

White Columns

GORDON MATTA-CLARK: NYC GRAFFITI 1972/73

curated by Roger Gastman and the Estate of Gordon Matta Clark

ENTRANCE:



Chris FREEDOM Pape

1973, 2025

House paint, makers and spray paint

Born in 1960, **Chris Pape** began painting trains in 1974 as a teenager in New York using the name GEN 2. His early train painting career came to a halt as he entered the prestigious La Guardia High School of Music and Art in 1976, where he learned printmaking, watercolor and oil painting. After leaving home, the artist returned to graffiti in 1979 with his new name FREEDOM. In 1980 Pape began the 16-year run of paintings and drawings in an abandoned tunnel by Riverside Park that would come to be known as the Freedom tunnel. He exhibited at galleries with CRASH, Jean Michel Basquiat, FUTURA and others throughout the '80s. In 1989, with the emergence of the "Mole People" in the tunnel, FREEDOM chose to abandon his gallery career and focus on painting and drawing the homeless until the tunnel was closed off in 1996. In recent years Pape has reemerging as an author and filmmaker, and is considered by many to be the leading archivist of the New York subway graffiti movement.



Documentation of **Gordon Matta-Clark's** *Grffiti Truck*, 1973

Vinyl

120 x 191 7/8 in.



'**TAKI 183**' SPAWNS PEN PALS, The New York Times, July 21, 1971 Courtesy of TAKI 183



Newspaper clippings related to **TAKI 183**, 1972/73

TAKI 183 worked as a messenger in the summer of 1970, which took him well beyond his neighborhood. Pocketing the taxi fare provided by his employer, he walked to his delivery destinations instead, leaving tags everywhere he went, making him the first graffiti writer to go "all-city." The combination of the enigmatic name TAKI and the fact that he wrote his name in affluent areas that hadn't previously seen graffiti made the writer something of a mystery. When a New York Times reporter tracked TAKI down in 1971, he encountered a relatively well-adjusted Greek teenager whose defense for writing was to point out the bumper stickers and posters plastered all over the city during political campaigns: "Why do they go after the little guy?" TAKI became known as the first graffiti writer in the newly growing writing movement, although he has cited others. Though prolific, his career was short-lived: he quit writing in 1971.

WEST GALLERY:



Gordon Matta-Clark
Graffiti: Soul Power, 1973
Gelatin silver print
24 x 40 in.



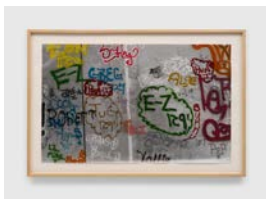
Gordon Matta-Clark
Graffiti: E-Z, 1973
Gelatin silver print
24 x 40 in.



Gordon Matta-Clark
Graffiti: Pain I is Pain II, 1973
Gelatin silver print
24 x 40 in.



Gordon Matta-Clark
Small Graffiti: Truck Fragment, 1973
Steel and paint
16 1/2 x 17 5/8 x 2 1/2 in.



Gordon Matta-Clark
Graffiti: E-Z 129, 1973
Gelatin silver print with hand coloring
20 x 31 3/4 in.



Gordon Matta-Clark
Graffiti: Satans, 1973
Gelatin silver print with hand coloring
20 x 31 3/4 in.



Gordon Matta-Clark

Graffiti: Satans, 1973

Gelatin silver print

20 x 31 3/4 in.



Gordon Matta-Clark

Graffiti: Linda, 1973

Gelatin silver print with hand coloring

18 3/4 x 31 3/4 in.



Gordon Matta-Clark

Graffiti: Mike, 1973

Gelatin silver print with hand coloring

20 x 31 3/4 in.



Gordon Matta-Clark

Graffiti Photoglyph, 1973

Gelatin silver print with hand coloring

23 7/8 x 367 1/5 in.



Documentation of Gordon Matta-Clark's

Graffiti Truck, 1973

Vinyl

120 x 156 in.

EAST GALLERY:



FUTURA 2000

Untitled, 1973

Marker on paper

8 3/4 x 11 3/4 in.

Courtesy of Ali - Soul Artists Collection, Jorge Palombo

FUTURA 2000 (b. Leonard Hilton McGurr, 1955, New York, NY) is an artist whose practice first developed within the genre of graffiti in New York City during the 1970s. He was among the earliest artists to introduce abstraction into the art form and among the first to break barriers and show in contemporary art galleries in the early 1980s. In 2020, Rizzoli New York published *FUTURA: The Artist's Monograph*, the most in-depth and comprehensive survey of the artist's life and career. In 2022, the non-profit arts organization Free Arts NYC honored Futura and established a scholarship in his name for his dedication to underserved youths. From September 2023 to February 2024, The University at Buffalo Art Galleries presented *FUTURA2000: Breaking Out*, the first comprehensive solo institutional examination featuring paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, studies, collaborations, and archival paraphernalia to showcase the artist's polyphonic output. The exhibition was brought to The Bronx Museum and was presented from September 2024 to March 2025.



Subway car with tags by **PHASE 2, ULTRA FAST 170, HULK 62** and others, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon-Matta Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Subway car with tags by **SOON 163, FUTURA 2000, THE EBONY DUKES** and others, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon-Matta Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



PHASE 2

Untitled, 1973

Marker on canvas

21 1/2 x 25 1/2 in.

Collection of KAWS



SNAKE

1973

Spray paint and marker on canvas

77 x 122 1/2 in.

SNAKE 1 was a Washington Heights writer and one of the founding fathers (and later, vice president) of WRITERS CORNER 188. He was among the first approached by Hugo Martinez to join UGA. Due to the proliferation of other writers using the name SNAKE, he added the now-iconic slogan "King of All Snakes, Ya Dig!" to his signature whenever possible. SNAKE 1 is still an active graffiti writer.



Subway car with tag by **BROTHER LOVE**, 1972/73
Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Subway car with tags by **KILLER, PANIC I, MANI, TOP HAT, EX-VANDALS, SPIN** and others, 1972/73
Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Wall with tags by **SEXY STEVE, STATANS-SPADES, GODFATHER 124** and others, 1972/73
Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Subway cars with tags by **ALL JIVE 161, DICE 198, RIFF 170, ROB 151, 7UP, SPIN, STAFF 161** and others, 1972/73
Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Wall tags by **BIG TIME MOE, FLAME 122, K-JEE 126, JOE 124, COOL CLIFF, JOE 182** and others, 1972/73
Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Subway car with tags by **ACE 120, WAR, LIL-BOB, MUGSY, DIAMONDS I, SLIN "72", SIN-BAD I** and **STASH**, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Subway car with tags by **KILLER 1** and others, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Subway car with tags by **STAFF 161, DOC COOL** and others, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Wall with tags by various artists, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Subway car with tags by **007, A-TRAIN** and others, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Wall with tags by **SNAKE I, MAGICIAN 120, SPANKY 132**
and others, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Subway car with tags by **PISTOL 1, SAVAGE** and others, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Subway car with tags by **PISTOL I** and others, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Subway car with tags by **CLYDE, SHELL 2, CHAP I, D. MAGIC** and
others, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Wall with tags reading "University of The Streets" by unknown and others,
1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Wall with tags by various artists, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Subway car with tags by **LAZAR, A-TRAIN** and others, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Subway car with tags by **BLADE 1, JJS, DOC COOL** and others, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Subway car with tags by **DEAD LEG 167, SHASTA 62/EARL**
and others, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Jaime (MICO) Ramirez

Red All Over, 1974

Spray paint on canvas

24 x 24 1/2 in.

Collection of KAWS

MICO was a Brooklyn writer who attended Erasmus High School, where he met his writing partner MANI. The two writers began by hitting Brooklyn train lines, moving on to the IRT fleet in 1972 to do pieces. MICO was known as one of the few writers of his generation to be political: one of his most famous trains was titled "Hang Nixon." In 1973 he joined United Graffiti Artists, where he made history by selling the first graffiti work on canvas. He quit writing in 1974.



SHASTA 62/EARL – Earle Augustus

1973

Marker on canvas

29 1/2 x 18 in.

Collection of SNAKE 1

SHASTA 62 / EARL, one of the first prominent writers from Queens, started writing in 1972. His pieces were done as SHASTA 62 or SHA 62. His work was so impressive that he was invited to join the UNITED GRAFFITI ARTISTS. As a member of UGA he attended special classes at the Pratt Institute and began painting canvases that were subsequently sold in galleries. When UGA disbanded in 1975, EARL ended his graffiti career.



Subway car with tags by **HULK, LIL-BOMB, STAR 206** and **MICO**, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



COCO144

Wet Dream, 1974

Spray paint on canvas

36 x 72 in.

Courtesy of the artist

COCO 144's name was inspired by a popular Puerto Rican pet name and the street that he grew up on in Manhattan, 144th Street. He was one of the first writers to use stencils to sign his work. In 1972, COCO 144 helped found UNITED GRAFFITI ARTISTS (UGA), which was the first organized group of graffiti writers in New York City and began presenting their work in a fine art context. COCO 144's work was instrumental in establishing graffiti as an art form in its own right.



Subway car with tags by **SJK 171, MIKE 171, STAG 161, SNAKE 1** and others, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



Garage door with tags by **NUTTY 131, STITCH I, FLAME 122, SNAKE 131, JEE 126, EX-VANDALS, SMOKE I, NAT, JUNIOR, AKE I, TICK, SUPER BEE 143, SHORTY 132** and others, 1972/73

Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS



SJK 171

1973

Marker on canvas

33 1/2 x 33 1/2 in.

SJK 171, an early pioneer of graffiti, grew up in Washington Heights on 171st Street. By 1971 he was one of the better-known style-writers in the city. During this time SJK 171 began to use the squiggly radiant “energy lines” later popularized by Keith Haring. He was an original member of UGA and painted some of the finest masterpieces of the group. SJK 171 was also the first writer to document his and his friends’ works in photographs, many of which he still has.



STITCH 1

1973

Marker on paper

15 3/4 x 18 3/4 in.

Courtesy of SNAKE 1



STITCH 1 & ROCKY 184

1972/73

Vintage photographs 1

8 1/2 x 10 in.

Courtesy of ROCKY 184



ALL JIVE

1973

Marker on paper

12 1/8 x 14 3/8 in.

ALL JIVE 161, also known as AJ 161 and ADAM 12, was the younger brother of EBONY DUKES leader STAFF 161. Equally prolific and eclectic in style, ALL JIVE 161’s work encapsulated all the major trends of the era. When STAFF 161 stopped writing in 1974, ALL JIVE 161 began to experiment with his own style innovations, twisting bubble style pieces into funkier-looking arrows. He loved to work large, and as early as 1972 painted numerous “top-to-bottom” cars (in which a car is painted across the entirety of its entire vertical height.) He later painted his name on the side of two different trains: what graffiti writers called a “married couple.” Though ALL JIVE 161 quit writing in the mid-70s, the EBONY DUKES would reunite years later with STAFF 161 and ALL JIVE 161 still at the helm; they are active to this day.



PIPER 1

1973

Marker on paper

12 1/2 x 15 in.

PIPER 1 grew up in Harlem and attended Haaren High School in midtown Manhattan with TAKI 183. Inspired by his schoolmate’s fame, PIPER 1 began writing in 1971, mostly on the Broadway line. His tag style was a variation on the Philadelphia style of elongated letters with platforms. PIPER 1 had a short-lived though active career primarily composed of pieces on trains, quitting writing after graduating high school in 1974. His fame continued long after he left the scene, and in 1974, he was featured prominently in Norman Mailer’s book *The Faith of Graffiti*.



JOE 182
1972/73
Marker on paper
13 1/2 x 16 1/4 in.



STAY HIGH 149
1973
Marker on paper
15 3/4 x 18 3/4 in.
Courtesy of SNAKE 1



SUPER STRUT
1973
Marker on paper
12 1/8 x 14 3/8 in.



CLIFF 159
1974
Marker on paper
12 1/2 x 15 in.



Moses Ros / SAL 161
Incognito, 1973
Marker on canvas
7 x 5 in.
Courtesy of the artist



T-REX 131

1973

Marker on paper

10 1/2 x 13 in.



SUPER KOOL 223

1972/73

Marker on paper

9 3/4 x 13 in.

SUPER KOOL 223 was one of the founding fathers of the Bronx graffiti movement. He did a great deal of indoor tagging in 1972 with his girlfriend watching out for him. During the summer of 1972, SUPER KOOL 223 created two things that would shape the movement forever. While experimenting with nozzles taken from random products in a grocery store, he discovered that the Jif Foam rug cleaner had a much wider arc to its spray. By placing the nozzle on a spray can he could do a piece in half the time. Perhaps SUPER KOOL 223's greatest legacy is the invention of the modern-day "masterpiece," defined by the artist as painting on the train starting with an outline, and then filling it in with extra paint provided by the wider nozzles. While tagging never went away, to do a "masterpiece" was to be at the vanguard of the movement. SUPER KOOL 223 retired in 1974 and went on to become a Fire Marshall in New York.



TOPCAT 126

1973

Marker on paper

9 1/2 x 12 in.

The hugely influential **TOPCAT 126** brought the Philadelphia style of writing to Manhattan in 1971, where it became known as Broadway Elegant, or Broadway style. TOPCAT 126 grew up with his younger brother Kevin in the Manhattanville Houses in West Harlem. Spending summers with his grandparents in Philadelphia, TOPCAT 126 met CORNBREAD and other major Philly writers of the period, and soon adopted their style of tall, slender letters with platforms on the bottom. In 1975, TOPCAT 126 was shot to death while playing basketball in Harlem; he was only 17. His mark on the culture of writing cannot be overlooked. As the next generation of writers came on to the scene in 1974, many of them utilized the Broadway style in their tags, and they continue to do so to this day.



HONDO 1

1973

Marker on paper

12 1/2 x 15 in.

HONDO 1 moved into the North Bronx's Co-Op City in the late 1960s when the first buildings opened. He had many advantages over other writers: he was older and tougher than most, and his home in Co-Op City abutted the Baychester layup where the trains were parked overnight. HONDO 1 began writing in 1971 with the first wave of Bronx writers, but he really began to excel in 1972, when pieces began to be done on trains. He was famous for doing stick letter or "block style" pieces, which resembled the straight lettering of a sign painter. HONDO1 painted hundreds of them in the Fall of 1972 and Spring of 1973, becoming "King of the Line" by painting large-scale, elaborate "pieces" on the sides of trains. He went on to design patterns like dots, stars and candy canes to put in the interiors of his pieces, and was credited with painting the first whole car. By the end of 1973 HONDO 1 had aged out of graffiti and moved on to other things.



MOSES 147

1973

Marker on paper

10 x 13 in.

MOSES 147 grew up on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, on 147th Street. He started writing in 1971 with his brother PATCH 147. They were known for writing on the Broadway line, the first subway line to be saturated in graffiti. In 1972 MOSES 147 started painting stick letter pieces on the sides of the Broadway local, becoming one of the first writers to “king” a line with pieces. In 1973 he moved to 94th Street and started to do more ambitious pieces, including whole cars and “end to ends” (pieces done across the entire horizontal length of a single train car) like the MOSES NO COMP EXPRESS. As his style began to evolve, he went from painting stick letters to using wider letters that looked like they had been squished, which he called his squiggle style. In 1973, as several writers vied for the title of King of Broadway, MOSES 147 changed lines. In 1974 his work could be seen on different lines on the INDs and BMTs. By 1975 he had aged out of writing and would eventually move upstate, where he lives today.



LAZAR with tags by WICKED GARY, GAY, DINO NOD and others

1973

Marker on jacket

Courtesy of the artist



LEE 163rd

1973

Spray paint on canvas

86 x 108 in.

LEE 163rd was the first major writer to come out of the Bronx. In 1971, he garnered attention by placing his name on the front of each traincar while standing in between cars, to ensure that at some point that traincar would rotate in to become the lead car. Soon the front of almost every 2 and 4 train had his name on it. His style also brought him fame. He stacked the letters of his name together and turned it into a logo. LEE 163rd was given the title of “King of the Line,” which he held for two years. Like most writers of the “single-hit” era, he quit writing in 1973 to do work on canvas with UGA.

BACK LOBBY:



Michael Lawrence

UGA, 1973

Video

6:17 min

Courtesy of Michael Lawrence

Michael Lawrence was a young hippie in the early '70s when he met up with arts photographer **Herb Migdoll**. Migdoll took him under his wing and helped mentor him as a photographer. During that time, he was living in a converted loft in Chelsea, which became the first studio for the United Graffiti Artists, where Lawrence often documented the group at work. Lawrence also photographed his friend Jack Pelsinger's graffiti group Nation of Graffiti Artists from 1974 through its ending in 1979. He currently lives in New Jersey, where he continues to take photographs and stays in touch with members of both UGA and Nation of Graffiti Artists.



*Graffiti Goes Legit — But the
'Show Off Ebullience' Remains,*
The New York Times, 1973



Michael Lawrence / Herb Migdoll

UGA group photo, 1973

UNITED GRAFFITI ARTISTS

At the same time that Gordon Matta-Clark began documenting graffiti throughout New York, graffiti had also caught the eye of Hugo Martinez, a 22-year-old student at the City College of New York who had studied street gangs and, inspired by the Latin Pride movement, took a particular interest in Puerto Rican graffiti writers. He went searching for the people behind the names he had seen on the walls and found HENRY 161, who connected him to the rest of the Washington Heights writers. Impressed with their energy and talent, he invited them to do a painting demonstration in a room at City College, providing paper, spray paint and markers. Twelve writers showed up that day and by the fall of 1972, they formed a group called UNITED GRAFFITI ARTISTS (UGA). Members included SNAKE 1, SJK 171, MIKE 171, STITCH 1, HENRY 161, WICKED GARY, BAMA, COCO 144, CHARMIN 65, PHASE 2 and several others.

Martinez invited writers from Brooklyn and the Bronx into the fold and as word spread about the organization, writers voted in new members themselves. Martinez referred to the writers as artists and focused on getting their work onto canvases and into gallery shows. In December of 1972, the first UGA show was hosted by City College, featuring a collaborative work on one 10-by-40-foot wall canvas. The show was widely well-received, even garnering a review by Peter Schjeldahl in the The New York Times.

In early 1973, UGA headquarters moved from Martinez' small apartment to the studio of Herb Migdoll, an arts photographer who had attended the City College show. He pitched the idea of collaborating with the artists to Twyla Tharp and the Joffrey Ballet.

In April of that year, eighteen wall writers participated with the Joffrey Ballet in the performance entitled Deuce Coupe. They painted a rolling backdrop on stage as dancers leaped about through what Migdoll recalls as "a mist of lethal enamel spray paint." The event proved a pivotal moment in graffiti's history—a month later New York magazine ran a cover story on the graffiti movement, featuring many of UGA's members, which led to a warehouse space provided by the city, private commissions and on September 4, 1973, a group show at the Razor Gallery in Soho.

A few other shows took place, but clashing personalities, financial disputes and aging writers turning their interests toward other things disrupted the group. By 1975, UGA was over. Some of the writers quit painting altogether while others continue to show in galleries today. Some went to art school, while others say they will forever be taggers and wall writers.

OFFICE:



Subway car with tags by **STAY HIGH 149** and others, 1972/73
Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS

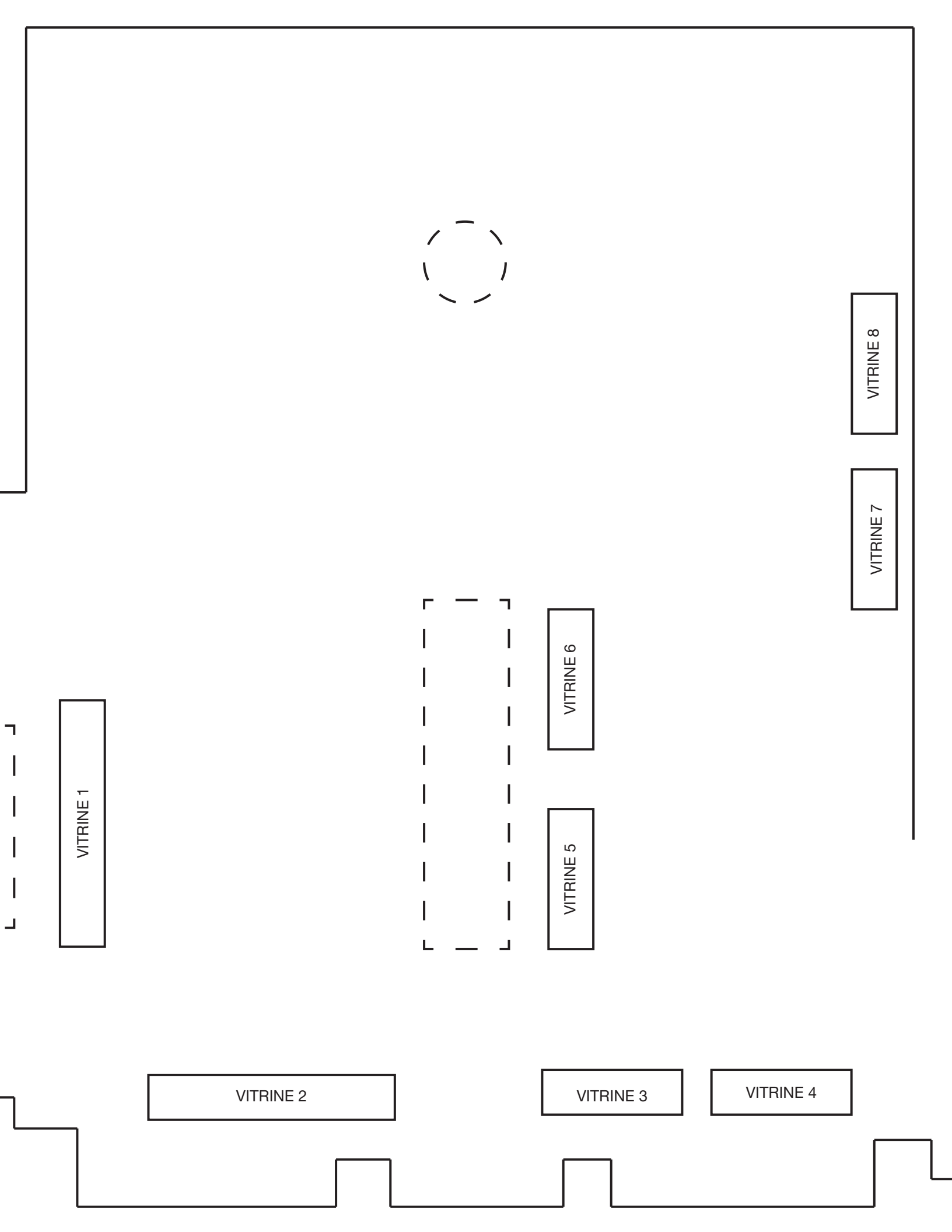


Wall with tags by **LEE 163rd** and others, 1972/73
Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark, printed by BEYOND THE STREETS

WINDOWS:



Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark featuring
tags by **SUPER KOOL 223, PHASE 2,**
NEHI 161, ULTRA FAST 170 and others,
1973 Vinyl
Left to right:
100 3/8 x 70 1/2 in.
65 5/8 x 70 5/8 in.
101 3/4 x 70 3/4 in.



VITRINE 1

VITRINE 2

VITRINE 3

VITRINE 4

VITRINE 5

VITRINE 6

VITRINE 7

VITRINE 8

Vitrine 1:

Drawings and tags on paper from: **FUTURA 2000, SKI 168, SPIN, RIFF 170, MICO, PHASE 2, S.PAT 169, STRAIGHT MAN aka LAVA I & II** and **KILLER**; accompanying photographs taken by Gordon Matta-Clark showcasing the aforementioned artists' works & various ephemera. Works on paper courtesy of: GRAPE 897; Moses Ros / SAL 161; Private Collection. All works circa 1972-74.

PHASE 2 is one of the most pivotal artists in the graffiti movement. He began as a tagger in the Fall of 1971 with Bronx pioneers LEE 163rd and SLY 2, usually hitting the 4 yard adjacent to DeWitt Clinton High School. Influenced by some of SUPER KOOL 223's early pieces, in 1972 PHASE 2 began painting pieces that were wider and soft around the edges, giving them the nickname of "softies." In 1973, PHASE 2 began calling them bubble letters. He was a major voice at the Writers Bench at 149th Street, and as other writers began using bubble letters the trains began to take on a more codified look. Another important innovation was the concept of interlocking letters, one of the mainstays of what would be called "wild style" lettering. By 1974, PHASE 2 had hardened the edges of his pieces and added arrows and blood drips to them. He retired that year after getting busted, but continued to develop styles on paper. In 1973, he joined the UNITED GRAFFITI ARTISTS, where he and other graffiti artists began making works on canvas. While painting with the group he attended Pratt Institute (where he felt his creativity was stifled.) In 1976, after UGA had come to a close, PHASE 2 began to make flyers for the emerging hip hop community. His reputation in the hip hop world came to match his renown in the graffiti movement. When he died in 2019, he was hailed by both groups as a legend.

Vitrine 2:

Founten Brothers gang jacket cutting & various ephemera, circa 1972-74. Courtesy of Private Collection.

Vitrine 3:

Drawings and tags on paper from: **STAFF 161, ALL JIVE 161, BAMBAATAA, STATIC, DR. B & TONKA** with accompanying photos by Gordon Matta-Clark showcasing the aforementioned artists' works; **WICKED GARY's** markers & various ephemera. Works on paper courtesy of: GRAPE 897 & Private Collection. All works circa 1972-74.

STAFF 161 grew up in what was considered the worst neighborhood in all of New York, "Fort Apache," in the South Bronx during the 1960s. It was there he assembled a graffiti club called the EBONY DUKES, which would go on to be one of the most celebrated crews in the history of graffiti. STAFF 161's biggest innovation was the creation of the "conceptual car," which incorporated backgrounds and figures into pieces on trains. In one such piece he painted a cannon shooting his name out of it; in another large scale painting he rendered a hand with a spray can in it coming out of the ground. He left the writing movement in 1974 and resurfaced almost 50 years later to tell his story and keep his name alive.

WICKED GARY attended Erasmus High School in Brooklyn in the early 1970s with **DINO NOD**, and together they formed a group called the **EX VANDALS** for **EXPERIENCED VANDALS**. Recruiting the best writers, the gang set themselves apart by eschewing violence. **DINO NOD** and **WICKED GARY** held meetings and handed out maps of the neighborhoods they were going to tag each night. As **DINO NOD** started to age out of writing, **WICKED GARY** took over the group and in 1972 began recruiting new members out of the Bronx. These writers would turn out to be some of the most renowned of the era, including **PHASE 2** and **STAY HIGH 149**. In 1973, **WICKED GARY** joined the **UNITED GRAFFITI ARTISTS**. He's maintained an interest in the writing culture for over fifty years and still leads the **EX VANDALS** to this day.

Vitrine 4:

Drawings and tags on paper from: **WICKED GARY, GRAPE 897 & IRON MIKE** with accompanying photos by Gordon Matta-Clark showcasing the aforementioned artists' works; **WICKED GARY**'s markers & various ephemera. Works on paper courtesy of: **GRAPE 897 & Private Collection**. All works circa 1972-74.

GRAPE 897 started writing after meeting Brooklyn writer **STONEY** at Art and Design High School. The two would take the train back and forth and write on it while it was moving, also known as "motion tagging." The two writers hung out at the Writers Bench at 149th Street, as well as the one on Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn, where they met the best writers of the day. After doing some pieces on the trains, both women retired from writing in 1974.

Vitrine 5:

Drawings and tags on paper from: **STAY HIGH 149, A TRAIN, JESTER I, SUPER STRUT, PISTOL 1, DYNAMITE 161, KING KOOL 143, PIPER I, SAVAGE, SEX 143** and **HULK 62** with accompanying photos by Gordon Matta-Clark showcasing the aforementioned artists' works & various ephemera. Works on paper courtesy of: **GRAPE 897**. All works circa 1972-74.

JESTER 1 started writing in the early 70s and went on to have one of the longest careers of any train writer. He grew up in Harlem, giving him access to the 1, 3 and A train. He started doing pieces in 1972 and continued until 1979. In the mid-70s his family moved to Queens and Jester took full advantage of all the new train lines available to him. By 1976, **JESTER 1** earned the title of all-city king, by dominating nearly every line.

PISTOL 1 was an early Brooklyn writer who tagged trains and walls throughout the city. He started doing signature pieces in 1972 on the sides of trains. **PISTOL 1** attended the High School of Art and Design in Manhattan where he learned to paint using perspective. Adapting what he had learned, he introduced three-dimensionality into his graffiti to create a wide-letter **PISTOL 1** piece that appeared to jump off the train. He retired from graffiti in 1973.

*The Ebony Dukes were an early writing group created by STAFF 161. Among its earliest members were writers from the South Bronx neighborhood he hailed from. **DYNAMITE 161**, aka **DR. SOUL** was one of the most prolific members. His DR. SOUL pieces were crisp at a time when the difficulty of controlling aerosol cans often led to dripping. **KING KOOL 143**'s pieces were more experimental, sometimes doing "top-to-bottom" pieces that stretched to the top of the train. As 1974 rolled around and a new generation emerged, both writers retired.*

***KILLER** and his partner **SAVAGE** were early writers from Brooklyn. They managed to write their names on several different lines, including ones that went into Manhattan and the Bronx, raising their visibility. Like other writers who wanted to stand out, they started doing pieces in 1972 and 1973. They were always signature pieces, and rarely expanded beyond that. By 1974 they had quit graffiti.*

***SEX 143** was from the South Bronx. He painted a number of pieces on the 2 and 5 lines, and is best known for his affiliation with The Ebony Dukes.*

***HULK 62** was a Bronx writer who hit several lines; while he was generally known for his tags, he did a few pieces as well. His backup name was **GREEK 501**.*

Vitrine 6:

Drawings and tags on paper from: **CAY 161**, **DEAD LEG 167**, **FRANK 207**, **JAMAR I**, **JOE 182**, **Moses Ros / SAL 161**, **SILVER TIPS** and **TRACY 168**. Accompanying photos by Gordon Matta-Clark showcasing the aforementioned artists' works & various ephemera. Works on paper courtesy of: **GRAPE 897**; **Moses Ros / SAL 161**; Private Collection.

***FRANK 207** grew up on the upper tip of Manhattan, leaving him near the A train layup. He hit the A line with his friends **SJK 171**, **MIKE 171**, and **JEC ***. The group was also famous for doing pieces on the outsides of the A trains. Frank quit writing by the end of 1973.*

***JAMAR I** was a Bronx writer with a unique swirling tag. He started in 1972 and in 1973 began doing two-color pieces that were well structured. By the end of the year **JAMAR I** had aged out of graffiti and moved on.*

***SILVER TIPS** came from a section of the East Bronx known for producing big time graffiti writers. He began writing on trains in 1972 and began transitioning to pieces that Fall. His pieces were done in the stick letter style of the day and took a lot of paint because of the length of his name. The longer pieces would eventually give way to the more economical name of **S-TIPS** in 1974. In early 1974 **SILVER TIPS** was invited to join the newly-formed **CRAZY 5** crew. Like so many of his contemporaries he quit writing after graduating high school.*

Vitrine 7:

Drawings and tags on paper from: **SNAKE 1**, **SPANKY 132** & **BAMA** with accompanying photos by Gordon Matta-Clark showcasing the aforementioned artists' works; **SNAKE 1**'s Uni Wide markers; black and white newspaper portrait of **COCO 144** in Chicago; UGA flyers, catalogs, & various ephemera. Works on paper courtesy of SNAKE 1; WICKED GARY; Private Collection. UGA letter courtesy of Steve Kesoglides / SJK 171. All works circa 1972-75.

BAMA's father was an MTA employee, and the inner workings of the subway system were no mystery to him. While he was famous as a writer during the tagging period, his impact on the culture stems largely from his work with the art collective United Graffiti Artists. He began painting canvases with the names BAMA and AMRL through the group's various incarnations in the 70s and 80s. He was also a member of Nation of Graffiti Artists, where he helped mentor younger artists.

Vitrine 8:

Drawings and tags on paper from: **ME 163rd** aka **RAY B 954**, **CHARMIN 65**, **SJK 171**, **SLIM 1** & **MIKE 171** with accompanying photos by **Gordon Matta-Clark** showcasing the aforementioned artists' works; color group photo of UGA by **Michael Lawrence / Herb Migdoll**; UGA business card; images of MIKE 171 in the Navy courtesy of the artist & various ephemera. Works on paper courtesy of: GRAPE 897; Moses Ros / SAL 161; Steve Kesoglides / SJK 171; Private Collection. All works circa 1972-74.

***RAY B 954** was an early Bronx writer, and a standout during the tagging era. He had two backup names that were almost as prolific: **ME 163**, and **FLIP 1**. In 1973 he joined United Graffiti Artists and started painting on canvas; he was done writing by 1974.*

***CHARMIN 65** was the most prolific female writer ever. She hit the city streets in the early 1970s and was known for doing strategic tags that baffled her male counterparts, including several spray paint tags in the locker room of the all-male DeWitt Clinton High School. **CHARMIN 65** is likely the first woman to do a larger-scale "piece" on a subway train.*

***SLIM 1** was a Brooklyn based writer, known for one of the most sophisticated tags of his era. He roamed the city with his partner **KOOL KITO** and tagged various lines. **SLIM 1** joined United Graffiti Artists in 1973 and gave up writing shortly after.*

White Columns

GORDON MATTA-CLARK: NYC GRAFFITI ARCHIVE 1972/3

March 20 – May 10, 2025

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 20, 2025. 6–8pm.

Participating artists:

Gordon Matta-Clark, ALL JIVE 161, A TRAIN, BAMA, CAY 161, CHARMIN 65, CLIFF 159, COCO 144, DEAD LEG 167, DYNAMITE 161, FRANK 207, FUTURA 2000, GRAPE 897, HONDO I, HULK 62, IRON MIKE, JAMAR I, JESTER I, JOE 182, K-55, KILLER 1, KING KOOL 143, LAVA I & II, LAZAR, LEE 163rd, Michael Lawrence, MICO, MIKE 171, MOSES 147, Moses Ros / SAL 161, PHASE 2, PIPER 1, PISTOL 1, RAY B 954, RIFF 170, ROCKY 184, SAVAGE, SEX 143, SHASTA 62/EARL – Earle Augustus, SILVER TIPS, SJK 171, SKI-168, SLIM 1, SNAKE 1, SPANKY 132, S.PAT 169, SPIN, STAFF 161, STAY HIGH 149, STITCH 1, SUPER KOOL 223, SUPER STRUT, TAKI 183, TOPCAT 126, TRACY 168, T-REX 131, WICKED GARY and Chris FREEDOM Pape.

White Columns is pleased to present **GORDON MATTA-CLARK: NYC GRAFFITI ARCHIVE 1972/3**, curated by Roger Gastman of BEYOND THE STREETS and Jessamyn Fiore, co-director of the Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark.

From 1972 to 1973, Gordon Matta-Clark captured over 2,000 photographs of the beginnings of the graffiti art movement in New York City. Displaying a selection of the artist's photographs from this period, the exhibition presents these alongside early, original artworks by writers and artists immortalized within Matta-Clark's images including: SNAKE 1, SJK 171, LEE 163rd, WICKED GARY, TRACY 168, STAY HIGH 149, and FUTURA 2000 (amongst many others.) This exhibition expands upon BEYOND THE STREETS's 2024 presentation *EXHIBITION 011: GRAFFITI ARCHIVE 1972/73* at Control Gallery in Los Angeles with an accompanying presentation of original photographic works by Matta-Clark, including hand-painted prints and one of the artist's scroll-like *Graffiti Photoglyphs*. **GORDON MATTA-CLARK: NYC GRAFFITI ARCHIVE 1972/3** is the first time in over twenty years that Matta-

Clark's artwork has been at White Columns, and will be the second time a *Graffiti Photoglyph* has been presented at the gallery, following an original presentation in a group exhibition at 112 Greene Street in 1973.

Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-1978) was a prolific artist and lifelong New Yorker, as well as a central figure of the downtown New York art scene in the 1970s. In the fall of 1970 Matta-Clark, with a group of fellow artists, co-founded an artist-run alternative art space at a former rag factory in Soho called 112 Greene Street (which would later be renamed White Columns in 1980.) Writing about the founding of 112 Greene Street, Fiore has said: "The raw architecture of this building was the creative catalyst for a multi-disciplinary artistic community looking to free artmaking from the pristine white cube and traditional commercial gallery system. It was a space where they could collaborate and experiment in making bold, often ephemeral, site-specific installation and performance that changed the course of contemporary art history."

Not long after the founding of 112 Greene Street, a remarkable transformation began to take place across the city as ordinary graffiti turned into a burgeoning art form. In the summer of 1972 Matta-Clark began to photograph the city's exploding graffiti scene. While mainstream culture was initially hostile towards graffiti and its authors, Matta-Clark recognized the artistic merit of graffiti long before the medium became the subject of gallery shows and museum retrospectives, viewing it as a kind of people's art movement that aligned with his own interests in socially engaged and site-specific artworks that directly incorporated or existed alongside the architecture of the city. He was one of a limited number of forward-thinking individuals who appreciated the importance of this rapidly evolving artistic movement, and his documentation of those early years of graffiti, by some accounts, even predates the now-ubiquitous tendency among graffiti writers' (most of whom were teenagers at the time) to document their work.

Matta-Clark's prescient embrace of graffiti as an art form in its own right reflects his lifelong interest in the relation between art and public space. As Caleb Neelon notes, "The graffiti that Matta-Clark found was fresh and full of adolescent fun and creativity. In the period between 1971 and 1974 graffiti went from being an occasional 'I was here' marking to a fully fleshed-out artistic game with internal rules, ranking and levels of mastery... In 1973, when Matta-Clark took this suite of images, the one-upmanship was in full play as so many of the standard hallmarks of graffiti pieces (3D letters, painted arrows, connections between the letters) were all in communal use." Expanding on this idea in his foreword to the accompanying exhibition catalogue, Carlo McCormick writes, "Before even *Wild Style*, Matta-Clark saw this new geometry in the visual language of teenagers robbed of identity and future, crossing the

bounds of public space, collective community, asemic writing, and fuck-you semiotics. His photographs of what would become the global language of youth in its still-nascent form are but a fragment of his oeuvre that speak to its greater influence on his art.”

Matta-Clark’s vast photographic archive of this time found its way into his own artistic practice, best demonstrated by the impressive *Graffiti Photoglyphs*. First exhibited at White Columns (then called 112 Greene St.) in 1973, the work took the form of a “long row of photographs of graffiti-decorated subway trains [attached] to the outside wall of a building visible through the rear windows of the gallery. The viewers had to traverse the rear of the space, looking out the windows as if they were watching a subway train passing through a station.” [1] The black-and-white photographs that comprised *Graffiti Photoglyph* were punctuated by hand-coloring done by Matta-Clark. Just as street artists were inscribing upon the architecture of the city, so did Matta-Clark inscribe upon their inscriptions, adding his own layer to the increasingly palimpsest-like surfaces of the city.

Presenting archival photographs by Gordon Matta-Clark alongside paintings and drawings by some of the most prolific graffiti writers of the era, **GORDON MATTA-CLARK: NYC GRAFFITI ARCHIVE 1972/3** traces the story of a city through the unlikely entwinement of early street art with the evolving practice of a major conceptual artist. As McCormick observes, “The deconstructive power of graffiti—relatively new then to the cityscape but rather something of an ancient voice thoroughly anti-modern against the soulless moneyed International Style of architecture that had transformed Matta-Clark’s native city from a place of homes and neighborhoods to a corporate shrine of steel and concrete—was the lifeblood of the New York he loved and the antidote to all the changes he saw effecting it.”

[1] Description taken from Rosemary Mayer, *Arts Magazine*, November 1973, pg. 63.

White Columns would like to thank Roger Gastman/BEYOND THE STREETS and Jessamyn Fiore for their enthusiasm in realizing the White Columns iteration of this exhibition. We would like to additionally thank David Zwirner gallery for their support of **GORDON MATTA-CLARK: NYC GRAFFITI ARCHIVE 1972/3**.

Born in New York City in 1943, **Gordon Matta-Clark** studied architecture and graduated from Cornell University in 1968, returning to his native New York City the following year. Combining his activist concerns with his artistic production, he helped establish alternative spaces such as 112 Greene Street and FOOD restaurant in SoHo and engaged with peer artists and non-artists in collaboration that aimed to improve their surroundings. In the 1970s, Matta-Clark experimented across various media and began

staging monumental interventions and smaller-scale installations in the charged city landscape, bringing attention to New York's failing social policies, displaced people, and abandoned spaces. Gordon Matta-Clark died from cancer in 1978 at the age of 35. In 2007, *Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure* was the first full-scale retrospective organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, which traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. In 2017-2020, Matta-Clark's work was the focus of a critically acclaimed traveling exhibition, *Gordon Matta-Clark: Anarchitect*, that was on view at The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York; Jeu de Paume, Paris; Kumu Art Museum, Tallinn, Estonia; and the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts.

Roger Gastman is a curator, writer, archivist and collector whose work is focused on elevating and historicizing the ongoing graffiti art movement. Gastman is the producer of the 2010 Academy Award-nominated film, *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, co-curator of *Art in the Streets* (2011) at the MoCA in Los Angeles, and director of the SHOWTIME documentary *Rolling Like Thunder* (2021), a plunge into the underground world of freight train graffiti culture. In 2018 Gastman founded BEYOND THE STREETS, an organization that presents large scale exhibitions and educational programs on graffiti and street art.

Jessamyn Fiore is a curator and co-director of the Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark. Exhibitions curated include *112 Greene Street: The Early Years (1970–1974)* at David Zwirner in New York (2011), which led to her editing the critically acclaimed, eponymous catalogue, published by David Zwirner and Radius Books (2012) and she co-curated (with Sergio Bessa) *Gordon Matta-Clark: Anarchitect* at the Bronx Museum of the Arts (2017); the exhibition subsequently toured to Jeu de Paume, Paris, France (2018); Kumu Kunstmuuseum, Tallinn, Estonia (2019); and the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, (2019).

For further information about this exhibition contact: violet@whitecolumns.org

Gallery hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 11am to 6pm.