The Bowery Timeline

1653 Dutch found New Amsterdam. Peter Stuyvesant settles his residence bouwerij (17th-century Dutch for “farm”) along Native American path, which develops into Bowery Lane.

1654 New Amsterdam becomes New York.

1655 First Bowery tavern founded.

1798 Park Theater opens at the southernmost point of the Bowery, New York’s most elegant street.

Great Bowery Theater opens, initiating the Bowery’s short reign as New York’s main theater district.

The Bowery Artist Tribute

Artists are frequently the first to pioneer under-recognized or neglected areas of the city. Artists are the first wave; a sure precedent to gentrification. Cultural institutions and commercial establishments follow… And so this is the way it has gone on the Bowery in its renaissance. As a relatively new establishment on the Bowery, the New Museum felt it was important to recognize not only the history of the storied boulevard, but also the role that artists have played in the formation of this history and the evolution of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Lisa Phillips, Toby Devan Lewis Director
Working in such diverse fields as performance, video art, architecture, and poetry, Vito Acconci (b. 1940) has helped redefine the role of the viewer and increase the range of strategies that inform creative artistic production. Acconci began his career in the 1960s as a writer, first in fiction at the Iowa Writer’s Workshop, then turning to poetry after his return to New York in 1964. Alongside Bernadette Mayer, Acconci produced the literary magazine 0 to 9, which ran for six issues between 1967 and 1969, and included contributions from poets, musicians, and visual artists. In the 1970s, Acconci executed a series of installations that radically shifted the role of the gallery visitor from spectator to participant. His performances were at the forefront of the Conceptual art movement that removed the object from art and replaced it with interaction. In the 1980s, he founded Acconci Studio, a group of architects who design projects for public spaces, treating architecture as an occasion for activity.

Excerpt from the Bowery Artist Tribute interview August 17, 2007 available at boweryartisttribute.org

When I came back to New York in 1964, I still thought of myself as a writer. I had a very large loft on the Bowery; it was this amazingly cavernous space. I was married to someone who thought of herself as a painter, which was the reason we moved into a loft. It was $60 a month. The Bowery was obviously different then. My memory tells me it was a mix of lighting stores and flophouse hotels, cheap bars, and people walking very, very slowly. People whose whole day seemed to be going from Spring and Bowery to Prince and Bowery. But they had nothing much else to do. I remember once, when Terry Fox came to New York, he was very fascinated about how very slowly people moved and walked to be nostalgic about this. The Bowery never felt that dangerous to me. It just felt, not exactly sad, but at the same time there was such a notion of change.

This was a time when a lot of New York poets got jobs with ARTnews. We would write reviews for like $4 a review. I wrote some reviews then. I would hope I got twelve each month, so I could make at least $50. But at that time, rent was very cheap. At that time, you could get a lot of spaces for $60 a month, I remember it had some problems. I don’t think there was heat; it was very, very dark. But that didn’t seem so bad then…

[The Bowery] seemed to be transient, not a place that people stay. For me that felt very invigorating. Transient was what I always thought New York was. I probably have a particular fear of home and safety, so the notion of transient feels very healthy. You don’t have to be nostalgic about this. The Bowery never felt that dangerous to me. It just felt, not exactly sad, but at the same time there was such a notion of change.
The agile sculpture of Lynda Benglis (b. 1941) exists at a unique intersection between artistic practice and feminist discourse. By employing a wide range of materials, including wax, latex, polyurethane foam, and metal, Benglis has undertaken an examination of materiality and form, a practice that both mirrors and critiques the societal examination of the female body. Upon her arrival in New York in the 1960s, Benglis set her work in opposition to the overtly masculine discipline of Minimalism with her process-oriented, sculptural work. At the same time, she began creating videos that expanded her exploration of female sexuality and identity, with humor, self-examination, and aggression. Since the 1960s, Benglis has shown nationally and internationally, including solo exhibitions in India and New Zealand, and her work is included in many public collections, including the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis; the Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art in Sapporo, Japan; and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

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Excerpt from the Bowery Artist Tribute interview October 11, 2007 available at boweryartisttribute.org

I had very close friends, Mike Goldberg and Lynn Umlauf, [who] lived in this building, and I acquired this room when I found out that a friend of [Mike’s] was moving out. He lived here and worked here and in Washington, where he was Jackie Kennedy’s best friend. He was a fellow that would come in at night in a tuxedo and then go back out in leather to the West Side: a great guy who had artistic aspirations. So I got his space. I’ve lived here for over thirty years. It’s one of my favorite places, because [of] different people who have lived here. William Burroughs was here.

When I would go up and down the hallway he would hug one side of the hallway and I would hug the other because we were equally afraid of one another. He was shy and I was shy. Burroughs is now gone, but John Giorno is here. John was always here, and Mike was always here before I was here. It’s kind of, in a way, like a dormitory. John has had the Buddhist meetings here. We would all use the same bathroom, at one point—it was his private bathroom upstairs. So you can imagine living here and having to go upstairs to take a shower, and maybe you had a toilet outside in the hall. It was very much an informal situation. It was only until we bought this space, maybe ten years ago, that we put in a functional kind of bathroom here. It was very informal, and very creative. It still is. Mike still paints next door. Lynn has her studio, John paints here. I did a lot of work here. I did a lot of gold leafing here, and I was sleeping with all this plaster, sleeping with all this gold leaf, in this same bed. This same pull-out bed I’ve had since I got here. Nothing’s changed. I’ve just gathered more furniture.

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CAPTIONS
1—Lynda Benglis with gold-leaf sculpture in her studio at 222 Bowery, 1981. Courtesy Lynda Benglis
2—Lynda Benglis interviewed in her studio at 222 Bowery, October 11, 2007
3—Lynda Benglis with a fan from her Peacock series in her studio at 222 Bowery, 1979. Courtesy Lynda Benglis
4—Lynda Benglis, Contraband, 1969, poured latex, 405 by 109 in (1,028.7 x 276.9 cm). Courtesy Lynda Benglis
5—Lynda Benglis with torso pieces in her studio at 222 Bowery, 1974. Courtesy Lynda Benglis
6—Doorway to Lynda Benglis Studio, 2007
7—Lynda Benglis, Chimera, 1988, cast bronze fountain, 55 by 96 by 52 in (139.7 x 243.8 x 132.1 cm). Courtesy Lynda Benglis

The Bowery Timeline

1843 The Virginia Minstrels perform the first all-blackface program to sold-out crowd at the Bowery Amphitheatre at 37-39 Bowery.
1845 City Council spends $116,000 to build Union Square, named for the union of Bowery, Broadway, and 14th Street.
1847 Astor Place Theater is built to present Italian opera, currently in vogue. New York’s theater district begins to move uptown.
1848 The Bowery between Union Square and Cooper Square is renamed 4th Avenue.
1852 National Theater at 104 Bowery hosts the first stage production of Uncle Tom’s Cabin.
1858 Chinese-American tobacconist Ah Ken sets up the first downtown Chinese-owned business on Park Row.
Tom Doyle (b. 1928) moved from his native Ohio to New York in 1957, where he became a key figure in the first generation of Abstract Expressionist sculptors. Combining his childhood experience in a blacksmith’s shop, his studies with Roy Lichtenstein at Ohio State University, and an admiration for the monumental structure and emotional intensity of Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock, Doyle developed a unique sculptural vocabulary.

In 1961, Doyle met and married Eva Hesse, and the couple began a four-year partnership in which their individual practices and interests informed each other’s work. In 1964, the couple embarked on a fifteen-month residency in Germany, where Doyle moved away from stone sculpture, instead working in assemblage, casting, and steel. As his mediums expanded, he remained focused on the tactility of his work and preserving each sculpture’s handmade origin. Doyle’s work has been exhibited internationally. In 1994, Doyle was awarded a lifetime achievement award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He lives and works in Western Connecticut with his wife Jane, also an artist. They recently opened a joint exhibition at La Motta Fine Art in Hartford.

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Excerpt from the Bowery Artist Tribute interview May 8, 2008 available at boweryartisttribute.org

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TOM DOYLE

Everybody always talks about how dangerous the Bowery was. The Bowery was never dangerous. I never had any one mess with me, no one. One time, a bum threw a bottle and it went in front of me and my girlfriend, and he apologized, “Oh, I’m sorry, sorry.” At 189, Jane would go to Little Italy to shop, and these guys would be sitting on the doorstep, and they would say, “Your wife went out, she’ll be back in twenty minutes.” They were like doormen. I would give them a quarter. I knew them all, and they were all nice guys. A lot of them were old soldiers and they didn’t have a home, and they were on pensions, and they would drink a bit when they could get it. But they weren’t bad guys. I never had any problem with anybody. The only time when you could have trouble would be around the first of the month, what’s called “Mother’s Day,” when the guys got paid, they got their checks. And then hawks would come in, and then rob them if they were drunk on the streets. They were called hawks, you know, gangsters.

David Weinrib, the sculptor, he used to have these parties. One time we had this great party, it was a communal dinner. We’d have soup in one place, and then we’d walk to the next studio, and we’d have appetizers. And we’d just move from one studio to another, and each person would make a dish. The night we had it was a blizzard and it was so fantastic. We could walk through the streets, it was like living in the country. There was nothing on the streets. There was no traffic. Every street and every avenue was white. It was marvelous.

CAPTIONS

1—Tom Doyle, 2008. Courtesy Tom Doyle
2—Tom Doyle interviewed at the New Museum, May 8, 2008
3—Tom Doyle, Ballyhock, 2003, stainless steel and cherry, 132 by 220 by 52.5 in (335.3 x 569.9 x 133.4 cm). Courtesy Tom Doyle
4—Tom Doyle, Ballyhock, 1991, bronze from wood, 67 by 37 by 37 in (170.2 x 94.0 x 94.0 cm). Courtesy Tom Doyle
5—Tom Doyle, Lepreca, 2006, oak and cherry, 132 by 220 by 52.5 in (335.3 x 569.9 x 133.4 cm). Courtesy Tom Doyle
The career of Amos Poe (b. 1950) is inextricably linked with the birth of American punk, the No Wave movement, and the downtown New York art scene. In 1975, he co-directed Blank Generation: The Birth of Punk with Ivan Kral, producing the first documentary of the burgeoning New York punk/new wave scene, with performances by Blondie, Patti Smith, the Talking Heads, and more. His 1978 film, The Foreigner, was really expensive: $140 a month. I went up to $92. Then I had this huge loft, about 5,000 square feet, and that was really expensive: $140 a month.
Inka Essenhigh (b. 1969) emerged in the 1990s as a painter of energetic, intricate, and superlative precocious works. Balancing a vast range of influences—Arabic miniatures, cartoons, Art Nouveau—her paintings effect a perfectly credible yet exotic world. Barrooms, malls, subway platforms, and other banal locations are populated with green-skinned creatures and twisted-limb grotesques, revealing their strange underbellies. Whimsical as often as sinister, the fluidly deformed characters of Essenhigh’s paintings coyly reveal an understanding of the world that inspired them. As Essenhigh explained, “I think about them as being about America: fake, fun, pop, violent, but also quite attractive.”

Recently, Essenhigh has begun a process of transforming her subject matter. Having always made paintings “about the world that I live in,” Essenhigh explains, “now I’m making a conscious effort to paint the world that I want to live in.”

Since her first solo exhibition at the Albright Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo in 1999, Essenhigh has exhibited widely across the United States and Europe. Her work has been featured in several defining group exhibitions including “Greater New York: New Art on New York Now” (2000) at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York; “Hybrids” (2001) at the Tate Liverpool; and the touring exhibition “My Reality: Contemporary Art and the Culture of Japanese Animation” (2001).

Excerpt from the Bowery Artist Tribute interview September 30, 2007 available at boweryartisttribute.org

In 1995, Giuliani really decided to crack down, and clean up the Lower East Side. And there were daily busts, and before you know it, there are nicer places to get lunch. I’ve been here for like fifteen years and I kind of take it for granted. And one thing that I might take for granted is that it’s not a white hue. It’s not a clean white box that I have a studio in that’s going to be like the galleries that I show in. A lot of times when I’m making a painting, I don’t like to make something that big, something that gigantic. I want it to be much more human scale, even if it doesn’t fit into the New York world with the gigantic spaces. I’ve always been thankful that I didn’t have such a generic space to make my paintings in. The aesthetic of the clean white box is a kind of recent thing, and it doesn’t have to be that way, and I’m glad I don’t have to be in a cold white box either. If I go, one thing that I would like for this space is that at least I would be able to give it to another artist, as opposed to having it turn into another condo. I really believe that art needs a certain amount of cheap living for people to have some play in their work, so it’s not all this boring professionalism and people can take chances. And this studio that I’ve had has always been really cheap and I have taken risks and I’ve never done something because I have a market for it. I really have just come to the studio and done what I’ve wanted, and that’s because of cheap rent.

To be, I always wanted to be in Manhattan. I had this dream of being able to walk anywhere and walk down the street and just run into people—and I always ran into people. I know as I walk down the streets of Manhattan: I guess this is not interesting though. It seemed easier just in terms of trying make a career in the art world. The whole idea was if you could invite someone back to your studio the thinking was it was actually easier to get them to come to a place that was actually close as opposed to Williamsburg or DUMBO.

It was a rough neighborhood when we first moved here, when you walked down the street you got a lot of offers, this corner was really known for heroin.
The Bowery Timeline

The Bowery: Arty and Avant-Garde (January 2, 1965) claims over 100 artists live on the Bowery for the cheap lofts, large studio spaces, and natural light. Vito Acconci moves to 217 Bowery; Roy Lichtenstein moves to 190 Bowery.

1966 John Giorno moves to 222 Bowery and establishes the Dial-a-Poem offices in the building. 

1972 A famous drag club, 82 Club, opens at 82 East 4th Street, just off the Bowery. Robert Mapplethorpe moves to 24 Bond Street.

1973 Billy Kristal opens CBGB OMFGU at 315 Bowery. Green Guerillas establish the Liz Christy Community Garden at Bowery and Houston, one of the first community gardens in the U.S.

1977 Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band move to the Bowery to open their boutique, the Bowery Music Shop, at 116 Bowery.

1976 The Bowery Artists' Association is formed.

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1963 The Bowery Artists' Association is formed.

1962 The Bowery Artists' Association is formed.

1961 The Bowery Artists' Association is formed.

1960 The Bowery Artists' Association is formed.
She acted as the anchor of a very lively community of artists and political activists, and gave her energy to such groundbreaking projects as Learning to Read Through the Arts (based at the Guggenheim Museum) and the Ninth Avenue International Fair.

Upon receiving her MFA from the University of Michigan, Wyn Riser began teaching at Eastern Michigan University in 1966, alongside artist Al Loving. When their friendship developed into a serious relationship, Al Loving, an African American, was fired from the college, and Riser publicly resigned in protest. After the couple’s subsequent relocation to New York, Wyn Loving’s paintings moved to the nonobjective large works that draped and tumbled. By the close of the 1970s, Loving moved to Newfoundland where she worked in design, creating Olympic sound for independent feature films. In 1985 trip to participate in the Havana Biennial, Loving abandoned the Biennial, Loving also unfurling exclusively with the spiral as an ontological category. As this practice led to meticulous painting, Loving also painted patterns of controlled color. As this large works that draped and tumbled, the paintings moved to the nonobjective art of the 1960s, Loving worked with massive geometric forms, precise, angular shapes painted in color. It was these works that brought him the attention of the Whitney Museum of American Art, who gave Loving a solo show in 1969. This breakthrough exhibition offered a variety of opportunities to Loving in galleries nationally and internationally. During this time Loving also undertook a number of public commissions, including pieces for the Metropolitan Transit Authority in New York City, Wayne State University, and the Sacramento Convention Center.

CAPTIONS
1—Wyn Loving, 1970. Courtesy Anne and Alicia Loving
2—Al Loving, 2003. Courtesy Anne and Alicia Loving
3—Al Loving, 2003. Courtesy Anne and Alicia Loving
4—Wyn and Al Loving at Studio 262 Bowery. Their daughter, Alicia, sits on one of the sculptures the children made out of the leftover tape Al Loving used in the production of his paintings. Courtesy Anne and Alicia Loving
5—Al Loving, Time Trip Part 2, 2005, rag paper collage (207 x 147 cm). Courtesy Anne and Alicia Loving
6—Wyn Loving, The Last Summer, 1972, acrylic on paper collage. 25 x 30 in (65 x 76 cm). Courtesy Anne and Alicia Loving
7—Alicia Loving and Kelly Jones at Studio 262 Bowery. Courtesy Anne and Alicia Loving

1. Moving here was amazing for all of us, because the level of acceptance was so much more. The first day of school there were kids of every nationality, and there were kids with divorced parents, and kids of every ethnic background. To come here for all of us was really wonderful.
2. We were allowed out, we walked everywhere. We went to school on our own. We would walk across the street, and would take the 3rd Avenue bus up. Actually that’s where I first met Kellie Jones, the downtown community school. Elizabeth Murray was our art teacher there. It was just a different time in New York. Tour buses used to come down and go slowly down the Bowery because they wanted to look and see. My sister and I used to pull up our shirts and show off our stomachs and do all kinds of crazy things, because we just thought it was so weird. Why would they want to come and look at these poor guys? Yeah, there was a certain amount of adventure about living down there at that particular time. For me, I continue to like to live in that certain way.
The following is an excerpt from Adrian Piper’s tribute to Sol LeWitt written upon his death in April of 2007.

Rosalind Krauss wrote a long, unenthusiastic review of [Sol's] groundbreaking show, [46 Variations on Three Different Kinds of Cubes] in Artforum. I didn't have the nerve to just call him up and console him; I knew who he was, but we'd never met. But I did write him a letter of consolation about how much I'd liked the show and how important I thought it was. I suggested that he ignore the review. He wrote back, thanking me for my easy admission into the art world, and my early success, to him.

I had quickly realized that we were more than just friends. In return for being a pest and feeding his cat, Puss, while he was away, I could watch it. I also dropped upstairs to see my work while they were there. In large part I owe my easy admission into the art world, and my early success, to him.

1982 New York's Chinatown surpasses San Francisco's Chinatown as largest community of Chinese immigrants in the Western hemisphere. Keith Haring paints his first major outdoor project, a mural over an abandoned handball court, at the corner of Houston Street and the Bowery.

1983 Jean-Michel Basquiat rents studio and living space from Andy Warhol at 57 Great Jones Street.

1993 Ali's Bar, the last of the Bowery dive bars, shuts down after fifty years of operation.
CAPTIONS
2—Empty bottle of benzine found between the walls of Scott Ewalt’s Bowery loft. Courtesy Scott Ewalt
3—Jean-Michael Basquiat, show poster for Gray and DNA at CBGB, March 22, 1980. At the time of the concert, Gray’s members were Basquiat, Wayne Clifford, Shannon Dawson, Michael Holman, and Nick Taylor. Courtesy Nick Taylor
4—Sign for Cap Makers business at 306 Bowery, date unknown. Courtesy Scott Ewalt
5—Artist in Residence sign at 190 Bowery, 2008. Photo: Ethan Swan
6—Curt Hoppe in his studio at 98 Bowery, with his painting Bettie and the Ramones at CBGB, 1978. Photo: Miller/Ringma
7—Poster announcing Bowery Gallery’s first show, 1970. Super 8 footage courtesy Barbara Grossman
9—Signs from the Gotham Hotel, found in the backyard of 356 Bowery by Doris Licht. Courtesy Doris Licht
10—Various objects found between the walls of Scott Ewalt’s Bowery loft. Courtesy Scott Ewalt

The Bowery Timeline
1997 Bowery Ballroom opens its doors as a music venue in a former shoe store at Bowery and Delancey.
2002 Bob Holman establishes the Bowery Poetry Club at 308 Bowery. Common Ground Community, a nonprofit housing organization, purchases the Andres Hotel at 107 Bowery to continue providing flophouse-type residence to current Bowery hotel tenants.
2004 After a six-year battle with the city, Kate Millett is relocated from her loft at 295 Bowery. The building is demolished to clear space for Avalon Bowery Place, a 600+ unit luxury apartment complex. Millett had resided at 295 Bowery since 1973.
2006 CBGB closes its doors with a performance by Patti Smith.
2007 The Bowery Hotel opens at 335 Bowery. Avalon Bowery Place, Whole Foods, and the YMCA open at Houston and Bowery. New Museum opens at 235 Bowery.
The Bowery Artist Tribute is an ongoing project.

The New Museum welcomes additional information about artists who have lived or worked on the Bowery, past and present.

Please return the form below to the New Museum: 235 Bowery, New York, NY, 10002 USA

or by email boweryartisttribute@newmuseum.org

ARTIST’S NAME

ARTIST’S ADDRESS ON/NEAR THE BOWERY

DATES THAT THE ARTIST OCCUPIED THIS ADDRESS

ARTIST’S (OR ESTATE) CONTACT PHONE

EMAIL

ADDRESS

YOUR CONTACT (IF DIFFERENT THAN ARTIST) PHONE

EMAIL

ADDRESS