

## ARTTALK

### KANSAS CITY, THERE THEY WENT

At Max's Kansas City, the room with a **Dan Flavin** red light sculpture became known as Bucket of Blood. Steak, lobster, and drinks like the "Just Water" were on the menu, served with sex and rock and roll. The bar and restaurant on Park

Avenue and 17th Street in New York, which operated from 1965 to 1981, was a hedonistic sanctuary for artists, poets, models, and musicians.

"It was a place where we sat around and got drunk and

told each other lies," sculptor **John Chamberlain** says.

Now an exhibition, book, and feature-length documentary are laying down a record of the party. The film, which is in production, looks closely at the fashion and music scenes at Max's, in interviews with **Tommy Hilfiger**, **Betsey Johnson**,

**Alice Cooper**, and **Lou Reed** (whose Velvet Underground was sort of a house band). The sense of exclusivity among New York's beatniks was essential to Max's success. "It was not the kind of place you could buy your way into," Reed has said. "You either belonged or you didn't belong."

It was Max's owner, **Mickey Ruskin**, who decided who got in and who got to take pictures. **Anton Perich**, who worked as a photographer for *Interview*, had Ruskin's OK, and contributed the bulk of the nearly 200 photographs in the show, opening on September 15 at Steven Kasher Gallery in New York. **Willem de Kooning** smokes a cigarette in a white pinstripe jacket; Chamberlain sits at the wheel of his truck, outside the restaurant. The cool feel of the place also comes through in snapshots of **Candy Darling**, **Mick Jagger**, and **John Waters**, as well as in **Elliott Landy's** photo of **Andy Warhol** presiding at his booth, next to **Janis Joplin**, with a large salad on the table, untouched.

Artists famously saved Max's in 1971, when Ruskin organized an art auction to raise funds to keep the restaurant out of bankruptcy. The auction catalogue appears in the book *Max's Kansas City: Art, Glamour, Rock and Roll*, which Kasher edited and which Abrams Image is releasing on September 1. Those who donated works included **Roy Lichtenstein**, **Robert Rauschenberg**, **Sol LeWitt**, **Malcolm Morley**, and **Richard Artschwager**. Not only did Max's stay in business, it raised enough money to redecorate. —**Minji Kim**



Warhol film actress **Andrea Feldman** in front of Max's, 1971.

