



# The Last Avant-Garde: The Making of the New York School of Poets

*David Lehman*

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## **The Last Avant-Garde: The Making of the New York School of Poets** David Lehman

A landmark work of cultural history--now in paperback--by one of our best critics and chroniclers: the story of how four young poets reinvented literature and turned New York into the art capital of the world.

Greenwich Village, New York, circa 1951. Every night, at a rundown tavern with a magnificent bar called the Cedar Tavern, an extraordinary group of painters, writers, poets, and hangers-on arrive to drink, argue, tell jokes, fight, start affairs, and bang out a powerful new aesthetic. Their style is playful, irreverent, tradition-shattering, and brilliant. Out of these friendships, and these conversations, will come the works of art and poetry that will define New York City as the capital of world culture--abstract expressionism and the New York School of Poetry.

A richly detailed portrait of one of the great movements in American arts and letters, **The Last Avant-Garde** covers the years 1948-1966 and focuses on four fast friends--the poets Frank O'Hara, James Schuyler, John Ashbery, and Kenneth Koch. Lehman brings to vivid life the extraordinary creative ferment of the time and place, the relationship of great friendship to art, and the powerful influence that a group of visual artists--especially Jane Freilicher, Larry Rivers, and Fairfield Porter--had on the literary efforts of the New York School.

**The Last Avant-Garde** is both a definitive and lively view of a quintessentially American aesthetic and an exploration of the dynamics of creativity.

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