

White Columns

THE
NEW YORKER

July 12 & 19, 2021 Print At the Galleries



The trove of ephemera in “From the Archives,” the current show at **White Columns** (through July 30), is an absorbing abridged history of the nonprofit—New York City’s oldest alternative space—and, by extension, of seemingly every downtown scene of the past fifty years. Founded, in 1970, by a daring collective of artists, including Gordon Matta-Clark, the gallery was first named 112 Greene Street, for its address. (It’s now at 91 Horatio.) A thank-you note to Robert Rauschenberg, near the start of the show, reveals that the upstarts had Pop art’s support. An invitation to a 1974 Louise Bourgeois show suggests that the gallery stayed open for her on Christmas Day. Fran Lebowitz appears on the bill for a reading in 1978, when she was still writing. In the summer of 1988, during the AIDS crisis, White Columns gave its keys to ACT UP. Performers ran the gamut from the Beastie Boys to Meredith Monk. The ethos has long been eclecticism. The figurative painter John Currin and the crusading conceptualist Fred Wilson had career-launching shows there a few months apart, in 1989 and 1990. (Full disclosure: a project that I co-organized in 1996 is also represented, by a Glen E. Friedman photo of a skateboarder.) Since 2004, White Columns’ influence has grown even more undeniable under the visionary direction of Matthew Higgs, who has an archivist’s instincts and the impeccable eye of a great curator.—*Andrea K. Scott*