

# Day 15 - Nicholas Krislov

The idea of creating an art district is both compelling in a cultural sense but an economic sense as well. The availability of good art brings galleries almost naturally to the same location. While Chelsea grew as an art hub after gallery owners fled SoHO, many of the same problems could potentially happen to Chelsea.

The rise of Chelsea came with a phase out of the SoHO art gallery scene. A Guggenheim exhibit featured in SoHO closed just as the last remaining galleries were moving. The main reasons for the switches from SoHO to Chelsea can be derived from the rising rental prices in SoHO and the change of zoning laws in Chelsea. The fact that SoHO was a previous art destination was a double sword. In one respect, it created a center for culture and art, in another it drew people and businesses to the area so rents were forced up. The zoning laws in Chelsea were also changed from the area being zoned for industrial purposes, to galleries falling into the "as of right" compliance.

The low rents of Chelsea drew galleries to the area. The interesting aspect of these locations is that both SoHO and Chelsea are not near the ultra elite of the upper east and upper west side. Instead Chelsea hugs the west-side highway in a previously industrial area of town. SoHO currently is filled with high-end fashion stores. Over run with boutiques and walk up apartments, the rents are currently sky-high and nearly impossible for a gallery to afford.

The Highline perfectly parallels the art expansion towards Chelsea. The highline is a elevated train track which runs along side the west-side highway. It has since been abandoned for use for over 30 years and was just an eye sore for the people of the area. In 1999 the highline was taken over by the city and turned into a trail for the public through the Rails to Trails Act. It has turned an industrial eyesore into a place for the public and a cultural attraction. Many New Yorkers believe that Chelsea with such concentrated art galleries exhibits a similar place for public and cultural attraction. .

One of the specific draws to the area is its reputation as the art gallery center of both Manhattan and the world. With over 300 galleries in the Chelsea area it is no wonder why the overwhelming majority of famous art shows (such as Art Basel) feature Chelsea galleries. Even in international shows the amount of galleries from Chelsea trumps the number from any other country let alone city (or part of a city).

Part of Chelsea which makes the location both a cultural icon and an economic powerhouse is the fact that there are both elite and non-elite art galleries. While some of the art galleries are focused on bringing collectors to the art market, many are legitimately out there for the sole reason of connecting the consumer with art. The proximity of all these galleries so close together increases competition, but provides an unparalleled art scene. The lower east side which has only a handful of galleries is known for bringing great art and many in the art world visit monthly. However the proximity of so many galleries in Chelsea means that artists can be seemingly noticed while not being at the most elite galleries. Further, the opening of one new gallery does not affect the others, regardless of how good or how bad the art being shown is.

The East End in London has similar features to Chelsea. In the 1800's the East End was a heavily industrial area. Because of its proximity to the water, the East End was home to many ship building companies and was a prominent port for the city of London. Currently the area houses some of the best galleries in the world. Despite being known as one of the poorest areas in London, property prices are at all time highs. Similar to SoHO and Chelsea, there are questions as to where the next art scene will be located because of rising rents within the East End. Many have speculated that the galleries may move east to Sundry.