

**LOFT LAW**  
**Photographs by Joshua Charow**

Curated by James Cavello

**EXHIBITION DATES:**  
May 16 – July 13, 2024

**OPENING RECEPTION:**  
May 16, Thursday, 6 to 8 pm



Marsha Pels in her Greenpoint Loft. Photograph by Joshua Charow. archival pigment print on Canson Platine paper, edition of 3 + 2 APs, 16 x 20 in. | 40.6 x 50.8 cm

WESTWOOD GALLERY NYC presents *Loft Law: Photographs by Joshua Charow*, the first solo exhibition for New York-based documentary photographer and filmmaker Joshua Charow (b. 1998), curated by James Cavello. This is Charow's premiere exhibition of his photographs and short documentary films on New York artists. The exhibition includes forty photographs by Charow and eighteen works of art by eleven of the artists featured in the photographs: Carmen Cicero, Loretta Dunkelman, Betsy Kaufman, Kimiko Fujimura, Joseph Marioni, Carolyn Oberst, Marsha Pels, Gilda Pervin, Steve Silver, Mike Sullivan, and Jeff Way. The exhibition will be on view May 16 – June 29, 2024.

In 1982, Article 7-C of the Multiple Dwelling Law, also known as the Loft Law, was passed in New York City. The law gave protection and rent stabilization to people living illegally in manufacturing and commercially zoned lofts. Hidden behind this legislation were thousands of artists who needed a live/work environment at an

affordable rent. These artists protected by the Loft Law changed the trajectory of New York's cultural landscape.

Three years ago, Charow found a map of the remaining buildings with Loft Law protection. He rang hundreds of doorbells to find and photograph over 75 Loft Law tenants across the city to document the last of these incredible spaces and the creative individuals who made them home. Charow's interest in the Loft Law and the vanishing history of New York stemmed from his early teenage years when he became immersed in a subculture called 'Urban Exploring,' the practice of illegally climbing skyscrapers, bridges, and abandoned subway stations. One of the rooftops he visited was an old factory building in South Williamsburg, where a tenant explained to Charow about the building's remaining tenants under Loft Law protection.

The photos are a living visual document of the expansive spaces: old flophouses on the Bowery, garment factories in Tribeca and SoHo, glass factories in Greenpoint, and even a former ice cream factory in DUMBO. From the 19th to the 20th century, many buildings in NYC, including SoHo, were manufacturing centers for items from sewing machines to textiles to printing houses. The massive light-filled loft spaces with high ceilings were left empty when these businesses vacated in the mid-1900s and moved to other areas outside of New York City. The industrial-zoned lofts were not legal to live in, as they did not meet the building requirements for residential use, and oftentimes were completely raw spaces without a kitchen, shower, plumbing, or even heat. However, artists were attracted to these large spaces where they could work and create at any hour of the day. At the end of the 1970s, loft living started gaining attention in the media and the wealthy started to become attracted to this lifestyle. Soon landlords began to evict the artist tenants in favor of a wealthier clientele. A group of artists formed the Lower Manhattan Loft Tenants and spent years lobbying in Albany to gain legal protections and rent stabilization. At the time the Loft Law was first passed, there were tens of thousands of artists living in lofts across the city. Today, only a few hundred artists protected under the original 1982 Loft Law remain. This exhibition marks one of the first documentary insights into this vanishing history.



Carmen Cicero in his Bowery Loft. Photograph by Joshua Charow.  
Archival pigment print on Canson Platine paper, edition of 3 + 2 APs.  
16 x 20 in. | 40.6 x 50.8 cm



Kimiko Fujimura in her Chinatown Loft. Photograph by Joshua Charow.  
Archival pigment print on Canson Platine paper, edition of 3 + 2 APs.  
16 x 20 in. | 40.6 x 50.8 cm

The majority of Charow's images depict painters, sculptors, photographers, musicians, and filmmakers captured amidst their industrial loft spaces. Notable portraits include experimental music and film artists Phillip (Phill) Niblock (1933-2024) and Katherine Liberovskaya (b. 1961); Phill was instrumental in the avant-garde music and film scene from the 1960s to the present. Visuals artists include 97-year-old abstract and figurative expressionist Carmen Cicero (b. 1926), who has works in the collections of the Guggenheim Museum, Museum of Modern Art, and Whitney Museum; Kimiko Fujimura (b. 1932), who in 1965 was selected as "Japan's Top 5 Female Painters in Contemporary Art" by Geijutsu-Shincho, a Japanese monthly art magazine; minimalist painter Loretta Dunkelman (b. 1937), a co-founder of the all-female artists cooperative A.I.R. Gallery; and Gilda Pervin (b. 1933), whose studio occupies the top floor of a 1790s Quaker building linked to the Underground Railroad and happens to be the old studio space of famed sculptor Eva Hesse, who worked there from 1965-70. Also included is Chuck DeLaney, co-founder of the Lower Manhattan Loft Tenants, an early activist group that was responsible for the lobbying and passing of the Loft Law.

The gallery and the photographer will donate a percentage of the proceeds from the sale of photographs in the exhibition to the individuals depicted in the photograph.

The exhibition is accompanied by the book "Loft Law: The Last of New York City's Original Artist Lofts" by Joshua Charow, and published by Damiani Books, Italy.

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**Joshua Charow** (b. 1998) holds his BFA from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts in Film & Television. In addition to his documentary photography, Charow has also shot notable documentary films. Charow creates and directs an online documentary series titled LimeLight, which explores the unique lives of New Yorkers. Over the past year, the series has amassed a following of 150,000 people and garnered over 40 million views. His first feature film as Director of Photography, Untrapped, was an official selection of the 2022 Tribeca International Film Festival. He has directed and shot documentary films for The New York Times, TIME magazine, Amazon Prime Video, and Hulu.

Curator **James Cavello** is the President and co-owner of Westwood Gallery NYC, and the president of the SoHo Broadway Initiative. He has curated over 300 exhibitions including in the gallery and globally. In addition to contemporary visual artists, Cavello has curated numerous first-time documentary photography exhibitions, such as John Thomson: "1862-1872 Photographs of China and the Far East" in 1998, Leo Matiz: "The Third Eye, 1940s Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Siqueiros" in 2001, Lazhar Mansouri: "Portraits of a Village, Ain Beïda, Algeria, 1950s-70s" in 2007, Bob Adelman: "Mine Eyes Have Seen, Photographs of the Struggle for Human Rights, 1960s" in 2008, Douglas Kirkland: "Mademoiselle Coco Chanel 1962" in 2009, Lucien Clergue: "Jean Cocteau, 1959 Testament of Orpheus" in 2012, Roy Schatt: "James Dean and The Actors Studio, 1950s-60s" in 2015, and many other premiere exhibitions.

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Gallery Hours      Tue – Sat, 10am – 6pm  
Directions          F to Second Ave, B, D, F, M to Broadway Lafayette, 6 to Bleeker, N, R at Prince Street