

# CONCEPT DOCUMENT



Fellowships for collaboration and synthesis

*Housed in the home of Robin Middleton (architectural historian & author) & Ruth Lakofski (sculptor & poet) & studio of W.G. Walton (Fashion designer, painter, sculptor, & poet).*

## Concept:

### **Mission:**

*In recognition of the unique collaborative personal and professional life that Middleton/Lakofski/Walton produced, it is my recommendation that 408 East 13th Street - the collections housed within, and all endowment monies be utilized to form a new cultural non-profit organization: STUDIO 408. STUDIO 408 will provide a physical location as well as a programmatic “safe zone” for new experimental & collaborative artistic and scholarly work. 408 East 13<sup>th</sup> Street will be utilized as the administrative and public venue of the STUDIO.*

### **Strategy:**

1. The primary component to the formation of STUDIO 408 is the establishment of highly competitive stipend fellowships dedicated to artists who embody a unique collaborative artistic process.
2. The secondary component to STUDIO 408 fellowships is to provide housing and studio space.

*To realize this component, the purchase of the property adjacent to the West of 408 is recommended. [Name of the property is unknown.]. Of course this has financial as well as long term stewardship consequences. For finances, see discussion below.*

3. Studio 408 fellows will receive a stipend to allow the individuals the ability to concentrate on the artistic collaborative work free from everyday financial concerns.
4. STUDIO 408 will present artistic collaborative work to the public through publicized, unique events (which take place at 408 East 13<sup>th</sup> Street) as well publications. *Space considerations are discussed below.*

## **STUDIO Organization:**

*Board:* A non-profit corporation is to be established whose fiscal purpose is twofold. First, to oversee the stewardship of the physical artifact of 408 East 13th Street and its collections, and second, to provide governance, financial and administrative oversight to the STUDIO 408 fellowship program. An International Board of Directors should be organized who's creative and financial backgrounds will keep the mission of STUDIO programmatically outwardly focused. The formation of this Board is time sensitive in that individuals who have had a direct relationship with any of the three occupants of 408 need to be culled for both information as well as emotional & financial support.

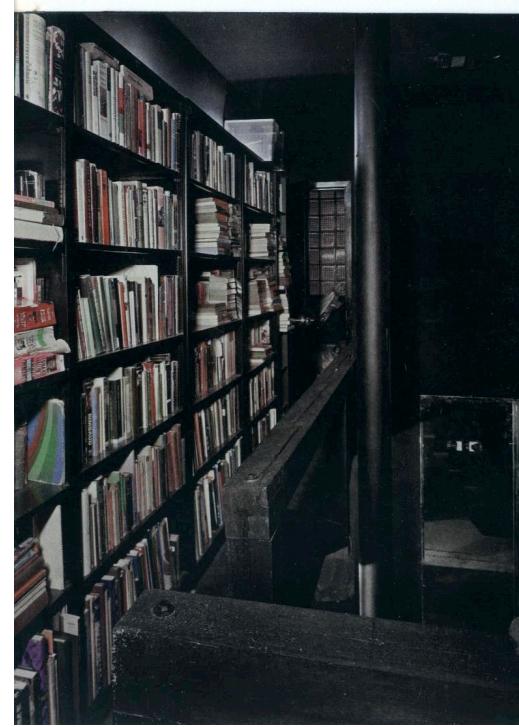
*Administration:* Once all preparatory evaluation has taken place, and the organizational structure has been established - a small administrative staff should be hired to handle the day to day operations of STUDIO, public programming and fc&s specifics. It is recommended that an Executive Director and part time assistant be hired as a first step in building the administrative staff. More detailed staff responsibilities should be added as financing is obtained. It is of special note that I suggest (due to the nature of the RM/RL/WGW collaboration and fluid relationship) that great care be given to allow freedom and fluidity in the administrative and programmatic choices of the staff leadership. [Not sure what this means or implies; but I guess, given the "fluid" nature of this enterprise, neither are you?] Given the unique mission of STUDIO 408 , it is to be expected that interactions among the Board of Directors, staff, and fellows be established and built into the very charter and articles of incorporation.

## **Funding:**

To fund the long term architectural maintenance of 408 East 13th Street, as well the long term provision of the stipend fellowships a significant endowment is to be established.

1. At the present a \$ 2 million dollar endowment has been established from the estate of Ruth Lakofsky and is held in Trust.
2. A financial feasibility study should be conducted to ascertain the optimal endowment size to accommodate the full STUDIO 408 program, Administrative staff with associated building maintenance costs.
3. Earned revenue should be included in the funding package.
  - a. STUDIO 408 should seek and provide rental space for celebrations and programming which include non-traditional events and concepts.
  - b. Some consideration should be made for the possibility of several apartment rentals within the STUDIO building (s). In my experience, income from such rentals is extremely valuable. It is also possible to offer an apartment to the Executive Director as a benefit to employment.





## *Opportunities and Discussion:*

### **Architectural space.**

408 East 13th street was a tile factory, ten a 3 story garage & 2 apartment building which were renovated in 2002 to function as a single residence and artist's workspace for the owners' use. The structure contains all new electrical, HVAC (gas Boiler), plumbing and steel columned interior with exterior load bearing walls (masonry and poured in place concrete). Total floor area of 2,522.25 sq. ft.

408 East 13th Street presently is an inhabited dwelling. As it stands - it provide remarkable visual poetry describing the lives of Middleton/Lakofski & Walton. Although the spaces are medium large, the furnishings and artwork occupy a majority of the spaces. As a supportive environment for the fellowship program, maintaining 408 as an interpreted house museum will severely restrict the use of the building. Moreover, there is limited potential for the property's use solely as an historic house museum. Financial support, volunteer staffing and visitor interest are all in decline internationally for such sites. In addition, the social history of the STUDIO 408 occupants' is appealing primarily to a specific portion of popular culture, thus resulting in limited growth.

In terms of the architectural fabric of 408 – It is suggested that a complete building fabric survey take place so that a long term maintenance plan can be established. This information will guide the long term stewardship of the organization. The Board of Directors can integrate facility maintenance with programmatic needs and produce a more comprehensive financial picture.

*Discussion should take place on the following issues:*

1. 408 as an Historic House Museum - maintain the house and all contents in as naturally domestic a state as possible. Interpreting the house & contents in either a manner that appeals to the widest audience OR targeting the interpretation to a very specific niche interest group.
2. Maintaining portions of 408 in a domestically natural state while utilizing other areas for exhibitions and public programs.
3. Emptying 408 out entirely of its contents and utilizing the spaces for STUDIO public and administrative purposes.
4. There is not enough space in 408 alone to accommodate numerous dormitory sized apartments nor associated studio spaces for the fellowship participants. It is suggested that the western adjoining structure be investigated as an auxiliary space to 408 - 408 could contain public functions and the adjoining structure could contain apartments and studio spaces.
5. Review of the building in terms of public egress and code compliancy for a public space use.

**RM Library.** The Middleton Library exists as a physical artifact. The library has the potential to be utilized in the execution of the fc&s. A complete cataloging of the contents should take place with special attention paid to any RM handwritten notes or paper insertions. Although valuable as a cultural and social artifact, the Library duplicates much of the existing collections of major New York City University and Public Libraries. Its space may be put to better use as communal lecture, presentation, and programming venue.

*Discussion should take place on the following issues:*

1. Cataloging of the Library
2. Storage of the collection
3. Removal of the collection
4. Utilizing the collection as part of the fellowship program

**RL Psychiatry papers.** The set of papers kept by RL in reference to her consoling sessions provide a unique perspective on the creative process. Utilizing these papers

as part of the fellowship program could enhance an understanding of the creative and collaborative process. These papers (without viewing them before writing this concept document) may prove to be one of the most valuable aspects of STUDIO 408's work.

### **RL Library.**

The RL has been donated to another organization. It is suggested that the collection be catalogued in order that its volumes be dovetailed with the RL psychiatry papers. If any of the books have significant marks and or notations – they should be retained and held as part of the STUDIO working collection.

**Performance Space:** A unique performance space exists in the basement level of 408. It was designed as a theatrical stage & fashion shows. At present it is utilized as storage space. Special attention should be paid to the functional use of this architectural volume in conjunction to the fellowships. The potential to foster collaborative theater and performance art as part of STUDIO 408 would enhance the mission of fostering a safe creative space.

**Existing Art Collection:** A complete and prioritized cataloguing of all art objects should take place. This assessment should include artwork of the original three occupants as well as pieces produced by other individuals.

*Discussion should take place on the following issues:*

1. As a living creative center, STUDIO 408 should consider not becoming a collection based institution, but rather focusing all resources upon future creative activates and artworks. Establishing this precedent at the outset will potentially free the organization in the future of treasuring the objects that were produced rather than the creative spirit that produced them.
2. Consideration should be paid to the concept of selling artworks on the open market to fuel the endowment procurement.
3. If the mission of STUDIO 408 is to hold collections then a discussion of which items to keep and which to de accession should take place. In addition, the discussion should include the purpose of such a collection.

