

## Touring Warhol's Space, and 32 Other Art-History Sites

By RANDY KENNEDY

Among the things New York City does exceedingly well is erase its own past, even the more durable parts, like the old Pennsylvania Station or the Third Avenue El. So when it comes to a more fleeting kind of history, a lot of imagination is necessary to pay homage.

Standing in front of an expensive-looking apartment loft building in TriBeCa the other day, Ethan Andrews, who works for the public-art organization Creative Time, was trying to conjure up the late 1970s, when the building housed the Mudd Club, the art world dance hall that served as a second home for luminaries like Jean-Michel Basquiat and Julian Schnabel.

Earlier, Mr. Andrews and a Creative Time curator, Mark Beasley, had surveyed another unlikely historical site, a city salt depot at Gansevoort Street on the West Side piers. It sits on the spot where the artist Gordon Matta-Clark, in 1975, beautifully and quite illegally sliced shapes into the walls of an old warehouse using saws and blowtorches.

The reason for this rummaging through the city's artistic past was not exactly nostalgia. It was part of a plan by Creative Time to celebrate its own history: The group began in 1974 as a way to help the many artists who were then emerging from their studios and using the city's derelict streets and buildings as their raw material.

To commemorate its 33rd year of helping realize large and sometimes unwieldy projects, the nonprofit organization has chosen 32 sites around the city — with a 33rd to be nominated later by the public — where famous, infamous and sometimes almost secret yet significant art has been made. And the sites, chosen with the help of artists and art world denizens like the director John Waters, are being memorialized with a kind of art project unto itself. Called "One Day It Will Please Us To Remember Even This," it involves the installation of acrylic plaques at all 33 places.

Creative Time says the plaques, which will be in place by Tuesday, are intended to remain for "infinity (or until they fall off)," in keeping with the ephemeral nature of much of the artwork itself. (The project is accompanied by an audio tour accessible by cellphone. Participants will be able to dial the phone number on each plaque to hear information about the site or to download the tour to MP3 players at [creativetime.org](http://creativetime.org).)

Since the idea was hatched only a few months ago, Mr. Andrews and other Creative Time people have been shuttling around the city asking for permission to affix the plaques, with bolts or glue or straps, at places



Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times

Ethan Andrews, a member of the art organization Creative Time, at One Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, the site of Andy Warhol's first Factory.

where present-day residents are often surprised to hear that anything noteworthy, artistic or otherwise, had happened. One day recently, for example, Mr. Andrews visited the spot that was once 231 East 47th Street, the address of Andy Warhol's first Factory, where he made his silk screen paintings. It is now a small, windswept brick courtyard in the shadow of the soaring office building One Dag Hammarskjold Plaza.

"I've been here four years, and nobody ever told me anything about any Warhol," said John DeGiacomo, the lobby and fire safety director for the office building, who accompanied Mr. Andrews quizzically as he scouted a good spot for the plaque. "I guess you learn something every day."

In the end, the management company that oversees the building and plaza declined to allow Creative Time to affix a plaque there. But most others approached agreed to cooperate, including the city; the owner of the East Village apartment building that was the first home of the Fun Gallery, an influential 1980s space; the operators of a small cafe on Park Avenue South that was once Max's Kansas City, the artsy nightclub; and the owners of a parking lot that was the site of Downtown Drive-In, a makeshift open-air movie theater set up by Creative Time in the summer of 1978 to show art films by Stan Brakhage, Rudy Burkhardt, Red Grooms and others.

"The city is becoming more privatized and more upscale, more upper-class, and artists are leaving here because they can't afford to be here,"

Places famous and infamous, and some nearly secret.

and the city's landmarks commission.

"The difference between doing it this way and just making your own plaque and putting it up illegally somewhere is pretty profound," Mr. Andrews said dryly. "It's been interesting for me."

Trying to determine what constitutes memorable art — and which of Creative Time's own projects, more than 300 now — to include on the memorial trail was also not easy. Among Mr. Waters's several suggestions were some things that were never created with art in mind and probably were not considered art by many people except him, like the Women's House of Detention in the Village, demolished in 1974, where he remembered women leaning out the windows and screaming unprintable things at passers-by.

"I think he saw it as kind of ongoing performance art," Mr. Andrews said. "To me that was one of the most interesting ones because I don't get that happening to me much in Manhattan now."

said Anne Pasternak, Creative Time's president. "I think it's important to share the kind of vitality and vibe the city once had and hope that it doesn't go away completely."

As simple as it might sound, the project required the organization to sort through a few spools' worth of red tape, including approval letters from the Department of Buildings



Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times

### Artistic Triumphs Remembered

Mark Beasley, a member of the Creative Time organization, at the site of "The Plain of Heaven," a 2005 art exhibition inspired by a plan to develop the High Line elevated rail line. To celebrate its 33rd year, the group is sponsoring a tour of 33 spots around the city where art history was made. Page 33.