

My Manhattan

"The other day we got into a taxi and the driver didn't know the way, so he asked us if we wanted to drive. It's something that could only happen here."



Editor's Note: Leo Castelli has been an imposing force in the art world since 1957, when he opened up his first gallery on East 77th Street. Within a year he had introduced the world to Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. The gallery now occupies a space at 420 W. Broadway, and remains one of the most famous in the world, with a roster of names that includes Ellsworth Kelly, Claes Oldenburg, Frank Stella and Andy Warhol. Recently, Leo Castelli and his wife, Barbara Bertozzi, shared their thoughts on art and life in New York City.

**BY LEO CASTELLI AND
BARBARA BERTOZZI**

New York is like Renaissance Florence. All the museums, galleries and artists that live and work here have created a cultural center comparable to the one that existed under the Medici. There is no other city in the world that has that power of attraction.

It is the city of everyone's dreams, a center of creativity that has attracted artists like Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol. This city inspired them, nurtured them and gave them a place to thrive. But

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THE CITY SCENE

New York has always been a city that inspired artists to learn from the past while looking to the future. While Jasper Johns looked to Picasso, Lichtenstein took inspiration from the colors of Matisse. The cycle continues today when we see how important Jasper Johns is for young artists now. Certain forms of art take a direct inspiration from the city: Pop artists like James Rosenquist were inspired by the big ads that plaster the buildings downtown. And minimalists like Donald Judd have been fueled by the straight streets and sleek, cubelike buildings bare of the baroque decorations of Europe. Judd's credo of less is more is a very New York concept, and his sculpture reflects this city's essential horizontal and vertical architecture.

New York is the place where the most curious things happen. The other day we got into a taxi and the driver didn't know the way, so he asked us if we wanted to drive. It's something that could only happen here.

New York is modern, yet so European. Call it Victorian modernism. The landscape of century-old skyscrapers shows how strong history runs in the veins of the most modern creation.

You come for a visit, almost accidentally, and end up staying forever. It must be the only city in the world where everyone feels like they were born here. This enormous monster of a city feels very intimate. When we walk around SoHo, we meet artists and critics in the streets and restaurants. Sometimes, you feel like everyone in the world is here and knows you personally.

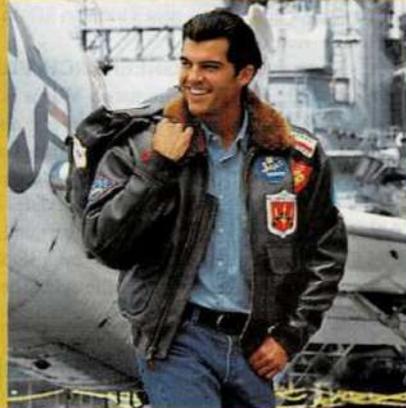
We go to the Milanese restaurant Sant Ambroeus almost every day; if they don't see us for a week, they'll call us at home because they worry. The breaded veal chop called *costoletta all Milanese* is so big that we share it. They've had the same menu for years. Nothing ever changes there and it almost seems to reassure

us that nothing bad can happen. If we are downtown, we go to Mezzogiorno for ravioli with eggplant or maybe to Da Silvano on Sixth Avenue. They make a classic boiled short rib called *bollito*, and it is possibly the only place outside of Rome that serves the wild Roman chicory called *puntarelle*. Between meals, we make the rounds of our favorite streets around gallery-laden Madison Avenue and the Upper East Side. But when we see the East River rushing by Manhattan's shores, we're reminded that all this artistic energy is concentrated on one little island. □

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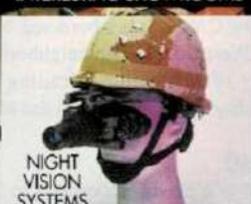


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