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EDITOR’S NOTE


1 The city of the 1960s and 1970s was in crisis. Buildings were on fire. Massive highways threatened vibrant neighborhoods. Citizens were taking to the streets in protest. In short, the future of the city was anything but assured. From the pages of Life magazine to municipal reports, these decades witnessed a widespread recognition of forces that threatened to destroy the social and physical fabric of American cities.1 Nowhere was this more evident than in the country’s three largest cities: New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. As early as 1961, however, critic Jane Jacobs imagined one form of urban revival in her famous book The Death and Life of Great American Cities.2 Jacobs’s ideas galvanized a generation of artists, planners, and activists, ultimately leading – for better or for worse – to the reaffirmation of these cities by the 1980s as the cultural and financial capitals of the country, complete with soaring real estate prices and art markets.

2 The City Lost and Found: Capturing New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, 1960-1980 was a 2014-2015 exhibition and publication exploring a pivotal period in American history through a variety of art, media, and urban-planning practices. Co-organized by the Art Institute of Chicago and Princeton University Art Museum, and curated by the three authors of this article, the project focused on the work of a host of actors including artists, filmmakers, urban planners, architects, activists, and the mass media who
transformed conditions of crisis into provocative and visually compelling statements about the culture, landscape, and politics of the three largest cities in the United States. In these projects, photography and film were used not only to represent and expose conditions of crisis, but also to articulate new constellations of images, goals, and futures for American cities. Ultimately, this activity led to the emergence of a new kind of photographic and cinematic practice in the art world, on the covers of magazines, and in the pages of planning documents, a practice that shifted away from aerial views and sweeping panoramas and instead turned to in-depth studies of streets, pedestrian life, neighborhoods, and seminal urban events. Not only did these close examinations offer the public a complex image of life in cities and create forms of artistic engagement with the texture and experience of urban culture, but they also served as important models for architects and planners.

As a result of the diverse focus of our inquiry, *The City Lost and Found* breaks with the traditional disciplinary boundaries that have long structured scholarship on this period, arguing for the collective impact of the circulation and exchange of new photographic and filmic practices in an extraordinary era for American cities. Our research began with a survey of important art-historical studies that examine art practice in relation to the city and its public spheres, including Rosalyn Deutsche’s classic book *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (1996), Joshua Shannon’s *The Disappearance of Objects* (2009), the exhibition catalogue *Mixed Use, Manhattan* (2010), recent work by Rebecca Zorach on black art in 1968 Chicago, and catalogues produced for Pacific Standard Time in 2011-2012, especially *Now Dig This* and *Asco*, which discussed the spatial politics of art made in response to the Watts Riots and Chicano protest in Los Angeles. Although these studies are extraordinarily valuable, our interest in comparing different cities as well as our dedication to work spanning journalism, art, and public projects quickly led us to seek out a new breadth of material inquiry as well as alternative methodological approaches drawn from sociology and urban studies. Groundbreaking examinations of American cities by Janet Abu-Lughod and other scholars in sociology and geography allowed us to develop a comparative model that enriched our examination of visual culture and highlight the important shared politics, histories, and physical transformations in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. We also looked carefully at period analyses of the changing landscapes of American cities, including newspaper reportages and the many studies undertaken by planners, architects, and journalists of this period (such as *New York Times* architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable), who were struggling to understand the role (and responsibilities) of those accountable for decision-making.

To further broaden our approach we engaged numerous advisors and publication contributors with backgrounds in film studies, urban planning, history, African American Studies, and Chicano Studies to advocate for a more complex consideration of the many actors – newspaper photographers, filmmakers, activists, and government officials – who shaped this seminal period in American culture and art practice. Compared to more traditional art-historical studies, which tend to focus on individual artists or movements as isolated phenomena in a single city, the approach used for *The City Lost and Found* allowed us to draw heretofore unseen linkages between artists such as Ed Ruscha and Hans Haacke, as well as productive and unexpected cross-fertilizations such as the dialogue created between the photojournalism of Barton Silverman and a painterly collage by artist Ralph Arnold.
New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles were the most populous and influential cities in the United States during the second half of the twentieth century. Despite the distinct histories of social and economic development in each of them, by 1970 all three had been faced with profound demographic shifts, changing economic bases, and civil unrest. This confluence of social, physical, and political problems led each city's mayor and planning department to undertake a comprehensive plan that would for the first time focus on quality of life and the environment as well as on the “hard” remedies of housing, transportation, and jobs.

The two decades from 1960 to 1980 span the presidency of John F. Kennedy and the election of Ronald Reagan, framing a tumultuous period in American cities. Many of the initiatives undertaken during this period responded to the urban challenges identified by President Lyndon B. Johnson – including poverty, segregation, scarce employment opportunities, and a lack of community involvement in the crucial decisions affecting the future of urban neighborhoods – which would be targeted by a series of federal programs known as the Great Society. In a 1964 speech announcing his vision for the nation, Johnson called not only for investment, but also for the development of new ideas and experimentation to solve urban problems: “Our society will never be great until our cities are great. Today the frontier of imagination and innovation is inside those cities and not beyond their borders.”

This sense of urgency and optimism built on the successes achieved by the civil rights movement in the preceding decade while grappling with the many changes in American cities stemming from massive demographic shifts. Among these challenges were the exodus of the white middle class from center cities to the suburbs and the movement of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North and West during the height of the Great Migration, as well as many other smaller migrations and immigrations in the second half of the twentieth century. The civil rights movement also responded to these developments with a set of urban strategies in the 1960s. These included local nonviolent protests by the likes of the Congress of Racial Equality’s chapter in New York as well as more ambitious and sweeping demands for urban change. For example, in 1965 Martin Luther King Jr. chose Chicago as the site for his Open Housing Movement to draw attention to housing discrimination and segregation in a city well known for its history of white-on-black violence as black families moved into white neighborhoods, a phenomenon explored in the seminal book by historian Arnold Hirsch, Making the Second Ghetto (1998).

As the 1960s progressed, these urban political movements expanded, diversified their tactics, and became more local and specific to the neighborhoods they served, drawing upon branches of the national Students for a Democratic Society and the Black Panthers; groups organized around place, such as Chicago’s Rising Up Angry, and those targeting specific political and social issues in cities, like the Los Angeles Chicano Moratorium, which mobilized against the Vietnam War. The City Lost and Found builds on recent studies acknowledging the importance and specificity of the civil rights struggle in northern cities, complementing them and identifying the need for further examination of the ways in which these movements had an impact on the representation of cities and ultimately actual urban spaces.

Another important factor in this history is the long legacy of urban renewal, which frequently resulted in the demolition and erasure of entire neighborhoods and became part of public debates, whether in newspaper articles or in a 1967 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Much of the violent displacement of communities...
in New York and Chicago, and to a lesser extent in Los Angeles, was done in the name of eradicating “blight.” This powerful, yet imprecise, term was targeted in the 1960s by critics, activists, and researchers such as Jane Jacobs and the sociologist Herbert Gans. Both her landmark 1961 publication and his radical 1968 book, The Urban Villagers, sought to expose the prejudice and ignorance that made many planners and decision-makers blind to the value of community in vibrant lower-income neighborhoods. Urban renewal was also used by local governments to further entrench historical racial divisions as a means of “protecting” real estate values in white neighborhoods and encouraging private investment in the increasingly disenfranchised inner city and luring developers back from the suburbs. In New York and Chicago, public housing was a complicated aspect of this era of redevelopment, on the one hand further concentrating low-income residents, often by race or ethnicity, and on the other offering places where many families developed strong social and political networks.

Another critical reaction to urban renewal – as well as to the more gradual loss of buildings through arson and neglect – was the emergence of historic preservation movements. The most publicized manifestation of this was the 1965 New York City Landmarks Law, fueled by a passionate and failed attempt to save the famous Penn Station from demolition.

Citizen action developed during this period as an antidote to years of top-down, closed-door decision making, taking the form of community interest groups such as Jacobs’s Committee to Save the West Village as well as an array of temporary mobilizations and occupations of city spaces for public use, including political protests, riots, and art performances. Urban demonstrations were essential to making visible and highly public the demands for equal rights by a variety of groups, including the Latino high school students, who staged walkouts in East Los Angeles, and the gay rights and women’s rights groups that organized marches in New York.

Federal and municipal governments also recognized the need for more direct and localized forms of civic engagement, although the results were often mixed. Johnson’s Model Cities program of 1966, for example, identified troubled urban neighborhoods and invited local people to choose and implement initiatives and services most needed for their own communities. Programs like the Environmental Protection Agency’s innovative photography survey Documerica (1971-1977) focused on framing the concerns of the agency through complex portraits of urban places and landscapes around the country. The mayors of each of these three cities responded differently to these challenges, with Chicago’s Richard J. Daley (1955-1976) and Los Angeles’s Sam Yorty (1961-1973) maintaining very centralized forms of administration, while John V. Lindsay (1966-1973) is known for his novel attempts to decentralize decisions about public schooling in New York. Nevertheless, all three administrations incorporated this new spirit of participation and focus on the needs of individual neighborhoods into comprehensive plans that were for the first time designed to represent and be accessible to the public.

Our broad historical research led us to home in on efforts by communities, organizations, and social movements in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles to embrace streets as places to preserve authenticity, demand equality in the public realm, and present new visions for the future of the American city. In general, we sought a nuanced approach that would allow us to recognize multiple, and occasionally conflicting, interpretations of these ideas in the period under question. The first of these areas of inquiry – the public call to preserve authenticity and community in city neighborhoods – includes the foundations of
the preservation movement, which sought to protect buildings and historic neighborhoods, as well as efforts to preserve the existing populations and social composition of cities. Artists’ engagements with this idea include James Nares’s experimental film *Pendulum* (1976), which recalls the languid motion of a wrecking ball as well as Romare Bearden’s monumental collage, *The Block II* (1972, fig 3). On the one hand, *The Block II* literally documents and thereby preserves the image of a particular stretch of Lenox Avenue between 132nd and 133rd Streets in Harlem. On the other hand, as it is composed of cut, pasted, and visibly manipulated photostats, newspaper and magazine images, fabric scraps, and bits of paper, the mural’s fabrication reflects the ways in which Harlem residents themselves modified their built environment to create a distinct sense of community within the changing landscape of New York City.

12 The second major topic underlying this project was demonstration, construed in the broadest sense as encompassing a variety of practices that helped shape and communicate public perceptions about social struggles and changes in American cities in the 1960s and into the 1970s. Materials relating to this theme include documentary or mass-media photographs of the protests, riots, and marches that swelled city streets as well as temporary appropriations of urban space by artists and filmmakers. Murals like the *Wall of Respect* (1967-1971) on Chicago’s South Side, or the performance pieces of the Los Angeles Chicano art collective Asco reveal the street as a vital space for public events as well as a place for making strong and often critical claims about crime and police violence, social and political exclusions, and misrepresentations in the mass media. This expansive notion of demonstration reflects the devastating history of protests that received front-page newspaper and magazine coverage in the 1960s, making the entire nation, if not the world, sit up and take notice of the problems facing America’s largest cities (and soon enough its smaller ones). It also shows how they served as sites where different groups, including artists and underrepresented communities, could stage their identities, develop site-specific creative practices, and demand recognition of their right to live equally.

13 The third key area of inquiry, renewal, addresses those projects and proposals that sought to remedy existing problems in the cities as well as to imagine new futures. It includes the emergence of new planning models developed by municipal agencies and grassroots activists that recognized the importance of diversity and shifted the goals and visual language of city plans to preserve and support distinctive qualities of urban neighborhoods, areas, and streets. Arthur Tress’s photographic portfolio *Open Space in the Inner City* (1971), for example, was intended as a kind of interactive exhibition of images reflecting the many possibilities for abandoned lots, old industrial piers, and other neglected spaces in New York. A photographic portfolio made available at little cost to any interested school, community center, library, or other organization, *Open Space* stimulated a visual participatory consideration of urban concerns that the artist understood to be indicative of a national crisis. In a different but related vein, DeWitt Beall’s film *Lord Thing* (1970) documents the efforts of the Conservative Vice Lords, a street gang turned community organization that renounced violence and transformed its neighborhood on the West Side of Chicago through job training, youth services, and other social programs.

14 *The City Lost and Found* charts a seminal and previously under-examined context for photography in American cities of the 1960s and 1970s. Although this period of art practice has been the subject of important scholarship and exhibitions in recent years, we
focused on the ways in which photography and film catalyzed disparate makers – including the architect Paul Rudolph, the photojournalist Barton Silverman, and the performance artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles – and their creative approaches to the city as a goal, site, and stage. Our project shed light on the role of images in setting new directions for urban planning in the 1960s and 1970s and argued that the crucial issues in the politics and landscapes of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles would not have been as legible and knowable to image makers or the American public without photography as the ambassador. The period saw expanded possibilities for direct engagement with city streets, with image makers privileging immersion and a sense of lived experience, as evidenced by Gordon Matta-Clark’s use of the newly developed and highly portable Arriflex SR 16 mm camera for City Slivers (1976) and the heightened visibility of street photography in influential exhibitions such as Toward a Social Landscape and New Documents. More experimental uses of photography – including collage, installation, photographic murals, and projected images of the city – were often predicated on the idea that these images could function as interventions into the urban fabric. At the same time, journalistic imagery of demonstrations in the streets shaped the public’s understanding of the city, with activists and public-relations departments scrambling to use photography and film to make competing claims about crisis or renewal. The work of many artists and planners revealed not only a concern with images circulating in the mass media but also a critical appropriation of the very tools – including street photographs, serialized images, and in some cases cinematic depictions – that attracted such a high degree of popular attention to the struggles and identities of American cities.

In some cases this project has led to the critical reframing of the work of well-known artists, such as the rediscovered photographs of Allan Kaprow’s Happening Moving (1967), which show the artist and his collaborators roaming the streets of Chicago and staging the occupation of an abandoned apartment on Skid Row. We also brought new attention to less familiar figures, like the architect Shadrach Woods, whose career in Europe gave him a unique perspective on preserving mixed-use spaces in New York’s SoHo, drawing heavily on architect Giorgio Cavaglieri’s 1964 photographic survey of local cast iron buildings to argue for a sustained connection to the neighborhood’s industrial past. In other instances, we placed the work of those who have long been identified with their close visual attention to cities – such as Garry Winogrand, Art Sinsabaugh, and Julius Shulman – into a different, more interdisciplinary context. Finally, The City Lost and Found identified the common threads in art practices in three cities that are usually analyzed in isolation or even placed in opposition. Blurring traditional boundaries separating practices, professions, scholarly fields, and geography, this project offered an opportunity to experience the deep interconnections in the political, social, and visual realities of American cities in the 1960s and 1970s.

This project therefore recognized the historic and fertile cross-pollination of photography and diverse practices – architectural research, performance art, documentary film, and popular media – that allowed for an unprecedented level of critical engagement with the problems and potentials of American cities. Just as these practices and objects speak to topics as wide-ranging as race riots, housing abandonment, community politics, and revitalization efforts, the publication The City Lost and Found featured essays from scholars in many fields in order to address questions of the urban and its representation from several disciplines and points of view. These connections continue to inspire artists, scholars, policy makers, designers, and the public to question
the role of art in engaging citizens in critical discourse, drawing new attention to pressing urban issues such as gentrification, public space, and urban diversity. The results, we hope, are as complex and varied as the cities that were the focus of our research, signaling an expanded dialogue about social agency and urban representation, whether in the 1960s and 1970s, today, or tomorrow.

NOTES

1. Dozens of publications from the 1960s described the crisis in American cities from different perspectives, including articles in popular magazines, work by sociologists on race and poverty, and studies of urban policy and planning. For a sampling of such writing, see the special issue “The U.S. City: Its Greatness at Stake,” in Life, December 24, 1965; Ralph Ellison, Whitney M. Young Jr., Herbert Gans, The City in Crisis, New York, ca. 1966-70; The Threatened City, New York, 1967; and Robert Goodman, After the Planners, New York, 1971.
7. It is worth noting that some aspects of Johnson’s Great Society initiative were carryovers from the Kennedy administration. Civil rights, for example, was a key policy area for both administrations, but the Great Society saw many demands codified into law, with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Among the many other accomplishments of the
Great Society, those with a strong impact on America’s cities included the War on Poverty (via the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964), which generated dozens of federally funded programs such as the Neighborhood Youth Corps, designed to provide work experience to poor youth in cities; education legislation that made funds available for bilingual schooling; various improvements to the Social Security program; numerous new laws aimed at environmental protection; and housing reform via the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 and the Demonstration Cities Act of 1966. For a recent contextualization of many of these domestic efforts by the Johnson administration as well as its simultaneous escalation of the war in Vietnam, see James T. Patterson, *The Eve of Destruction: How 1965 Transformed America*, New York, 2012.

12. See, for example, Biondi, 2003, cited n. 10.
13. The practice of urban renewal evolved over the first half of the twentieth century but is mainly associated with an extreme form of redevelopment that removed whole sections of the historical urban fabric (or even whole neighborhoods) in favor of modern developments, often for use by a higher-income population. Although early debates about the phenomenon were largely restricted to specialists, work by Jane Jacobs and others brought the issue to the public realm. See, Alexander von Hoffman, “The Lost History of Urban Renewal,” in *Journal of Urbanism*, 1/3, 2008, p. 281-301.
14. Gans was one of the first sociologists to study low-income urban neighborhoods in the United States, with work on the so-called slum of Boston’s West End, which was cleared by urban renewal during the course of his research. His observations about the strong social networks of this Italian-American community influenced Jacobs, and this neighborhood is mentioned frequently in Jacobs, 1961, cited n. 2. See Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans*, New York, 1968.


17. We purposely use varied terms – protest, riot, uprising, and rebellion among them – in order to reflect the names commonly used for such events as well as the evolving discourse surrounding them.

18. These demonstrations, like those of nearly every political and social protest movement in the 1960s, derived their strategies and tactics from earlier civil rights efforts. This included an understanding of the pivotal role of photographic – and later televised – representation of the struggle.

19. Model Cities was a direct response to the perceived failure of urban renewal to improve living conditions and race relations in the inner city. Part of Johnson’s Great Society, the 1966 program focused on a more holistic approach to federal aid in 150 low-income neighborhoods around the country. The goal was to assist low-income communities with job training, health care, and housing through programs developed in partnership with neighborhood leaders. Although this initiative did raise community awareness and participation in municipal politics, it was plagued by funding and implementation problems and ultimately considered unsuccessful. See John A. Andrew III, *Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society*, Chicago, 1998.

20. Documerica, a project created in 1971 by the Environmental Protection Agency to document environmental conditions in the United States, commissioned more than one hundred photographers working around the country. During the course of the project, a secondary focus on the urban landscape and communities of the inner city developed, particularly in Chicago and New York, with work by renowned photographers such as Danny Lyon and Arthur Tress. While there has been relatively little scholarship on Documerica, Barbara Lynn Shubinski’s recent dissertation affirms the significant role played by photographers who documented these cities. See, Barbara Lynn Shubinski, “From FSA to EPA: Project Documerica, the Dustbowl Legacy, and the Quest to Photograph 1970s America,” PhD dissertation, University of Iowa, 2009.


22. The 1975 Arriflex SR 16 mm camera was notable for its small size and silent operation, allowing users to wander the streets relatively inconspicuously. *Toward a Social Landscape*, curated by Nathan Lyons, was presented at the George Eastman House in 1966, and *New Documents*, curated by John Szarkowski, was on view at the Museum of Modern Art in 1967.
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