One of the first items I was charged with as Co-Director was finding a space for Skowhegan in New York City. At a practical level, this seemed feasible: real estate is familiar territory. At a philosophical level, the challenge was formidable: how could we appropriately locate Skowhegan in New York when our base understanding of its history, program and purpose is inextricably tied to the physical and phenomenological experience of being on campus?

As we worked with the New York Committee (Trustees & Governors) to parse out priorities (use, space, location, price) and conferred with members of the Alumni Alliance over programmatic objectives, a consensus coalesced over snacks at Joyce Kozloff’s loft: we needed a kitchen. For if New York was going to serve as the off-site home for the extended Skowhegan family, a metaphorical “hearth” would be crucial to its success.

Dozens of properties were considered, but West 22nd Street inspired immediate confidence despite being a pretty big mess (in previous lives it was an elevator repair shop; a tile and flooring store; and a photo processing lab). The 1907 warehouse building has a sense of history; a strong relationship to the street; and an open flow across two floors that offers a flexible framework for our programmatic and administrative requirements.

From the beginning we spoke of the space in familial terms, as a “home” for Skowhegan. The plans, illustrated at right, are beginning to be realized. They include the requisite kitchen, communal gathering points, a quiet nook, and invite a transformation that anticipates Gaston Bachelard’s axiom that all inhabited environments assume qualities of the domestic. Certainly, this is true at Skowhegan where we have made agricultural buildings our own, and it is also a fitting description for Alan Wanzenberg’s approach to architecture and his intuitive understanding of how people occupy their surroundings. With his colleague Seky Gomez, Alan has designed a porous and integrated space on West 22nd Street that we envision as a place to continue the active exchange found on campus. Without Alan or Rick Prins, who spearheaded and shepherded the purchase, and the full support of the Boards, this new addition would not exist.

When we move, many people will say that you cannot really know what Skowhegan is unless you go to campus. And while that is true, it will also be true that the experiences offered up through Skowhegan’s outpost will forge a meaningful connection to its distinct mission and purpose. This is crucial to our future. It has been challenging for Skowhegan to demonstrate what it does, or who it is, outside of campus, and over the past year both Trustees and Governors have stepped forward to ensure that Skowhegan’s contributions are more broadly understood. Don Moffett, Bibi Gober, and David Beitzel are particularly effective in articulating the necessity of Skowhegan in the broader art world, and under their leadership an extended circle came together through the Awards Dinner to affirm that Skowhegan matters. This commonality defines and empowers us, and will enable this community—which is as complex and loaded as the various contributors set forth in this Journal— to survive and to thrive.