



TENTH STREET DAYS

The Co-ops of the 50's

10th St. N.Y.C. - Between 3rd + 4th Avenues - 1961

MARCH GALLERY — 1957 - 1960

95 East 10th Street - March 1957 - December 1960

"The March Gallery happened like the other artists' galleries which sprouted in the fifties, because all at once it seemed plausible for a lot of former art students to risk leading the lives of artists.

Exhibition became a way of making the distinction. Flouting the proprieties of waiting to be "discovered," artists broke the mystique of the galleries."

Pat Passlof 10/77

"I went to the Cedar Bar one evening in the spring of 1957. Felix Pasilis came over to my table and asked if I wanted to help start a co-operative gallery -- he had found that the basement of his building was available for a very low rent. I was pleased to be invited and went to the founder's meeting. We called ourselves "March" because we got together that month. We proposed names of other artists for the gallery and I suggested Wilfrid Zogbaum and Elaine de Kooning. We swept the floor and painted the place white. When we didn't remember to sweep or to pound nails into the walls, Felix called us "a bunch of intellectuals." I said that I would be treasurer instead of sweeper. My treasurer's notes show that we paid dues of \$2.50 a month. The 24 original members were all in our first show. The second show had 4 painters, Bill Gambini, Burt Hasen, Boris Lurie and myself and one sculptor, Rocco Armento. Rocco and I were reviewed in *Art News* by Tom Hess. We discovered that *Art News* would write reviews of Tenth Street shows; also *Arts*. Like many co-operative galleries, the artists sat for shows, but for a time we hired [Deborah Sperberg, without pay], Enid Furlonger and then Janet Keyishian."

Alice Baber

Members:

Lennart Anderson
* Rocco Armento
Anne Arnold
* Alice Baber
* Waldemar Baranowski
* Robert Beauchamp
* June Corwine
Elaine de Kooning
Mark di Suvero
* Francine Fels (Felsenthal)
* William Gambini
* Joann Gedney
Paul Georges
Burt Green

* Burt Hasen
Bob Hauge
* Budd Hopkins
* Richard Ireland
* Lester Johnson
* Matsumi Kanemitsu
Gesha Kurakin
* David Lund
* Boris Lurie
* Marcia Marcus
Joan Mathews
Hugh Mezibov
* Steve Montgomery
** Felix Pasilis

* Patricia Passlof
Leo Rabkin
* Wallace Reiss
Marlene Schwanzel
Bill Seibring
* Ray Spillenger
* Peter Stander
Robert Tannen
Yvonne Thomas
Bob Tieman
Beate Wheeler
* Tom Young
Mario Yrissary
Anthe Zacharias
Athos Zacharias
* Wilfrid Zogbaum

** Founder * Original Members

Subj: Hopkins piece on 10th St.

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BUDD HOPKINS

What can be added at this late date to the history and mythology of the Tenth Street galleries? Perhaps a reminder of the poignant mixture of hope and despair we all felt, because, truth to tell, none of us really wanted to be showing there. We all longed for uptown - Janis, Kootz, Betty Parsons, Poindexter, Martha Jackson and all the rest. Without saying so, we felt that on Tenth Street we were in a holding pattern, waiting for the tower to summon us to the glory of a successful up-landing.

But in the meantime there was a spirit of generosity and a rich sense of comraderie because we were all more or less in the same situation. Hardly any of us had any money, and in that context the Tenth Street galleries were true co-ops. We did help and support one another. I remember with gratitude that the first painting I ever showed in New York was at the Hansa Gallery in, I believe, 1955, as a guest invited by Philip Pearlstein.

At the March gallery, where I later exhibited, we took turns minding the shop, whether it was our show or someone else's. I remember I was taking my turn one afternoon during a Marcia Marus exhibition of soft-focus erotic paintings, when a local wino - there were many around, due to our proximity to the Bowery - came lurching down the stairs into our basement gallery. He stood in the middle of the small exhibit space and looked around, but it took him a few minutes to take in what he was seeing. "My God," he said finally, "thish is the real thing!" In the nineteen-fifties we were still suffering under the repressive hand of the Eisenhower-Nixon legacy, so to see naked breasts and erect penises and embracing lovers in an art exhibition, no matter how soft the soft-focus, amazed the man. "My God!" he kept repeating. "It's the real thing! The real thing!" And after a very close look at each work, he finally left with a sly, contented, grin on his face.

Evidently word traveled quickly up and down the Bowey in those days because from that moment on there was a constant stream of similarly unsteady but happily expectant locals wandering in and out. They came down our iron stairway carefully, step by step, to stare at the paintings and smile knowingly, because not only was the show racy but there was no admission charge. I don't remember seeing any collectors that day - collectors were rare, anyway - but by the end of the afternoon I was feeling a buzz from the contact high of our many visitors.

Two other things need to be mentioned about the Tenth Street galleries. One is the enormous range of quality of the art shown, from truly solid and important to embarrassingly amateurish. Unfortunately, the amateurish badly tarnished the reputation of the Tenth Street galleries because in any large group show or group endeavor, the mediocre or the bad always subtly weakens the good.

The other thing I recall is the range of age, experience and personality of the artists exhibiting there. Some of us, like Bart Perry, for example, was "older" and highly educated, even scholarly-appearing, while many of the rest of us were in our mid-twenties and spent our evenings at the Cedar Bar pretending to a sense of life experience that some us - myself included - almost totally lacked.

I do not think of those long-past, difficult years - showing on Tenth Street - as some kind of golden age. It really wasn't. But Tenth Street is where lots of us started, and birth, as we know, is always painful.

Budd Hopkins