



Liberate the Artist

Fractured Atlas Testimony - June 24, 2008

ADAM FOREST HUTTLER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Providing Adequate Workspaces for Artists and Musicians in New York City

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Good afternoon. My name is Arwen Lowbridge and I am the Managing Director of Fractured Atlas. I'd like to thank Chairman Recchia and the members of the Committee for inviting Fractured Atlas to testify today.

Fractured Atlas is New York's largest arts service organization, with a membership of over 3,000 of the city's independent artists and emerging arts organizations. We help our members function more effectively as businesses by providing access to funding, healthcare, education, advocacy, and more.

I am here today to speak to you about the space and infrastructure crisis that currently faces independent artists and newly formed arts & cultural organizations all over the city.

Emerging artists and organizations play a unique role in the cultural ecosystem by contributing some of the most provocative, accessible and inventive art work that our City's residents and visitors may consume. And while they may not draw attendance in the thousands, they provide measurable financial and immeasurable social benefits to our daily lives. These are the creative workers who are most affected by rising property values and are often the first people driven out when the forces of urban development set in.

Regardless of discipline and beyond an actual artist, space is the single most critical component to producing and consuming art that exists; and space that is accessible and affordable to artists here in New York City is disappearing at an alarming rate. At this point, I believe we are quickly approaching a crisis stage. Artists can be incredibly inventive on a shoestring budget when it comes to things like human resources, supplies & materials, and marketing & distribution, but we cannot begin any substantial work if we do not have a space secured.

If this trend continues, New York will devolve into an old museum city like Paris or Rome rather than expand its international reputation as a cornucopia of artistic and cultural diversity. It will cease to be a hotbed of activity that's producing forward thinking, boundary pushing, essential and

relevant art. People come to New York to experience things that they cannot experience at home and the worst thing we can do is to strip our city of the ability to provide such opportunities.

Proactive policies must be developed and implemented now to avoid losing our edge as an artistic Mecca and attract and retain young artists. Without affordable space to produce new work, only mainstream cultural institutions will be able to survive. If that happens, then our city will stop being known as a place of cultural innovation, and instead become simply one more place to revere the genius of generations past.

The consequences of that shift go far beyond the art world. New York's cultural dynamism and innovation is a huge part of what has historically attracted top-tier creative professionals from countless other fields to settle here. If the city loses its luster in this respect, the ramifications will be felt far and wide.

There is more than enough talent, passion and intelligence within the City's leadership and the arts community to solve this problem.

Fractured Atlas is ready and willing to partner with the city as it faces this challenge. We can provide unbiased information and serve as a liaison between the various constituencies involved so that we may work together to create sustainable policies that benefit everyone concerned. I am committed to doing everything I can to reverse the trend of artist flight and help those who choose to stay survive and thrive in this challenging yet unparalleled city. I hope you will join me in this effort.

Thank you very much.