

The New York Times

March 18, 2012

Real Estate



ABOVE, SUZANNE DeCHILLO/THE NEW YORK TIMES; BELOW, BY RAHAV SEGEV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

OUTPOST Gena Mimozo, a filmmaker, is among the young artists who have settled in Stapleton, Staten Island. She lives above the Full Cup cafe, a place replete with colorful murals.

By **CONSTANCE ROSENBLUM**

THE race to anoint the latest neighborhood for New Yorkers eager to pursue careers in the arts is never-ending.

Greenwich Village, for much of the 20th century the heart of American Bohemia, was shoved aside by one after another newcomer, first the East Village, then SoHo and the Lower East Side, and most recently the Brooklyn quartet of Williamsburg, Greenpoint, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Bushwick. These days, a new destination seems to be proclaimed every few weeks, as artists rush about pell-mell in search of fresh terrain to colonize.

The first sign that the artists are arriving can be seen at the entrance to the local subway station. Seemingly overnight, the crowd is swelled by lanky 20-somethings in the uniform of skinny jeans, cowboy boots and black-rimmed eyeglasses. In short order, an old-school bar starts serving lattes along with the Buds. Wildly colored paintings sprout on the grubby walls of a onetime factory, and in abandoned storefronts, bands with wonderfully arcane names can be heard blasting away far into the night.

For young people laboring in notoriously low-paying fields, the grail is cheap rent, followed by proximity to like-minded souls and especially to mass transit. It's no accident that Brooklyn's outposts for artists are strung like beads along the necklace of the L train and more recently the G. If these young people are lucky, their homes also offer space in which to create art and music.

Still, the next wave of artists' neighborhoods might not have the grit and authenticity of those that came before, said Robert Anasi, the author of a forthcoming book on Williamsburg, where he lived from 1994 to 2008.

"Artists' neighborhoods turn over so quickly these days," said Mr. Anasi,

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Follow The Drips Of Paint



A timeline for Williamsburg, from artists to tourists.

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The neighborhoods young artists colonize these days are ever farther afield. The areas turn over so quickly, there's scarcely time to set up an easel.

Follow the Drips of Paint

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whose memoir, "The Last Bohemia: Scenes From the Life of Williamsburg, Brooklyn," explores the neighborhood's transformation from industrial backwater to artists' district to trendy high-rise colony. "The speculators are there practically before the artists themselves."

What's more, 21st-century technology guarantees that neighborhoods will be discovered almost instantaneously. "People learn about the cool place the day after it happens," Mr. Anasi said. "And because people have so much mobility, they can be there the next day — from France, from Germany, from Japan. Neighborhoods are overrun so rapidly, they don't have a chance to establish an identity."

In a few months, as newly minted college graduates start flooding into the city, their numbers will include the latest wave of young artists seeking living quarters. In a city in which rents move in only one direction, they will search ever farther afield for compatible and affordable neighborhoods. The list of possibilities includes Ridgewood, just across the Brooklyn-Queens border from Bushwick, along with Upper Manhattan and a tiny outpost on Staten Island.

The community of Stapleton, just south of the better-known St. George and Tompkinsville on Staten Island's North Shore, is remote, far from the city's most happening precincts. And forget the L train. To get to the clubs and galleries of downtown Manhattan and Brooklyn, you hop aboard a ferry. But in the past few years, the neighborhood has emerged as a destination for young people in the arts, especially those born and raised on the island.

Gena Mimozo, an island girl through and through, personifies this population. Ms. Mimozo, 29, grew up in West Brighton, studied at nearby Wagner College and the New York Film Academy, worked for the Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Gardens, and is the arts in education program officer for the island's Council on the Arts and Humanities.

For the past three years, she and two roommates have shared a three-bedroom apartment in a small, century-old brick building on Van Duzer Street. One roommate, Corinne Guglielmo, 22, is a visual artist who recently graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology. The other, Keith Joergens, 29, who was raised on the island, was trained as a chef and works delivering meat for Boar's Head.

Amenities include a back porch where they can barbecue and, on the walls of Ms. Mimozo's bedroom, paintings by a friend of birds and flowers with the heads of aliens. The total rent, split three ways, is \$1,575.

Ms. Mimozo is a founder of SicoLab (Staten Island Collaboration), an organization that offers support for local artists, and she is a project manager of Van Duzer Days, a music and arts festival on Van Duzer Street that is heading into its fourth year.

Since graduating from film school last August, she made a 20-minute short, "Left Behind," the story of two young people whose friend has committed suicide after having been bullied at school. She also created an "It Gets Better" video for the Staten Island LGBT Center, among other works.

Conveniently, her apartment sits atop a combined cafe and performance space known as the Full Cup, which functions as the epicenter of Stapleton's artistic community. Patrons can curl up on worn brown leather sofas, sip herbal tea or microbrews, and admire the paintings that line the brick walls. A blackboard lists forthcoming events — comedy on Tuesday, acoustic showcases on Wednesday, karaoke on Thursday and so on. On a good night, the performance space in the rear draws a couple of hundred people.

The audience typically includes people living much as Ms. Mimozo does, in apartments in modest houses that for groups with roommates rent for well under \$1,000 a month each. While some might find a car, three buses stop on her corner, and the ferry is a five-minute walk.

For years, fear of crime deterred even many intrepid young people from settling in the area, and residents are upset by a recent string of muggings and car break-ins. But the neighborhood is forging an additional identity.

"Today," Ms. Mimozo said, "people know that Stapleton is where the art kids hang out."

The ambience of Upper Broadway between the Columbias (the university



ABOVE AND LEFT, JAMES ESTRIN/THE NEW YORK TIMES

GALLERIST Matthew J. Mahler, a painter, at the Small Black Door, a basement gallery in Ridgewood, Queens, that he runs with a friend, Jonathan Terranova. Right, the gallery's interior.



LEFT AND RIGHT, SUZANNE DUCHILLO/THE NEW YORK TIMES

COLONISTS Claire Kiechel, left, a playwright, and Sarah Skeist, an actress, share a place on West 162nd Street in Manhattan. Recent college graduates, they find the neighborhood convenient and cheap.

and the hospital) hardly qualifies as cool. On this unprepossessing stretch of northern Manhattan, bodegas jostle for space with travel agencies touting cheap trips to Latin America. But young people in the arts are being drawn to apartments in the town houses that line the side streets, thanks to a triecta of low rents, relative safety and straight-shot access to neighborhoods like Morningside Heights, Lincoln Center and the Village, where they study, play and hang out.

A few of these newcomers have ended up in an airy three-bedroom atop a town house on West 162nd Street, which the house's owners, Ben Lopez and Rose Deler, rent out for \$2,000 a month. "Our first group of tenants were three actors in their early 20s," Ms. Deler said. "And of the dozen people who checked out the place after they left, I'd say the majority were in arts-related fields — actresses, dancers, musicians."

Since the summer of 2010, the apartment has been home to two recent Amherst College graduates — Claire Kiechel, a playwright, and Sarah Skeist, an actor.

Ms. Kiechel, who tutors French and Latin to pay the rent, is studying for an M.F.A. in playwrighting at the New School. Her works include "Whale Song or: Learning to Live with Mobyphobia," which was presented last year at the New York International Fringe Festival.

Ms. Skeist, a student at the Maggie Flanigan Studio, performed in "Naked Holidays" at Roy Arias Studios and Theaters in Midtown, and has made several short films and Webisodes. For a time her day job was waiting tables at

Jean Georges. The newest arrival, Caitlin Kleinschmidt, 23, who works as an editorial assistant at Oxford University Press, replaced a young playwright who left the city to pursue an M.F.A. at Smith.

For less than \$700 a month, each woman has her own bedroom, and thanks to skylights and tall windows, the space is flooded with sunshine. They have noticed that once-grungy coin laundromats and hardware stores have been spruced up, as if readying themselves for the new arrivals.

And increasingly they see people much like themselves. "It's bizarre," Ms. Skeist said. "In class, I have two scene partners, and as it turns out, one lives at 181st Street and the other lives just two blocks away."

The proximity makes it easy for her to rehearse in the neighborhood, at her place or theirs. "It's really convenient," Ms. Skeist said. "Lots of our other classmates have to pay for studio space near our school since they don't live close to each other. So I've gotten really lucky."

Ms. Kiechel has also discovered that the apartment nurtures creative juices. Often she wakes early and stays in bed to write until 8, opening the curtains to let in the morning light. "I find that the early-morning grogginess helps me access a different, more relaxed and creative part of my brain," she said.

Except for Antika, a popular pizza place, and Carrot Top Pastries, celebrated for what Ms. Kiechel described as "the most bragworthy carrot muffins," the cafes, clubs and boutiques that typically signal the existence of an artists' neighborhood have yet to reach this

part of Broadway. "Coffee is a major problem," Ms. Skeist said. "And there are no local bars that serve craft beer." "It's not yet the cutest," she said of the neighborhood. "But if you figure out the ratio of convenience, space, price and safety, there aren't many better places."

Matthew J. Mahler is one of the growing number of newcomers you see these days on the streets of Ridgewood, Queens. Mr. Mahler, 30, has a master's degree in fine arts from Queens College and is a painter. With Jonathan Terranova, a childhood friend from Long Island, he runs the Small Black Door, a basement gallery on Palmetto Street.

Like many of his artist friends, Mr. Mahler rents an apartment in one of the hundreds of neat brick row houses that define this working-class community. Still very much a family neighborhood, it was settled by Germans and East Europeans, many of whom worked at local knitting mills.

His space serves him well. For two years, until he acquired a studio in Greenpoint, he used the master bedroom as a studio, covering the carpeting with canvas dropcloths and outfitting it with a few worktables. To help pay the rent, he teaches art to private students and at an afterschool program. He also works freelance at a picture-framing company in Brooklyn.

Mr. Mahler, who pays \$600 for his two-bedroom space, didn't have to search hard for housing. The building where he lives, on Stanhope Street, belonged to his grandparents and was inherited by an aunt who lives on the first floor. Because he knows the neighborhood well, he understands its attractions and drawbacks to artists.

"Ridgewood is mostly residential," Mr. Mahler said, "so it doesn't have the lofts and industrial spaces where artists can work. That's why artists who move here need to find studios outside the neighborhood. On the plus side, it's just one stop beyond Bushwick on the L train. It's safer than Bushwick. Rents are cheap, and there are more and more art spaces."

Among the first galleries to arrive, in 2009, was Famous Accountants, in a basement on Gates Avenue. Valentine, on Seneca Avenue, was opened last June by Fred Valentine, a founder of Galapagos Art Space in Williamsburg. Mr. Mahler's gallery, which held its first show early last year, offers five exhibitions a year in the basement of a building that Mr. Terranova's family has owned for decades.

The openings often attract more than 100 people. "They're like celebrations," Mr. Mahler said. "Then afterward, we all go to the Gottscheer Hall, this beer hall on Fairview Avenue. The ambience is distinctly old-fashioned, he said, but "it's cool because we make it cool."

The neighborhood suffered a blow last July when the Silent Barn, a beloved D.I.Y. performance space on Wyckoff Avenue, was robbed, ransacked and forced to close.

But despite this loss, local blogs and newspapers have been quick to spread the word of Ridgewood's growing appeal. In January, a headline on Gothamist announced: "Local Paper Declares Next Big Neighborhood: Ridgewood." The Queens Chronicle, which trumpeted Ridgewood as "the next hipster hot spot ... the new place to go without going broke," quoted a dean at LaGuardia Community College as saying: "Ten years ago, you didn't think

Williamsburg Over Time

The arc of a neighborhood from artist haven to international destination can be steep. A newer anointed hotspot might follow the same path.



JUNE 1992 The cover of New York magazine officially declares Williamsburg "The New Bohemia."



THE 1990S Galleries and trendy restaurants begin to arrive, including the Galapagos gallery, the L Cafe and the Miss Williamsburg Diner, shown above in 2000.



MAY 2002 There is an uptick of babies and strollers in the neighborhood.

MAY 2005 Parts of Williamsburg are rezed from industrial to residential.



2010 Condo owners start moving into the Edge, on the waterfront.



2011 East River Ferry Service begins to the North Sixth Street terminal.

anybody cool would live in Ridgewood. But it's happening."

Mr. Mahler has many artist friends who have moved to the neighborhood in the past few years, paying from \$1,200 to \$1,600 for two-bedroom spaces like his own. Despite the lure of neighboring Bushwick, he expects their numbers to increase. "Bushwick has a lot of wind in its sail," he said, "and people who live here end up hanging out in Bushwick a lot. Ridgewood is still a hidden gem. It's not the hippest neighborhood. But it's getting there."