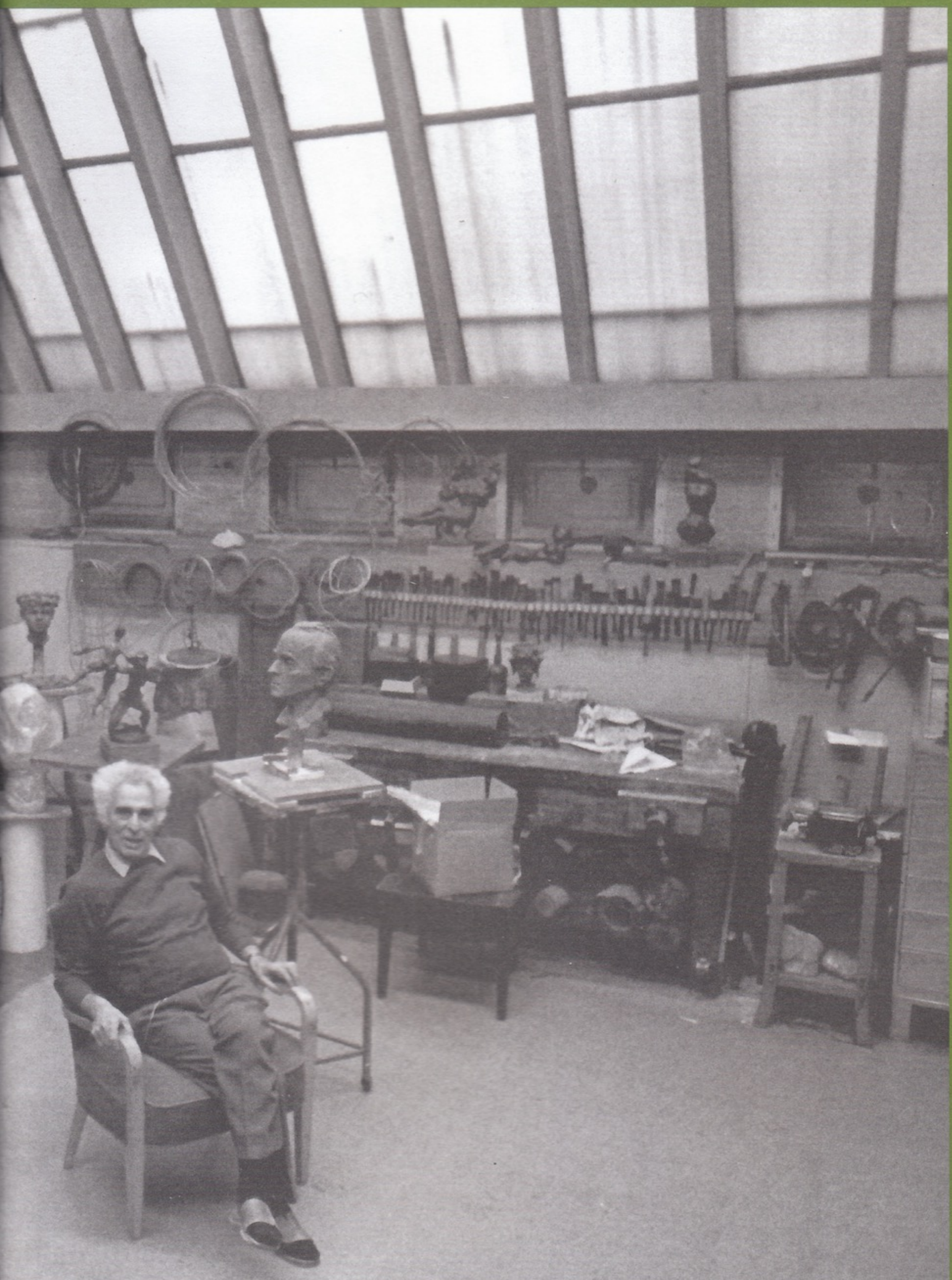
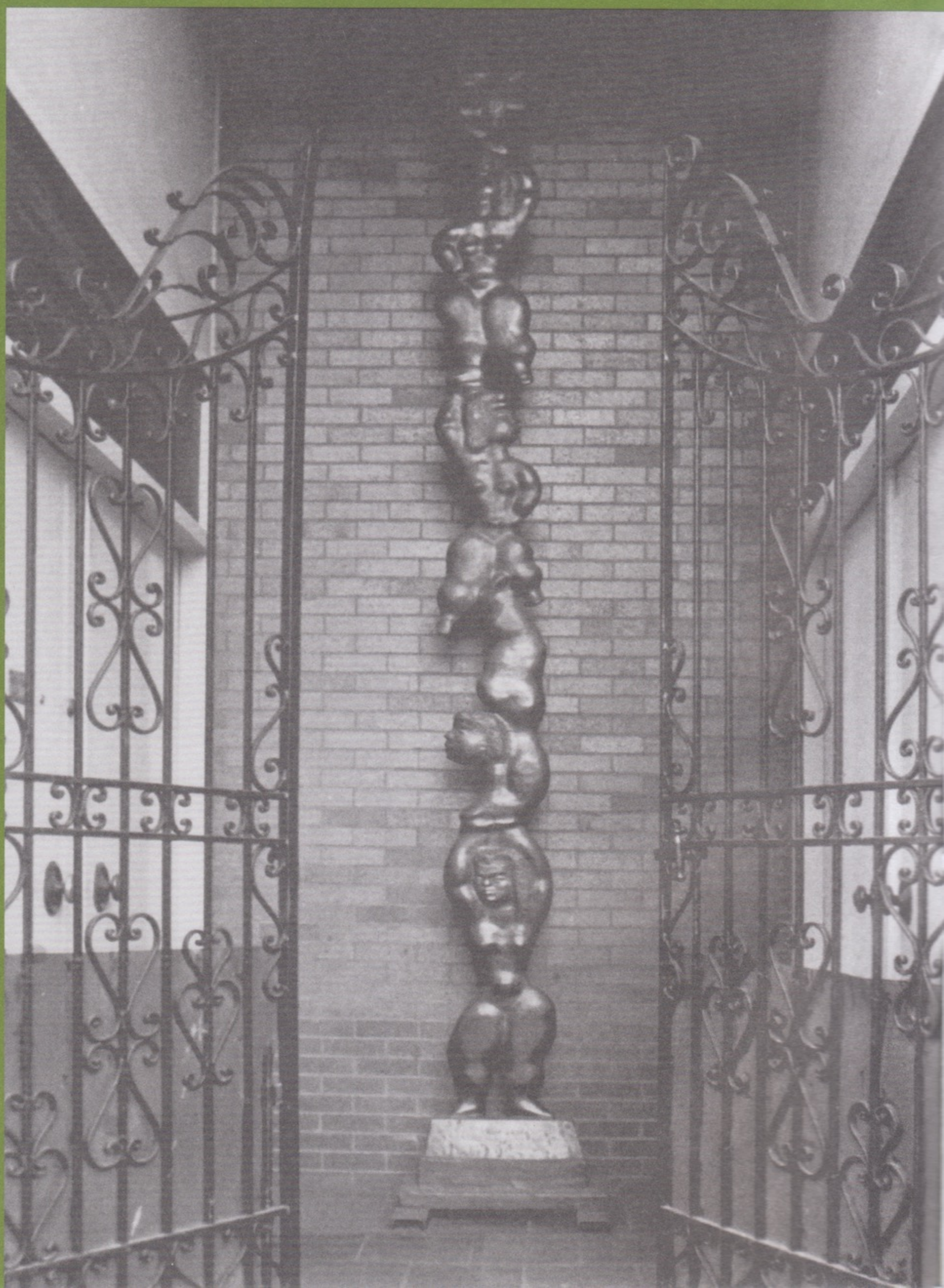
BUILDING IDENTITY
Chaim Gross and Artists' Homes and Studios in New York City 1953-74





Susan Greenberg Fisher

CARVING A LEGACY

How does an artist's home become a museum? The transformation is a complex negotiation between the artist's private and public identity, and more broadly, between personal history and institutional structures. The history of the Renee and Chaim Gross Foundation, from 1962 as the newly-purchased Greenwich Village home and studio of modern sculptor Chaim Gross (1904–91), to its incorporation as a non-profit in 1989, is a case study in how this complex conversion unfolds.

Today the Foundation is a center for the study of American art of Gross' era, namely the late 1920s through the 1950s. What is striking in the progression leading up to the Foundation's opening as a public museum in 1994 is that the building, as Gross' final residence after a long and successful career, was always semi-public and never completely a private home. Gross had an archivist's mentality from the very beginning of his career, and he often saved two or even three originals of newspaper clippings, articles and photographs. His purchase, renovation, and installation of a townhouse and studio at 526 LaGuardia Place likewise formed the core of a larger strategy about his legacy and the writing of art history.

In 1962, Gross and his wife of over fifty years, Renee Gross (1909–2005), purchased the four-story townhouse on LaGuardia Place between Bleecker and West 3rd Streets in the New York City downtown neighborhood of Greenwich Village.[1] Their new home combined living quarters on the upper floors and a sculpture studio on the ground floor. This was a new arrangement for Gross. For much of the first half of his career, he had a separate studio downtown, in Greenwich Village at 63 East 9th Street, and lived uptown with his family at 30 West 105th Street. Gross had thus long been familiar with the Village, a bohemian enclave since Edgar Allen Poe's move to 85 West Third Street in 1844. In Gross' era, since the early 1950s the Beat poets had gathered in the Village, where Gross further developed his friendship with Allen Ginsberg whom he already knew from 105th Street. Ginsberg later gave a powerful eulogy of Gross at the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York City in 1991.[2] A number of now iconic folk clubs opened in the Village in the late 1950s, such as Cafe Wha? and the Gaslight Cafe, which were both on MacDougal Street off Bleecker Street. When Gross moved to LaGuardia Place in 1963, just three blocks east of these cafes, the area was already filled with tourists, who came to see the hippies.[3]

The Grosses raised the money for the down payment on 526 LaGuardia Place by selling a painting from their private collection, Joseph Stella's 1914 tondo painting, *Coney Island*, long a fixture in their living room on 105th Street. Gross sold it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where it now often hangs in their modern galleries.[4] The Stella painting was one of approximately 1,000 20th-century American paintings, drawings, and sculptures in Gross' art collection, which he amassed since the 1930s, largely from exchanges and gifts from artists and photographers. Gross installed his collection at LaGuardia Place, along with his extensive collection of historic African art. Around 50 African works would soon go to the Museum of African Art in Washington DC, founded in 1964 by Gross' friend, the visionary Warren Robbins (1923–2008).

The building at 526 LaGuardia Place dates from 1873. It was designed by architect Joseph M. Dunn, who was known around this time as the architect of the City's Department of Charities and Corrections.[5] The LaGuardia Place building was originally in the Neo-Grec style, and built as a store and lofts.[6] When Gross purchased the building in 1962, it was an art storage warehouse, run by Berkeley Express. Gross renovated the building for

1. For a biography of Chaim Gross and his wife Renee Gross, see the Foundation's website, www.rcgrossfoundation.org/ChaimGross

2. Ginsberg's eulogy was published in the Academy's 1991 proceedings and can be found on the Foundation's website at: www.rcgrossfoundation.org/Foundation/ChaimGross.

3. For a history of the South Village, see the South Village Historic District Designation Report, December 17, 2013, http://www.gvshp.org/_gvshp/resources/doc/sv-hd-lpc-rpt.pdf.

4. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, George A. Hearn Fund, 63.69.

5. Christopher Gray, "Streetscapes: 117-119 West 74th Street; Rowhouses Shape Their Destiny," *New York Times*, April 19, 1992.

6. For a detailed summary on 526 LaGuardia Place, see the Designation Report cited in footnote 3, http://www.gvshp.org/_gvshp/resources/doc/sv-hd-lpc-rpt.pdf.

domestic use, and also renovated a studio on the ground floor. As Marisa Angell Brown discusses in this catalogue, he collaborated with New York architects Don Reiman and Arthur Malsin.

Gross produced his signature wood carvings in the studio, which was also a photogenic backdrop for photo shoots and interviews, as Sasha Davis discusses in this catalogue. Gross also renovated the space adjacent to the studio, creating a long area that was part gallery, part storage, and featured sculptures from his entire career. This semi-public space functioned as a complement to his annual gallery exhibits at Forum Gallery, run by Bella Fishko, who began to represent Gross around at this time. Gross' first solo exhibit at Forum was in 1962.

The Grosses rented the second floor of the building to tenants, renovating that space into a two-bedroom apartment with a kitchen and bathroom. Their own living space was on the third-floor (their bedrooms were on the fourth floor). This area was like the first floor in how it similarly functioned as both a private and public space. Gross renovated the space to create a long gallery separating the living and dining space, as Brown describes in her essay. The entire floor featured Gross' art collection, which was hung Salon-style as a layered narrative of 20th-century art and history in America.[7] For the family, it was a private space for daily meals, or rituals like weekly Shabbat. There were also celebrations, including their daughter Mimi Gross' wedding celebration to fellow artist Red Grooms in 1964. But frequent visits by artists, dealers, and collectors, often visiting newly-opened galleries in the area around Houston Street, soon made the space active, social, and semi-public.

In addition to Gross other artists had recently moved on or near LaGuardia Place, including fashion and commercial photographer Leon Kuzmanoff, who lived at 508 LaGuardia Place in the early 1960s; and painters Leon Golub (1922–2004) and Nancy Spero (1926–2009), who lived next to Gross at 528 LaGuardia Place, also by the early 1960s (figs. 1–2). Later in the decade, Minimalist sculptor Donald Judd (1928–1994) purchased 101 Spring Street, a five story cast-iron building a few blocks south of Houston, in 1968. In the same year, the pioneering dealer Paula Cooper opened the first gallery in what officially became SoHo in 1975. By then, there were over 80 art galleries in the neighborhood. Actors, artists, and writers like Ginsberg visited Gross in his new home, sitting around the table, talking and eating, and surrounded by modern drawings from his collection by Picasso, Léger, Grosz, Laurencin, Weber, and many others.

When Gross turned 70 in 1974, he began to talk with educational and cultural institutions about his legacy, and he considered the idea of donating his own work and parts of his collection to them. In the mid-1970s, there were discussions of a Chaim Gross museum at City College uptown[8]; and in 1978, in partnership with Pace University, on Liberty Street downtown.[9] In the early 1980s Gross engaged in lengthier conversations and numerous meetings with Smithsonian Institution curators and administrators about a gift of his own work and portions of his modern American art collection.[10] In the mid-1980s, Gross entered into similarly lengthy discussions with John Brademas, President of New York University, about donating his entire art collection and building at 526 LaGuardia

7. See Susan Greenberg Fisher, "Notes from New York: Names, Networks and Connectors in Art History," *Panorama* at www.journalpanorama.org (Fall 2016).

8. Gross engaged in conversations with R.E. Marshak, the renowned physicist and President of City College of CUNY, to establish a Chaim Gross museum. This and all correspondence related to the potential gifts, are in the Foundation's archive at the Renee & Chaim Gross Foundation.

9. An August 9, 1978 letter from Edward Mortola, President of Pace University, to Thomas Armstrong, then Director of the Whitney Museum, outlines an idea to establish a Gross Museum at the New York Chamber of Commerce and Industry at 65 Liberty Street. Archives, The Renee & Chaim Gross Foundation.

10. Gross' negotiations with the Smithsonian were initiated by Warren Robbins. Gross had worked closely with Robbins during the founding of the Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C. in 1964, gifting around 50 works from his collection to the new institution. Gross had known Robbins after his arrival to the U.S. from Germany.

Fig. 1
Sidewalk in front of Chaim Gross' residence at 526 LaGuardia Place, New York City, photographed by Chaim Gross, October 1970.

Place to create a Chaim Gross Center for the Arts at NYU.

These negotiations took up a great deal of time, both for Gross and also for Mimi Gross, who accompanied her father to many of his meetings. They also demanded the huge task of cataloging Gross' art collection at LaGuardia Place to better understand what a gift would entail. By the 1970s his collection was easily over 10,000 sculptures, drawings, and works on paper. This time-consuming work coincided with museum retrospectives of his 50-year career, which required the task of assessing his own work.[11] Gross was furthermore still producing new sculptures in wood, and in the 1970s and 80s, he was also working on a more ambitious scale, creating large outdoor bronzes for parks and plazas throughout Manhattan, such as his iconic *Family*, which is still a centerpiece of Bleecker Street Park in the Village at 11th Street.

Changing administrators and evolving personal relationships worked both for but ultimately against the negotiations, and Gross eliminated these institutional partnerships because they did not fit his vision for his home and collections. In the late 1980s Gross decided to create his own museum, and in 1989 the Grosses incorporated the Renee & Chaim Gross Foundation.

In his will, Gross left to the Foundation his own work and entire private art collection. He stipulated that the "spirit" of his installation remain the same—thus relieving future curators from a Barnes-like exactitude concerning the display. In 1994, Renee Gross and the newly-hired curator Dr. April Paul (1933–2014) opened the first two floors of the building to the public with a memorial exhibition of Gross' work. Renee Gross in turn lived on the top two floors until her own passing in 2005. In 2009, the third floor living and dining area was opened to the public.

Today, the Foundation is the only space in New York City where the public can experience the 1930–50 period of American art in its original context. In the continually changing city of New York, historic spaces are always threatened by erasure and a desire for the new. In 2013, the South Village area including the Gross Foundation at 526 LaGuardia Place was landmarked, thanks to the efforts of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation. This new landmarked status ensures that a history of American art from an artist's point of view—as he lived, interpreted, and experienced it—can endure for future generations.

11. In 1977, Gross had a retrospective at the Jewish Museum, New York, and the show's catalogue included a major essay by scholar Roberta Tarbell. In that same year Gross also had solo exhibits at the Lowe Art Museum in Florida, and the Montclair Art Museum in New Jersey. For Gross's exhibition history see www.rcgrossfoundation.org/chaim-gross/exhibition-history.

Fig. 2
Bleecker Street off of LaGuardia Place, New York City, photographed by Chaim Gross, October 1970.

Sasha Davis

STUDIO AND SETTING— WHERE CHAIM GROSS WORKED

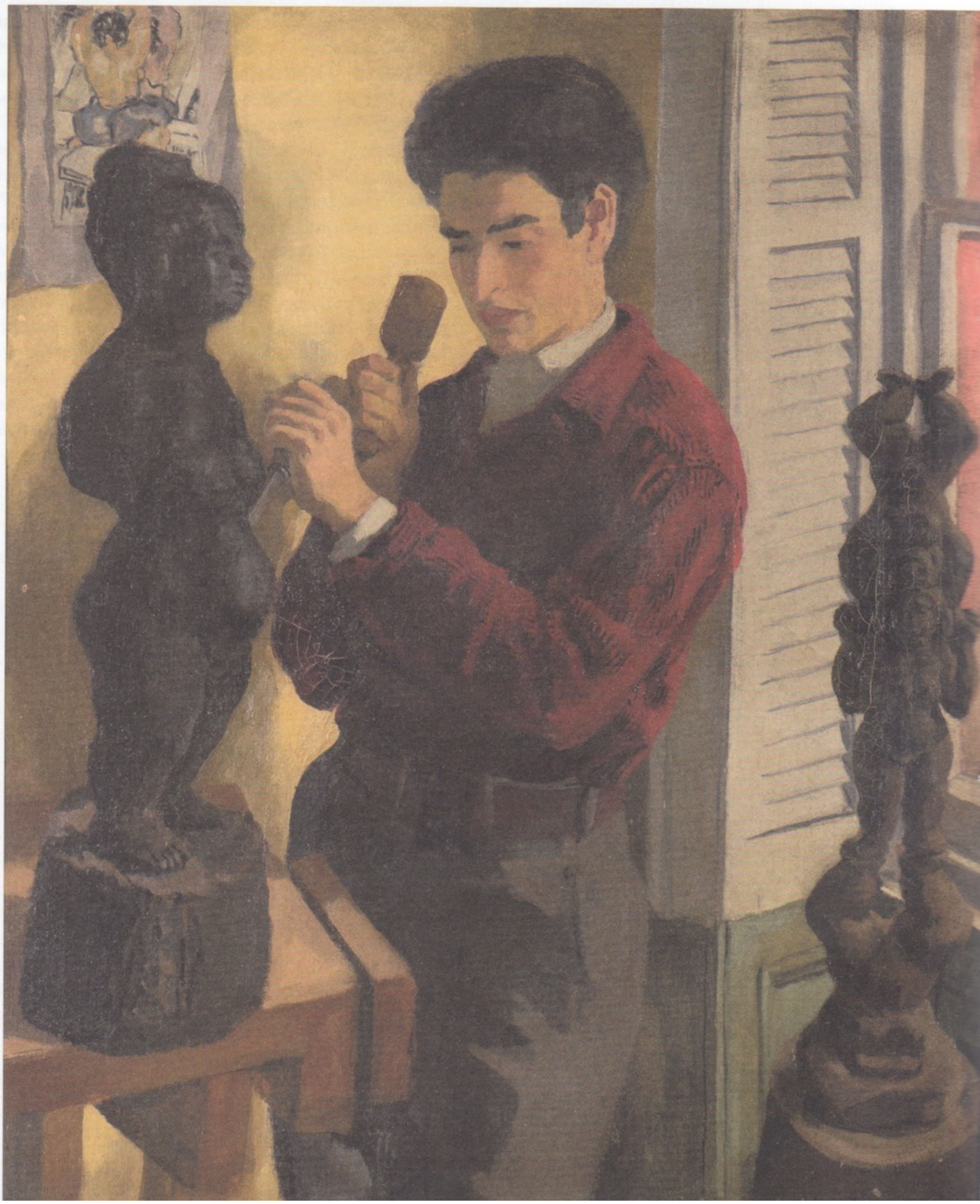


Fig. 1
Saul Berman, *Portrait of Chaim Gross Carving*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 24 × 20 in.

Chaim Gross' illustrious career is intimately tied to the studio spaces in which he worked. By 1927 Gross had alighted on his calling as a sculptor, specifically a direct carver in wood. No longer an art student, he began teaching at the Educational Alliance Art School on the Lower East Side and moved into a small attic studio on East Fourteenth Street. While we do not have photos of this nascent studio in our archive, there are two important paintings in the collection of the Renee and Chaim Gross Foundation that show Gross at work in this space. They are Saul Berman's *Portrait of Chaim Gross Carving* and Raphael Soyer's *Portrait of Chaim Gross Working*, both from 1929 (figs. 1-2). The paintings focus on Gross, poised with a chisel in his left hand and a mallet in his right, as he works on two works in wood. In Soyer's portrait we see Gross carving *Walking Negress* and *Pregnant Negress* in the painting by Berman. Although *Walking Negress* remains intact in the Foundation's collection, *Pregnant Negress* has undergone a strange transformation. Her head was removed for a collector who did not care for the body,[1] and the base beneath her feet has been lightly carved into a roughly hewn head. Although only a narrow window with shutters clues the viewer into the space Gross inhabited in Berman's portrait, the studio, and Gross' place in it, has already taken on an important role in defining his work.

The images of Gross in the studio become much more integral to his fame with his next studio, his base from 1930 until 1953. The iconic images shot by Arnold Newman, Eliot Elisofon, Lewis Jacobs, and Alfredo Valente of Gross working in the 1930s and 40s were all shot in his studio at 63 East Ninth Street. Gross' Ninth Street studio was also the set for the film *Tree*

1. Josef Vincent Lombardo, *Chaim Gross, Sculptor* (New York, Dalton, 1949), 100.

Fig. 2
Raphael Soyer, *Portrait of Chaim Gross Working*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 24 × 20 in.

Trunk to Head in 1938. Directed by film scholar, photographer, and director Lewis Jacobs and shot by Leo Lances, *Tree Trunk to Head* is a 28-minute, 16 mm, black and white film that begins with the door to Gross' studio. From there, we meet the artist and are ushered into the wilds of his studio. The photographs, combined with *Tree Trunk to Head*, give a clear image of what studio life was like for Gross. Although composed and manufactured, these images show the chaotic density of his studio and the unparalleled collection of paintings and works on paper by other artists already forming on the painted brick walls. Jacobs' film also features many of Gross' works in addition to his process of transforming a hunk of sabicu wood into a portrait of his wife, *Head of Renee*. In addition to the moving image, Jacobs used still photography to capture Gross in the studio (fig. 3).

Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Streets were a hub of artist studios in the 1930s, with artists including Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock near to Gross. Gross' studio was a hotbed of his own work, but also the site for artists inspired by his physical working methods and finished sculptures. Photographer Alfredo Valente captured Gross at work (fig. 4), as did Eliot Elisofon for Gross' book *The Technique of Wood Sculpture*. Although not published until 1957, this instructional manual features photographs shot in 1938. The profusion of images taken here mark the studio as the launch site of Gross' career.

Gross briefly inhabited two other studios in the 1950s. This was the beginning of his heightened interest in casting works in bronze. From 1953–56 his studio was on Twelfth Street, and from 1956–61 he worked at 48 Horatio Street. Gross was forced to relocate from Horatio Street after a significant rent hike made it impossible to afford. He underwent a rapid search for an alternate studio space and found 41 Grand Street, a site significantly farther south in an Italian neighborhood that was to become SoHo. Daughter Mimi Gross recalls that there were no lights on Prince Street at the time, and the evolution into an art-hub was to occur later in 1968 with the establishment of the Paula Cooper Gallery.

Gross moved his studio to Grand Street in 1961, setting up the longest lasting studio of his career. However, Grand Street was only one of two studios central to his later career. Renee and Chaim Gross had been in search of a building downtown from before the mad rush to Grand Street, and they continued the search for a live/work space after the transition. They found the ideal space in 526 LaGuardia

Fig. 3
Lewis Jacobs, *Chaim Gross in his 9th Street Studio*, 1938.

Fig. 4
Alfredo Valente,
Chaim Gross at Work, c. 1940.

Place, now the home of the Renee and Chaim Gross Foundation. Gross had used the art shipping company Berkeley Express, who owned the building, and negotiated the purchase from them. After almost a year of renovations to turn the space from industrial to residential, his second studio was available in 1963.

The presence of two studios for almost three decades of Gross' career poses the question of why both were necessary. The studios each had separate purposes and characteristics. Grand Street had concrete floors in parts of the building, making it ideal for the drips of working in plaster. Images from the instructional book *Sculpture in Progress*, published 1972, by Gross and Peter Robinson show the constant dribbles of working in plaster (fig. 5). This was his second instructional book and a follow-up to *The Technique of Wood Sculpture*. Plaster is worked in many states of solidity, and the more liquid phases are inherently messy. Gross favored working in plaster for making bronzes, but he also modeled in wax and clay. Gross produced both *Six Days of Creation* (1964–65) and *The Ten Commandments* (1970–71), enormous multiple-paneled bronze reliefs for Temple Shaaray Tefila and the International Synagogue at John F. Kennedy International Airport, respectively, while working at Grand Street. These substantial commissions required the large space of Grand Street to fabricate. In a series of photographs by Budd Studio, Gross works in clay on the *Six Days of Creation* (fig. 6).

Grand Street became his center for busy activity. Gross worked in all media there, the space functioning as a workshop as opposed to a studio. Giles Waterfield, who wrote extensively about the history of studios in the context of Britain for his exhibition and catalogue of the same name *The Artist's Studio*, delineates between a studio, used for a number of functions, but not primarily the work of art-making, and the workshop, which has the sole purpose of production.[2] While LaGuardia Place was the site of interviews, photographs, and part-time working, Grand Street was the site of constant and methodical art-making. Gross' important interviews were always held at the LaGuardia Place studio. This included the 1983 interview with Chaim Potok (1929–2002) for "The Two Chaims," produced by The Eternal Light Program for NBC News. Snapshots from filming capture the light streaming through the skylight, cameras framing the two Chaims in conversation (fig. 7). LaGuardia

2. Giles Waterfield, ed., *The Artist's Studio* (Compton Verney and Sainsbury Centre, UEA, 2009), 15.

Fig. 5
Peter Robinson, *Chaim Gross Winds a Length of Plaster-Soaked Gauze*, from *Sculpture in Progress*, 1972.

Fig. 6
Budd Studio,
Gross working on the First Day from Six Days of Creation, 1964.

Place, with its enormous skylight and end-grain floors, is an idyllic environment. Light bathes the sunken workspace at the west end and streams into the forest of sculptures that Gross kept on view in the gallery on the ground floor. Later photos almost always show Gross in the studio of LaGuardia Place as a still, composed figure (fig. 8). The photos at Grand Street tend to be more casual, and always show him working.

The mammoth bronzes, often produced as commissions, of Gross' later career are juxtaposed with a late resurgence in wood sculptures. Although Gross never completely ceased to produce his iconic figures in exotic woods, he completed a number of supple figures in the 1980s in both his Grand Street and LaGuardia Place studios (fig. 9). The late production of his *Soho Girl* series was inspired by what he saw in his new location walking his regular route down West Broadway from LaGuardia Place to Grand Street.

The history of Gross' studios is not complete without a mention of his working environments outside of New York City. The Grosses first spent summers in Rockport and Wellfleet, Massachusetts, but transitioned to Provincetown in 1943-44. Gross summered there from that point until his death. Renee Gross found the home and studio, still owned by the family, in 1950 when she was berry picking in the dunes.[3] The studio had previously belonged to prominent landscape painter George Elmer Browne (1871–1946). Gross' work varied at his studio in Provincetown, where he drew profusely and sculpted at a smaller scale than in New York. Many of his works from Provincetown are watercolors, often landscapes or images of fishermen hanging their nets to dry. He frequently worked outdoors on the deck, something his other studios were not designed for (fig. 10). Gross also rented studio space when he traveled. Gross was interested in working with the Nicci Foundry in Rome, which led to his setting up a temporary studio during several trips there in the late 1950s. Arnold Newman, a good friend and a frequent documentarian of Gross in the studio, photographed Gross in the rented studio of artist Pericle Fazzini on Via Margutta in 1957 as Gross modeled the plaster for *Bird's Nest* (fig. 11). In contrast to Gross' main studios, this one reflects his brief sojourn; the space is not teeming with sculptures reaching back to the very beginning of his career. It appears bare, almost silent, like the myth of the studio as a space for quiet contemplation.

3. Author's conversation with Mimi Gross, November 2016.

Fig. 7
Unknown photographer, *Filming of "The Two Chaims"* for NBC's *Eternal Light Series*, 1983.

Fig. 8
Susan Weiley, *Chaim Gross in His Studio on LaGuardia Place*, c. 1980.

Fig. 9
Unknown photographer, *Chaim Gross Carving* Soho Girl, 1986.

Fig. 10
Unknown photographer, *Chaim Gross Stone Carving*, Provincetown, c. 1960.

Fig. 11
Arnold Newman, *Chaim Gross Working on* Bird's Nest, Rome, 1957.

Marisa Angell Brown

1873 MEETS 1963 AT 526 LAGUARDIA— THE DESIGN OF CHAIM GROSS' HOME AND STUDIO

> "There is only one absolute today and that is change. There are no rules, surely no certainties in any of the arts. There is only the feeling of a wonderful freedom, of endless possibilities to investigate, of endless past years of historically great buildings to enjoy."
> – Philip Johnson (1962)

Chaim Gross' studio and home at 526 LaGuardia Place is an enigmatic building. A 1963 modernist renovation to an 1873 historic structure, it was designed by the New York modernist architects Don Reiman and Arthur Malsin with substantial input from Chaim Gross. The existing plans submitted to the New York City Department of Buildings by Reiman and Malsin from June 21, 1962 and February 5, 1963 that are now in the Foundation's archives show that overall, the building renovations closely followed the initial drawings. Mimi Gross, daughter of Gross, recounts that Reiman signed off on the permit application, and Malsin was charged with the design; she recollects that Malsin rarely came to the site however and that her father had a heavy hand in designing the new interiors, including the studio and living spaces.[1]

Prior to the Gross renovation project, Reiman and Malsin left a relatively light footprint. In 1949, Reiman makes his first appearance in the pages of the architectural press as a young associate with Sanders & Malsin Architects for the design of a Coward Shoe Store in New York City. Two years later, Reiman is listed as a full partner with Sanders & Malsin & Reiman; that year, the firm designs Lane Bryant women's clothing stores in Manhasset and Brooklyn and another Coward Shoe Store in Hackensack, all with a sensibility that we now see as very Mad Men. These are the firm's first commissions and, like most first commissions, were earned through nepotism as Malsin's family owned both Lane Bryant and Coward Shoes. In the ensuing years, the firm drew up a proposal for a "triple threat store" at the height of the Cold War that combined a store, bomb shelter, and park. They also designed many mid-century modern suburban homes, public buildings, and stores in the New York suburbs near Ossining, where Reiman lived, including the Ossining Library, demolished in 2005.

The combined home and studio that Reiman and Malsin designed for—and with—Chaim and Renee Gross in 1963 was perhaps some of their best work, demonstrating both a sophisticated synthesis of modernism and the architecture of the past, and a playful sense of materials and space. In many ways, this project's most ambitious set of moves is made at the building's entrance on LaGuardia Place. Aside from filling in one of the fourth-floor windows, the architects' work on the street-facing façade was confined to the ground-floor entry. Here, they replaced a set of massive, impassive wooden doors with a rhythmic progression of vertical planes punctuated by the wrought iron gate, which creates a sense of spatial depth (figs. 1-2). In this small public space, visible from the street, flagstone paving differentiates the entry both from the sidewalk and from the building's interior. A large sculpture by Gross signals the artwork inside,

Fig. 1
Lewis Hine, *Girl Delivers Flowers to West Broadway Factory*, 1912.

1. Email exchange with Mimi Gross, November 9, 2016.

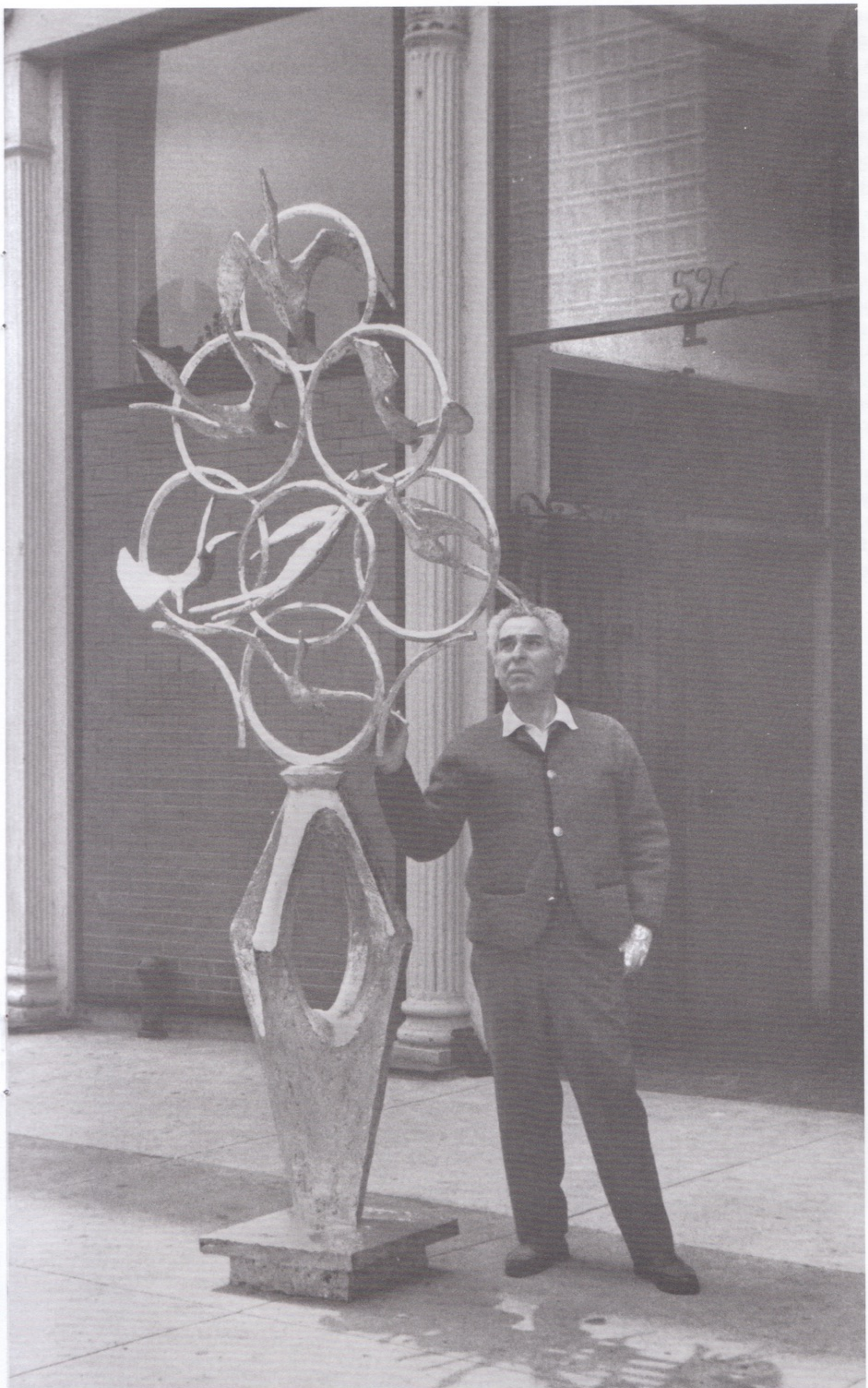


Fig. 2
Marvin Bolotsky, Chaim Gross in front of 526 West Broadway (now LaGuardia Place), New York City, with *Birds of Peace*, 1965

and the subtle brick decorative detailing at the junction of wall and ceiling—where bricks are laid in a pattern on end and on edge—draws the eye upwards and echoes the cornice detailing of the original building (fig. 3). A lot is going on in this diminutive box of space.

To the left and right of the entry gate, contrasting materials were used to create a play between transparency and opacity; modern, oversized transom windows were installed at top, juxtaposed with the purple brick that was then coming into vogue with architects such as Philip Johnson and Kevin Roche. Together, the materials are discordant: the transparency of the glass invites our gaze, allowing us to see lighting fixtures and large sculpture inside of the studio, while the brick front at eye-level repels us from seeing anything more. A similar juxtaposition was used at a larger scale by Louis Kahn at the Yale University Art Gallery, completed 1953, which combines a provocative stretch of blank brick façade punctuated with the museum's glass curtain wall entry (fig. 4).[2]

Both of these materials are insistently modern, and they are handled here in modern ways. But Reiman and Malsin treat them with a light touch, using a thin steel frame around both the plate glass and the brick facing, in effect presenting the materials themselves as works of art. Those who look closely will see that this framing stops several inches above the sidewalk, revealing the brick to be a neatly contained installation rather than a structural façade. Close looking is rewarded as these details are not readily apparent to the passer-by: this is a project that reveals itself slowly, and only with some effort.

Despite the fact that so much of this renovation involved glass—the plate glass transom windows installed on the ground-floor façade, above the entry door (where a decorative wrought iron motif repeats the entry gate), and of course, the showpiece of

2. Reiman would have known of the Yale University Art Gallery, which was published in *Architectural Record, Progressive Architecture* and *Perspecta* in the mid-1950s and was the subject of an enthusiastic review written by the well-known critic and theorist Vincent Scully in the 1956 issue of *Museum;* in addition, Kahn and Oscar Stonorov designed a Coward Shoe store in Philadelphia in 1949 that was featured in *Architectural Forum* in December 1949 alongside the New York store that Sanders & Malsin designed, with Reiman as associate architect.

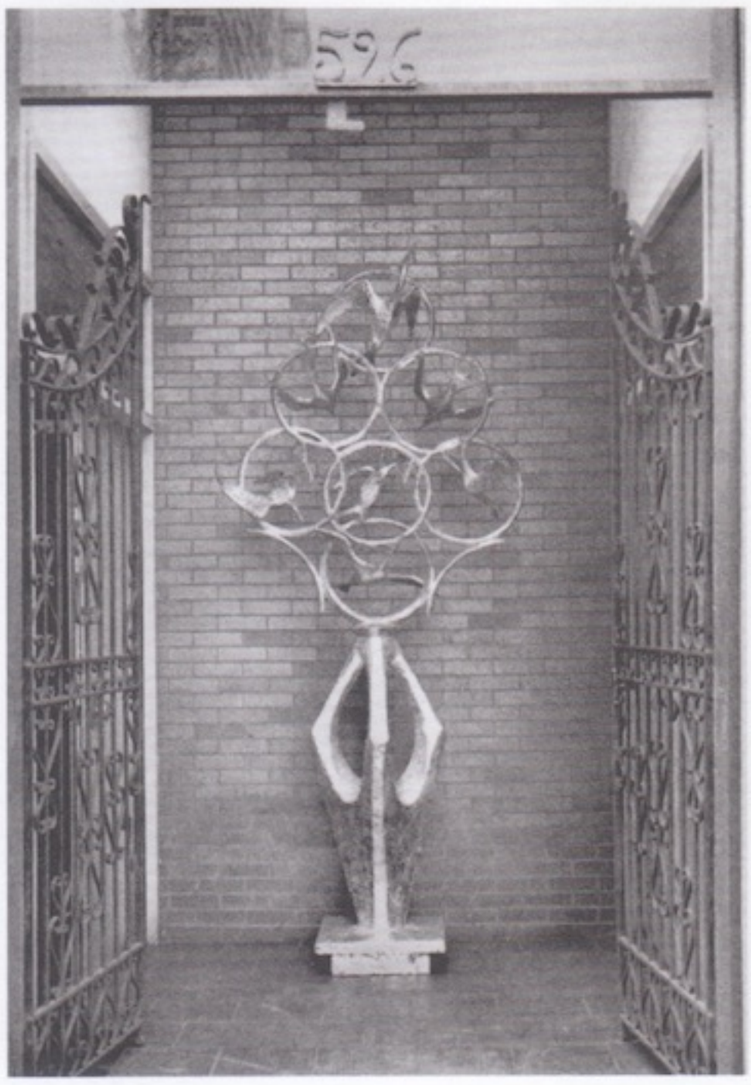


Fig. 3
Marvin Bolotsky, Entryway to Chaim Gross Residence, 1965

Fig. 4
Louis Kahn, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT, completed 1953

this project, the massive skylight in Gross' ground-floor studio—the feeling throughout much of the building is dark, moody, and introspective. This is due in part to the Gross' choice of rugs and furniture in the third-floor living room, which date more closely to the design of the original 1873 building than they do to the 1963 renovation (fig. 5). It also stems from the abundance of artwork throughout the building that fills the walls and their built-in display nooks, even colonizing large swathes of interior space (what creates this sense of crowding: is it the quantity of the artwork here or is it the fact that so much of it is figurative?). But certain elements of the design reinforce a sense of containment, such as the plaster suspended ceiling design in the third-floor living and dining rooms, which creates a sense of separation between these spaces, and the ground-floor plaster wall that was introduced to partition the entryway from Gross' studio–all elements that Mimi Gross recalls were designed by her father.[3] This urge to separate and contain different activities and people through architectural gestures belongs more to the 19th century than to the 1960s, so it is interesting to see elements of both eras coexist in this space.

What were Reiman, Malsin, and Gross trying to achieve with this renovation? Architecture is so interesting precisely because it registers the complexity of human intent; and often, intent is not unequivocal, but may contain diverging or even opposing objectives. This seems to have been the case with this project, which revealed an urge toward both transparency and concealment, toward both the public life of the street and the private life of work and family, toward both modernism and the objects and mores of the past. In this, the building itself is a sort of hybrid which speaks the language of both the present and the past.

What inspired this design? Mimi Gross recalls that her father had visited Rodin's home and studio in Paris, and that this served as a design model. Like Gross, Rodin kept two studios: one in Paris and the other in the suburb of Meudon, where he and his team of about 50 assistants worked in the chateau Rodin

3. Email exchange with Mimi Gross, November 9, 2016.

Fig. 5
Barrett Gallagher,
Living Room of
Gross Residence,
1965

purchased in 1895. Photographs of the studio show a charming space with nearly floor-to-ceiling windows providing ample light and picturesque views of the surrounding landscape (fig. 6).

Given the timing and design of the 1963 renovation, it may also be that Reiman, Malsin, and Gross had in mind the modernist sculptor Constantin Brancusi's Paris studio, which was reconstructed in full in the National Museum of Modern Art, Paris in April 1962, after his death in 1957. Of course, Brancusi would have been well known to Gross; his work was the subject of a major exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in 1955 and was featured in more than ten group exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York between 1937 and 1957. Mimi Gross recalls that her father often said that Brancusi was the greatest modern sculptor.[4] The 1962 reconstruction of his studio at the National Museum of Modern Art in Paris was covered widely by the press, in part because he had at first offered it to the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which did not have the space to receive and install it.

Photographs of Brancusi's studio reveal a similar space to the studio Gross would come to inhabit, from the massive skylight, to the crowding of sculptors' tools, works in progress, and completed works peopling the space (figs. 7-8). In the summer of 1962, Athena Tacha wrote for *Art Journal* about Brancusi's studio in words that may just as well be applied to the Gross studio:

> The studio meant even more to him as an ensemble and as an environment. He changed and arranged it throughout his stay, each time choosing minutely the position of each work, base and object in relation to the others. This

4. Email exchange with Mimi Gross, November 9, 2016.

Fig. 6
Jacques-Ernest Bulloz, General View of the Studio in Meudon, 1904-05

Fig. 7
Brancusi Studio at Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2016. Photo by Sasha Davis

Fig. 8
Edward Steichen, Brancusi's Studio, ca. 1920. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Grace M. Mayer, 1992

is revealed in the gouaches and the many photographs he himself made of sections of the studio. In them, individual works, shadows and utilitarian objects blend together as abstract shapes of equal value integrated in a composition... His works themselves were his companions. He often said he enjoyed living with his peaceful beasts and sleeping by them...[5]

5. Athena C. Tacha, "Brancusi: Legend, Reality and Impact," *Art Journal* 22:4 (Summer 1963), 240.

In photographs of both Brancusi and Gross sitting in their studios, there is a sense that they, like we, are visitors in a space that in fact belongs to the artwork (figs. 9-10). From our vantage point today, when many art studios are run by art "workers" whose division of labor resembles the turn-of-the-century manufacturing plant (Jeff Koons' studio may be the most egregious or the most evolved example of this model, depending on one's point of view), Gross' studio and home recalls an earlier era. The richness and complexity of its design lies in the indeterminate way in which it toggles between modernism and the past, ultimately synthesizing both into a new idiom that feels relevant today.

Fig. 9
Edward Steichen, Brancusi in his studio, Paris, 1927, printed 1981-82. Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Martin J. Oppenheimer, LL.B 1956

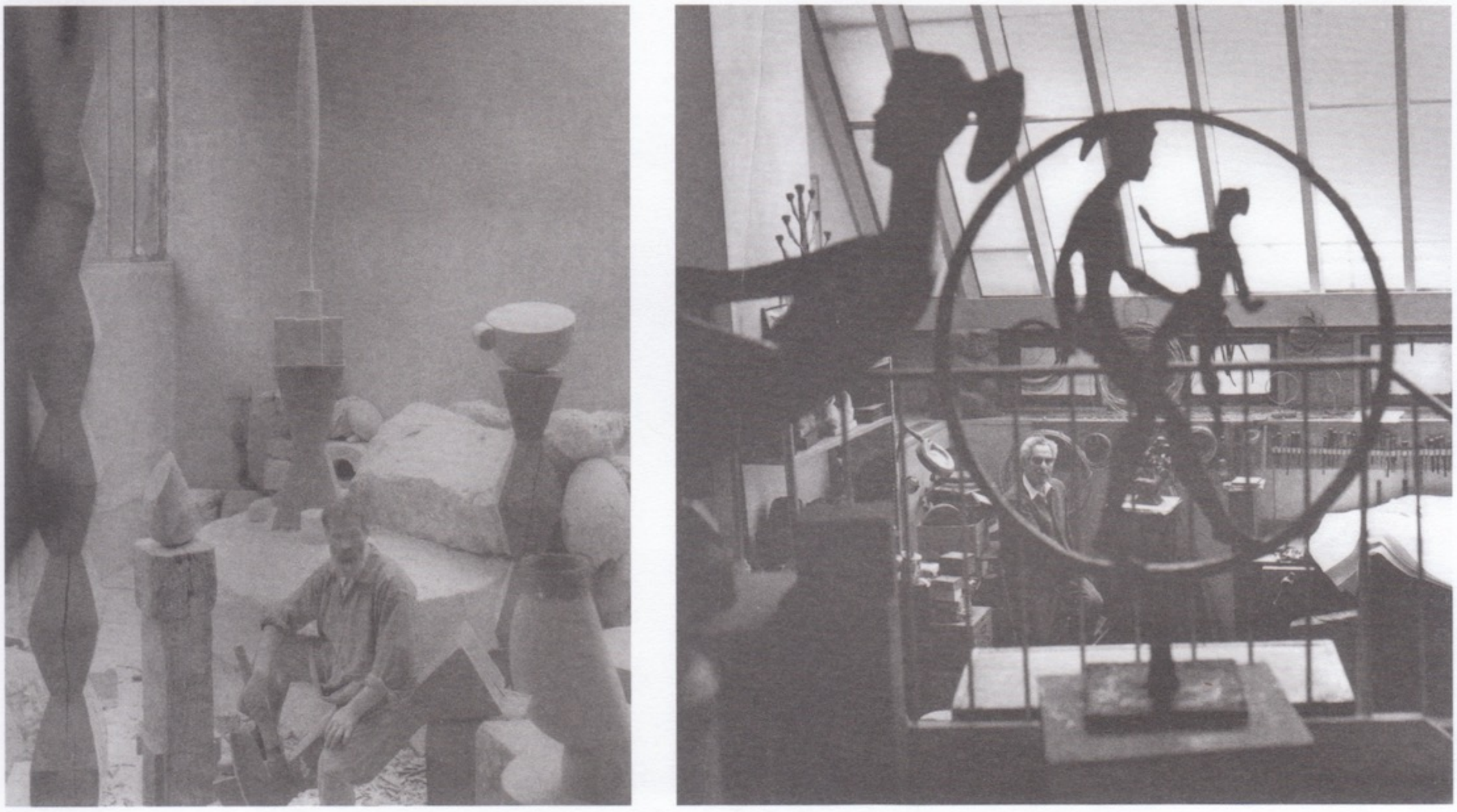


Fig. 10
Marvin Bolotsky, Chaim Gross in his Studio, c. 1965

Exhibition Checklist

All works Collection of the Renee & Chaim Gross Foundation unless otherwise noted

Benny Andrews (1930-2006)
Passion, 1963
Mixed media, 12 × 18 inches

Marvin Bolotsky (b. 1929)
Chaim Gross in front of 526 West Broadway, New York City, with *Birds of Peace*, 1965
Three gelatin silver prints, 9 ½ × 6 ½ inches each

Brassai (1899-1984)
Picasso in his Studio on the Rue des Grandes Augustins, 1939
Gelatin silver print, 12 × 9 ½ inches
Collection Mimi Gross

Budd Studio [Sydney J. and A.L. (Bud) Waintrob]
Chaim Gross working on *Six Days of Creation* in his Grand Street Studio, 1964
Two gelatin silver prints, 9 ⅜ × 6 inches each

Eliot Elisofon (1911-1973)
Chaim Gross Studio at East 9th Street, 1939
Two gelatin silver prints, Variable dimensions

Richard Alan Fox (b. 1949)
Entryway to Chaim Gross residence, 526 LaGuardia Place, New York City
Gelatin silver print, 12 ¾ × 10 inches

John Frank
Untitled
Oil on canvas, 37 × 25 inches

Barrett Gallagher (1913-1994)
Interiors at 526 LaGuardia Place, New York City, 1965
Three gelatin silver prints mounted on board, 11 × 14 inches each

Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997)
Mr. and Mrs. Gross at Home after Supper, January 11, 1988
Two gelatin silver prints, 6 ½ × 9 inches each

Red Grooms (b. 1937)
Chaim Gross at Home, circa 1975
Pastel on paper, 35 × 23 inches

Red Grooms (b. 1937)
Renee Gross at Home, circa 1975
Pastel on paper, 35 × 23 inches

Red Grooms (b. 1937)
Chaim in his 9th Street Studio, 2014
Mixed media, 22 ½ × 30 inches

Chaim Gross (1904-1991)
Dancing Mother, 1954
Mahogany, 17 × 6 ¾ × 4 ¼ inches

Chaim Gross (1904-1991)
Bird's Nest, Rome, 1957
Bronze, 71 × 17 × 17 inches

Chaim Gross (1904-1991)
Juggler with Seven Rings, 1959
Ink and watercolor on paper, 18 ¼ × 12 ¾ inches

Chaim Gross (1904-1991)
Portrait of Willem de Kooning, 1959
Ink on paper, 16 ½ × 12 ¼ inches

Chaim Gross (1904-1991)
Seven Birds in Seven Rings, 1959
Bronze, 16 ¼ × 8 ½ × 6 ¾ inches

Chaim Gross (1904-1991)
The Dance, 1961
Ink, watercolor, and graphite on paper, 12 ½ × 19 ¼ inches

Chaim Gross (1904-1991)
Six Days of Creation, 1964-66
Five bronzes, each: 16 ½ × 10 inches
After large-scale works commissioned by Temple Shaaray Tefila, New York City

Chaim Gross (1904-1991)
Happy Children, 1968
Bronze, 30 × 24 × 14 inches

Chaim Gross (1904-1991)
LaGuardia Place and Bleecker Streets, New York City, October 1970
Seven c-prints, 3 ½ × 3 ½ inches each

Mimi Gross (b. 1940)
14th Street, 1958/62
Oil on canvas, 60 × 47 inches

Mimi Gross (b. 1940)
Mott Street Market, 1964-65
Painted papier mâché, 13 ½ × 17 inches

Mimi Gross (b. 1940)
The Proof is in the Pudding, Studio of Charlie Atlas
circa 1981-82
Mixed media, 21 × 34 × 27 inches
Collection of Mimi Gross

Lewis Hine (1874-1940)
Facsimile of *Girl Delivers Flowers to West Broadway Factory*, New York City, February 1912
Collection of the Library of Congress

Willem de Kooning (1904-1997)
Untitled, 1959
Enamel on paper, 40 × 30 inches

Leon Kuzmanoff (1921-1998)
Model and Sculpture in Chaim Gross's Studio
Chaim Gross with Eternal Mother, 1985
Chaim Gross Seated in the Studio at 526 LaGuardia Place, New York City
All gelatin silver prints, variable dimensions

Ibram Lassaw (1913-2003)
Space Loom XXXV, 1974
Painted welded steel,
13 × 8 ¼ × 7 ½ inches

Bruno Lucchesi (b. 1926)
Pedicure, 1967
Bronze, 12 × 8 × 8 inches

Arthur Malsin and Don Reiman, architects, Ossining, NY
Architectural plans for Renovations at 526 LaGuardia Place, New York City, 1962

Roberta Matta (1911-2002)
The Invincible Star Lands Like Blue Bees, circa 1953
Oil and graphite on panel,
16 × 23 inches

Roberto Matta (1911-2002)
Untitled, circa 1953
Oil and graphite on panel,
16 × 23 inches

Irving Marantz (1912-1972)
Brother and Sister, 1963
Oil on canvas, 32 × 24 inches

Jay Milder (b. 1934)
Untitled, c. 1965
Oil on canvas, 34 × 34 inches

Arnold Newman (1918-2006)
Max Ernst, New York, 1942
Chaim and Renee Gross at Home, 105th Street, New York City, circa 1945
Chaim Gross with *Bird's Nest* in his Studio in Rome, Italy, 1957, two photographs
Home of Arnold Newman with *Offspring* (1930) by Chaim Gross, circa 1960
All gelatin silver prints, variable dimensions

Fairfield Porter (1907-1975)
The Artist's Home, c. 1964
Graphite on paper,
11 ¼ × 14 ¼ inches
Collection of Mimi Gross

Daniela Roman
Studio of Saul Steinberg, c. 1990
Digital print, 12 ½ × 8 ½ inches
Collection of Mimi Gross

Walter Rosenblum (1919-2006)
Dancing Mother in Chaim Gross's Studio on Horatio Street, New York City, 1956
Gelatin silver print,
9 ½ × 7 ¾ inches

Walter J. Russell
Chaim Gross in his Grand Street Studio, NYC, with *Birds of Peace*, 1965
Gelatin silver print,
9 ¾ × 8 inches

Unknown photographer
Chaim Gross and Raphael Soyer in Soyer's Studio, 1937
Gelatin silver print,
7 ¼ × 8 ¾ inches

Unknown photographer
Chaim Gross in his Horatio Street Studio, 1956
Gelatin silver print,
8 ¼ × 7 ¾ inches

Unknown photographer
Lane Bryant Department Store Window Display with Chaim Gross sculpture, circa 1950
Gelatin Silver print,
10 × 8 inches

Alfredo Valente (1899-1973)
Chaim Gross in his 9th Street Studio, New York City, circa 1940
Three gelatin silver prints, variable dimensions

Susan Weiley
Chaim Gross in his Studio on LaGuardia Place, c. 1980
Gelatin silver print
6 ½ × 9 ¾ inches

Louis Werner
Living Room design by Gilbert Rohde with Chaim Gross sculpture from *American Contemporary Arts* exhibit at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1940
Gelatin silver print,
10 × 8 inches

Building Identity:
Chaim Gross and Artists' Homes and Studios in New York City, 1953-74
January 19 – June 30, 2017

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Arnold Newman photograph on page 11 © Arnold Newman properties / Getty Images

Front Cover: Susan Weiley, Chaim Gross in his studio on LaGuardia Place, c. 1980

Frontispiece: Entryway to Chaim Gross residence, 526 LaGuardia Place, New York City

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Dr. Susan Greenberg Fisher
Executive Director
The Renee & Chaim Gross Foundation

About the Foundation

The Renee & Chaim Gross Foundation is a (501)(c)(3) not-for-profit organization incorporated in New York State in 1988. Founded by American sculptor Chaim Gross (1904-91) and his wife Renee, the Foundation exhibits Gross's sculpture and drawings in the couples' Greenwich Village townhouse at 526 LaGuardia Place. The Foundation also organizes cultural activities and encourages visitors to actively engage with the artist's studio space and extensive art collections. The Foundation's initiatives include interdisciplinary programs, special events and exhibitions, and are organized around topics related to Gross and his contemporaries.

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