

Home Doubling As Art Gallery

Many \$4 million apartments are as carefully staged for sale as a Broadway show, but the home and studio of Lenore Tawney, an artist known for her huge sculptural weavings, was left looking very much like an artist's studio, full of her work hanging from 11-foot ceilings.

Ms. Tawney, who died in 2007 at the age of 100, had lived and worked in her 47-foot-wide loft on West 20th Street, off Fifth Avenue, for nearly three decades.



The co-op on West 20th Street owned by artist Lenore Tawney, whose huge weavings help decorate the loft.

She so filled the space with her art that it was decided to leave it looking more like an art gallery than a home.

"You can feel the spirit and the artistic life the loft has had when you come in," said Kathleen Mangan, the director of a foundation set up by Ms. Tawney that will receive the proceeds of sale. "We thought it is kind of a nice benefit to have that special feeling during the sale."

In some ways the loft itself has become a piece of art. The walls and wooden floors are gallery white, except for one column that has been covered in panels of gold and silver leaf, the silver now tarnished to a deep shade of black.

Ms. Tawney was trained as a sculptor in Chicago, and moved to New York in the late 1950s living in a series of downtown lofts that at the time weren't legal living spaces. The result was she was forced to repeatedly move, Ms. Mangan said.

During the 1960s, she was considered a pioneer in transforming weaving, long regarded as a craft, into what many began to regard as fine art, by pulling and twisting woven tapestries into three-dimensional objects, notable for their open spaces as well as the actual woven fiber. Her work is in the permanent collection of many major museums.

Some of these large tapestries hang from the high ceilings throughout the space. Some will eventually be sent out to museums or for exhibitions or will be placed into storage before the loft is sold, Ms. Mangan said.

The 4,000-square-foot co-op is being listed for \$3.95 million by John Harrison of CORE. He said he considered staging it "with a couple of couches here and there," but concluded that "the space itself became a work of art."

At the same time, he noted that, despite features like a wall of nine huge windows, the fifth-floor co-op is largely unfinished, with a small glass-walled bedroom, a modest kitchen and a bathroom. The bedroom is now used to store rolled-up works by Ms. Tawney.

"This is really a bring-your-own-architect kind of space," he said.

Another full-floor apartment one floor below has been on the market since June for \$4.9 million. That space is far more finished, including a huge wall of bookcases, but it has been subdivided into two apartments that could be turned back into a single apartment.

A half-floor apartment on the sixth floor is also on the market for \$2.25 million, creating a potential opportunity for an affluent buyer to create a 10,000-square-foot space for about \$11 million, plus renovation costs.



*Bryan Derballa for The Wall Street Journal
The building exterior.*