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Gordon Matta-Clark, Suzanne Harris, and Tina Girouard: The 112 Greene Street Years
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Installation view, Gordon Matta-Clark, Suzanne Harris, Tina Girouard: The 112 Greene Street Years at Rhona Hoffman Gallery.

One of the first non-commercial alternative art spaces in New York City, 112 Greene Street was an epicenter of artistic experimentation for much of the 1970s. The six-story industrial building in then-blighted Soho was a place where collaborations among young artists resulted in innovative cross-pollination between disciplines. This exhibition celebrates and explores the interchange between three artists—Gordon Matta-Clark, Suzanne Harris, and Tina Girouard—who shared a mutual fascination with space and sculptural installation. Gordon Matta-Clark is undoubtedly the most famous of the three, but it is Suzanne Harris who steals the show.

Harris was originally trained in medicine, and some of the work in this exhibition reveals her enduring interest in scientific systems. On view in the main space of the gallery, Harris's watercolors and pastels calculate the wavelengths of the color spectrum; her glass sculptures, triangular sheets of carefully arranged plate glass, cast a subtle geometry of sight-specific shadows on the surrounding wall.

Harris was also a pioneer of performance and contemporary dance. On the gallery's second floor, visitors can watch a short video that documents two of her performance-based works. Titled *Flying Machine* and *The Wheels*, both pieces are elegant experiments with gravity and kinetic energy. In *Flying Machine*, two participants dangle from the ceiling, strapped into harnesses attached to an interconnected rigging system. One person's movements caused a reaction in the other person's harness, sending limbs swinging and long 1970s hair styles dangling. In *The Wheels*, participants were encouraged to climb onto and into a series of four giant wheels that were connected with interlocking gears. Their body weight set the wheels in motion; a perfect distribution of weight would bring the wheels to a standstill.

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Not only do these pieces embody many of the concepts that characterized 112 Greene Street—collaboration, participation, interdisciplinary experimentation—but they also look like they were a hell of a lot of fun. Disorienting, maybe, but delightful. Harris employed simple physics to playfully illustrate the give and take of relationships and communities.

Suzanne Harris died just a year after Gordon Matta-Clark, but her work hasn't benefited from the same kind of savvy estate management that has secured him a place as one of the most important artists of his generation. Hopefully, exhibitions such as this one can help revive her reputation.

Rhona Hoffman Gallery has been exhibiting Gordon Matta-Clark's work since the artist's death in 1978. This show doesn't feature any of his monumental "cut" pieces—entire sections of walls and floors carved out of old buildings—but it does showcase a selection of photographs, drawings, and intimate sculptural work that demonstrate his fascination with achieving new perspectives in the built environment.

Visitors entering the gallery are greeted by Glass Brick, a solid rectangle of brown broken beer bottles Matta-Clark fused together, as well as a series of photographs of weathered exterior walls and layered graffiti. The show also includes a collection of loosely rendered ink drawings of trees and colorful, abstracted "energy forms."

Upstairs, sharing space with Harris's Flying Machine/The Wheels, is Matta-Clark's 1972 video Open House. The piece features dancers from The Natural History of the American Dancer (a dance group Suzanne Harris co-founded) moving in and around the interior of a dumpster Matta-Clark had fitted with found building materials. The work functions as a social commentary on the plight of the neighborhood's homeless population (before waves of gentrification transformed the area in later decades), and also underscores the community-minded nature of 112 Greene Street. The people in this video weren't just Matta-Clark's collaborators—they were his friends.

Tina Girouard's colorful installations, constructed from panels of wallpaper, linoleum, and fabric, are scattered throughout the gallery's exhibition areas. Designed to demarcate smaller spaces inside the vast industrial expanse of 112 Greene Street, these works were also intended to evolve as performance artists interacted with them. Her work complements pieces by Harris and Matta-Clark, emphasizing a common interest in alternative materials and interdisciplinary practice.

"Gordon Matta-Clark, Suzanne Harris, and Tina Girouard: The 112 Greene Street Years" is on view at Rhona Hoffman Gallery until August 9. Summer gallery hours: Tuesday through Friday, 10:30—5:30.

Note: 112 Greene Street eventually became White Columns, a non-profit organization that still exists today. Now located in the West Village, White Columns stages exhibitions and presents projects, lectures, screenings, and events free of charge.