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Newsletter Winter 2006

New York, Once a Lure, Is Slowly Losing the Creative Set

By Jennifer Steinbauer
Permission to reprint excerpts from *The New York Times*
Sunday, December 18, 2005

They may not have the money of the hedge fund managers who line up at bonus time at the open houses for \$5 million homes, and their numbers do not equal that of health care workers. But New York City's creative sector –which includes architects, potters, filmmakers and clothing designers- has long helped fuel the city's economy because of its size and its role in drawing the wealthy to town.

But relentless inflation in real estate and health care costs are endangering New York's long dominance in the creative sector, according to a new report, as artists and companies migrate to less expensive cities eager to lure them.

For example, 20 years ago, New York was the headquarters for half of the world's advertising agencies, but is now home to fewer than a third, according to the report, written by the Center for an Urban Future, a left-leaning New York research group that analyzes urban policy issues.

"The danger for New York is, if we don't really start addressing the needs in the creative sector," said Robin Keegan, the lead researcher of the study, "we will not be able to do the origination" of many artistic products that the city has long been known for.

It is generally agreed that world-class cities are defined by a vibrant and diverse cultural life that offers both a large symphony and small theater companies, couture dress designers

and tiny hat makers, art museums filled with impressionist paintings and hole-in-the-wall galleries where local glass makers show their stuff.

Among other scholars, Richard Florida, who has written extensively on the topic, has argued that a "creative class" attracts workers and industries outside of the creative world who want to live in a tolerant, heterogeneous culture. This combination stimulates the economy. At a recent conference, Mr. Florida put it simply: "When a place gets boring, even the rich people leave."

Skyrocketing prices on housing and professional space have driven many artists out of the very neighborhoods they helped to pioneer, and other cities, including Philadelphia and Minneapolis, have been very aggressive at luring artists their way with marketing campaigns and housing incentives.

Two years ago, Hope Forstenzer, a graphic designer and glass blower who had lived and worked in Brooklyn for 10 years, left for Seattle because of the high cost for work space.

"There was just no way with the way my finances were set up so that I could ever buy a co-op in New York," Ms. Forstenzer said in an interview. "What you need to put down has gone from 10 percent to 20 percent, and that, combined with the fact that the price for electricity skyrocketed, I chose to come here, where I could buy a house for 5 percent down."

(over)

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New York, Once a Lure, Is Slowly Losing the Creative Set (cont.)

Like many other artists who have traditionally set up shop in the city's less expensive quarters, "What I want for my life is to get by on as little money as possible and do as much of my art as possible," she said. "But there is no such thing as what SoHo was or even Williamsburg once was where a group of artists could buy a building. That is no longer possible in New York."

The consolidation of industries that serve artists or distribute their goods has also pushed artists out. Kevin Cunningham, executive artistic director of 3-Legged Dog, a media and theater company, cited the consolidation of vendors that rent lights and equipment in the last decade, which has resulted, he said, in a 250 percent rise in costs for that equipment.

The city's Department of Cultural Affairs, aware of the potential for brain drain in the arts, is working to create new housing and financing packages for people in the arts. For example, the city has found ways to use bonds traditionally sold for investments in public property to help private arts concerns.

The city is also pursuing an arrangement to allow artists to invest in buildings with philanthropists putting up half of the money, with the agreement that they would get half the profits in a sale, a program without real precedent in New York.

"There is widespread appreciation of the role arts plays in shaping our economy," said Kate D. Levin, New York's cultural affairs commissioner. "We think there is a sense of possibility in addressing these issues that wasn't there before. We frankly defined some of these areas of concern. They are complicated issues."

**Does Cleveland Have the Will? ArtSpace-Cleveland Response
to New York**

By William A. Gould

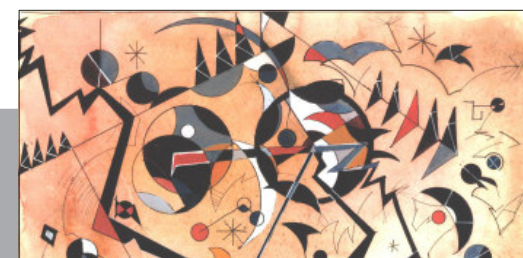
New York replaced Paris in 1940 as the world capital of creativity in theater, design, publishing music, painting, art, etc. Now, in 2006, New York is faced with a crisis of high costs of real estate and health care due to inflation. It is becoming unaffordable for artists and a threat to New York City's dominance.

So, if Cleveland is still affordable, will we seize the moment in the competition between cities for creative leadership? Cleveland, for its size, is in a good position to win its share of creative artists.

With the world famous orchestra, art museum, health care and universities, Cleveland can compete - if it has the will. Other competing cities are aggressively luring artists away from the 'Big Apple'. A public/private partnership on a regional scale should mount an aggressive, well funded campaign, to compete for the creative class. We have the organization in place; now we need the will and money. It boils down to affordable spaces to do your art.

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