York Earth Room* gallerist, Bill Dilworth (March 4, 2016). Dilworth explained that De Maria relinquished control-concerning the maintenance and presentation of the *Earth Room* to the Dia Art Foundation and that De Maria did not conceive of the installation at 141 Wooster as permanent.

<sup>144</sup> Author interview with Bill Dilworth, March 2016.

<sup>145</sup> Anne Raver, "A Big Room in SoHo, Full of Earth," *New York Times*, (November 11, 1993): C8.

we have ignored it!”<sup>146</sup> A gallery filled with dirt, maintained to stifle all growth appears the perfect argument against cultural ascendancy, and an invitation to contemplate the most minimal view of nature.

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<sup>146</sup> Walter De Maria quote in the press release for “The Land Show” (September 1968) Galleries Heine Friedrich, Munich reprinted in David Bourdon’s article, “Walter De Maria: The Singular Experience,” *Art International* 12, no. 10 (December 1968), 72.

### 3. Too Natural, Alan Sonfist's *Time Landscape*

"Parks are idealizations of nature, but nature in fact is not a condition of the ideal...Nature is never finished...Parks are finished landscapes for finished art. The museums and parks are graveyards above ground."

- Robert Smithson, *The Collected Writings*.

In the beginning of his 1973 essay "Frederick Law Olmstead and the Dialectical Landscape," Smithson asks readers to imagine standing in what is now Central Park one million years ago, "you would be standing on a vast ice sheet, a 4,000-mile glacial wall, as much as 2,000 feet thick. Alone on the vast glacier, you would not sense its slow crushing, scraping, ripping movement as it advanced south."<sup>147</sup> Sonfist's *Time Landscape* similarly sought to evoke the topographic time machine that Smithson asked readers to imagine, except he chose a post-glacial date—the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a period when humans were present in the American landscape.<sup>148</sup> A paradoxical proposal, Sonfist sought to recreate a pristine pre-European settlement forest in the midst of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century metropolis. A formerly abandoned lot in lower Manhattan, at the corner of Houston Street and LaGuardia Place became the site for the earthwork in 1978 (fig. 4). Cleared and subsequently left undeveloped in the 1950s, the empty lot was the result of a failed Robert Moses project to extend Fifth Avenue through Washington Square Park and on to the Lower Manhattan Expressway (fig. 33). By the late 1970s, SoHo was well established as a legal and landmarked artists' district making it a receptive site for Sonfist's public art proposal. While Sonfist wanted *Time Landscape* to represent not only historic nature, but also a site where nature could institute its own chaotic order, the feral park's unkempt appearance began to clash with the

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<sup>147</sup> Smithson, *The Collected Writings*, 157.

<sup>148</sup> Paleo-Indian culture first established itself in approximately 5,000 B.C., with the Iroquois and Algonquin cultures actively inhabiting Manhattan from 400 A.D. into the 1600s. Giovanni da Verrazano first entered New York harbor in 1524, and Henry Hudson's *Half Moon* sailed up the river as far as Albany in 1609. Michael Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (Millwood NY: KTO Press, 1975), 1-7.

neighborhood's increasing state of gentrification.<sup>149</sup> An examination of city greening initiatives enacted by homesteading artists and neighborhood associations clarifies the context in which Sonfist found support for his project from government agencies. Located on Houston Street for more than twenty-five years, *Time Landscape* has had the most public exposure of the three artworks discussed. It was also the most compromised conceptually by the community's insistence of the necessity of maintenance. Neighborhood residents were flummoxed to find that the picturesque environment Sonfist's project purported to provide was in reality quite dissimilar to the maintained landscape of Olmstead's parks. The entropic aesthetic proved ultimately too natural for the present urban audience.

In its first iterations, *Time Landscape* was a proposal for a series of public memorials to nature that would appear in specific sites throughout the city (fig. 34). Each site would reenact or uncover the historic topography hidden by centuries of development (fig. 35). Sonfist began to publicize his idea for the memorials in 1965, the same year the federal government required the city to invest in community renewal programs or forfeit continued aid.<sup>150</sup> In his proposal, Sonfist mapped out numerous locations for *Time Landscapes* throughout the city. Sonfist's maps are strikingly similar to widespread sites of public housing projects that mushroomed throughout the boroughs (fig. 36). It would appear that the site-specific land art works were intentional counterweights to municipal renewal efforts. The modernist architecture of residential tower blocks would have stood in juxtaposition to the reinstituted wooded lots and marshlands. Sonfist sent copious correspondence to Mayor John Lindsay's office seeking permission to use city held

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<sup>149</sup> Alan Sonfist, "Letter to the Editor," *New York Times* (December 10, 1989): SM18.

<sup>150</sup> Gordon D. MacDonald and Rosalind Tough, "New York: Social Action in Urban Renewal," *Land Economics* 42, no. 4 (1966), 514.

property for fifty *Time Landscapes* throughout the municipality.<sup>151</sup> Sonfist may have felt some affinity towards the Mayor's office as Lindsay had run on an anti-Moses platform and had, compared to his predecessor, held conservative views on infrastructure and building projects.<sup>152</sup> While the city was not responsive to Sonfist's project, the Metropolitan Museum, under the direction of Thomas Hoving did take notice. Hoving had recently served under Lindsay's administration as the Parks Commissioner, making him particularly receptive to the *Time Landscape* concept. In a lecture Sonfist presented at the museum in 1969 titled "Natural Phenomenon as Public Monuments," he described the resuscitation of historic natural scenery through his series:

I plan to reintroduce a beech grove, oak, and maple trees that no longer exist in the city. Each landscape will roll back the clock and show the layers of time before the concrete of the city. On Canal Street I propose to create a marshland and a stream; on Spring Street I propose to restore the natural spring; in front of City Hall I propose to restore the historical lake.<sup>153</sup>

Sonfist's plan to recreate the landscapes displaced by civilization read much like a political statement against expanding urbanization. The reinstatement of marshes, streams, and lakes would certainly have affected the egress of crosstown traffic or entrance to municipal buildings. Like the construction sites for public housing or other renewal projects, each *Time Landscape* would uncover the historic earth that existed beneath Manhattan's concrete infrastructure, since the time of pre-European settlement. The uncovered earth of the *Time Landscapes* would support indigenous plants and trees, not concrete pilings.

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<sup>151</sup> Brian Wallis, "Survey" in *Land and Environmental Art*, 33.

<sup>152</sup> "Lindsay—The First Six Months," *New Republic* (July 16, 1966), 16-19.

<sup>153</sup> Alan Sonfist, "Natural Phenomena as Public Monuments," as reprinted in *Alan Sonfist Natural History* (Portland, Oregon: Companion Editions, The Reed Institute, 2016), 14-15.

Sonfist and Simonds both grew up in New York City during the postwar era of rapid expansion. In her 1960 column in *The Reporter* Mayra Mannes described the dislocating experience of living in the city:

New York is in the throes of the greatest building boom in its history, a convulsion equal to the wrinkling of the earth's skin by interior forces, a transformation so rapid and so immense that the native New Yorker becomes a stranger in a new city, all landmarks fled.<sup>154</sup>

The fact that the environment Sonfist proposed to recreate was that of Mannahatta viewed from boats by European settlers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the moment just before settlement, speaks to his romanticized notion of the indigenous peoples' relationship to nature. As John Beardsley noted in his critique of *Time Landscape*, "we now know that the precolonial forest was altered by Native American habitation even before the arrival of settlers."<sup>155</sup> For Sonfist the natural landscape did not exist after the arrival of European immigrants. This conception of an American landscape, as one only known by native peoples who lived in harmony with nature, appears in Simonds' *Dwellings* as well. As New Yorkers, both artists had become alienated from the landscape of their hometown that had altered so dramatically. Their interest in historic time and sympathies towards Native Americans reveals their want of connection to geography.

Of the three artist discussed, Sonfist was the most directly affected by the altered landscape of Moses's urban planning. His interest in the expanded field of sculpture was informed not only by his involvement with the homesteading of lower Manhattan but also by his childhood biography.<sup>156</sup> Sonfist grew up in the South Bronx, a neighborhood that came to symbolize the depth of New York City's economic collapse in the 1970s and the wholesale

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<sup>154</sup> Marya Mannes, "The White Cross," *Reporter* (December 8, 1960): 53.

<sup>155</sup> Beardsley, *Earthworks and Beyond, Contemporary Art in the Landscape*, 161.

<sup>156</sup> Sonfist bought a former police precinct building on lower Manhattan's Mulberry Street in the late 1960s. Ann Landi, "Separating the Trees from the Forest," *ARTnews* 110, no. 7 (2011):74.

destruction of a community by a master planner who favored expressways.<sup>157</sup> In October of 1977, President Carter visited Charlotte Street, an intersection only a few blocks from Sonfist's childhood home at the intersection of Boston Road and East 180<sup>th</sup> Street (fig. 37).<sup>158</sup> Carter reflected, "it was a very sobering trip for me to see the devastation that has taken place."<sup>159</sup> It would have been feasible to walk from Charlotte Street to Sonfist's childhood home before the neighborhood was cut in half in the mid-1950s by the Tremont section of Moses' Cross Bronx Expressway (fig. 38). In the 1979 exhibition, *Devastation/Resurrection, The South Bronx*, curator Robert Jensen listed numerous reasons for the abandonment and destruction of the neighborhood in the previous decade. Beyond the construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway Jensen identified the suburban flight of manufacturing industries, desegregation of New York City housing, and federal funding for large subsidized housing units such as Co-Op City as contributing to the abandonment of the neighborhood.<sup>160</sup>

Sonfist's *Time Landscape* related not just to landscape and architecture, but the whole city. The idea for *Time Landscape* encapsulates Sonfist's interest in reversing the destruction enacted upon New York by municipal projects, as well as his wish to recreate the pocket of woods he played in as a child.<sup>161</sup> In his autobiographical accounts, the artist always mentions the relationship he forged with nature as a child playing amongst old-growth hemlock trees, "I lived next to a primal forest. It was basically my sanctuary as a child. It was my magical cathedral

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<sup>157</sup> Berman, "Emerging from the Ruins," 60.

<sup>158</sup> Landi, "Separating the Trees from the Forest," *ARTNews*, 74.

<sup>159</sup> Lee Dembart, "Carter Takes 'Sobering' Trip to South Bronx," *New York Times* (October 6, 1977): 1.

<sup>160</sup> Donald Sullivan, "1940-1965, Population Mobility in the South Bronx," *Devastation/Resurrection, The South Bronx*, Robert Jensen ed. (Bronx: The Bronx Museum of Art, 1979), 42-44.

<sup>161</sup> Alan Sonfist, "Biography," accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.alansonfist.com/biography.html>.



within the urban center,” (fig. 39).<sup>162</sup> The hemlock forest was in the southern most portion of Bronx River Park (fig. 40). This inclination towards nature has led Jude Schwendenwien, John Grande, Brain Wallis, and Beardsley to categorize Sonfist’s art as environmentalist.<sup>163</sup> While Sonfist has often framed his artistic message in terms of restoring the natural environment and raising public awareness of the importance of nature, I argue that this early land artwork was additionally inspired by the artist’s interest in the temporal.<sup>164</sup> Building upon Pamela Lee’s argument that artists of the 1960s were obsessed with the notion of time as it came to “signal something about technological change,” I suggest that *Time Landscape* was a manifestation of this temporal obsession with suspending or reversing time.<sup>165</sup> Sonfist’s site-specific earthworks intended to argue his position that utopia was a thing of the past, rather than an end result of urban planning. As Robert Silfkin recently noted, *Time Landscape* was not only a juxtaposition of temporal landscapes—present cityscape to past wilderness—but additionally temporal growth, “the gradual pace of nature to the fitful rapidity of human culture.”<sup>166</sup> *Time Landscape* asserted nature’s regenerative possibilities. Regardless of how far civilization altered the landscape, nature could reinstate its eternal and historic authority. *Desolation*, Thomas Cole’s final painting in the *Course of Empire* series imagines nature reclaiming a once civilized landscape (fig. 22). Sonfist found his attitude towards nature similarly depicted in the paintings of members of the

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<sup>162</sup> John Grande interview with Alan Sonfist, “Nature/Culture,” *Sculpture* (May 2004), 56.

<sup>163</sup> Jude Schwendenwien, “Breaking Ground: Alan Sonfist, Helen Mayer and Newton Harrison, Mel Chin, Michele Oka Doner, Jody Pinto, and Aviva Rahmani,” *The New Earthwork, Art Action Agency*, Twylene Moyer and Geln Harper, eds. (Hamilton N.J.:isc Press, 2011), 41; Grande, John K., *Art Nature Dialogues* (Ithaca N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2004), 166; Wallis, “Survey,” in *Land and Environmental Art*, 33; Beardsley, *Earthworks*, 160.

<sup>164</sup> Robert Rosenblum and Alan Sonfist, “Introduction: Interview with the Artist,” *Alan Sonfist, Nature, the End of Art* (Florence, Italy: Gli Ori, 2004), 8-16.

<sup>165</sup> Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2004), 7.

<sup>166</sup> Robert Silfkin, “Alan Sonfist: Natural History,” essay in *Alan Sonfist Natural History*, Stephanie Snyder ed. (Portland O.R: Companion Editions, 2016), 23.

Hudson River School.<sup>167</sup> The focus in these portrayals of the American landscape by both Sonfist and the work of Cole and his contemporaries is upon nature's eternal and even godlike presence in geography in contrast to civilization's temporary and destructive visitation.

Finding land for *Time Landscape* was initially challenging, as the shift from autocratic planning to a more democratic approach to urban development in New York was still underway in the late 1960s and early 70s. Two institutions in Manhattan, both on the Upper East Side first considered hosting the project. In 1969, the Metropolitan Museum contemplated the installation of a *Time Landscape* in an area directly adjacent to the museum. If enacted the earthwork would have been in Olmstead's Central Park, providing an interesting contrast in curated landscapes: sculpted picturesque versus historic nature. The proposal was ill timed as the Museum was in the midst of planning a major expansion project.<sup>168</sup> The construction of three new wings, two of which extended into parkland, was severely criticized.<sup>169</sup> As Sonfist's project would have required more parkland—a topic already hotly contested—it becomes evident why the proposal was set aside. In 1974, Finch College a private women's college with a contemporary art museum directed by Elayne Varian intended to provide a site on campus for *Time Landscape*. When the school unexpectedly closed in 1975, the idea was abandoned.<sup>170</sup> Sonfist would finally secure a site for *Time Landscape* in 1978 through a renewed effort to approach city agencies and neighborhood community boards. He noted, "the wide public enthusiasm for this project [*Time Landscape*] would not have been possible in the '60s...., it is the existence now of so *many* artists

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<sup>167</sup> Sonfist stated in an interview, "I am absolutely convinced that if he [Asher B. Durand] was working today, he'd be doing what I'm doing now." Jo Ann Lewis, "Works by the Man Who Gave the Big Apple a Pre Colonial Forest," *Washington Post* (November 2, 1978).

<sup>168</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, "Metropolitan Museum to Expand In Park and Revamp Collections," *New York Times* (September 29, 1967):1, 23;

<sup>169</sup> Carter B. Horsley, "Museum Wing Will Cost \$15-Million," *New York Times* (January 23, 1973): 44.

<sup>170</sup> Silfkin, *Alan Sonfist Natural History*, 28.

now trying to extend the audience of art that created this present climate.”<sup>171</sup> I would further argue that the legalization and landmarking of SoHo’s loft buildings for use by homesteading artists provided a friendly context for historically minded projects that explored the expanded field of sculpture.

With the televised destruction of the Pruitt-Igoe buildings in 1973, the bright future promised by modernist renewal projects was called into question.<sup>172</sup> How were great cities developed if not on the drafting tables of the intellectually elite and powerful? By 1976, when the country was celebrating its historic bicentennial, the public was warming to a utopian view of the past. The failures of urban planners readied the public interest in Sonfist’s *Time Landscape*, as well as literally clearing the land needed for the project. Under the Title One Housing Act chaired by Moses’ Committee on Slum Clearance, an argument was made for the removal of the “obsolete” buildings on the corner of Houston Street and LaGuardia Place.<sup>173</sup> The plan was to use the real estate for a retail facility that would front Fifth Avenue South and service the residents of the proposed nearby residential towers (fig. 41 & 42). When an emergency committee headed by Jane Jacobs in the 1958 blocked the extension of Fifth Avenue through Washington Square Park the obsolete buildings had already been removed.<sup>174</sup> For several years the cleared forty-foot strip along the north side of West Broadway, later renamed La Guardia

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<sup>171</sup> As quoted in “Situation Esthetics: Impermanent Art and the Seventies Audience,” *Artforum* (January 1980), 29.

<sup>172</sup> “Critics claimed the widely circulated photographs of the exploding buildings revealed the failure of modern architecture, large-scale planning, and government-funded housing.” Margaret Garb, “Public housing in the United States,” Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online. Oxford University Press, website accessed March 28, 2017, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T2271630>.

<sup>173</sup> New York City-Committee on Slum Clearance, *Slum Clearance Plan Under Title 1 of the Housing Act of 1949: Washington Square Southeast* (New York, 1953), 53.

<sup>174</sup> Ira Henry Freedman, “Bohemian Flair Fades in Village: New Projects Will Change the Face--and the Character--of the Washington Square Area,” *New York Times* (Dec 08, 1957), W1; Robert Kanigel, *Eyes on the Street, The Life of Jane Jacobs* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016), 228.

place, acted as an impromptu greenway from Washington Square Park but with the commencement of construction on New York University's Bobst Library in 1967 the park became cut off from the empty lots.<sup>175</sup> For many years, the lots remained abandoned and slowly filled with neighborhood debris. In 1977, Sonfist approached the local planning board about using a 9,000 square-foot lot, owned by the Department of Transportation for *Time Landscape*.<sup>176</sup> The board approved the \$100,000 project funded by the National Endowment for the Arts' "Art in Public Places" program, the Department of Parks and Recreation, New York University, the Public Arts Council, Con Edison, Citibank, and Chase Manhattan Bank.<sup>177</sup> The installation of the work was a community effort, including local schoolchildren and members of the New York Horticultural Society with academic guidance provided by historians and an ecologist (fig. 43). *Time Landscape* had historical overtones that now appealed to the community. Gerald Suttle's sociological observations of phenomenon within urban neighborhoods could also be applied to the popular acceptance of *Time Landscape*: "Such a romantic backward look can survive in large part because it need not confront any concrete examples in modern societies...[and is] powerfully attractive to those heavily burdened by the continuous necessity to negotiate interpersonal relations."<sup>178</sup> After the long fight to save their neighborhood, residents were willing to forfeit real estate from public use in order to host *Time Landscape*.

The aesthetic of a memorial to nature did not compliment the forward-looking modernist architecture of utopian urban planners. When the Silver Towers were completed in 1967, a

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<sup>175</sup> *New York Times*, "Zoning is Modified for N.Y.U. Library but Litigation Looms," (May 10, 1967): 45.

<sup>176</sup> While originally a residential zone, as the land had been cleared for a roadway project it became part of the Department of Transportation.

<sup>177</sup> The National Endowment for the Arts provided a \$15,000 grant. Jo Ann Lewis, "Works by the Man Who Gave the Big Apple a Pre Colonial Forest," *Washington Post* (November 2, 1978); Public Art Fund, "Alan Sonfist: Time Landscape," website accessed March 3, 2017, [https://www.publicartfund.org/view/exhibitions/5985\\_time\\_landscape](https://www.publicartfund.org/view/exhibitions/5985_time_landscape).

<sup>178</sup> Gerald Suttles, *The Social Construction on Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 186.

public artwork was selected for the plaza between the buildings. Pablo Picasso's monumental concrete *Bust of Sylvette* (1967) complimented not only the aesthetic of the building but additionally brought a level of artistic status to the location (fig. 44). As Harriet Senie has noted, urban situated sculpture was frequently an adjunct to architecture.<sup>179</sup> By the late 1970s, *Time Landscape*, a city supported public artwork would complement the inclination towards the historical, recently established in the neighborhood through the landmarking of SoHo's cast-iron buildings (1973) and Greenwich Village (1969). Sonfist noted, "New York has rediscovered its historical buildings. My work means that the city's historical nature can also become a functional monument to the fabric of the community."<sup>180</sup> While Sonfist was correct in acknowledging historic preservation as an aid to the establishment of his project in lower Manhattan, his assertion concerning audience reception suited his own artistic objective. Babs Shapiro further misconstrued the relationship between Sonfist's *Times Landscape* and neighboring historic buildings by arguing that both revealed the roots of modern day civilization.<sup>181</sup> How could an historic reenactment of nature represent the roots of civilization? While many public monuments do seek to present pinnacle moments in civilization what was so radical about Sonfist's project was the attempt to expand the definition of public monuments. Both Wallis and Silfkin credit Sonfist with being among the first to expand the traditional form and subject of public

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<sup>179</sup> Harriet Senie, "Sculpture and Architecture: A Changing Relationship," *Contemporary Public Sculpture: Tradition, Transformation, and Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 61.

<sup>180</sup> Robert Rosenblum interview with Alan Sonfist, *Alan Sonfist 1969-1989* (Brookville, NY: Hillwood Art Museum, 1990), 9.

<sup>181</sup> Babs Shapiro, "Architectural References, The Consequences of the Post-Modern in Contemporary Art and Architecture," *Architectural References* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1980).

monuments, to include “non-human elements.”<sup>182</sup> As public monuments rocks, trees, and soil represented the lost landscape, the elements on top of which civilization was built.

Sonfist’s *Time Landscape* was not the first greened lot on Houston Street. A community garden established in 1973 on a reclaimed abandoned lot existed nine blocks east of La Guardia Place, on the corner of Bowery Street and Houston Street (fig.45). Intended for community use, the garden was started by neighborhood resident Liz Christy, who along with volunteers planted the lot with vegetable beds, trees, herbaceous borders, and a children’s garden. Like Sonfist, Christy’s garden was originally inspired by an interest in recreating historic New York’s landscape, however from a later more agrarian date.<sup>183</sup> As Miranda Martinez has noted, the community garden movement began at the same time and was born from the same motivations as the homesteading movement.<sup>184</sup> Instead of relying upon municipalities to create the neighborhood they wanted homesteaders were taking measures into their own hands. In this fiscally challenged era, the city began to encourage these grassroots efforts at establishing parks in the city. The Parks Department of New York City formally recognized the neighborhood greening initiatives when in 1978 they launched their “Operation Green Thumb” program. The program was funded by federal Housing and Urban Development Community Block Grants, and assisted with the coordination of token leases—often only one dollar secured a yearlong lease of city-owned vacant land.<sup>185</sup> Sonfist was most likely able to obtain community support and the plot of land on Houston Street for his *Time Landscape* because of the already established community

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<sup>182</sup> Silfkin, *Alan Sonfist Natural History*, 21; Brain Wallis, “Survey,” in *Land and Environmental Art*, 33.

<sup>183</sup> Deirdre Carmody, “Helping New York: Green Guerrillas Plan to Dig,” *New York Times* (Feb 24, 1976): 76.

<sup>184</sup> Miranda Martinez, *Gentrification, Community Gardens, and the Puerto Ricans of the Lower East Side* (Blueridge Summit, US: Lexington Books, 2010), 25.

<sup>185</sup> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, “History of the Community Garden Movement,” website accessed January 2017, <http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/community-gardens/movement>.

garden movement. There was a significant difference, however, between Sonfist's project and community gardens; once planted *Time Landscape* was fenced off from community access.

While framed as a community project, *Time Landscape* had the same slightly hostile claim to lower Manhattan real estate as Simonds' *Dwellings* and De Maria's *Earth Room*. Like the two other earthworks, *Time Landscape* was for viewing, not entering. The space was for nature only. The trees which were selected for their historic native habitation—American elm, arrowwood, birch, beech (grown from seeds saved by the artists from Bronx River Park), red cedar, black cherry, witch hazel, oak, white ash, sassafras, sweetgum, and tulip—were sequestered behind a fence, keeping 20<sup>th</sup>-century interlopers from entering the shaded and fragrant grove. Further, in his efforts to memorialize the past Sonfist was claiming real estate that could have been used to house New York City residents or create a public playground or park. Despite the fact that having access to the woods was so essential to his childhood fascination with the natural world, *Time Landscape* was a precious and physically inaccessible space to children.<sup>186</sup> The initial response from the community was overwhelmingly positive. Mayor Koch wrote to Sonfist to congratulate him on his creation of a “fresh and intriguing” microcosmic forest within the city.<sup>187</sup> The neighborhood newspaper claimed to hear the “murmuring of the pines.”<sup>188</sup> Lucy Lippard observed in the early 1980s that *Time Landscape* was, “not one of these unreal projects that has forgotten death. In winter, the *Time Landscape* is a tangle of brush, its

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<sup>186</sup> It is interesting to note that children's participation is one of the most important factors contributing to the success of establishing a community garden. Malve von Hassell, *The Struggle for Eden, Community Gardens in New York City* (Westport C.T.: Bergin & Garvey, 2002), 104.

<sup>187</sup> Johnathan Carpenter, “Alan Sonfist's Public Sculpture,” in *Nature, The End of Art*, Alan Sonfist ed. (Florence, Italy: Gli Ori, 2004), 25.

<sup>188</sup> Carpenter, *Art in the Land a Critical Anthology*, 151.

beauty ravaged and hidden. In the spring you watch it awakening.”<sup>189</sup> Given time however, the originally perceived respite from urban life become too natural, a sort of dangerous and feral garden whose unkempt appearance clashed with the neighborhood’s real estate market (fig. 46).

Once planted, Sonfist wanted *Time Landscape* to institute its own order—displaying equal parts death and growth, and usurping the original artistic composition for chaotic happenstance. In a letter to the Editor of the *Times* in 1989, he wrote that he did not object to the introduction of non-indigenous plants into *Time Landscape* because their occurrence was only natural.<sup>190</sup> Morning glory vines, an invasive species not native to Manhattan, began to overtake the fence, and infestations of unwanted urban vermin, and decaying underbrush blocked sight lines into the space allowing homeless populations to find hidden temporary shelter. As a public memorial that had the appearance of a park, and occupied city held land, *Time Landscape* posed a series of unforeseen challenges to audiences.

Maintenance became a pressing issue for Sonfist’s urban-sited earthworks. Nature did not fit in well with civilization. In May of 1986, Sonfist created a *Time Landscape* for downtown St. Louis, across the street from the historic Union Station. Seventeen months later, the Parks Department removed the work and made the site into a public park with planted trees, grass, and benches. The Parks Commissioner justified her decision to bulldoze the work of public art because of maintenance issues, "it was as if the artist had abandoned the site, leaving it to me to use my budget and my workers to try to make it work."<sup>191</sup> A similar fate could have befallen the lower Manhattan *Time Landscape* as it too began to appear unmaintained. In 1986, a group of

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<sup>189</sup> Lippard, *Overlay, Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, 231.

<sup>190</sup> Alan Sonfist, "Letter to the Editor," *New York Times* (December 10, 1989): SM18.

<sup>191</sup> William E. Schmidt, "After Auspicious Beginnings, Public Art Finds Itself at Odds with the Public," *New York Times* (November 2, 1987): A16.



volunteers managed by New York City's Parks Department and guided by master gardener Wilhelmine Hellmann from the Union Square Greenmarket cleared out the entropic aesthetic that had begun to overwhelm the space and clash with neighborhood interests. Under the guidance of Hellmann, the volunteers restored *Time Landscape* to a more curated landscape of "uncultivated nature," which appeased the neighborhood residents (fig. 47).<sup>192</sup> Now every year undergrowth, dead branches, trash and invasive weeds are removed from the site and flowering plants, such as Black Eyed-Susans and Echinacea are tastefully planted near to the fence line. Nature is opportunistic, and an unmaintained 17<sup>th</sup>-century landscape will with time, slowly conform to the influences of the present environment, the result being a Darwinian composition of lopsided trees straining for sun exposure and a proliferation of hearty vermin resistant undergrowth. While Sonfist was open to nature's additions to the landscape, the neighborhood preferred the fabricated historically framed picturesque as it matched their now rehabbed luxury loft co-ops.

As a public memorial, *Time Landscape* presented a radical conceptual break from historical precedents. The idea of uncovering historical nature has since become popularized by many urban gardening initiatives including New York University, who in 2009 planted a "Native Woodland Garden," in Schwartz Plaza, on the east side of Bobst Library. The High Line, which also opened in 2009, similarly features plantings that imitate the "self-seeded landscape that grew on the out-of-use elevated rail tracks during the 25 years after trains stopped running."<sup>193</sup> However, Sonfist did not conceive of his land art as a garden, nor was human influence expected to dictate the site after being established. His conception of reintroducing

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<sup>192</sup> Kara Bloomgarden-Smoke, "Cleanup time for *Time Landscape* Indigenous Garden." *Villager* 77, no. 17 (2007); Interview with Johnathan Kuhn, Director, Art & Antiquities, New York City Parks Department (July 6, 2015).

<sup>193</sup> Friends of the High Line, "About: Design," website accessed February 2017, <http://www.thehighline.org/about>.

nature into the city proved to be far too entropic for a public art project. Ultimately, the neighborhood would take on the maintenance of the site, making it in all but name and access, a community garden.

#### 4. Conclusion:

The anxiety of connection to place within the New York population was an unforeseen result of rapid urban expansion in the early postwar period. The dramatically altered landscape of the city alienated residents who no longer felt that they were from the neighborhood. Failures of large-scale developments such as Lomex and Washington Square Housing coupled with a rising tide of anti-authoritarian politics prompted lower Manhattanites to consider other approaches to building a utopic neighborhood. The Modernist architecture favored by urban planners under Moses quickly revealed its temporality of style and construction, and invited appreciation of historic structures and approaches to community development.<sup>194</sup> The once populated blocks cleared under eminent domain exposed a rare element, the historic and by comparison eternal seeming earth. Artists living in lower Manhattan were particularly attuned to the creative possibilities of defining space through their work homesteading lofts. Posed between a sculptural precedent of object making and the current propensity for the dematerialized object, land art anchored itself to a site. Simonds, De Maria, and Sonfist all fabricated environments that invited the public to observe place and yet did not welcome immersion or escapism. Thus, these earthworks were reclamations of space from the metropolis' fluctuating cultural present over to nature, both historic and eternal. Through the recontextualization of *Dwellings*, *Earth Room*, and *Time Landscape*, this thesis seeks to make a significant contribution to the examination of the characteristics of urban-sited land art works.

Jane Jacobs identified three levels of existence in the city in which urban dwellers operate: the block and building; the neighborhood or district; and finally the entire metropolis. It is interesting to consider *Dwellings*, *Earth Room*, and *Time Landscape* as artistic explorations of these three levels of engagement with the urbanscape. The *Dwellings* of the Little People as the

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<sup>194</sup> Harvey, *The Condition of Modernity*, 71-75.

smallest and most structural of the three projects embodied the immediate locality of the building and block. Embedded within the architecture, *Earth Room* related to the ambition of the artistic community to settle the neighborhood and create a new bohemian district. *Time Landscape*, sited within the grid of Manhattan, was relational to the settlement and topography of the whole city. Using dirt, clay, and soil each artist created memorials to nature. The uncultivated worlds of *Dwellings*, *New York Earth Room*, and *Time Landscape* were interventions within the urbanscape that appeared to preserve a pre-modern time. These land art works offered not only an escapist view from the complicated present, but were also invitations to viewers the question the driving ambition of urban development.

The guerilla-like installation of Simonds' project as well as his considered use of unfired clay insured the brevity of their existence. The audience for the work was limited to observant locals, who walked down Greene Street at the right time on the right day. As the *Time Landscape* and *New York Earth Room* have been steadfast to their sites, the cityscape around them has changed. The industrial lofts, tenement buildings, and urban blight that originally stood in juxtaposition to the artworks no longer define the neighborhood. The steadfastness of the works was secured by the parks department volunteers and a non-profit arts organization that maintain the sites, rather than by the artists. The artists had a more elastic sense of the site specificity of the work. *Time Landscapes* and *Earth Rooms* were enacted by the artists in multiple locations throughout the world. As time progresses the works move farther from the artists' conception and closer to the urban community's interests. As this temporal distance grows, *Time Landscape* and *New York Earth Room* appear stripped of their original political charge.

Since the time of the Hudson River School, urban artists have framed the American landscape, as a place of spiritual rejuvenation threatened by modernity's impending

expansion.<sup>195</sup> Simonds, De Maria and Sonfist all created land art works sited in SoHo which are a continuation of this legacy. In each of their works, the artists present a paradigm of “back-to-the-land” purity and renewal as an antidote to the ambition of the ever-expanding metropolis. Easily misconstrued as natural idylls in the city each of their sites was in fact a reaction against community betterment. De Maria did not fill a gallery with dirt in order to create a meditation space for weary shoppers. As Suzaan Boettger has noted land art, like its precedent landscape painting, is *memento mori* to the viewer.<sup>196</sup> The Arcadian scenes often titled *Et Arcadia Ego*, reminded those who gazed upon the Eden-like landscape that death was present “even in Arcady.”<sup>197</sup> A dirt-filled gallery, miniature abandoned ruins, and a 17<sup>th</sup>-century landscape existing in 20<sup>th</sup>-century New York City all serve to remind viewers that our civilization is fleeting in relation to eternal nature.

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<sup>195</sup> Nova k, *Nature and Culture*, 198-199.

<sup>196</sup> Suzann Boettger, *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 223-224.

<sup>197</sup> Panofsky was the first art historian to perceive this iconographic message. Boettger, *Earthworks*, 224.

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## FIGURES



Figure 1.

Map of Lower Manhattan noting the sites of the three land art works:

From top to bottom:

Alan Sonfist, *Time Landscape*, 1978, northeast corner of Houston and LaGuardia Place;

Walter De Maria, *The New York Earth Room*, 1977, 141 Wooster Street;

Charles Simonds, *Dwelling*, 1970, at various locations along Greene Street between Canal and Houston Streets.

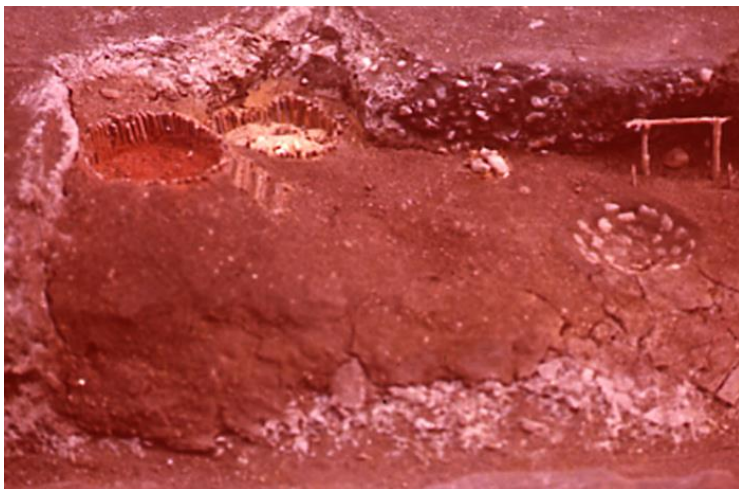


Figure 2.

Charles Simonds, *Dwellings*, 1970,  
Clay, sand, and wood.  
Greene Street, New York.





Figure 3.

Walter De Maria, *The New York Earth Room*, 1977

250 cubic yards of earth, 3,600 square feet of floor space, 22" depth of material

141 Wooster Street, New York City

The Dia Art Foundation



Figure 4.

Alan Sonfist, *Time Landscape*, 1978,  
200'x 40' lot filled with native species trees and  
plants.  
LaGuardia Place, Manhattan.  
Maintained by NYC Parks Department, Greenstreets.  
(top: looking north, bottom: looking southeast)  
Photographs c. 1980





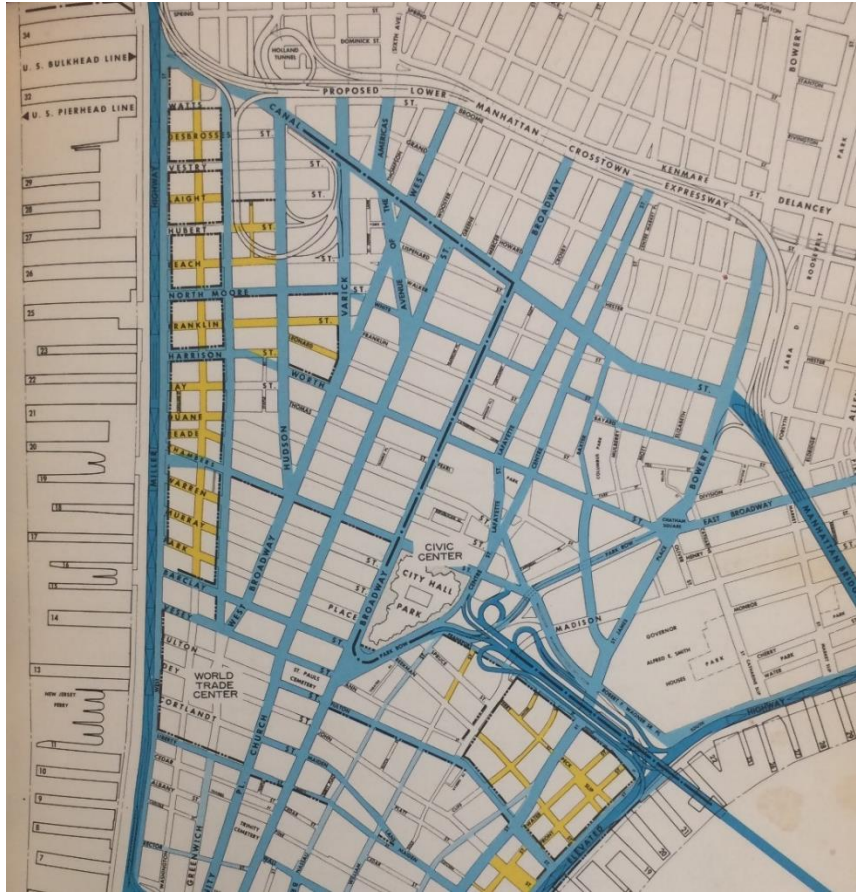


Figure 5.

The route of the Lower Manhattan Expressway as proposed in 1963, and 1967 (Paul Randolph's design).

Published by the Lower Manhattan Association and the Ford Foundation.





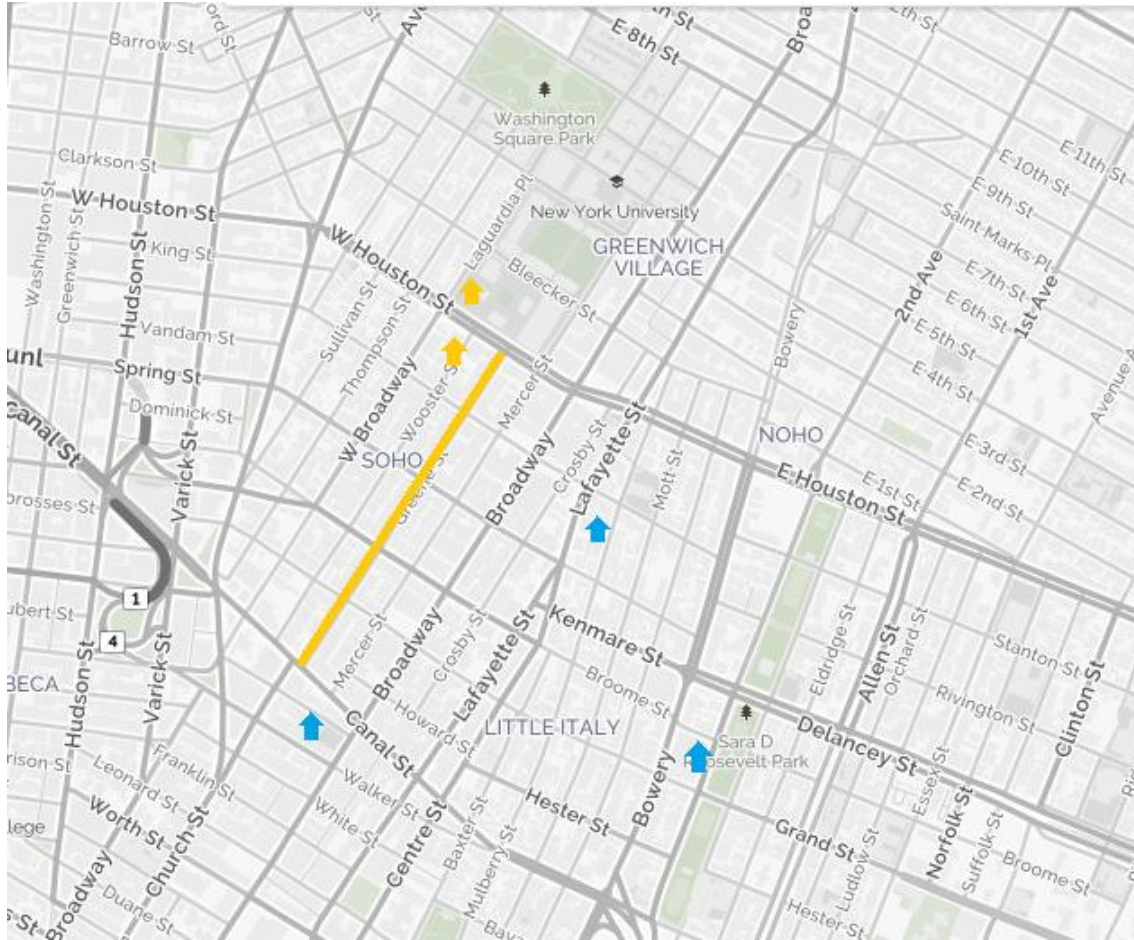


Figure 6.

Map of Lower Manhattan

Yellow makers—sites of artworks: De Maria's *New York Earth Room*, Simonds' *Green Street Dwellings* series, and Sonfist's *Time Landscape*

Blue Markers—sites of artists' studio lofts: Walter De Maria on Walker Street, Charles Simonds on Chrystie Street, and Alan Sonfist on Mulberry Street

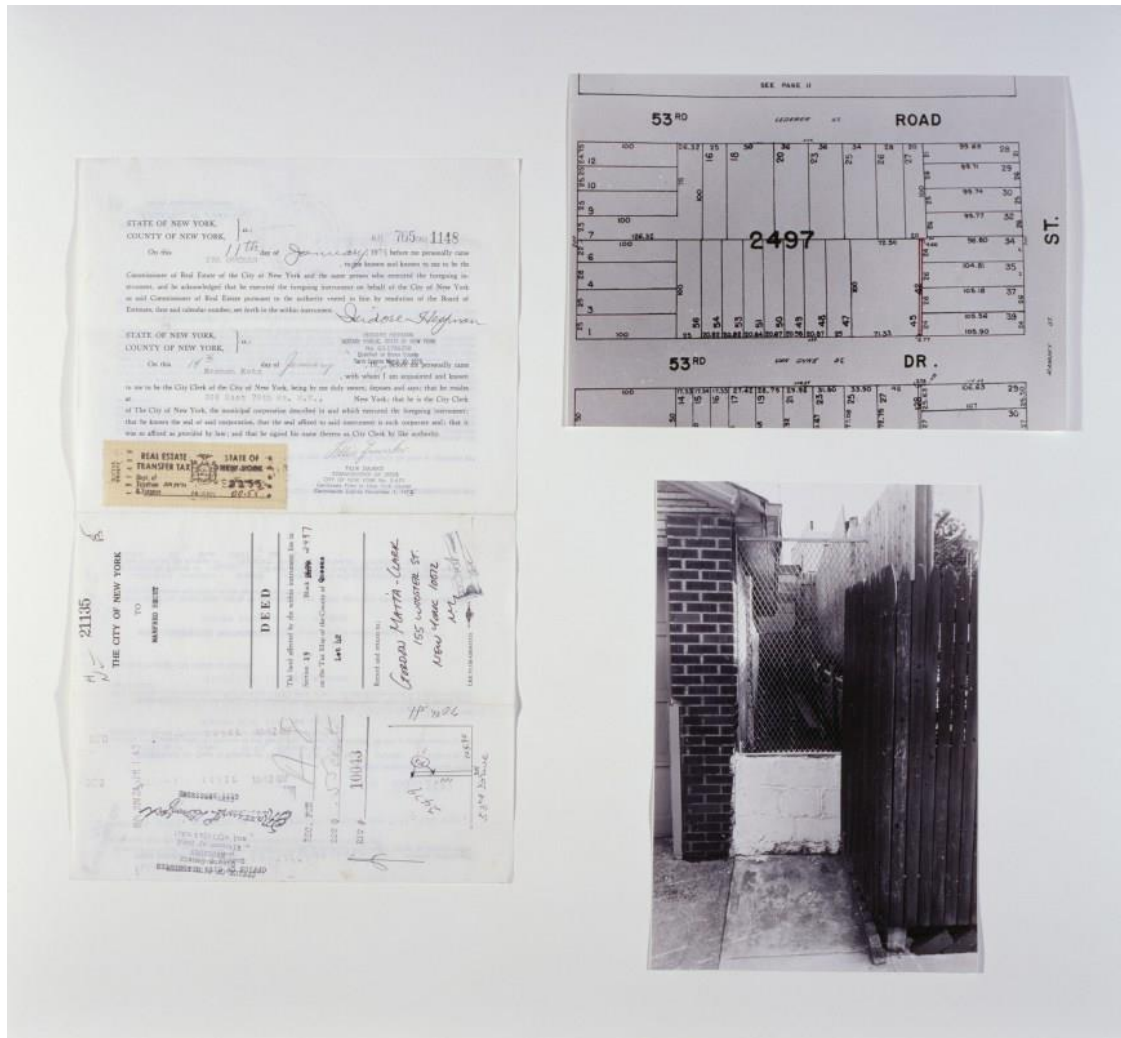


Figure 7.

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Reality Properties: Fake Estates, Little Alley Block 2497, Lot 42*, 1974 (posthumous assembly, 1992)

Photographic collage, property deed, site map, and photograph

Framed photographic collage: 10 x 87 3/16 x 1 3/8 inches (25.4 x 221.5 x 3.5 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 98.5228



Figure 8.

Meeting of SoHo Artists Association Planning Committee, discussing survey maps prior to the legalizations of loft living.

SoHo Artists Association Records, 1968-1978

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution



Figure 9.

Claes Oldenburg, *Hole - Placid Civic Monument*, October 1, 1967,  
A crew of gravediggers digging a 6-by-3-foot rectangular hole in the ground  
Conceptual performance/action behind the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York





Figure 10.

Agnes Denes, *Wheatfield - A Confrontation: Battery Park Landfill, Downtown Manhattan*, Summer 1982, Two acres of wheat planted and harvested by the artist, Battery Park landfill, Manhattan, All photographs by Agnes Denes



Figure 11.

Richard Serra, *Titled Arc*, 1981-1989,  
Hot-rolled steel,  
120' x 12',  
Federal Plaza, New York City

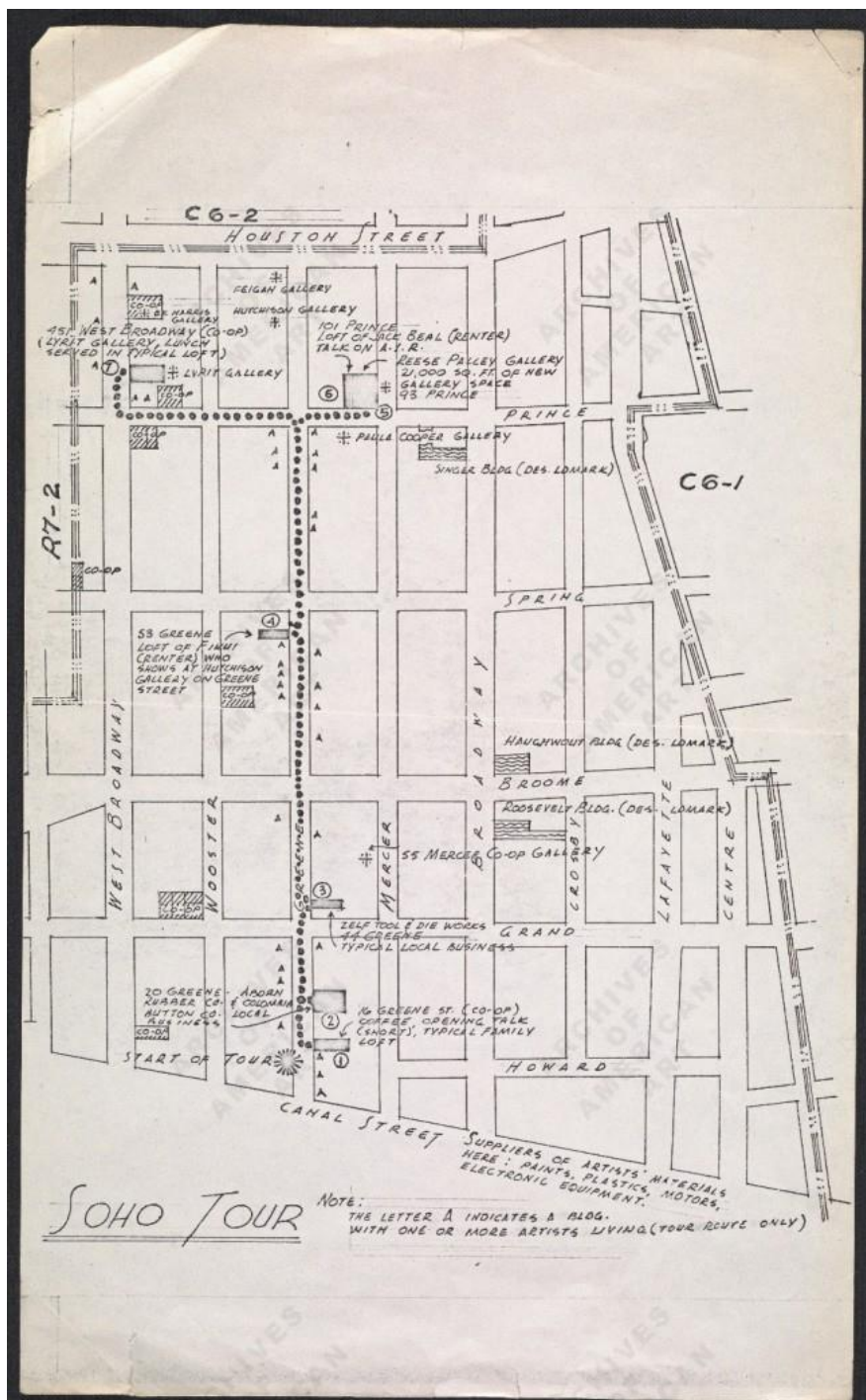


Figure 12.

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



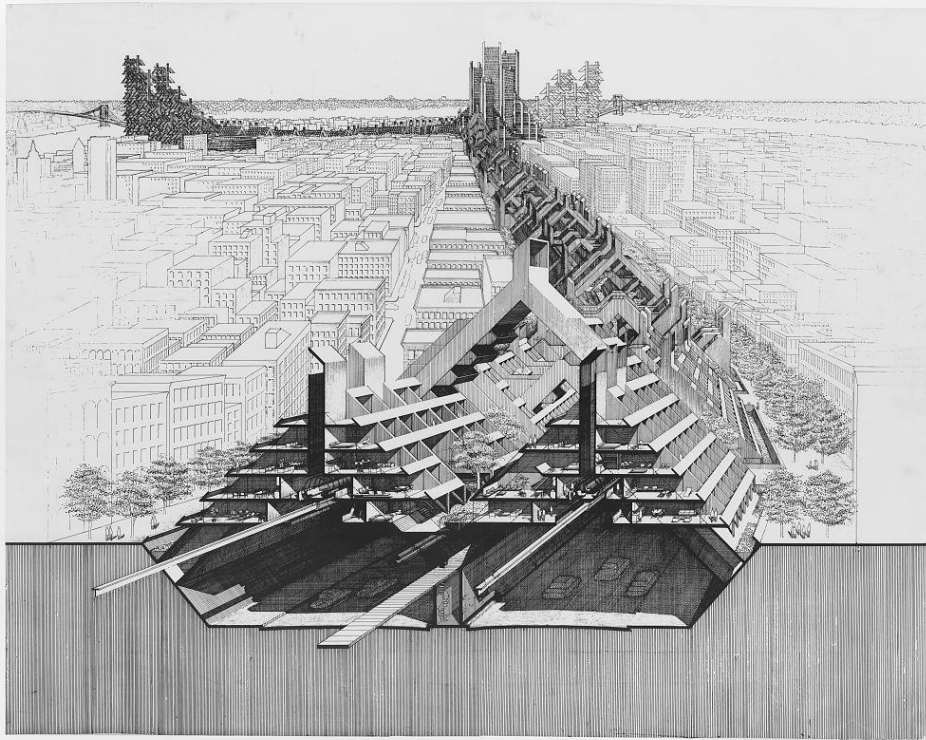
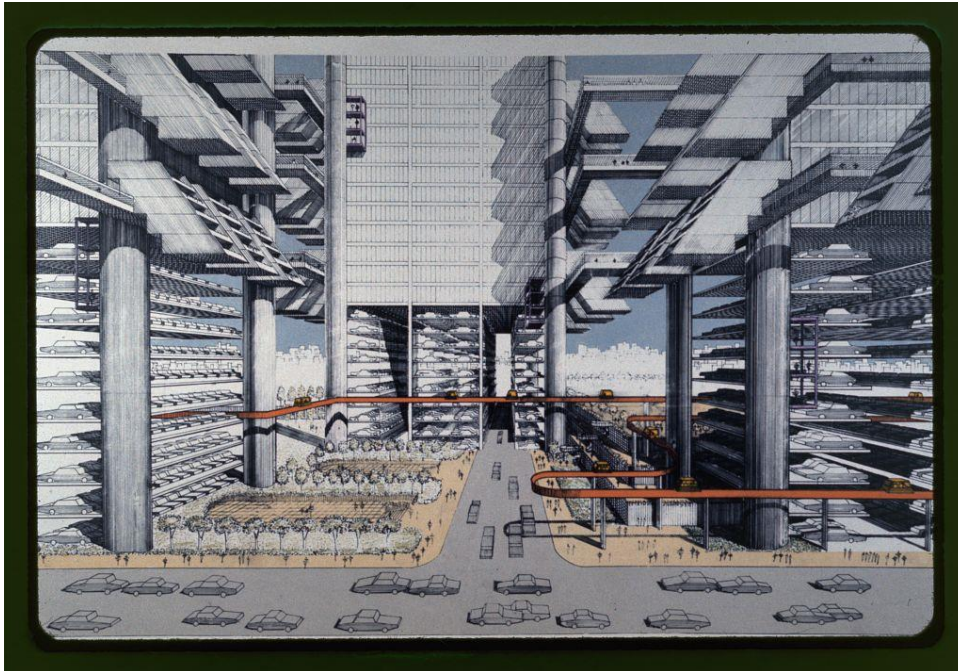


Figure 13.

Paul Rudolph, Renderings of the Lower Manhattan Expressway, 1967  
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C., Paul Rudolph collection



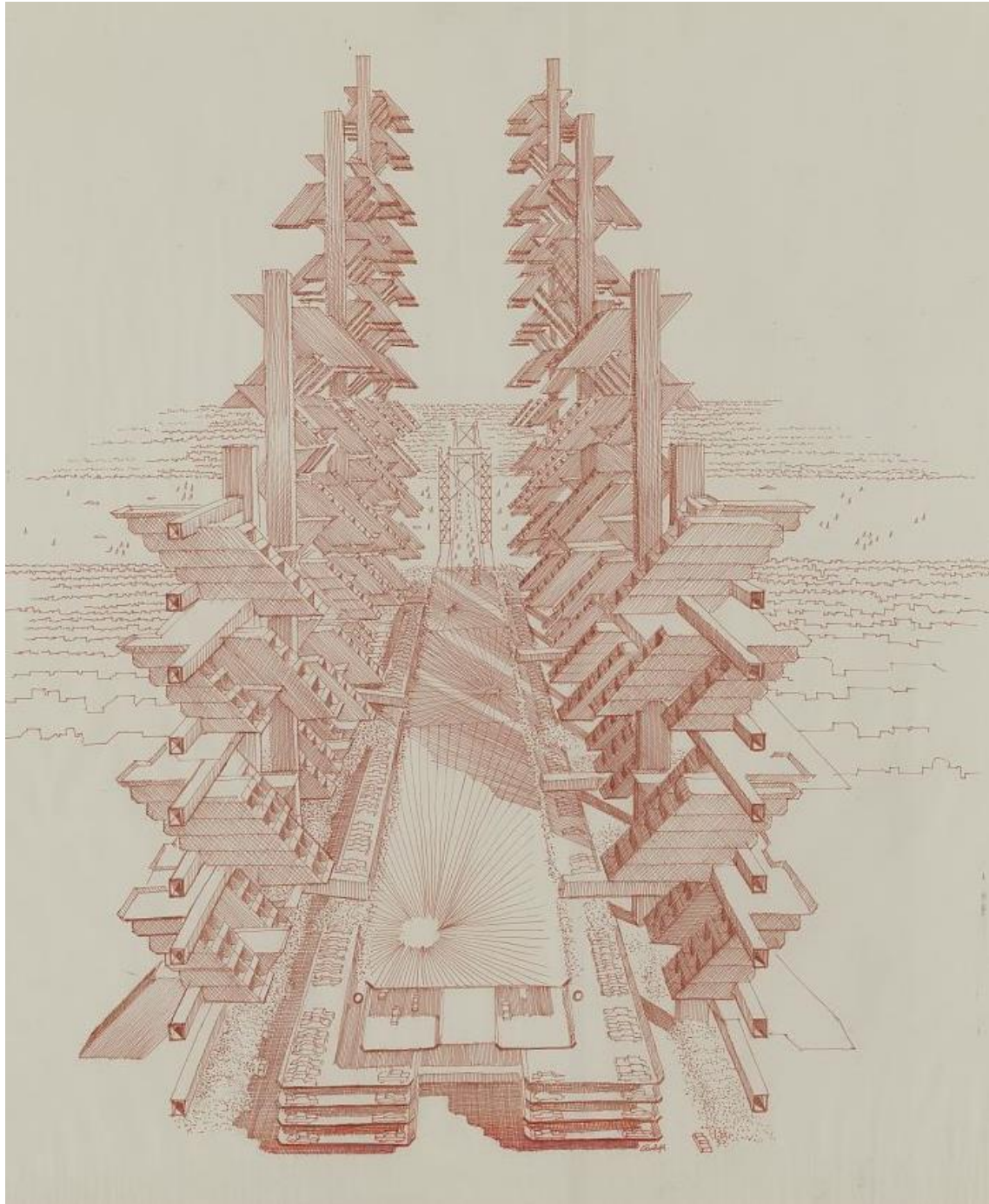


Figure 14.

Paul Rudolph, Renderings of the Lower Manhattan Expressway, 1967

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C., Paul Rudolph collection.



Figure 15.

Berenice Abbott (1898-1991) for the Federal Art Project, *Broadway and Thomas Street*,  
March 6, 1936

Photograph 8'x10'

Museum of the City of New York, 43.131.1.94





Figure 16.

J. I. Freed & I. M. Pei, the  
Silver Towers, 1964-66  
New York City  
Photographed by:  
Halfspeedsparks, and  
PCF&P/George



Figure 17.

Edmund Vincent Gillon, *142 and 132-140 Greene Street*, ca. 1978

Photograph gelatin silver print

10"x 8"

Museum of the City of New York, 2013.3.1.539





Figure 18.

Charles Simonds, *Birth*, 1970-1  
Six 16mm color film stills excerpted from 2-minute film  
Filmed and edited by Charles Simonds

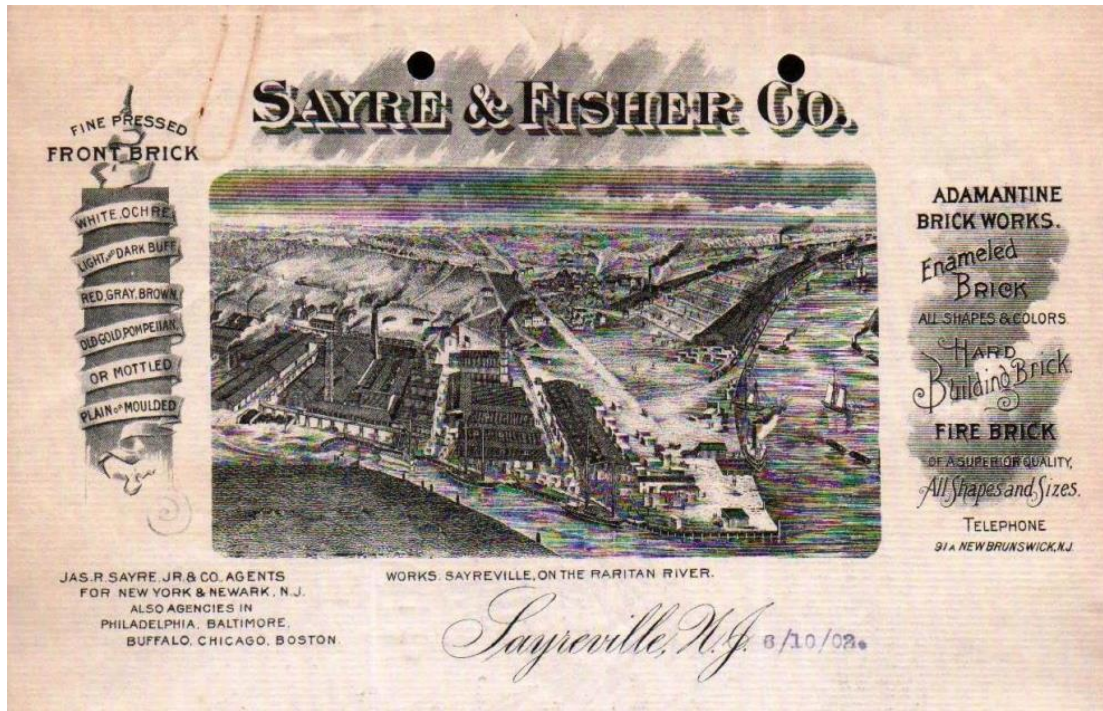


Figure 19.

Sayre & Fisher Brick Works advertisement, 1908  
Sayre & Fisher dock, 1930 photograph  
Sayreville Historical Society



Figure 20.

Jerome G. Frank, Brooklyn Academy of Music, May 10, 1986

Photograph

Brooklyn Historical Society, Jerome Frank photographs, V1990.62.4





Figure 21.

Charles Simonds, *Dwellings*, 1971

Clay, sand and wood

112 Greene Street, New York





Figure 22.

Thomas Cole, *The Course of Empire: The Savage State; The Arcadian or Pastoral State; The Consummation of Empire; Destruction; Desolation*

1834-1836

Oil on canvas

39 ½" x 63 ½", and 51" x 76"

New-York Historical Society, 1858.1



Figure 23.

Walter De Maria, *Mile Long Drawing*, 1968  
Two Chalk Lines  
Mojave Desert, California

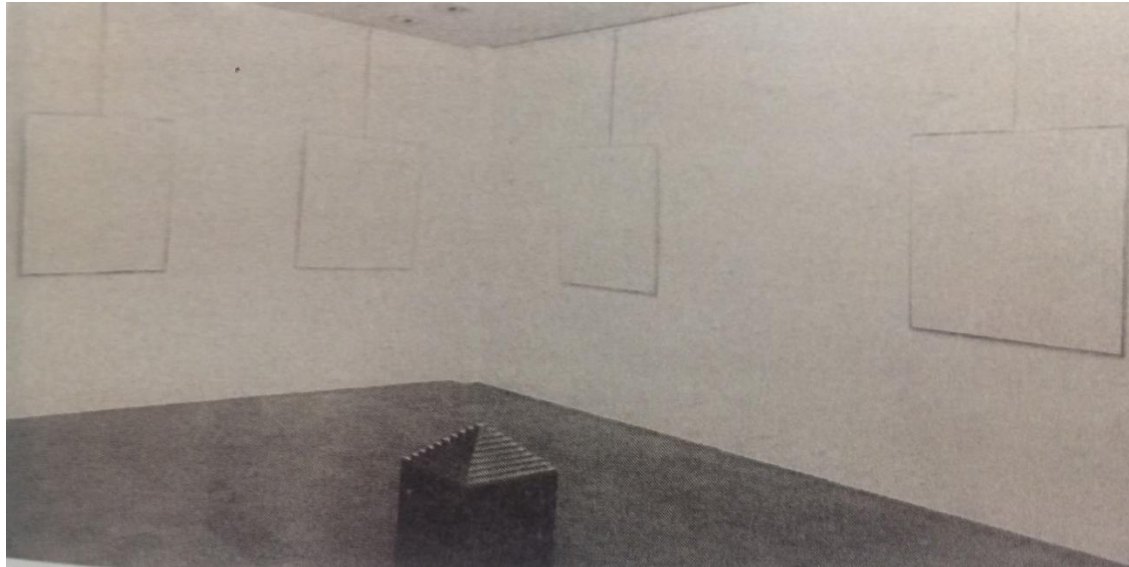


Figure 24.

Installation shot of Walter De Maria's *The Large Landscape* at Cordier & Ekstrom gallery, 1966.



Figure 25.

Henry Flynt reads "From Culture to Veramusement," February 28, 1963  
Walter De Maria's loft, New York City,  
Photographed by Diane Wakoski





Figure 26.

Exterior and architectural detail, 141 Wooster Street, New York City

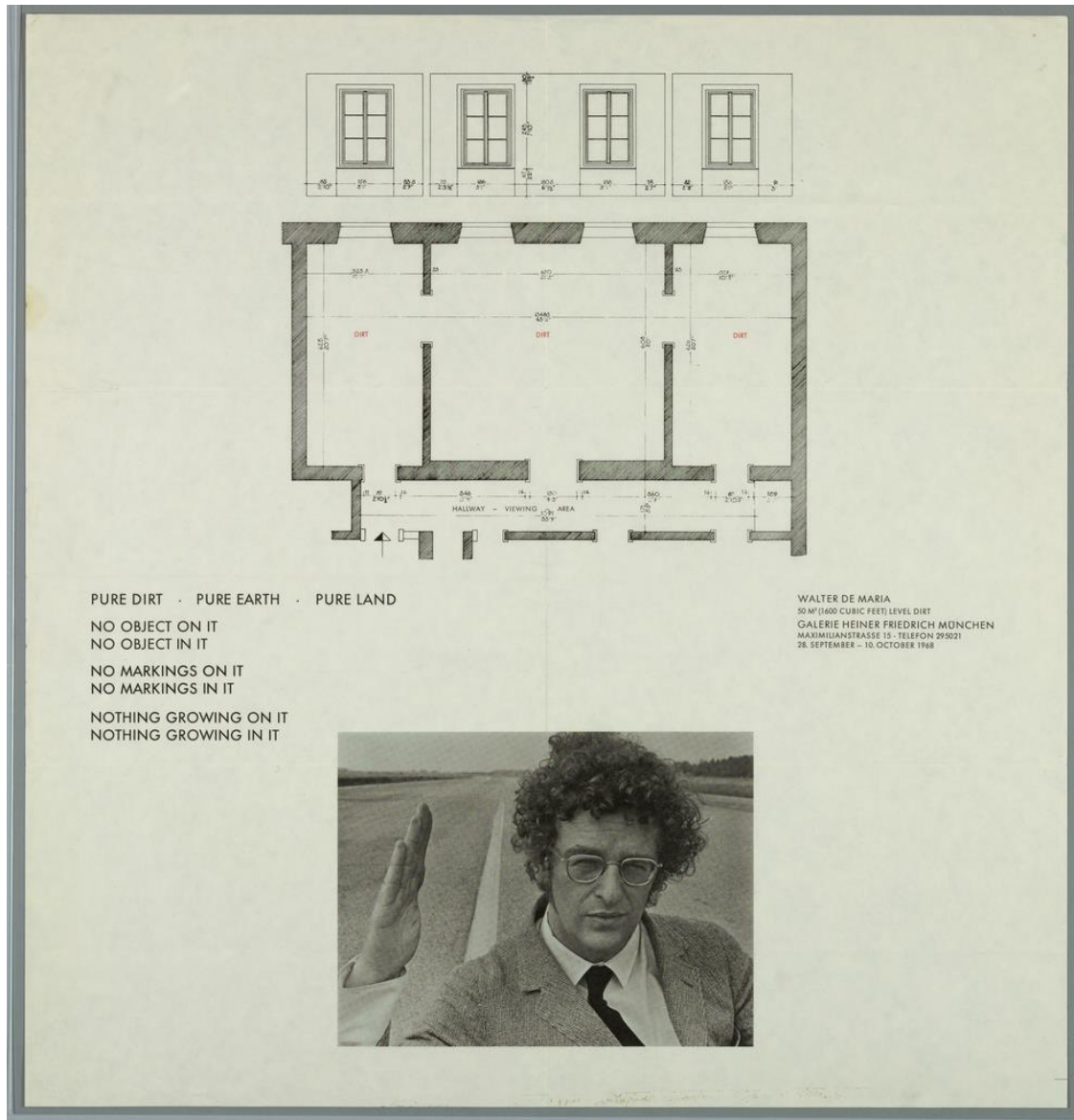


Figure 27.

Walter De Maria, *50 M<sup>3</sup> (1600 cubic feet) Level Dirt*, Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Munich, Germany, 1968

Offset lithograph on paper (Designed by Walter De Maria)

23 7/8 × 22 3/4"

Cooper Hewitt Museum; 1999-45-11



Figure 28.

Walter De Maria, *Munich Earth Room*, 1968

1,765 cubic feet of level dirt in 755 square feet at a depth of 23 5/8 inches

Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Munich, Germany.





Figure 29.

Walter De Maria, *The Large Earth Room*, 1974  
2,991 cubic feet of level gravel in 1,784 square feet at a depth of 19  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, Germany



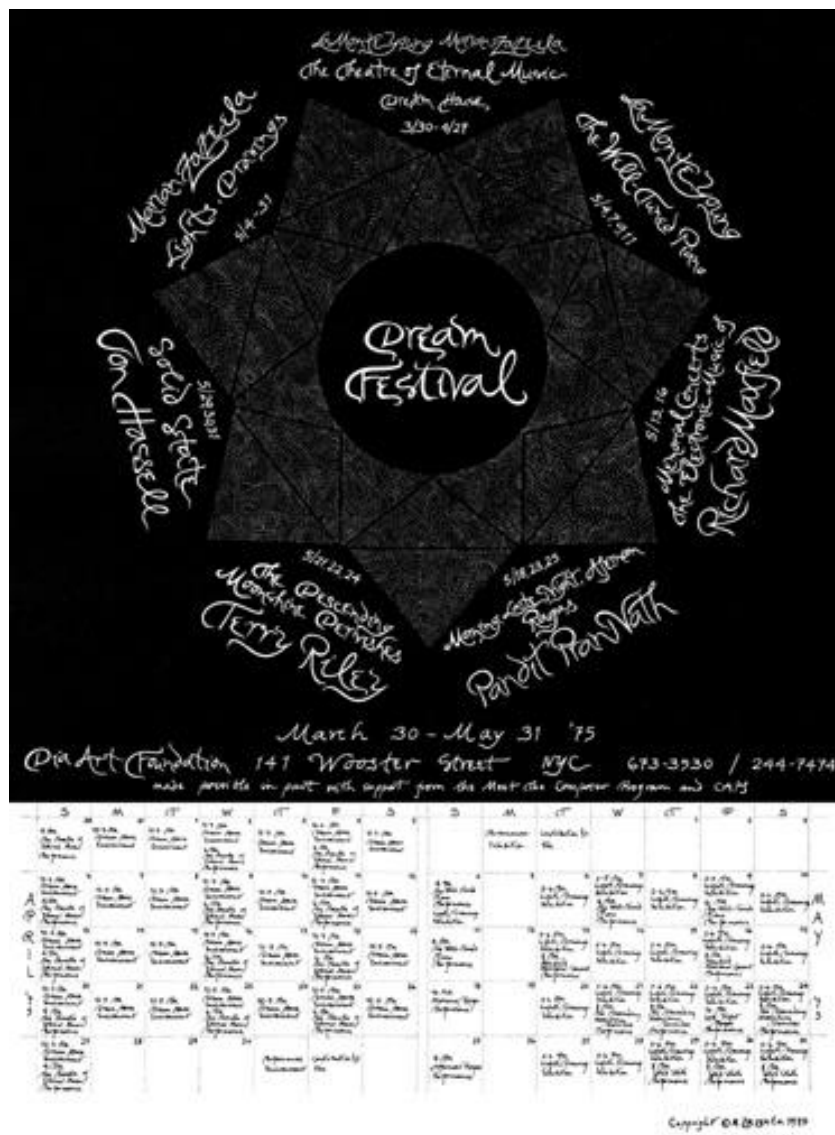


Figure 30.

Dia Art Foundation, "Dream Festival" Poster, March 30 - May 31, 1975  
141 Wooster Street, New York City



Figure 31.

Walter De Maria, *The Lightning Field*, 1977

400 polished stainless steel poles installed in a one mile by one-kilometer grid

Long-term installation, western New Mexico

Dia Art Foundation

Photographed by John Cliett



Figure 32.

Robert Smithson, *Non-Sites*, Oberhausen, Ruhr-district, Germany, 1968  
Steel bins slag, with correlating map and five photographs,  
Estate of Robert Smithson, courtesy of James Cohan Gallery

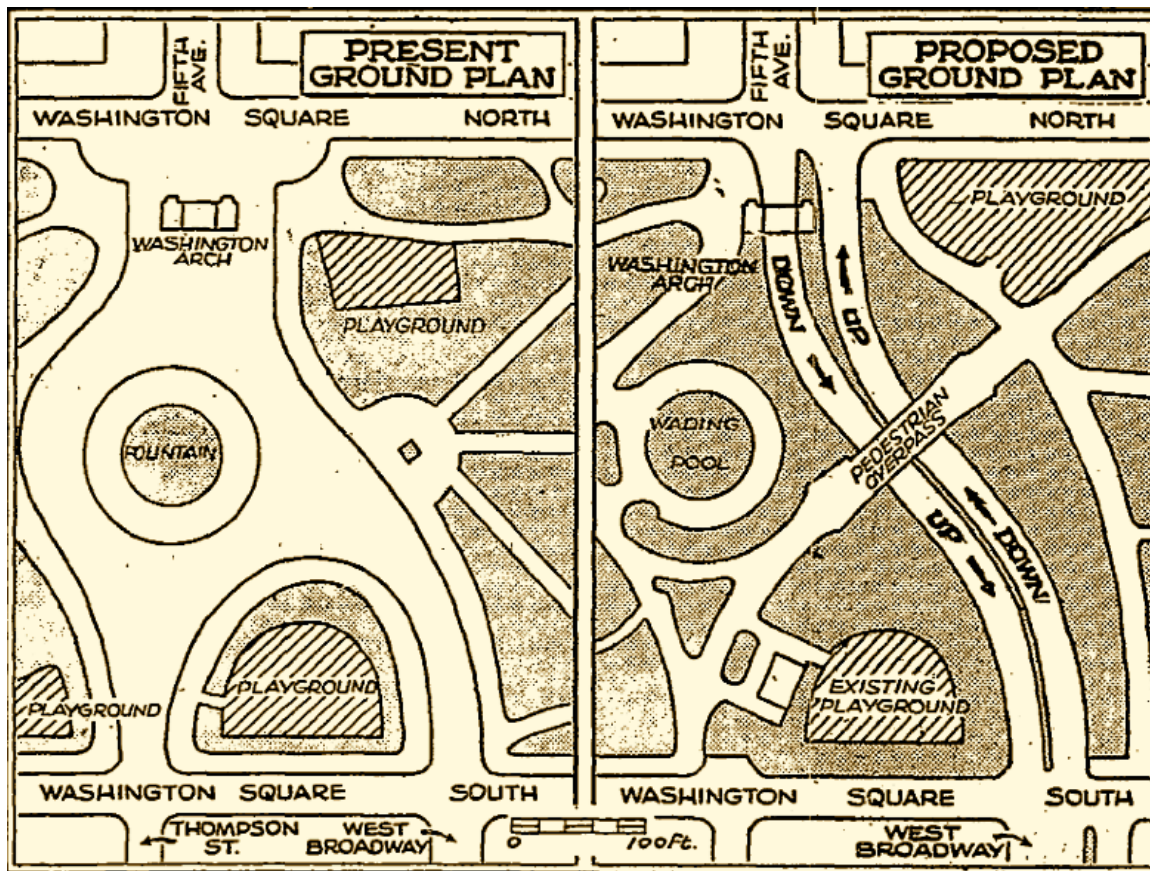


Figure 33.

Map accompanied article "Open Cut Mapped In Washington Sq.; Jack Proposes Extension of 5th Ave. Through Park to Join West Broadway" *New York Times* (March 11, 1955).

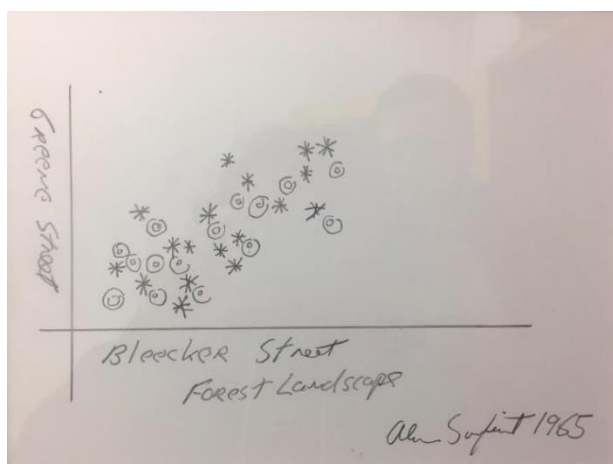
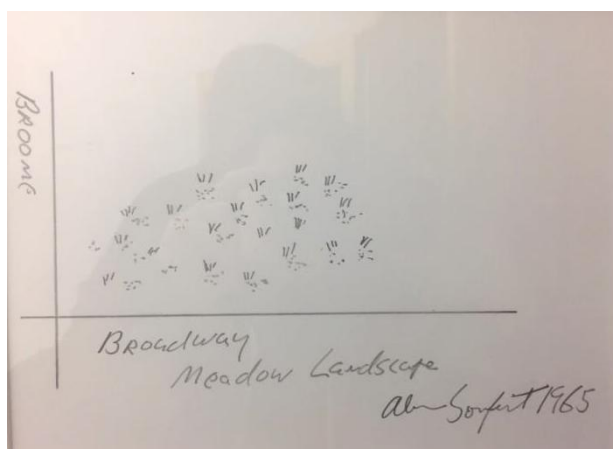
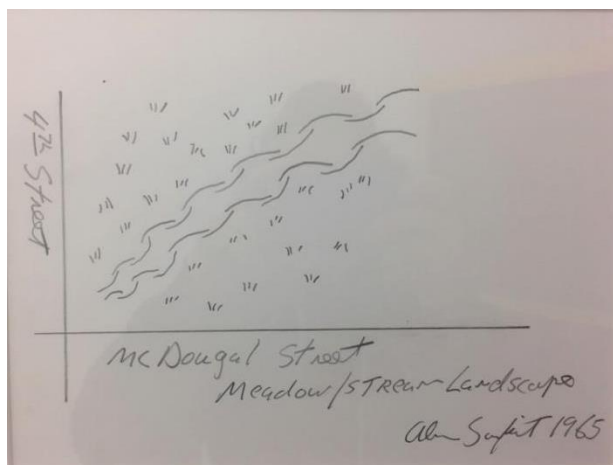


Figure 34.

Alan Sonfist, *Time Landscapes*, 1965  
Pencil drawings on paper





Figure 35.

Alan Sonfist, *Time Landscapes* [New York City Aerial View, Triborough Bridge, etc.]  
 1978  
 Lithographs with collaged photographs  
 28.25" x 28.25"

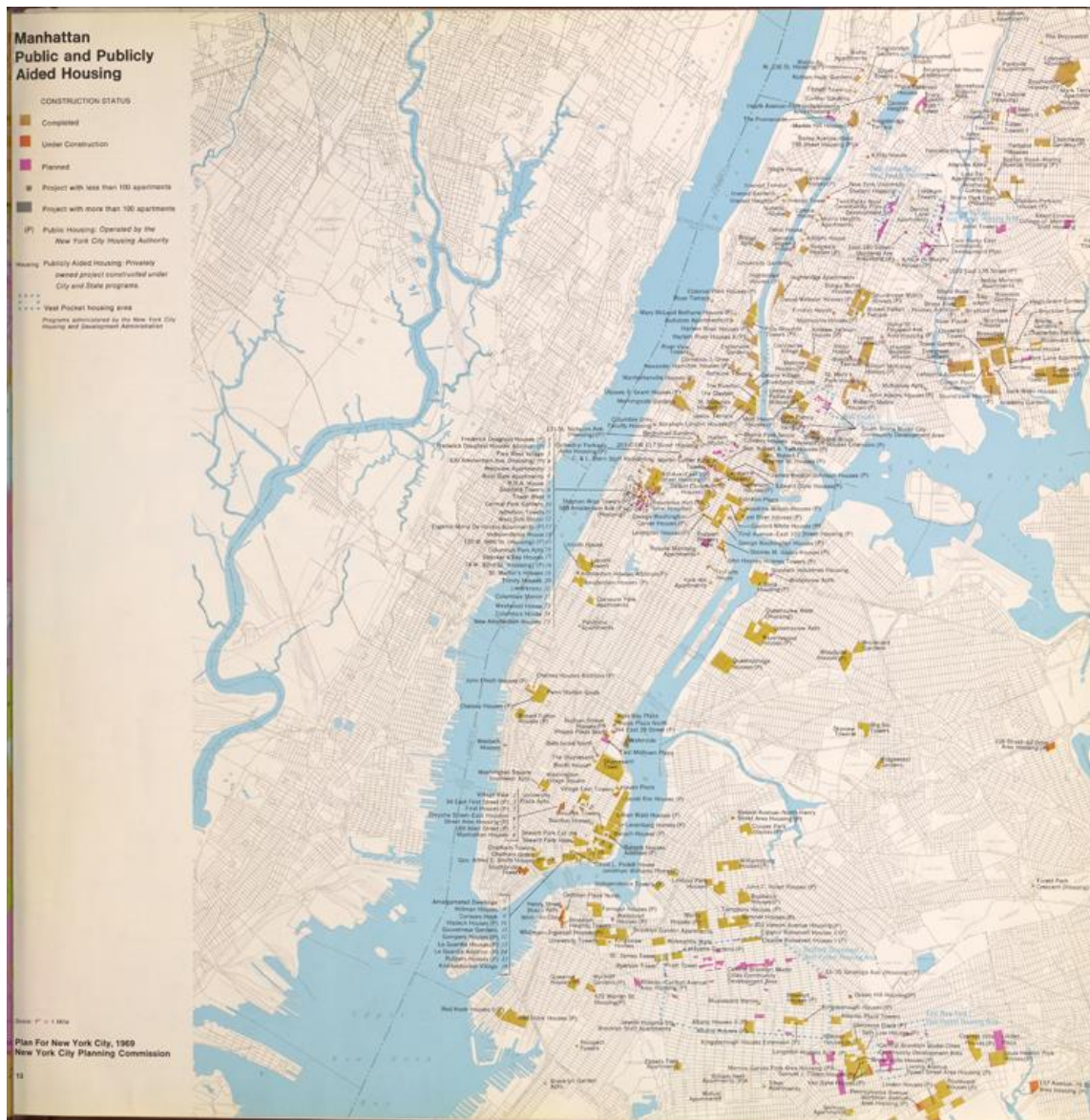


Figure 36.

New York City Planning Commission, "Manhattan public and publicly aided housing" 1969  
 Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library  
 New York Public Library Digital Collections.



Figure 37.

Teresa Zabala, "Touring the South Bronx, President Carter walked through a rubble-strewn, empty lot towards abandoned buildings. Secret Service man accompanied him"  
Photograph front page of *The New York Times* (October 6, 1977)





Figure 38.

Photograph, "Cross Bronx Expressway, under construction at 176th St. & Southern Blvd., looking west toward the Prospect Ave. temporary bridge."  
Bronx Chamber of Commerce Collection, Lehman College CUNY



Figure 39.

R.F. Turnbull and H. Hagemester Co., "Hemlock Grove, Bronx Park," 1907  
Postcard  
Museum of the City of New York, X2011.34.1769

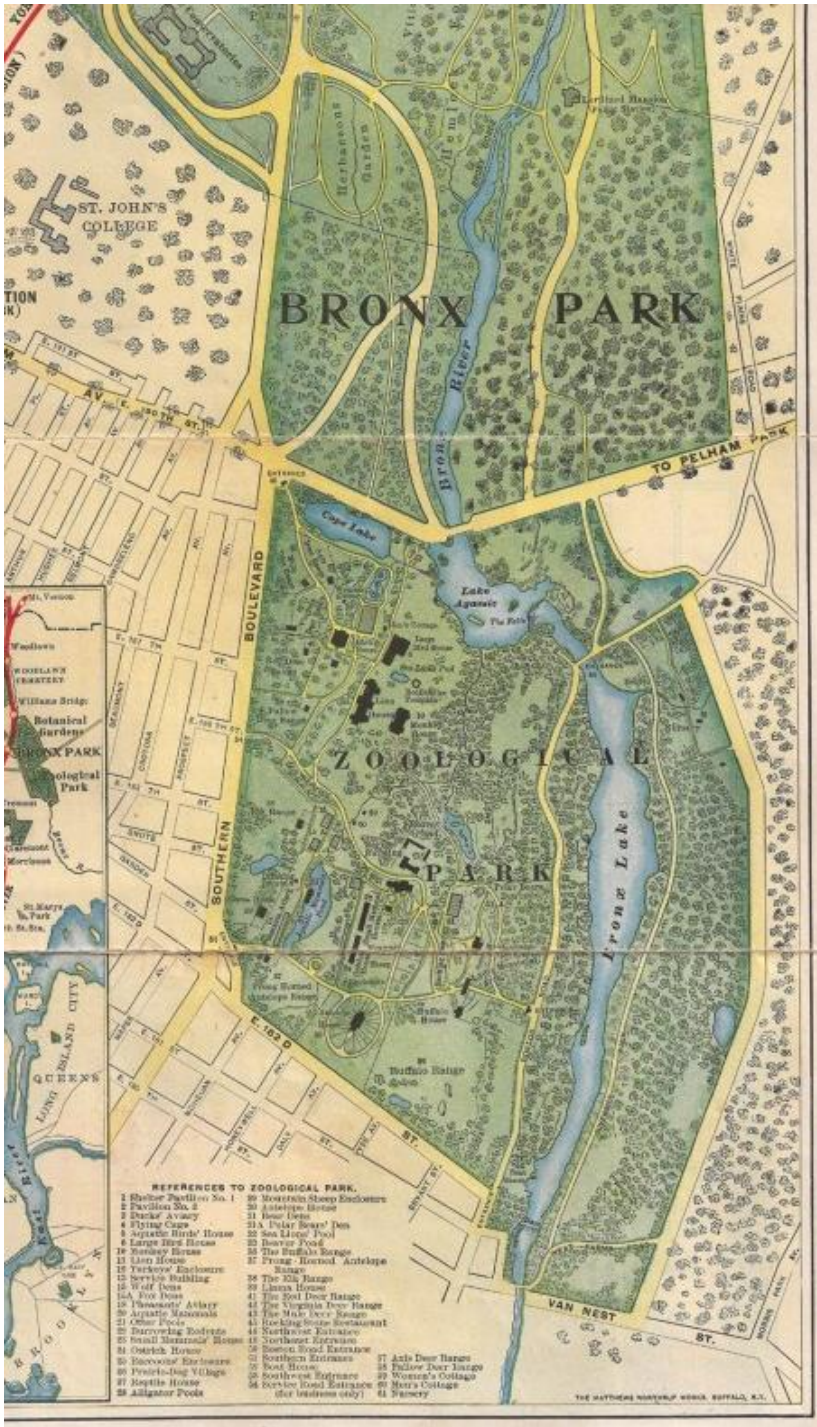


Figure 40.

Detail of Bronx Park, from  
 "Four-Track Series No. 14,"  
 1904  
 New York Central Railroad



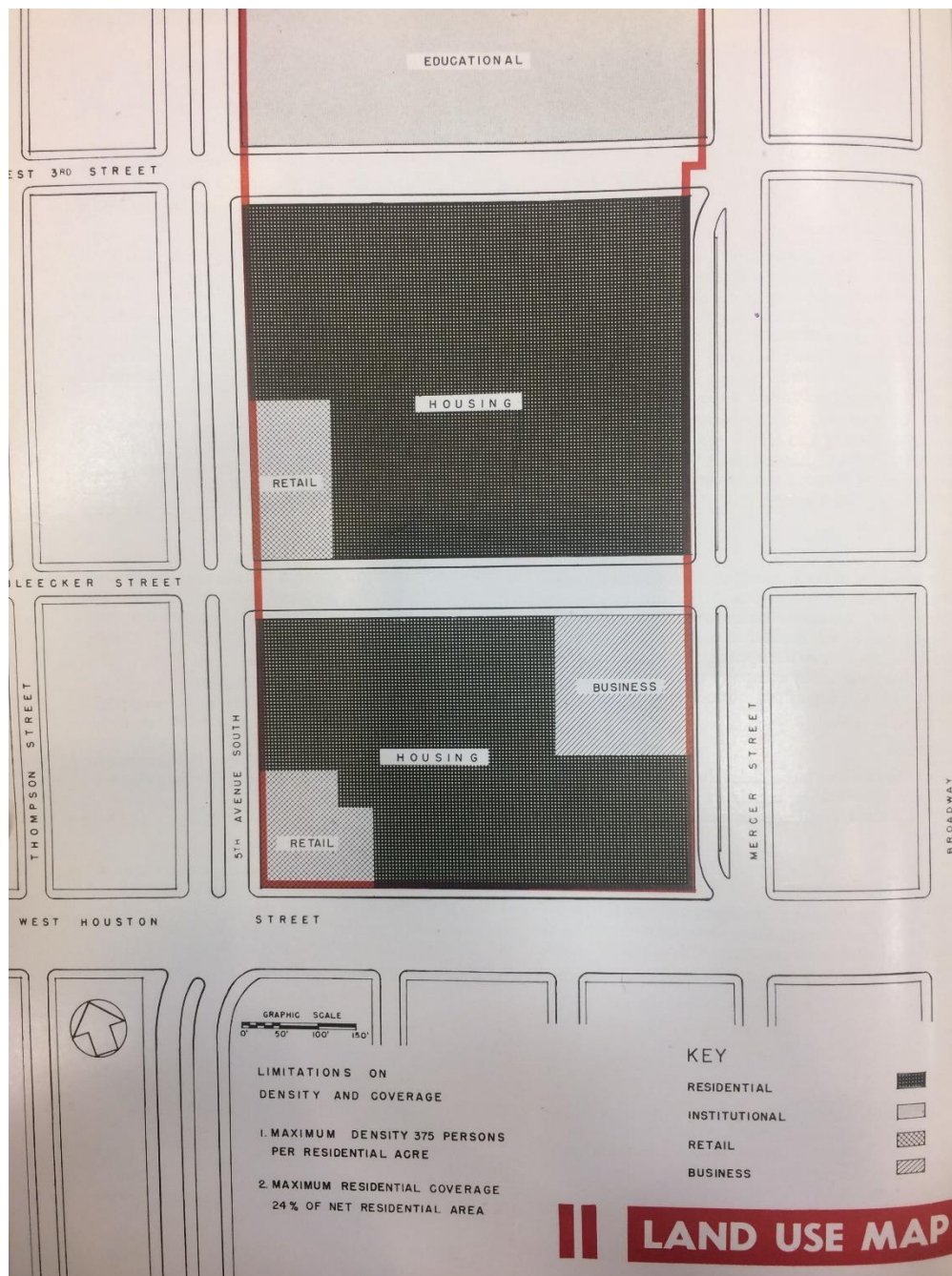


Figure 41.

"Land Use Map," illustration, 1953

New York

Printed in *Slum Clearance Plan Under Title 1 of the Housing Act of 1949, Washington Square Southeast.*

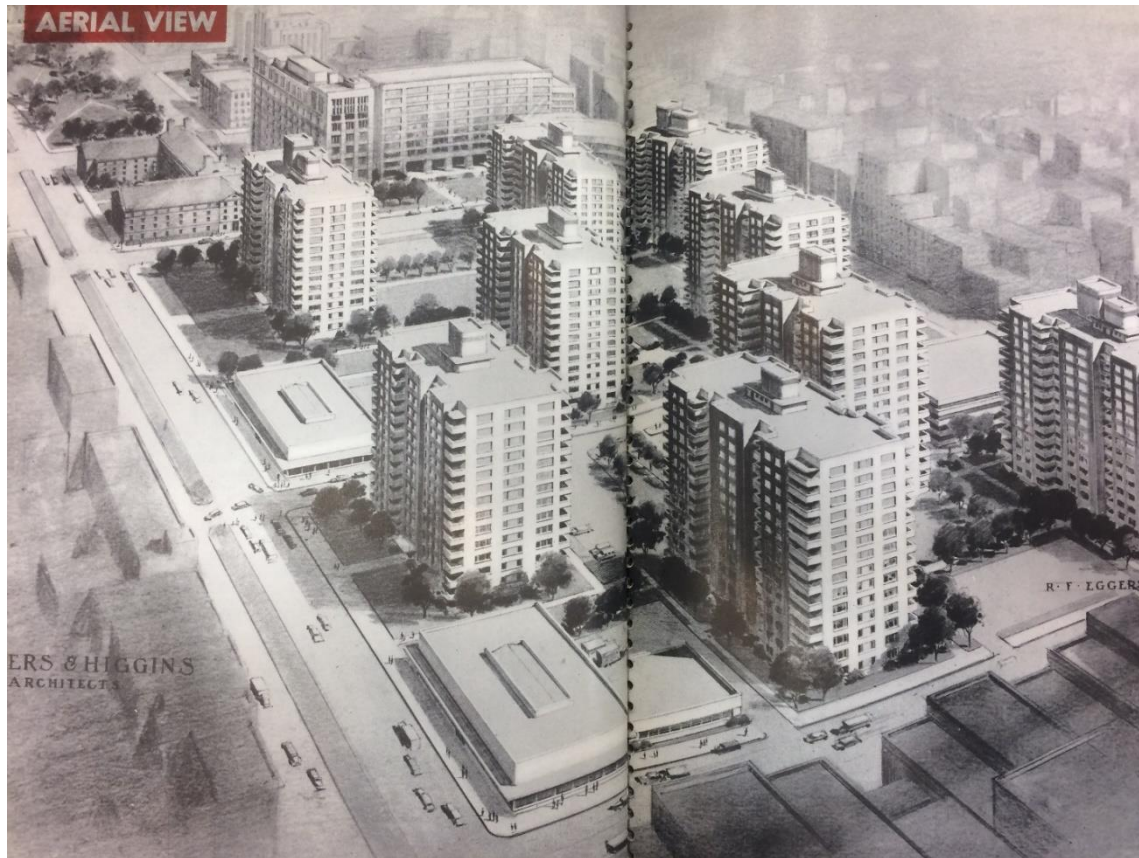


Figure 42.

“Aerial View” Illustration, 1953

New York

Printed in *Slum Clearance Plan Under Title 1 of the Housing Act of 1949, Washington Square Southeast.*



Figure 43.

Photograph, "Time Landscape - Nature Culture Education Programs"

Appears in *Nature, The End of Art*, ed. Alan Sonfist (Florence, Italy: Gli Ori, 2004)





Figure 44.

Pablo Picasso, *Bust of Sylvette*, 1967

Sandblasted cement

36 feet high

University Village, Silver Towers, Manhattan, New York City

Photographed by Jake Rajs, 2010



Figure 45.

The Liz Christy Garden, 1973-74  
 Photographed by David Loggins





Figure 46.

*Times Landscape* July 1, 2006  
Photographed by Hubert J Steed,



Figure 47.

*Time Landscape*, 2011  
Google streetview