

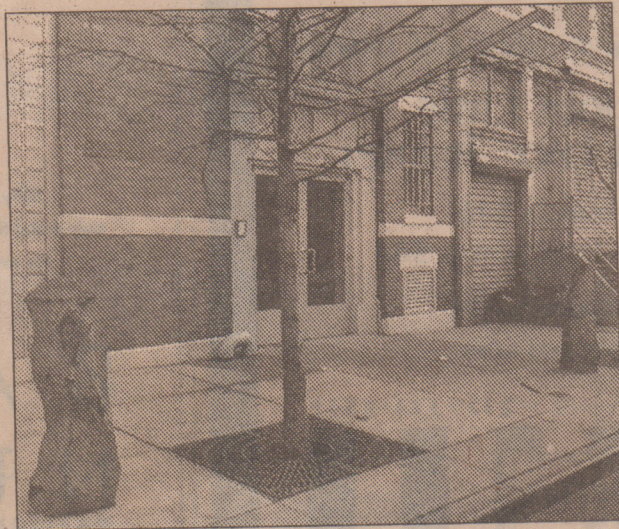
HERE NOW

West Chelsea: Art Appears In the Latest 'Next SoHo'

TWO more art galleries had recently opened in West Chelsea, and the director John Waters was gallery hopping. "This is fantastic, I wish I owned some property here," he said, referring to the crowd that had descended that evening on 22d Street. He paused for effect. "Now, where can a guy get a decent \$3 cup of coffee?"

There are no coffee bars yet, but it doesn't seem to matter. Attracted by large, raw spaces and inexpensive rents, several gallery owners who specialize in contemporary art have opened on West 22d Street between 10th and 11th avenues: Matthew Marks, of Madison Avenue fame; Pat Hearn, via SoHo; Paul Morris, relocating from Downing Street, and Marilu Lannon, a newcomer to the city, who previously had galleries in Boston and Chicago.

These four new galleries, along with the Dia Center for the Arts (opened in 1987) and the Arnulf Rainer Museum, now form an enclave in West Chelsea that has



Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times

Low rents are drawing art to West 22d Street, and its sidewalks. At No. 548 is the Dia Center for the Arts.

SoHo tenants like Mary Boone and Paula Cooper scouting 22d Street real estate.

The move seems economically logical. With rents at \$10 to \$15 a square foot as against \$25 to \$45 in SoHo, 22d Street dealers can afford coffee flown in from Brazil.

Another factor that separates the 22d Street galleries from their SoHo counterparts is an anti-1980's design esthetic. "It's no longer chic to build magnificent galleries," said Mark Abolafia, the owner of the Empire Design and Construction Corporation, which did the renovations for the Paul Morris and Pat Hearn galleries. "The trend now is to be simple: poured concrete floors, a few walls, skylights. It's essentially a raw, unfinished look."

Matthew Marks's first two shows featured Ellsworth Kelly and Nan Goldin. "Yes, I suspect 22d Street has everything it needs to become the next SoHo," said the artist Mark Kostabi. "Except maybe a subway stop. But people who can afford to buy art don't tend to use public transportation anyway."

And what about that \$3 cup of coffee? "West Chelsea is definitely one of our target markets," said Tom Thornton, the president of Dean & DeLuca. "To tell you the truth, we're in negotiations to open a coffee bar there soon."

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