

They paved people's homes to build a parking

BY JULIE SHAPIRO

The artist who lost her home and studio when bulldozers slammed into 213 Pearl St. nearly 18 months ago could only laugh when she heard that the site had been turned into a parking lot.

"I don't know whether to laugh or cry," said Colette, who goes by one name only. "I'd rather laugh."

Colette and fellow tenant Jim Teschner were forced to leave 213 Pearl St. in the summer of 2007, when adjacent construction rendered the building unsafe. The Lam Group then bought the damaged building and demolished it later that year rather than repair it, reportedly to make way for a 660-room Sheraton Hotel.

But the hotel has been on hold since last year because C.E.O. John Lam could not get a loan for the over \$200 million project. So, like many other out-of-luck developers, Lam recently converted the site into a parking lot, several blogs reported last week. Lam did not respond to a request for comment.

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"What happened is tragic," Colette said, "and it's even stranger now that they haven't done anything [with the site].... It's ridiculous, but I don't want to dwell on it."

Colette's apartment at 213 Pearl St. was more than just the space she used to produce her art — the space itself was art. Colette created different environments in her atelier and molded matching personas for herself, marking stages of life and inspirations.

When Colette was evicted at a moment's notice in 2007, she had to leave behind costumes, wigs, fabric, portraits and antique furniture. A last-ditch preservation effort later that year failed to save her home, an 1832 warehouse that was part of the city's first foray into international trade. During the demolition, Colette staged performance art pieces in front of the building.

After leaving 213 Pearl, Colette moved briefly to Chelsea, then farther uptown, and now works out of a studio in DUMBO. On the wall of her studio, she wrote, "Home is where my art is."



Colette, an artist who lived in 213 Pearl, dressed as a pirate to protest the demolition of her building.