

For struggling artists, it's cash to crash at SoHo pad

ART MAY imitate life, but a pioneering performance artist is trying to make sure the high cost of living doesn't drive all the artists out of downtown Manhattan.

Arleen Schloss has turned her Bowery loft into a salon for struggling artists who, for \$50 a night, can crash on one of the four futons she keeps at her pad or in the two tents she pitched on her balcony.

"I prefer nice people," said Schloss, a brassy 65-year-old blond. "Nice people can't afford that much money."

What Schloss is doing hark-

EXCLUSIVE
BY SIMONE WEICHELBAUM
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

ens back to the days before SoHo was called SoHo and when Manhattan was a mecca for artists from around the world.

"She is keeping the spirit alive by offering people a place to stay inside a location of New York art history," said Bruce Wands of the School of Visual Arts.

And Schloss has been doing it since 1989, when real estate types saw gold in artists' lofts

and yuppies started displacing the young painters, sculptors and filmmakers.

Schloss' pad — dubbed "A's" — quickly became the place to be for those in the know.

Art superstar Jean-Michel Basquiat, who was a nobody when Schloss first met him, jammed on a keyboard in the back of her loft.

Wallpaper created by pop artist Roy Lichtenstein graces the walls of Schloss' sole shower.

"He used to do bathrooms," said Schloss about the famed pop artist.

And Schloss' loft became the launching pad for noted Native American artist James Luna, 57, who crashed with her during one of his first gallery openings two decades ago.

"I came to town as an unknown," he said. "Now it is 2009 and I am in a group show at the MoMA. That says something."

Schloss is picky about who spends the night. Only friends, or friends of friends, can book with her. And there is a long list of rules to follow.

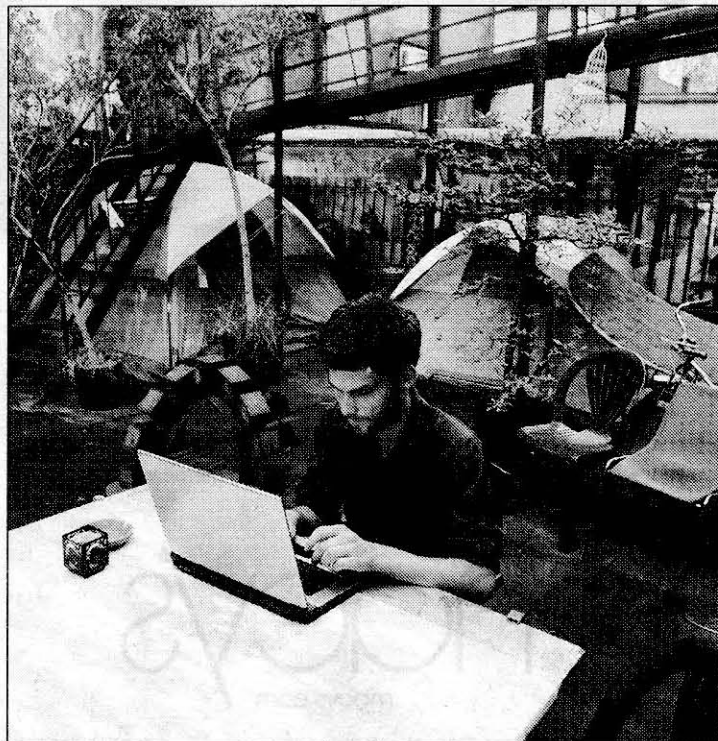
"Make sure the door is locked at all times — this is NYC, where if you don't pay attention someone will steal your undergarments while you are still wearing them," one rule states in bold letters.

Technically, what Schloss is doing runs counter to city Buildings Department rules, which state that "only up to three unrelated individuals are allowed to occupy the space."

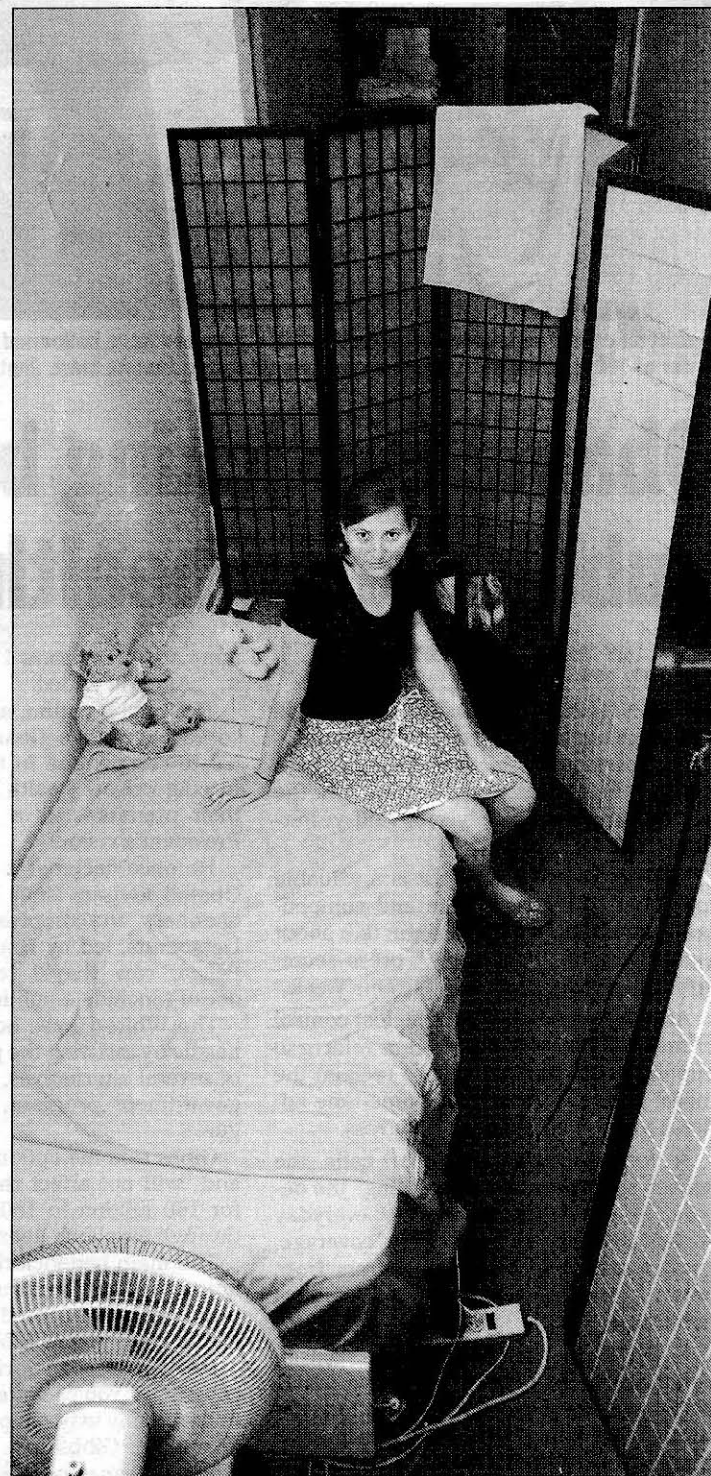
Schloss, who has been battling crippling multiple sclerosis in recent years, said she's not presiding over a squat.

"It is a happy, creative space for art," she said.

simone@nydailynews.com



Philipp Modershon, 23, a student from Berlin, is staying in a tent (rear left) in an outdoor courtyard at "A's" on the Bowery in SoHo.



Hannah Lutzenberger, 18, a student on vacation from Germany, sits in her screened-off room at "A's" in SoHo. Photos by Jefferson Siegel