

NEWS US & Americas

Escape from New York

Ongoing gentrification of the city is forcing artists to flee in search of cheap studio space

ARTISTS

New York. First it was the Lower East Side, then it was Williamsburg – now Bushwick, Ridgewood and Red Hook are among the New York neighbourhoods where developers are stepping in and artists are being pushed out. Average rents in the city rose 75% between 2000 and 2012, but only by 31% in the rest of the US, according to a report published this year by Scott Stringer, the New York City comptroller – and studio costs are also rising. Now, artists are moving to cities and areas such as Detroit, upstate New York and even Des Moines, Iowa.

"You would have to be a dipshit to stick around this soul-sucking city," wrote the artist Justin Lieberman in a farewell letter to New York when he moved to Munich in Germany this summer. "Give it another five years and you'll all be complaining that New York is just a poor man's version of Dubai."

Although Lieberman is rebelling against the corporatisation of art galleries in New York – what he calls the "Commercial Art State" – others cite personal financial concerns. The artist Ryan Turley moved to Hillsdale, New York, last year, and now puts the \$700 he spent each month on renting a studio in Brooklyn towards a mortgage payment on an entire house, studio included.

Not the same old story

In some ways, it is a familiar complaint. In the 1960s, artists bemoaned the loss of Soho; in the 1980s, it was the East Village. "This narrative has been going on forever," says Tom Finkelpearl, the commissioner of New York's Department of Cultural Affairs. "When I was a young artist in New York City, people were leaving because of crime; now it's real estate." So is the situation for



The Dumbo Arts Festival in 2013—but for how much longer will it look like this?

today's artists really so different?

Yes, say those who claim that the cycles of gentrification are much quicker and more deliberate. In just over a decade, Dumbo (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge) has changed from an industrial no-man's-land to the third most expensive neighbourhood in New York City, where condos can easily sell for \$1,300 per sq. ft. The real-estate developer Two Trees, credited by the *New York Times* with "almost single-handedly creating Dumbo", lured artists with cheap or free rent, watching as their bohemian trendiness raised property values and betting that luxury condos would follow. The developer has since co-founded the Dumbo Arts Festival and subsidised venues for Smack Mellon, Issue Project Room and the Galapagos Art Space. "It appears to have been a well-conceived and well-executed strategy from the start," the Rice & Associates commercial broker Earl Bateman says.

"If you want dirt-cheap production space, you need to move to Detroit"

As the demand for loft conversions grows, the market for the same large-scale studio spaces is "tighter than ever", says Paul Parkhill, the executive director of Spaceworks, a city-funded studio development organisation. Since launching in 2011, Spaceworks has rented out five studios in Williamsburg and Gowanus for between \$350 and \$400 a month – slightly higher than the monthly price artists said they could afford in one survey – and plans to open another 43 on Governor's Island next year. "If what you want is 10,000 sq. ft of dirt-cheap production space, yes, you probably need to move to Philadelphia or Detroit," Parkhill says.

"The biggest thing we can do for artists as an administration is make

the city more affordable in general," Finkelpearl says. But he also points out that many of the farther-flung neighbourhoods remain affordable. "It's not expensive in Rockaway right now; \$1,200 a month is not free, but that is affordable on a middle-class salary," he says. Meanwhile, the internet has also challenged New York's status as the perceived centre of the universe. "Visual artists, in my experience, need less space than they used to; the studio visit is now done on a laptop in a café."

Although there may be fewer places to make art in the city, there is no shortage of places to show it. Bateman thinks that dealers may be stepping in to help artists. In the past year, at least a dozen of his gallery clients have requested leases for property with extra space for studios. "It's a new model for a gallery that has artists out of town," he says.

And not all of the artists are complaining. "When I lived in New York, it was always one of my hobbies to imagine not living in New York," says the

Where to go when the going gets tough

Des Moines

Iowa's cost of living is 6% lower than the national average, according to *Forbes*, while the state's growth in jobs is nearly 3% higher. These factors led Zachary Mannheimer to relocate from Brooklyn, New York, and launch a 37,000 sq. ft arts complex there. When the musician David Byrne delivered the keynote address at the opening of the Des Moines Social Club in May, he said he was "moved and inspired" by the city. A creative explosion is "not going to happen in Manhattan any more, which means it's up to you guys", Byrne said.

Hudson

Hudson is just an hour's journey north on the train from New York's Grand Central station, and its artist community has grown so much that the New Art Dealers Alliance launched an art fair there in 2011. The artist Conor Backman, who moved from New York partly because of Hudson's "better quality of life", says he sees "an average of one to two artists a month moving here, mostly from New York City".

Philadelphia

In 2012, Larry Eichel, the director of the Pew Charitable Trusts' Philadelphia Research Initiative, estimated that roughly 4,000 people move from New York City to Philadelphia – the so-called "sixth borough" of New York – each year. Home to seven art schools, the revamped Barnes Collection and the world-class Philadelphia Museum of Art, it has attracted artists in particular.

Detroit

When the musician Patti Smith told a crowd at the Cooper Union four years ago that "New York has closed itself off to the young and the struggling", she named Detroit as a possible alternative. Major non-profit organisations also see potential in the motor city: in 2012, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation committed to spending \$19m on citywide art projects, while the Kresge Foundation has been awarding \$4.3m to more than 60 arts organisations in the greater Detroit area since 2012. R.C.

artist Jacques Louis Vidal, who recently relocated to Fishers Island, three hours away, where he directs the Lighthouse Works residency programme. "There are only around 200 people who live on the island. I like it here very much." Rachel Corbett



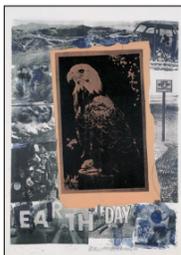
Patti Smith has tipped Detroit as the new New York

NEWS IN BRIEF

UNITED STATES >>>

Rauschenberg foundation to tackle climate change

■ The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation has launched the Climate Change Solutions Fund. Successful applicants will receive a grant of up to \$150,000 for projects that "apply a systemic lens to the root causes of global warming". The open call for applications, which close on 22 December, seeks both pragmatic ideas and radical proposals, such as suggestions for new economic systems. "We are looking to fund projects that advance actual solutions to the greatest crisis of our time," says Risé Wilson, the foundation's director of philanthropy. Robert Rauschenberg designed the first poster (above) for Earth Day in 1970, when the annual event launched. P.P.



Philadelphia prepares for year-long outdoor show

■ The city of Philadelphia is organising a year-long art project that will culminate in an outdoor exhibition of works by contemporary and street artists. Throughout 2015, artists will spend time in communities in Philadelphia, exploring issues such as incarceration, behavioural health and the environment. "Open Source: Engaging Audiences in Public Space" is being organised by Philadelphia's Mural Arts programme, and Pedro Alonso, a Boston-based independent curator who specialises in street art. The list of participating artists is due to be announced in January. Funding comes from the Hummingbird Foundation. A.S.

Gagosian and Perelman urged to settle dispute

■ Prominent art-world figures and institutions have become embroiled in the ongoing lawsuit between the financier Ronald Perelman and the dealer Larry Gagosian. Perelman's lawyers have asked

the auction houses Phillips and Sotheby's, the investor-collectors Alberto, José and David Mugrabi, the artist Jeff Koons and the New York-based Sonnabend Gallery to provide documents that may shed light on a series of disputed deals stretching back to 2010. Members of the Mugrabi family testified in September, but according to court papers, Perelman's lawyers last month agreed to withdraw their request that Koons and Sonnabend Gallery testify (but stood by their request for certain documents). Judge Saliann Scarpulla of New York State Court encouraged Perelman and Gagosian to resolve the dispute before it goes to trial next summer. J.H.

Bloomberg earmarks \$3m for public art

■ Two major US foundations are increasing their commitment to public art. Bloomberg Philanthropies, a foundation established by Michael Bloomberg, the former mayor of New York, plans to award up to \$1m to each of at least three US cities over the next two years to support temporary public art projects

that "celebrate creativity, enhance urban identity, encourage public-private partnerships and drive economic development", according to its website. The initiative, the Public Art Challenge, is open to cities with 30,000 residents or more. Applications must be submitted by the mayor or chief executive of the host city by 15 December. Meanwhile, the Miami-based Knight Foundation has pledged \$500,000 over five years to help US artists launch grassroots initiatives, from pop-up museums to health fairs that connect uninsured artists with doctors (below, part of the Irrigate



Toolkit project, which adapts disruptive public works into art). Organised with the Minnesota-based non-profit organisation Springboard for Arts, the project, called Creative Exchange, gives enterprising artists access to on-call experts and free step-by-step guides to replicate previous successful programmes. J.H.

Get customised global art news with iPad app

■ An iPad application developed by the financial services company UBS aims to bring order to the endless stream of global news about contemporary art that is available on the internet. Planet Art reads, indexes and ranks information from mainstream media outlets such as the *Guardian* and the *New York Times*, as well as specialist publications, including *The Art Newspaper*. The app organises stories into three categories—news, features and the market—and users can customise the content. Planet Art is scheduled to launch officially during Art Basel Miami Beach this month and an iPhone version is due to be released in January 2015. J.H.