



The Art Students League of New York



A Landmark Exhibition: An Alliance of Artists and Patrons on 57th Street

Celebrating 125 Years of the Art Students League's Landmark Home

Contact: Ken Park 917-753-8220; kpark@artstudentsleague.org

The Story of a 57th Street Masterpiece Now Open —Many of America's greatest artists have studied and taught at the Art Students League of New York. But the legendary school might not be teaching students today—indeed might not have made it into the 20th century—were it not for the vision of the men and women who worked together to develop the American Fine Arts Society (AFAS) building, the League's home on 57th Street since 1892.

From November 7 through December 4, the League celebrates the 125th anniversary of the AFAS building with *A Landmark Exhibition: An Alliance of Artists and Patrons on 57th Street*, which is free and open to the public in the League's Phyllis Harriman Mason Gallery at 215 West 57th Street.

A Landmark Exhibition chronicles the conception, construction and history of the AFAS building and its crucial role in the success of the Art Students League and—in turn—the progress of American art. The story is told through timelines, photographs, original documents, works from the League’s permanent collection, and contemporary representations of the building.



The history of the AFAS building begins with an idea from landscape painter and Harvard-trained lawyer Howard Russell Butler. It gets a crucial financial boost from philanthropist George Washington Vanderbilt II, whose eponymous gallery in the building will host major exhibitions in the late 19th and early 20th century. The building becomes a reality through the participation of members of the Art Students League and other arts organizations, and through the work of architect Henry Janeway Hardenbergh.

Over the years the building witnesses history like Thomas Hart Benton teaching Jackson Pollock, houses an influx of thousands of veteran artists on the GI bill after World War II, and becomes a player in the development of “Billionaires’ Row.”

As League Curator Jillian Russo explains, “Butler’s original idea to bring several independent art organizations into partnership to create a building with dedicated exhibition space transformed the Art Students League from fledgling art school into a cultural institution.”

Selections from the League’s permanent collection—including work by Butler himself, Arthur Wesley Dow, Allen Tucker, Kenyon Cox, William Merritt Chase, Georgia O’Keeffe, James Montgomery Flagg, George Bridgman, George Grosz, Burgoyne Diller, Will Barnet, and Peggy Bacon—help to illuminate the historical timeline.

The AFAS building was designated a New York City Landmark in 1968 and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. As founder Howard Butler said of George Vanderbilt’s crucial donation, “No gift ever did so much for the art of this community.”

Ms. Russo curated *A Landmark Exhibition* in collaboration with League archivist and historian Stephanie Cassidy. The exhibition design was created by Grace Han, in partnership with Voll Inc.

Gallery Hours:

Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.;

Saturday & Sunday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

About the Art Students League of New York

The Art Students League of New York is one of America's premier art schools. It was founded in 1875 by artists, for artists, to provide affordable studio-based art education of the highest quality. Great artists have trained, taught, and exhibited at the League throughout its rich history. Classes, lectures, workshops, exhibitions, and professional development programs continue the League's legacy of supporting students who intend to make art a profession, and cultivating a spirit of community among artists. Among its prominent instructors and students, the League counts Thomas Eakins, Frederic Remington, Reginald Marsh, Georgia O'Keeffe, Norman Rockwell, Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg, Mark Rothko, Jacob Lawrence, Louise Nevelson, and Ai Weiwei, among many others. Today, thousands of students each year study drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking and mixed media at the League. www.theartstudentsleague.org