

WALLACH/Everyone wants to get in

By Amei Wallach

IN THE two-and-a-half years since public money and private ardor transformed a 19th-Century romanesque white elephant of a red brick school building into a vast honeycomb of barely renovated artists' studios, P.S. 1 has become a try-out space for the avant garde. P.S. 1, in Long Island City, is to bigtime art what Philadelphia is to Broadway plays. A play can still founder after playing Philadelphia, but oh what odds had to be overcome to get there in the first place.

The artist who is chosen to rent space, at \$30-\$80 a month, in the studio wing of P.S. 1 is the artist who is on the way. The constant traffic of dealers, critics, curators, collectors and the curious that moves through P.S. 1 corridors (two subway stops from the Museum of Modern Art, residents like to point out) leads to exhibits in prestigious galleries, sales, reviews and the start of a personal public. The artist who is chosen to show in the exhibit wing of P.S. 1 has the prestige of having been seen in a well-regarded location and the joys of working in a positively extravagant amount of space.

All of which also makes P.S. 1 an especially happy experience for art lovers. Good artists, arriving artists, innovative artists from around the world are eager to work and to display their wares at the former public school at 46-01 21st St., Long Island City. There's a constant hum of activity, a heady exchange of ideas and plenty for anyone to see during the public hours of 1-6 PM, Thursday through Sunday. Enter the tiny stair hall, absurdly painted metallic gold over brick, turn left, and there is the artists' wing. Floors slope, layers of ancient paint flake off the walls, the stairs are utilitarian at best. Behind doorways on the three floors are artists' studios, and if the doors are open, it generally means the artists are in residence and visitors are welcome. A recent foray discovered Marty Johnson amidst the jumble of his colorful, funky, Rube Goldberg-like constructions; on another floor, Tadeusz Myslowski painstakingly examined how real life distorts basic geometry.

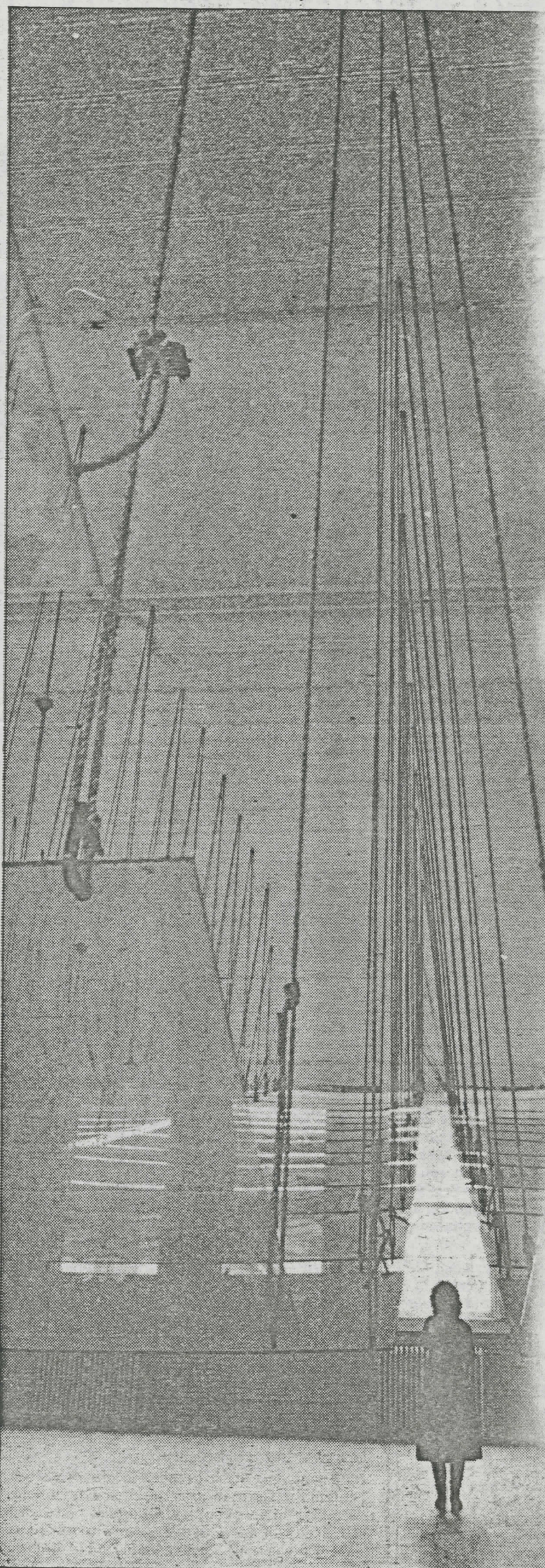
On the other side of the building, in the public display space, a cornucopia of exhibits, on view through Jan. 27, spills over with many of the new ideas from the art world's more rarefied regions.

The main exhibit at the moment is one organized by The Detroit Institute of Fine Arts called "Image & Object" that, at one and the same time, explores how recognizable images and objects are creeping back into sculpture and introduces some fine unknown artists from west of the Hudson to New Yorkers. There are New Yorkers in the show, too, such as Scott Burton who makes furniture out of sculptural materials and then arrange the pieces in ways that suggests different possibilities for human relationships. But among the new and the out-of-town, one artist stands out for the sheer abandon of his imagination and his *chutzpah* in challenging most of the new media available.

That artist is Terry Allen of Fresno, Calif., whose head dances with visions of wrestlers and rodeo champs, of marital mayhem and wasted lives. He gets his message across with startling sculptures, found objects, videotapes, performances, and a tiny reconstructed wrestling ring in which a great deal of real and symbolic action takes place. As it does at P.S. 1.

Among the other exhibits is Bruce Chao's "Suspended" which has taken over the entire auditorium on the third floor of the public display wing. "Suspended" has the feel of a suspension bridge. It consists of several dozen plates of glass suspended from the ceiling by ropes. At each end of the room, the panels are held about 12-feet high. But they swoop down until they are only perhaps three feet above the floor in the auditorium center. They are smudged with whitewash, and give off the only partially transparent quality of a gray New York day. It is pos-

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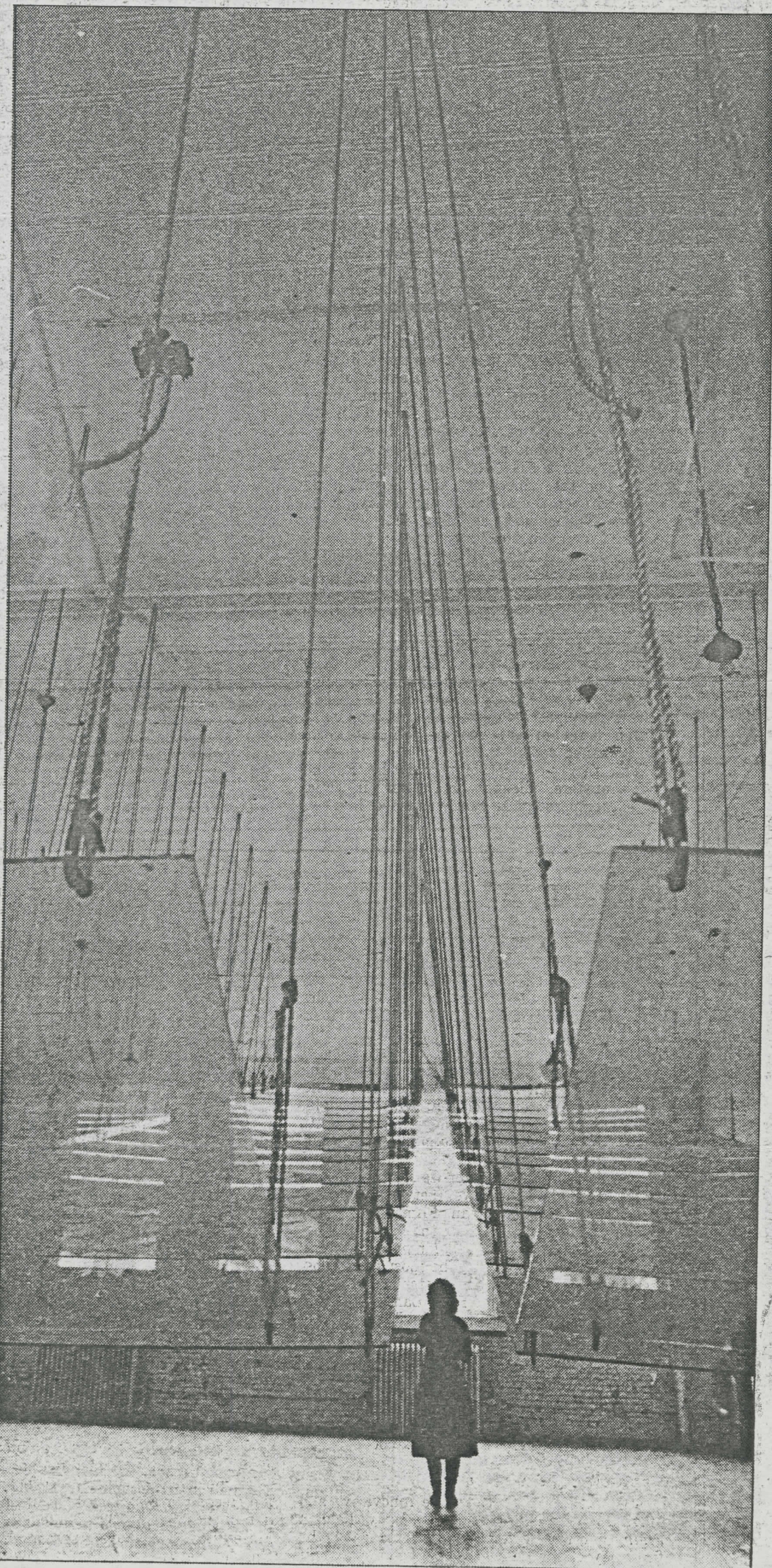
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Artistic ferment at P.S. 1

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sible to look above them, as if one were flying, or up at them as if they were crushing down as a fog might. It's a handsome and evocative piece, and the glass panels overhead add a not altogether unpleasant hint of danger.

In a neighboring room, Bruce Cunningham is showing his installation drawings. They take up the entire wall on opposite sides of the long room. Both sides consist of gigantic circles, some smudged, some filled in, some empty and textured, but all joined and shaped the way school children used to be taught to write in penmanship classes. The circles on one wall are in black and white; on the other side they are in bright colors.

A corner room has on its walls the artist's proofs for "Another Country Tune," a limited edition book with poems by Brad Gooch and etchings by Frank Moore composed in the ambitious, offhand spirit that Larry Rivers and Frank O'Hara institutionalized in the 1950s.

Jennifer Cecere has transformed one of the big, forbidding classrooms into a gaudy, intimate place she names "In My Room." No sternly minimal intellectual pretensions there. Just too much texture, color, humor and a surfeit of marzipan *gemütlichkeit*. The rug is a pink square painted on the floor, the overstuffed sofa is covered in an orgy of sequins and buttons and beads and lace and plastic squiggles seemingly laid on with a cake decorator. Ditto the curtains, and the tablecloths, and the wall hangings and even the antimacassars everywhere.

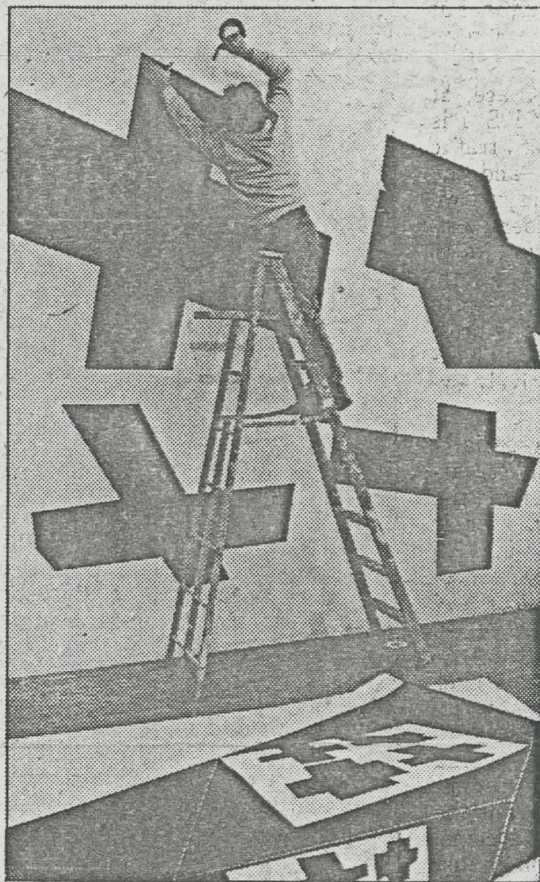
Irene Whittone, in her "Model One—Work at School Classroom 208," also takes a real room as her departure point. She, however, keeps in mind that it was once a schoolroom and has lined scuffed, old fashioned schoolroom furniture on the floor facing a blackboard with the word "Education" written on it in gold. She is interested in glimpses of the scene. First, there is the way one sees the real scene through an opening in the badly whitewashed door. Then, there are reprises of aspects of the scene, seen in slivers through small, framed constructions in which most of the surface emulates the whitewashed door.

It's a fitting counterpoint for Rachel Rabinovich's austere "Cloister II: Shelter" in which tinted, tempered glass panels intersect in a con-

stantly changing clashing of lines and volumes.

Craig Stockwell uses glass, too, only his panels are curved and shaped and stuck in carefully pleated sand like so many mirages in the desert, meeting, merging, obliterating each other and then opening up again and becoming transparent. It is an especially engaging and poetic image.

Also on view is an exhibit of stamps created by artists. In addition, a group called Friday Architects has contributed an analysis of towns, houses and possessions and what they mean (including a room filled with the objects an 86-year old woman owned when she died). ■



Newsday Photo by Naomi Lasdon

Tadeusz Myslowski in his P.S. 1 studio.

IN SHORT

Movie memories

They were designed to appear behind glass at movie palaces, or to cover fences at construction sites, or to decorate subway stations. Teenagers hung them over their beds; college athletes used them as wallpaper in the locker room. Movie posters are still around, of course, still one of the easiest ways to advertise the latest on the silver screen. But the old posters, like the old movies, are different. Redolent with nostalgia, bulging with fantasies about a time that only existed in some director's imagination. Right now, through Feb. 9, a special exhibition and sale of motion picture posters is on view at PosterAmerica, 174 Ninth Ave. (between 20th and 21st Streets) in Manhattan. Film posters, like so many other leftovers from the past, have become collectibles—these sell for prices ranging from \$75 to about \$3,000. The most prized possessions in the show are the poster for the original European release of Fritz Lang's "M" and the original American poster for "The Maltese Falcon," which, of course, starred Humphrey Bogart. Elsewhere in the poster market, Sotheby Parke Bernet did even better than it had expected to do with its first specialized auction of posters last month. Toulouse-Lautrec's "Eldorado: Aristide Bruant" brought \$26,000 and his "Divan Japonais" went for \$20,000.

Exploring an enigma

About once each decade, the innovative and enigmatic German artist Joseph Beuys holds a seminar in his country. One took place on the final day of his Guggenheim Museum exhibit about a week ago. Beuys believes his work, like

like fat and felt, can change the world by short-circuiting ideas about society and environment so that people have to think for themselves and thus attain true personal freedom. His talks are usually occasions for free-for-all discussions and the recent one at the Guggenheim was no exception. On the podium with Beuys were a sociologist, an economist and Thomas Messer, the Guggenheim's director. They wanted to explore the meaning of Beuys' work outside the realm of art. Beuys obliged by maintaining, "I am not an artist. I have never been an artist." An audience member made a plea for the "freedom to explore sensual pleasures," and Beuys applauded. Someone else complained that the panel's very intellectual exploration of individual freedom and economics was "boring," and, by the time it was over, half the audience had left. Those who remained got Beuys' point: it is up to individuals to change and they in turn can change the systems that appear now to rule their lives.

Sketches

Stephanie Brody Lederman, familiar to Long Island art enthusiasts because of her long association with the Central Hall Gallery in Port Washington, is currently showing her work at the Kathryn Markel gallery, 50 W. 57th St., on gallery row in Manhattan. . . . The photographs that Walter Krajicek shot of "Children of China" on a trip there during April, 1977, are on view at Guild Hall in East Hampton, where the exhibit has been extended to Jan. 26. . . . Since 1977, nearly 150 works have been donated to the Heckscher Museum in Huntington. A selection of those works by the likes of Larry Rivers, Moses Soyer, Romare Beardon, Henry Moore, Charles Demuth and Arthur Dove went on view

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