

max's kansas

Ronald Bladen, Max's Kansas City, 213 Park Avenue South, c. 1972



Vito Acconci
Carl Andre
Alice Aycock
Larry Bell
Lynda Benglis
Brigid Berlin
Ronald Bladen
John Chamberlain
Dan Christensen
Willem de Kooning
Friedel Dzubas
Dan Flavin
Al Held
Donald Judd

artists at
max's
kansas city
1965 - 1974

hetero-holics and
some women too

September 10 - October 30, 2010

Opening reception: September 15, 6-8pm

Joseph Kosuth
Frosty Myers
Adrian Piper
Larry Poons
Robert Rauschenberg
Larry Rivers
Dorothea Rockburne
James Rosenquist
Robert Smithson
Frank Stella
Andy Warhol
Lawrence Weiner
Neil Williams
Larry Zox

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Artists at Max's Kansas City, 1965 - 1974
Hetero-Holics and Some Women Too

As the Cedar Tavern played a role in the formation of Abstract Expressionism, Max's Kansas City galvanized a younger generation of artists. From when it opened in 1965 to when it closed its doors in 1974, Max's Kansas City helped bring about focused clusters of artists from every major reference point in the New York art world: Color Field, Pop Art, Minimalism, Conceptual, Earthwork and Performance Art — a creative efflorescence rarely seen in art history.

Willem de Kooning's occasional presence at Max's Kansas City was conspicuous in its singularity: he was perhaps the only one of the older generation who would frequent the place. It was no coincidence that it was de Kooning who allowed Robert Rauschenberg to erase a choice drawing of his from the early 1950's.

In Max's there was a clear delineation between the front room and back room, geographical art-political territories. Mickey Ruskin, the owner, would stand at the front door, John Chamberlain, Larry Rivers and Robert Rauschenberg held court in the front room but could venture into the back room as well. Rauschenberg was considered a prince of the back room. The backroom — a bit intimidating for most customers to enter — was reserved for Andy

top to bottom
Mickey Ruskin

Neil Williams, Frosty Myers and
Larry Poons on a bench



top to bottom
Dan Flavin, Artists Rights Society

Frank Stella and Larry Poons, Getty Images
photo: Fred W. McDarrah



Warhol and his entourage, film and music people. Bob Dylan's "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" was the veritable anthem.

Painters and sculptors stood at the bar, and the "regulars" among them occupied the booths beside the bar. They stood, drank and argued. They were the acknowledged "heavy hitters."

"To what extent the visual content was the real content," said Philip Glass, "or whether the ideas were the content — this is what people went through windows for, and the big front window at Max's seemed to be broken at least twice a year!" And, recalled the late photographer Jimmy Moore, "Nobody talked about money."

Max's Kansas City was a social venue where ideas could be thrown out, tested and formed. But a salient distinction was signaled to the art world at Max's where important new art was prominently featured on its walls; and the art was a "permanent installation," as Donald Judd phrased it, rather than a changing show. Artists and artwork filled Max's Kansas City. Most often, art was obtained by Mickey in trade for food and drink. Although food didn't necessarily equal

the value of the art (a hamburger at Max's cost \$1.10). John Chamberlain's galvanized iron sculpture imposed itself dramatically at the entrance, while Dan Flavin's bold red florescent light sculpture defined the corner of the back room and cast a glow over the entire space. Frank Stella's large abstract painting dominated the side wall, while the frame of Dorothea Rockburne's folded paper collage gathered nicotine above the bar. Frosty Myers'

laser beam ran from the front window to a mirror on the juke box and then across the entire restaurant to the back room.

In the back room Andy Warhol held court with film and Factory people including Brigid Berlin, snapping Polaroid pictures and making audio-tapes of conversation. There were periodically inflamed scenes, dancers on the tables, a strip tease, singers, the outburst of SHOWTIME: nakedness, exhibitionism and applause. There was a lot of drug use and sexual action especially in the telephone booth and under the tables.

In contrast to the clientele in the back room, usually passive, hard drinking artists gave off an aura of testosterone in the front room. The virtual hegemony of men there prompted the appellation “hetero-holics”. Women artists nevertheless were present at Max’s, including Dorothea Rockburne, Lynda Benglis, Alice Aycock and Adrian Piper.

In this exhibition we attempt to convey the diversity and the full-bodied nature of the art that defined the later sixties and early seventies in America, and set parameters for the next 30 years — all by artists who frequented Max’s Kansas City.

Maurice Tuchman



top to bottom
Andy Warhol, Brigid Berlin and
Frosty Myers, Getty Images
photo: Billy Name, Ovoworks

Lynda Benglis
Courtesy, Cheim and Read,
New York

Alice Aycock, 1974
*Tropico De Cancer: Boundary
Line 23½ degrees North,*
Tamaulipas, Mexico;
photo: Mark Segal

Brigid Berlin's Portraits of Artists



Vito Acconci



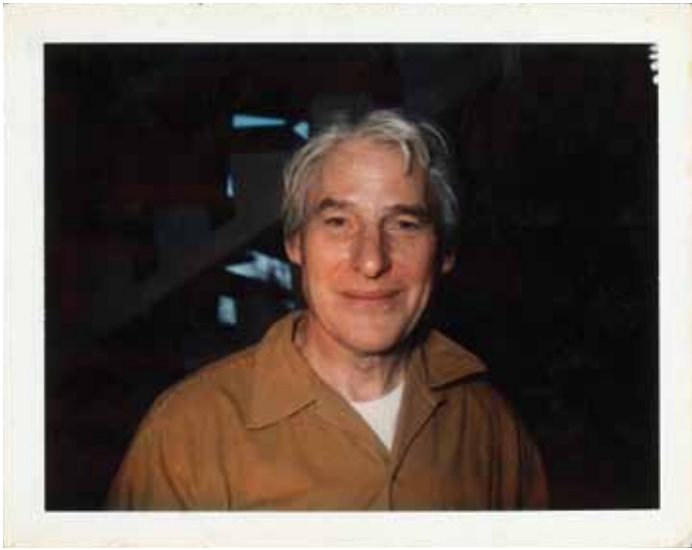
Larry Bell



John Chamberlain



Dan Christensen



Willem de Kooning



Donald Judd



Joseph Kosuth



Frosty Myers



Larry Poons



Robert Rauschenberg



Larry Rivers



Dorothea Rockburne



James Rosenquist



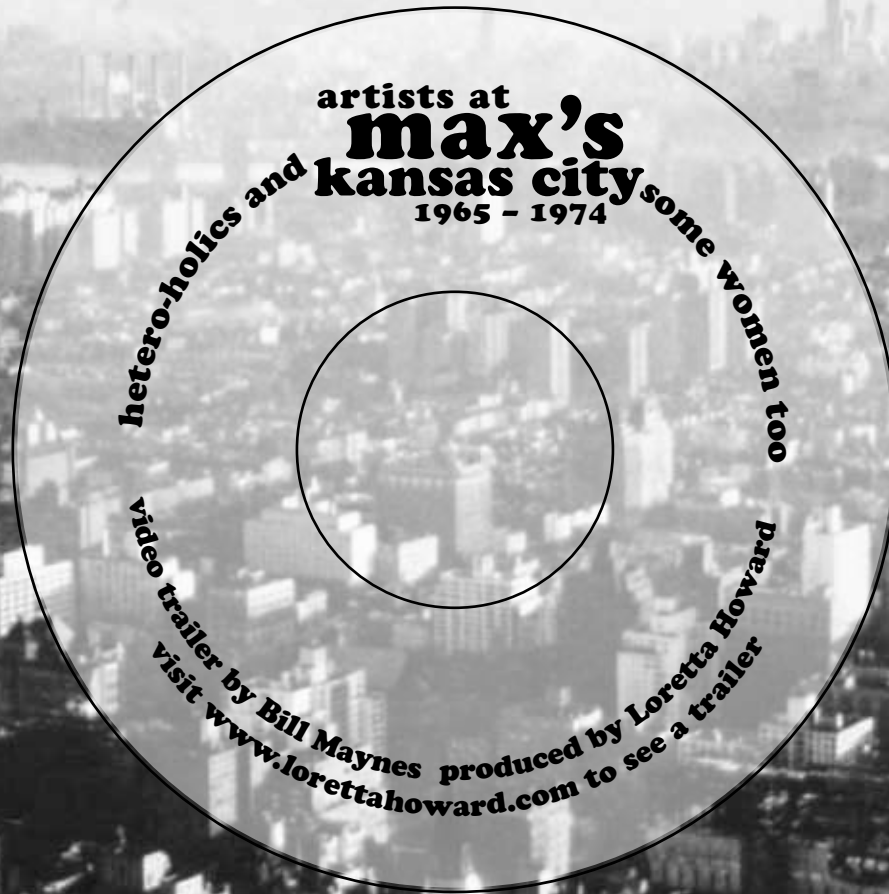
Robert Smithson



Andy Warhol



Neil Williams



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video trailer by Bill Maynes produced by Loretta Howard
visit www.lorettahoward.com to see a trailer

inside front & back covers: Alice Aycock,
NYC Orientation, 1971, 35mm photograph

back cover photo: Julia Fahey

Full length version of video by
Bill Maynes on view during exhibition.

ISBN 978-0-9842804-2-1



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Larry Bell, John Chamberlain & Neil Williams eating at Max's Kansas City