



Augustus Goertz

Paul Hyman



Peter Reginato

Howard Barash

Standoff in SoHo

by Julian Weissman

Art writers and journalists have visited SoHo in increasing numbers over the past four years, supplying their readers with gastronomical guides, shopping information and gallery walking-tours. Like well-intentioned nurses, they tell us about SoHo's height and weight but not about its heartbeat and pulse. Artists are the "heartbeat and pulse" of SoHo. They re-pioneered the area during the early 1960s, and it is the artists—not the forty odd galleries or the boutiques or the exotic shops—that account for the community's vitality.

As Stuart Waltzer, director of the downtown Emmerich Gallery, recently pointed out, "There are three places one traditionally places galleries. One is where people who love and collect art live. We have a gallery on 57th Street. The second place is where they bank the money with which they buy art. We have a gallery in Zurich, Switzerland. The third place is where the artists make art. Thus the downtown gallery in SoHo."

The artist is there—but what is his current situation? How do these men and women live and work? How do they see their community and its future from the inside looking out?

Following are profiles of four young artists presently living and working in SoHo. By no means do the artists profiled here cover the gamut of SoHo art or SoHo artists. But they do bring into

focus some of the internal realities of this art community's most vital group.

One attitude shared by all four artists is a growing uncertainty with SoHo, a refuge and a community becoming less and less viable for artists.

At 25, Augustus Goertz is the youngest of the four artists profiled. Yet, in many ways, his situation is the most typical. Like the overwhelming majority of the 1,200 to 1,800 artists living and working in SoHo, Goertz is still trying to get his first one-man show. And like most of them, his immediate concerns are two-fold: he must support his art and himself.

His background helped prepare him for what is often a long, difficult effort. Goertz grew up in the West Village of the 1950s, the son of a former painter. "My father did everything from teaching art to driving a cab for seven years to support our family, his painting and himself," he said. In the family tradition, he is currently working four nights a week as a second chef at the new artists' bar-restaurant, The West Broadway Central. Goertz first arrived in SoHo in 1971, after four years of study and painting on the West Coast. "I was really knocked out by the excellent work some of my friends were doing. And the vitality of SoHo!"

A 2,500-square-foot loft on the edge of SoHo is both home and studio for Goertz. As with most artists' lofts, the emphasis here is on the studio. Two-thirds of the unfinished loft is devoted to a work and storage area. Two loft bedrooms with skylights rest on sup-

ports above an informally defined kitchen and living room in the remaining third of the loft. Goertz has lived and worked here for two years, and has invariably had to share it with someone else. Faced with a \$350-a-month rent (plus utilities), there is little else the unsubsidized, unexhibited Goertz can do. High rents are no longer the exception to the rule—they are simply a part of the reality of living in SoHo today.

Like most of his peers, Goertz avoids the use of labels when it comes to describing his art. "I guess if I am any one thing, I am a synthesizer. Basically, my paintings are investigations of two things. First, the multiple levels of visual perception that can be incorporated on one canvas through the use of projection of overlapping images. And second, the created illusion of two separate paintings working within the same frame."

Most of Goertz's canvases are 2 by 6 or 9 by 5 feet. They range in price from \$200 to \$800. In 1973, Goertz sold six paintings. In the first half of 1974, he sold two.

Most of his sales have evolved directly out of recommendations made by fellow artists living in SoHo. They have helped him, and he them. It is rapport like this that convinces Goertz that "SoHo is special. It's incredible how different it is from the art scene I knew as a child in the Village. Most of the artists of my father's generation were more independent, more selfish. We have our envies and our jealousies, but we really try to help each other as well."

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