

Objects Conservation Studio, Kostow Greenwood and others work on \$5.7 million Nevelson Chapel restoration

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Nevelson Chapel at Saint Peter's - Manhattan, NY

MANHATTAN, NY A critical restoration for Louise Nevelson's 1977 masterwork Chapel of the Good Shepherd is now underway. The work is colloquially known as Nevelson Chapel.

Objects Conservation Studio's Sarah Nunberg and students from Pratt Institute are treating overpainted wood surfaces with an innovative cleaning system developed in Florence, revealing Nevelson's original paint for the first time in decades. A multidisciplinary

team, including Jane Greenwood of Kostow Greenwood Architects, Michael Ambrosino of ADS Engineers, Michael Henry of Watson & Henry Associates, Ryoko Nakamura of Loop Lighting and Sarah Sutton of Sustainable Museums, has designed and will introduce an integrated system to regulate heating/cooling/humidity, filter UV light and provide for energy-efficient LED lighting — all while respecting the historic architecture of the room.

The \$5.7 million initiative is supported by foundations and individual givers, including an early phase funded by members and friends of Saint Peter's. The project recently received two gifts. A \$250,000 grant from the Henry Luce Foundation is enabling initial art conservation. The National Endowment for the Humanities' Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections grant program is providing \$350,000 for an environmental management system. Other foundation and leadership donors will be unveiled in the fall.

Commissioned by Saint Peter's Church for midtown Manhattan's ground-breaking corporate/church/public complex formerly called Citigroup Center (completed, 1977; landmarked, 2017), Nevelson Chapel remains key public space in a neighborhood where Privately-Owned Public Spaces (POPS) have been allowed by the City to evolve into retail or office space since their original designations. In this way, the Church's commitment decades ago to invest in the City as it neared bankruptcy in the 1970s finds fresh expression today in protecting Nevelson Chapel as it becomes one of fewer and fewer spaces attending to, as Rabbi Joshua Heschel put it, "being human amid skyscrapers."

Born in Ukraine in 1899, Nevelson's family fled pogroms there and eventually settled as immigrants in Rockland, Maine. Much in the spirit of her own life story as a discard of Europe, Nevelson collected broken furniture, toilet seats, baseball bats and other objects — what her dealer, Pace Gallery's Arne Glimcher, called "the detritus of society" — from the streets of New York and assembled them as comprehensive sculptural installations intended to be grand and mysterious: "Moon Garden," "Palace," "Feast," "Chapel."

Nevelson was, herself, grand and mysterious — her storied persona, termed "the Nevelson," replete with three sets of fake eyelashes, floor length fur coat and bold jewelry. She was one of the first recipients of the National Medal of the Arts, bestowed on her in 1985 by President Ronald Reagan to honor her creative genius and her personal achievement.

Nevelson Chapel is the artist's only remaining complete environment always open to the public. Restoration of this New York City treasure hidden in plain sight will conserve an important piece of cultural heritage for the future and secure Nevelson's legacy as one of the most influential and celebrated sculptors of the 20th century.

The public can catch a glimpse of restoration to the sculptures until construction begins on or near October 15. Nevelson Chapel will re-open for further conservation Spring 2019.