

An illustration of the Manhattan Bridge in New York City, rendered in a style reminiscent of early 20th-century architectural drawings. The bridge's two massive stone towers are the central focus, with their Gothic-style arches and intricate steel suspension cables clearly visible. The bridge spans across a body of water, with a cityscape of brick buildings and a few sailboats in the background. The sky is a pale, hazy green. Overlaid on the entire scene is a white grid consisting of several concentric, overlapping circles on the left side and several vertical lines on the right side. The text 'CITY COURANT' is centered in the upper half of the image, with the American flag integrated into the letter 'O' of 'COURANT'.

# CITY COURANT

FALL 2017

MUSEUM  
OF THE  
CITY  
OF NEW YORK

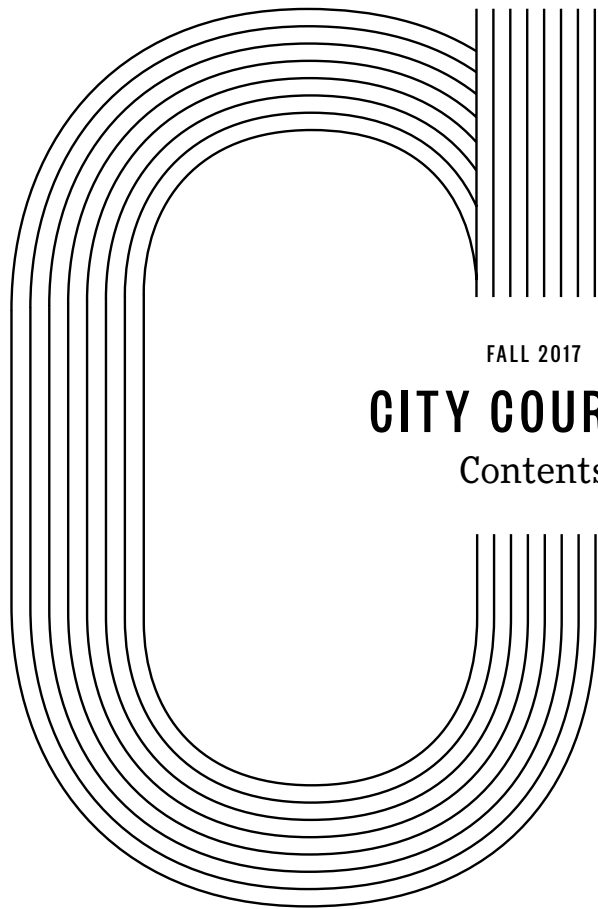
RICHARD K FOX



# **CITY COURANT**

The Journal of the  
Museum of the City of New York

**FALL 2017**



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# CITY COURANT

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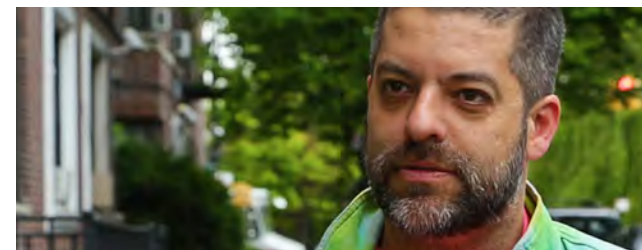
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## From the Director

This is my first opportunity to address you from within the covers of the *City Courant* since I became director of the Museum in January 2016. In this themed issue we celebrate a major milestone: *New York at Its Core*, the first comprehensive permanent exhibition in the Museum's 94 years. This unprecedented survey of 400 years of New York City history employs the latest in interactive technology, inspired storytelling, and a rotating selection of hundreds of objects drawn from our collections as well as loans from other institutions. It has already won multiple awards and widespread critical praise, testifying to years of hard work by more than 250 talented staff members and consultants.

In its design and themes, it mirrors the vision of our founders, who saw the Museum not solely as a repository for art and artifacts, but also as a forum for spirited discussion and debate about the present and future of our city. To that end, *New York at Its Core* devotes two galleries to the past, as you would expect in a museum. But what we believe is unique is a third gallery, the *Future City Lab*, which deals with the challenges the city will have to tackle if it is to continue to survive and thrive as a world capital.

I must pause here to make special mention of Hilary Ballon, who was the guiding intellectual force behind the *Future City Lab*, as well as a key figure more broadly in the creation of *New York at Its Core*. Sadly, Hilary passed away in June as this issue was in preparation. Her death is a great loss for this institution, which she served as a trustee and as guest curator of two of our most ambitious, original, and well-attended previous exhibitions, *The Greatest Grid* and *Robert Moses and the Modern City*. Our deepest condolences go out to her family. We were fortunate to be able to interview her for *City Courant* just weeks before she died. (You can read more about this remarkable scholar, teacher, and eloquent speaker and writer on page 66). It is an honor to dedicate this issue of *City Courant* to Hilary's memory.

*New York at Its Core*, expansive as it is, can encompass only a fraction of the stories the Museum has to tell. A packed schedule of temporary exhibitions, public programs, special events, school programs in our F. A. O. Schwarz Education Center, and a growing body of online content provide us with



Installation view of  
*Port City, 1609-1898*  
Thomas Loof for Museum of the  
City of New York

other opportunities to take deeper dives into New York's past, present, and future. This journal is itself another important expression of our role. It was the brainchild of Elizabeth Rohn Jaffe, who served as its first editor. We are grateful to Elizabeth and her husband, Robert, for their vision and ongoing commitment to this important publication.

Like the city that is our inspiration, this institution is an ever-evolving work in progress. We may finally have a permanent exhibition, but we are not resting on our laurels. With so many stories to tell, we continue to present new exhibitions and programs that reflect our city in all its dynamism and diversity. I invite you to come to the Museum in person to revisit your personal favorites and to see what is new. And then to return again and again.

*Whitney W. Donhauser*

Ronay Menschel Director and President of  
the Museum of the City of New York



## The Editor's Desk

This issue of *City Courant* is notable for several reasons: it is a themed issue wholly devoted to our landmark permanent exhibition, *New York at Its Core*; it marks my debut as editor-in-chief, replacing the irreplaceable Elizabeth Rohn Jaffe; and with this issue we welcome Madeline Rogers as executive editor and Susan Johnson in a new role as director of publications. I am also a member of the curatorial team for *New York at Its Core*, so it is thrilling for me to have an opportunity to explore the exhibition's themes and content in the longer format that this journal allows.

To that end, we have populated this issue of *City Courant* with New Yorkers who take center stage in *New York at Its Core*. They include the 19th-century street painter Nicolino Calyo; Lew Leslie, Adelaide Hall, and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, who collaborated to bring *Blackbirds of 1928* before Broadway audiences in the 1920s; and Jennie June, one of the city's earliest known transgender residents. Looking to future challenges and opportunities, our interview with Hilary Ballon allows us to thank and honor a guiding light behind *New York at Its Core* and, in particular, its most unique and visionary feature: the *Future City Lab*. And we probe how the Museum's F. A. O. Schwarz Center is using the exhibition to teach, inspire, and beguile new generations of young history explorers.

Interleaved between the features you will find two-page spreads highlighting the exhibition's major themes: money, diversity, density, and creativity—"key words" that provide an intellectual framework on which to hang our story. Here again, as throughout *New York at Its Core*, New Yorkers themselves have their say, celebrating the city in their own voices. Last but not least, "Object Lessons" throughout the issue highlight artifacts that evoke the continuities and changes that New Yorkers have lived with for more than four centuries.

New York has long been a beacon of hope for the world, a city that has faced innumerable challenges and bounced back, a city at once exhausting and exhilarating. *New York at Its Core* is our tribute to the city we love. Enjoy!

Installation view of  
*World City, 1898–2012*  
Filip Wolak for Museum of the  
City of New York

Steven H. Jaffe  
Editor-in-Chief

# WHAT DEFINES NEW YORK?

The Museum's new permanent, three-gallery exhibition poses the question "What Makes New York New York?" *New York at Its Core* answers with four key words that have long defined the city.

## MONEY

New York has always been a money town—a fierce marketplace and global financial engine. A place of both great opportunity and inequality, the city has also pioneered reforms to temper the hardships created by its competitive economy.

## DIVERSITY

The power of New York's economy has drawn people from around the world. The resulting diversity has caused social conflict, but New York has also been a model of cross-cultural interaction and tolerance.

## DENSITY

A defining feature of New York, density is both an asset and a challenge. The concentration of people fuels commerce and culture, while the stresses of the crowded city have spurred innovations to make New York more livable.

## CREATIVITY

New York's potent blend of money, diversity, and density has sparked creativity across all spheres of life. Creativity drives New York's relentless change and energy, attracting yet more money, diversity, and density, and continually redefining the urban condition.

These forces have shaped the daily experience of generations of New Yorkers, and of those who continue to embrace both the daunting challenges and vast opportunities this city offers. You will meet some of those intrepid and visionary souls in the following pages: a small representation of the many characters who populate the galleries of *New York at Its Core*. Their stories, achievements, and struggles provide a lens through which to view the many meanings of these key words and the city they describe.

**Sarah M. Henry, PhD**  
Deputy Director and Chief Curator



One thing I am attached to about New York is that it is always changing.

Sharon from video installation  
*Then & Now & Then*  
by Neil Goldberg

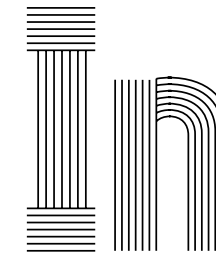


# CRIES OF THE CITY

NICOLINO CALYO AND HIS STREET CHARACTERS

Steven H. Jaffe

Figures 1–11, clockwise from top left, are described in the text of the article.



In 1835 an unusual immigrant arrived in New York City with his wife and three children. Nicolino Calyo (1799–1884) was a political exile, a cultured Neapolitan in an era when New York’s Italian population numbered only a few hundred, and a classically trained artist who earned

his living with brush and pigment. Given his education and background as a landscape painter, it is unlikely that the newcomer could have predicted the future that awaited him in New York, where in a few years he would be portraying Gotham’s gritty peddlers, cart drivers, and chimney sweeps.

Gathered under the title *Cries of New York*, Calyo’s most famous and cherished work comprises a series of vivid watercolor depictions of street characters, illustrating how artistic creativity, moneymaking, and ethnic and racial diversity converged in Manhattan’s densely thronged streets and marketplaces. More broadly, his 50 years in New York also show how the growing and varied metropolis allowed Calyo to invent for himself a hybrid career that mixed private and public patronage, “high” and “low” genres, and commissioned works for discerning individuals as well as crowd-pleasing urban spectacles.

Calyo created *Cries of New York* in the early or mid-1840s as three sets of nearly identical watercolor images of Manhattan vendors, cartmen, and other tradespeople, apparently to be displayed in conjunction with written texts of the “cries” they shouted or sang as they solicited customers. Today, 112 of these paintings are in the collections of the Museum of the City of New York, the New-York Historical Society, and the Yale University Art Gallery, while a few belong to other institutions or private collectors. Calyo was never a particularly sophisticated painter; his landscapes, faces, and human figures often approach the formulaic quality of folk art or caricature. But his keen eye, the charm and color of his style, and his sensitivity to the urban scene have left us with images that evoke New York’s political culture during the Jacksonian era—the so-called “age of the common man”—when universal

suffrage for white men and an expanding urban economy bred a popular faith in the abilities and dignity of ordinary working- and middle-class city dwellers.

This self-confidence—both the artist’s and his subjects’—seems evident, for example, in Calyo’s watercolor of charcoal cartman C. McDougoln, who raffishly adorned his vehicle with an advertisement for himself as “The Biggest [sic] Rogue in the World,” along with the motto “Honesty is the best policy” (opposite). In the 1840s, New Yorkers burned charcoal in domestic furnaces and lanterns, and vendors and deliverers of the fuel were a familiar sight. A similar self-respect beams from the face of another unnamed man delivering ice from Rockland Lake, at a time when slabs of frozen water cut from upstate lakes during winter were packed in sawdust to minimize melting, and then shipped to New York City dealers and consumers who used it to cool drinks and preserve food (fig. 2, p. 10). Social equality between petty retailer and customer is suggested in Calyo’s watercolor showing two men chatting or arguing over a table of oranges and lemons imported from the Mediterranean and sold from street carts. In a sly detail, Calyo has labeled the box of oranges under the vendor’s stand with the inscription “Napoli per New York” (Italian for “Naples for New York”) suggesting the shared itinerary of the fruit and the artist (fig. 5, p. 10).

Laboring men increasingly dominated the city’s expanding municipal workforce, and Calyo showed them in these civic roles as well. Firemen, in particular, were celebrated as heroes, not just in paintings, such as Calyo’s depiction of a red-shirted fireman and a well-dressed fire company foreman, but also on stage, in the pages of newspapers, and soon by lithographers such as Currier & Ives. While in the 18th century the city’s volunteer fire companies had included a broad constituency of the city’s “mechanics” and “middling” men—craftsmen, shopkeepers, and even some professionals—by the 1840s, the companies took on an increasingly plebeian identity. Neighborhood firehouses became working-class social clubs and political bases for New York’s Democratic, Whig, and Native American parties. As such, fire companies often functioned as street gangs, beating up rival voters during elections or brawling with each other for the honor of putting out a fire while the house in question burned down. Nevertheless, the era’s popular image-makers glorified them, an acknowledgment of their vital public service and perhaps also their political power. Calyo was one



Nicolino Calyo  
*The Charcoal Cart*,  
1840–1844  
Watercolor on paper  
Museum of the City of New York,  
Gift of Mrs. Francis P. Garvan,  
55.6.12

of the first to do so. The urgent, dramatic stances of his two firemen—echoing classical figures by painters Nicolas Poussin and Jacques-Louis David, whom he had probably studied at art school in Naples—foreshadowed the flattering treatment accorded Gotham’s “Fire Laddies” over the next several decades, even after a professional force replaced the volunteer companies in 1865 (figs. 3 & 9, p. 10).

Far more neutral is Calyo’s portrait of a police officer, *The Watch Man* (fig. 1, p. 10). Holding a nightstick and wearing a leather helmet, this watchman may have been one of the cart drivers who had long formed a political bloc in the city, and held paid, part-time appointments from the mayor and Common Council, as members of the city watch. But by the mid-1840s—with an explosion of crime, violence, riots, and accidents driven by population growth and social stress, and in the wake of complaints about the unreliability and corruption of these untrained men—there were calls for their replacement by a full-time, uniformed, professional police force modeled on London’s bobbies. The reform was enacted in 1845, and a force populated by native-born Protestant cartmen and other laborers began to give way to a police force dominated by Irish immigrants. Calyo’s watchman was probably painted as the new, professionalized force was either contemplated or put into effect, and may be more a nostalgic



image of a vanishing figure than a “snapshot” of a current city functionary.

Calyo also documented an emerging industrial economy that intersected with street peddling. In his painting *The Mead, Ginger, and Root-Beer Cart*, the uniformity of the soft-drink bottles loaded on a one-horse wagon evokes an incipient world of factory production, mass marketing, and mass consumerism in which New York’s booming population of natives and immigrants was simultaneously the entrepreneurs, wage laborers, and customers (fig. 4, p. 10).

Two views of young boys selling newspapers testify to another relatively recent development of urban life: the penny press. “News-boys” first emerged in New York in the 1830s when new printing technologies, an increasingly literate urban population, and innovative approaches to writing and promotion all converged in the rise of the first truly mass-produced American newspapers, sold daily to thousands of consumers on the city streets. In each of Calyo’s renderings, a boy is hawking *The Sun*, the nation’s first successful penny newspaper, launched by printer Benjamin Day in 1833 with a recipe of “spicy” stories that included crime and sports reportage, distinguishing it from most of the sober sixpenny news sheets that preceded it (fig. 6, p. 10). One of the boys (above) is also selling *The Whip*, a scandal sheet that, in language that seems veiled today but was shocking and titillating in the 1840s, detailed the alleged sexual transgressions of New Yorkers. Was Calyo drawing a contrast between childhood innocence and adult vice to imply that street vending was no proper activity for New York’s children? We cannot be sure. In another painting, a young boy in tattered clothing sells boxes of friction matches, another inexpensive, mass-produced consumer item vended in the streets. Like the newsboy, the poor match boy and match girl would become New York City icons through the rest of the 19th century (page 19).

Calyo’s portraits of working children evoke the less positive and more anxiety-provoking aspects of a changing urban



above  
Nicolino Calyo  
*The Newspaper Stand*,  
1840–1844  
Watercolor on paper  
Museum of the City of New York  
Gift of Mrs. Francis P. Garvan,  
55.6.3

opposite  
Nicolino Calyo  
*The Strawberry Girl*,  
1840–1844  
Watercolor on paper  
Museum of the City of New York  
Gift of Mrs. Francis P. Garvan,  
55.6.17



economy. By the 1840s, a flood of European immigrants and rural Americans—mostly unskilled and semiskilled—crowded into the city’s poorest neighborhoods to work for piece rates or low wages in manufacturing or domestic service. In this context, several of Calyo’s paintings show Jacksonian New York to be simultaneously a place of freedom, equality, and mobility for working and “middling” white men, but also a place that kept some New Yorkers in poverty, giving rise to growing class tensions.

Consider, for example, Calyo’s pictures of street women. By his era, the notion that women from “respectable” families would toil for pay inside or outside the home was becoming taboo among the city’s expanding middle class of businessmen, professionals, and clerical workers. (By contrast, in the Dutch and English colonial eras, New Yorkers such as Sara Kierstede and Mary Alexander had been able to enjoy mercantile careers without sullyng their reputations or family standing.) By depicting women street vendors—*The Market-woman* and *The Strawberry Girl*—Calyo called attention to the thickening social line separating them from middle-class society. The elderly market woman vending vegetables—possibly a poor city dweller or a farm wife from nearby New Jersey, Long Island, or still-rural northern Manhattan—cuts an uncouth figure as she puffs on a tobacco pipe in an era when smoking, once

enjoyed by women as well as children, was becoming, at least in urban “polite” society, exclusively a man’s privilege (fig. 11, p. 10).

More ambiguous is the strawberry vendor, a trimly dressed adolescent girl or young woman coyly gazing over her shoulder toward the viewer (left). As contemporary adult viewers would have known, female street peddlers were sometimes also prostitutes. Calyo’s *Cries* echoed paintings and engravings handed down from the cities of early modern Europe, where “strolling” women and girls were often assumed to be selling more than the flowers or fruits they carried. The existence of this so-called “frail sisterhood,” which grew to an estimated 7,860 women and girls in New York City by 1855, was viewed by many

middle-class and wealthy citizens as a threat to morality and decency, and a depressing sign that America's grand metropolis was duplicating one of the worst scourges of London, Paris, and other large cities. Indeed, in 1836 the murder in Lower Manhattan of a prostitute named Helen Jewett by a young clerk, Richard Robinson, was one of the first circulation-building sensations for the penny newspapers. Commercialized vice was a by-product of an expanding urban economy in which many unskilled women from the American countryside, Ireland, or Germany had trouble surviving on their low pay as servants or industrial "operatives," while footloose men had money to spend. Is the clean, unpatched, stylish clothing worn by Calyo's strawberry girl an allusion to the relatively higher incomes some prostitutes could command, as well as an advertisement of her true vocation? His depiction may be innocent of double entendre, but the larger context—that street labor was a mark of potential female shame—is inescapable.

Calyo's depictions of African-American street characters provide us with one of the few pictorial documents of mid-19th-century black New Yorkers, while also touching on the poverty and racism that beset their community. Slavery ended in New York State in 1827, but job and educational discrimination, segregation, or exclusion from the city's institutions, and a state law that kept all but a handful of propertied black men from voting, burdened the lives of the 15,000 free people of color living in the city and surrounding towns in Kings County, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island. So did a pervasive caricaturing of African Americans as grinning, simple-minded "Zip Coons" and "Jim Crows,"

as purveyed in minstrel shows on the stages of Bowery theaters, in penny newspapers, and in popular New York lithographs and joke books. Calyo himself contributed to this emerging stereotype, painting several portraits of eye-rolling, happy-go-lucky black "dandies," dancers, and banjo players on Manhattan's streets.

But unlike most other white artists of his era, he also painted black New Yorkers in a way that stripped away patronizing assumptions and took their predicament seriously. His *Butter and Milk Man*, one of the city's relatively few black tradesmen



above  
Nicolino Calyo  
*The Hot Corn Seller*,  
1840–1844  
Watercolor on paper  
Museum of the City of New York  
Gift of Mrs. Francis P. Garvan,  
55.6.2

opposite  
Nicolino Calyo  
*The Butter and Milk Man*,  
1840–1844  
Watercolor on paper  
Museum of the City of New York  
Gift of Mrs. Francis P. Garvan,  
55.6.10

or transport workers in an era of fierce racist discrimination, appears to be as self-possessed and ordinary as the white drivers Calyo depicted (opposite). More somberly, the facial expressions and body language of two black street workers, *The Hot Corn Seller* and *The Chimney Sweep at Rest*, are among the most memorable in Calyo's repertoire. The female vendor of boiled corn on the cob, one of the most popular street foods of antebellum New York, stares out at the viewer with a look that might be woeful, angry, bewildered, or exhausted (left). The chimney sweep is a young black boy, an apprentice, wrapped in a ragged blanket and trying to ease his fatigue on the

stoop of a townhouse (fig. 10, p. 10). In New York, with its thousands of chimneys and fireplaces, chimney sweeping was one of the lowest paying, most unpleasant, and most dangerous of trades. Consequently, it was left to poor black men and boys to do (just as in London, it had been left to Irish immigrants and other poor laborers). Hired by white householders, adult masters pushed young boy apprentices up narrow, winding chimneys to clean out ash and soot with a brush, a scraper, and their hands, resulting in frequent wounds, accidental deaths, and exposure to severe respiratory and skin illnesses, including cancer. The trade's harshness was partly alleviated in the 1820s by the invention of patented mechanical cleaning devices that could be pushed down a chimney from the roof level, eliminating the need to employ climbing children. Indeed, Calyo also portrayed the adult sweep George Cousin, who carries such a device coiled in a sack on his back (fig. 7, p. 10). But some master sweeps continued to employ boys to climb, and *The Chimney Sweep at rest* remains one of Calyo's most arresting images.

Its mood may well have been influenced by the empathy embodied in earlier versions of *New York Cries*, published by Samuel Wood (1808) and Mahlon Day (1825), both Quakers and members of the city's anti-slavery Manumission Society. Such sympathy also surfaced in a poem accompanying an

engraved adaptation of Calyo's resting sweep published in an 1846 book, Frances Osgood's *The Cries of New-York*:

Sweep! Sweep! in rags and cold,  
The poor—the lonely sweep behold!

Beneath the poem and the engraving, a printed commentary asserts that “the poor sweep . . . as he follows a useful and indispensable occupation, should not only be treated kindly but be also well paid for his labor. In this city the business of sweeping chimneys is confined to colored men and boys, although in London white men and boys are thus employed.”

Calyo was working in a longstanding genre when he painted these hardworking New Yorkers. Printed images of urban street vendors “crying” their wares went back at least as far as the early 16th century, when an anonymous French woodcut artist issued the *Cries of Paris*. Artists and printmakers of Nuremberg, Cologne, Vienna, Bologna, and Rome followed suit, and around 1600 the first known *London Cries* was published in a broadside portraying 38 different street characters, ranging from shoe peddlers to fishmongers. Over the next 250 years, multiple versions of *London Cries* appeared as broadsides, serial prints, or in book form, some of them by distinguished artists such as Thomas Rowlandson. Originally intended for adults, in 1754 the genre was adapted for one of the first illustrated children's books in English, *The Cries of London Engraved and Sold by J. Kirk, in St. Paul's Church Yard*, and thereafter *Cries* became a staple of children's literature. By 1808 the genre had crossed the Atlantic to New York, where bookseller Samuel Wood sold and repeatedly reissued *The Cries of New-*

*York*, considered to be the first American picture book for children, with illustrations by local engraver Alexander Anderson. In 1825 bookstore owner Mahlon Day published *The New York Cries in Rhyme*, also intended for children, and was still reissuing it in 1836.

Not only did Calyo draw on this tradition and its conventions in the form of his *Cries* paintings; he himself also turned to the printing press. In 1846 publisher John Doggett Jr. came out with a new juvenile book version of *The Cries of New-York*, with poems by Frances S. Osgood and 15 engravings “Drawn from Life by a Distinguished Artist.” A popular sentimental poet, “Fanny” Osgood is mostly remembered today as a friend

*below*  
Nicolino Calyo  
*George Cousin the patent chimney sweep cleaner,*  
1840–1844  
Watercolor on paper  
Museum of the City of New York  
Gift of Mrs. Francis P. Garvan,  
55.6.6

*opposite*  
Nicolino Calyo  
*The Match Boy,*  
1840–1844  
Watercolor on paper  
Museum of the City of New York  
Gift of Mrs. Francis P. Garvan,  
55.6.26



and possibly a paramour of Edgar Allan Poe, then living in Manhattan. Ten of the book's images are unmistakably based on Calyo watercolors, as reinterpreted (with varying degrees of fidelity) by an engraver named Harrison. Did Calyo produce his sets of watercolors with publication in mind, perhaps even as drafts or demonstration pieces for the book's engraver? Or did Osgood or Doggett happen upon Calyo's watercolor *Cries* and decide to adapt them as accompaniments to Osgood's poetry? Or, perhaps, did Calyo make and sell the watercolors following publication of the book that included engravings

based on his sketches? We do not know, but in any event the book demonstrates how artists could find gainful employment in the nation's emerging literary and publishing center.

Calyo's knowledge of the European street cries tradition can probably be attributed to his artistic training in his native Naples; beyond that we know little about his early life. He left behind almost nothing in his own words, and the major biographical sources—a flurry of obituaries appearing in American newspapers after his death in 1884—offer details that

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**Calyo, unlike other white artists of his era, painted black New Yorkers in a way that stripped away patronizing assumptions and took their predicament seriously.**

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may be inaccurate or embellished. What seems certain is that Nicolino Calyo was born in 1799 in the Kingdom of Naples in southern Italy, where his father served as an army officer. The Calyos may have been an aristocratic family, the Vicomtes di Calyo of Calabria, although the lineage has proved hard to trace. As a boy or young man, Nicolino entered the Academy of Naples to train as an artist. His life changed dramatically in 1821, when liberal revolutionaries tried but failed to overthrow the reactionary Ferdinand IV, King of Naples. Although the

academy enjoyed royal patronage, Nicolino and his wife, Laura, sided with the rebels. They joined an exodus of liberal Neapolitan émigrés to the island of Malta, where the couple taught drawing and needlework and raised three children: Giovanni (later John), Elisabeth, and Joseph. By 1833 the Calyos were living in Spain, where Nicolino apparently had relatives.

The family crossed the Atlantic, arriving in Baltimore by January 1834. Politics again, this time in the guise of the First Carlist War that broke out in Spain in 1833, may have been the event that put the Calyos in motion. After brief sojourns in Baltimore and Philadelphia, the family settled in New York. Over the next five decades, with Manhattan as his base, Calyo continued to travel, touring New England and possibly parts of the American West and South, returning to Spain with his son John for a prolonged stay from 1851 to 1854, and visiting Europe again in 1866.

At least initially, Calyo secured the kind of patronage in America for which both Old World and New World artists yearned. As was the case in Europe, where painters sought

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**Printed images of urban street vendors “crying” their wares went back at least as far as early 16th-century Europe, when an anonymous woodcut artist issued the *Cries of Paris*.**

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*above*  
John A. Calyo  
*Nicolino Calyo*,  
mid-19th century  
Oil on canvas  
Museum of the City of New York,  
89.11

*opposite*  
Nicolino Calyo  
*The Lemon and Orange Stand*, 1840–1844  
Watercolor on paper  
Museum of the City of New York,  
Gift of Mrs. Francis P. Garvan,  
55.6.27

employment adorning the palaces and mansions of monarchs, aristocrats, and status-seeking merchants, Calyo found a patron in Thomas Edmondson, a wealthy Baltimore physician, horticulturist, and connoisseur. Calyo produced at least four paintings in gouache of local landscapes for Edmondson. Similarly, when he moved to Philadelphia in mid-1835, a Calyo painting of that city’s Fairmount Water Works was commissioned or bought by Joseph Saunders Lewis, merchant and chairman of the committee that financed the project. Calyo also painted multiple similar views of the waterworks, probably for sale to others. This strategy of replicating his own work to generate exposure and income would characterize his New York career as well.

Perhaps it was the prospect of patronage that initially drew Calyo to New York in 1835. By then New York was rapidly superseding Philadelphia as the new nation’s largest city, business capital, and hub of the arts—factors that were interrelated. In the decades after the American Revolution, New York took the lead in commerce, pioneering an array of business innovations that drew people, cargoes, and money to the city’s piers, warehouses, and markets. “We are rapidly becoming the London of America,” New Yorker John Pintard wrote in 1826. “I myself am astonished & this city is the wonder of every stranger.”

# Street Scenes

**The advent of photography in the mid-19th century revolutionized the way we see the world.**

By the time Nicolino Calyo was painting his *Cries of New York* in the 1840s, the first photographic portrait studios, which sprang up in the wake of the invention of the daguerreotype in Paris in 1839, were becoming popular in Manhattan. By the late 1880s, technological improvements, including dry-plate and flexible film negatives, enabled photographers to take to the streets to document the spontaneity of the urban scene. Some, like Calyo, became captivated by the city's colorful street vendors and their customers. Some made photographs that were purely artistic; others became urban crusaders, using the camera as a tool to comment on poverty, overcrowding, and child labor.

Alexander Alland (1902–1989), who captured this image of a vendor selling his wares in Lower Manhattan, clearly fell into the latter camp. Unlike Nicolino Calyo, whose motives we can only guess at, we know that throughout his career, Alland, a Crimean immigrant, was an unabashed and outspoken documentarian who believed that photography could bring about social change. Taken around 1940, this photograph was published in his first solo book, *American Counterpoint* (1943), a collective portrait of the diversity of the American populace. The book, he explained, was his attempt “to show clearly and distinctly the differences and the similarity among Americans of many national and racial backgrounds: differences in the physical appearance, customs, and cultural backgrounds; similarity in the desire for happiness, prosperity, and liberty that we all hold as an American ideal.”

Sean Corcoran, curator of Prints and Photographs

Alexander Alland  
*Asian-American Street Vendor*, c. 1940  
Photographic print from acetate negative  
Museum of the City of New York  
Gift of Mrs. Alexandra Alland,  
94.104.186



New York's booming prosperity and population also attracted artists seeking commissions from the city's merchant princes for portraits, landscapes, genre scenes, and historical tableaux. Predicting in 1823 that New York City would soon "feel the influx of wealth" from Erie Canal commerce, the painter Samuel F. B. Morse noted that "it will be advantageous to me to be identified among her citizens as a painter." Yet fantasies of lucrative careers working for wealthy patrons often surpassed the reality. Although Morse himself would go on to enjoy an impressive career as painter, professor, inventor, and cofounder of the city's National Academy of Design, after settling in Manhattan he complained, "Everyman is driving at one object, the *making of money*, not the spending of it."



Nicolino Calyo  
*View of New York,  
 Brooklyn, and the Navy  
 Yard, taken from  
 the Heights near  
 Williamsburg, 1847*  
 Watercolor on paper  
 Museum of the City of New York  
 Gift of Mrs. Arthur Douglas  
 Farquhar, 87.41

Getting New York's captains of commerce to spend their dollars on art often proved frustrating. Although Calyo billed himself as a "portrait painter" during the 1840s and early 1850s, only one commissioned portrait attributed to him—that of the family of Manhattan merchant Richard K. Haight—is known to have survived.

Yet the prosperous city offered other opportunities. Like many New York painters, to make ends meet, over a five-decade career Calyo became an artistic jack-of-all-trades, offering his services as teacher, appraiser, conservator, and painter of stage scenery. Between 1836 and 1842, he described himself in published city directories as a "professor of painting" offering private lessons. He also taught painting and drawing at the Rutgers Female Institute, the city's first institution of higher learning for women, between about 1843

and 1864. In 1867 writer Shearjashub Spooner noted that he knew "no man more competent to judge the authenticity of paintings, by what masters they were executed and to restore them when injured than my friend Signor Nicolino Calyo of New York."

Calyo's son-in-law Joseph Allegri, a scenery painter and also an Italian immigrant, may have introduced him—as well as John Calyo and Nicolino's youngest son, the American-born Annibale (or Hannibal)—to stage work in an era when New York was becoming the undisputed theatrical capital of the continent. In 1856, for example, Calyo painted drapery and the drop curtain for Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, the opening play of actress and manager Laura Keane's new 2,500-seat theater at 122 Broadway. The "Messrs. Calyo & Sons" continued

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**Over a five-decade career, to make ends meet, Calyo became an artistic jack-of-all-trades, offering his services to the public as a teacher, appraiser, conservator, and painter of stage scenery.**

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painting theatrical and operatic scenery for two premiere showcases, both named the Academy of Music—one in New York, the other in Brooklyn—until at least 1867; the sons continued doing so during the 1870s.

Calyo found his greatest opportunities for public exposure soon after his arrival in New York, thanks to the city's emergence as the nation's publishing center and to a sensational and catastrophic event: On the frigid night of December 16, 1835, a fire started in a Hanover Street dry goods store and quickly spread, demolishing 674 buildings worth at least \$18 million on 20 blocks in the heart of the city's commercial district near the East River wharves. Surveying the wreckage the next day, newspaper editor James Gordon Bennett beheld "a horrible scene of desolation. Looking down South Street . . . nothing could be seen but awful ruins. People were standing shaking their heads and stamping their feet—still quite cold—and uttering melancholy exclamations." Only two people were killed (the area was deserted after business hours), and the city's resilient economy, grounded in maritime trade, quickly rebounded, with new mercantile offices and warehouses taking the place of the gutted ruins within a year, "with more splendor than before," in the

words of diarist Philip Hone. But the memory of block after block being consumed by flames while helpless firemen tried to unclog frozen hydrants and hoses was a terrifying and unforgettable one for thousands of New Yorkers, as well as for spectators on the Brooklyn and Williamsburg shores who knew that their homes were just as vulnerable to conflagration.

In 1982 the art historian Margaret Sloane Patterson identified 22 known depictions of the Great Fire and its aftermath painted by the Italian “Signor” between 1835 and 1840, most in gouache but at least one in oil on canvas. These include views of the burning of the Merchants’ Exchange on Wall Street, Lower Manhattan’s flame- and smoke-filled skyline as seen from Brooklyn and Williamsburg (then a separate city), and a view of ruined buildings still burning and smoldering on Exchange Place the next morning. Although it has been assumed that Calyo was an eyewitness to the fire (several of his views show a man, presumably himself, sketching the fire from the roof of the Bank of America across from the Merchants’ Exchange), it is unlikely that he could have been present both in Lower Manhattan and at multiple vantage points in Kings County that night and the following morning, especially given the slow transportation of the era.

Calyo, it seems, was well prepared to paint the great fire: in Baltimore he had exhibited *A view of the eruption of Mount Desuvius in 1822, taken at night*, which, we can assume, was based on his witnessing firsthand the eruption of that famous volcano when he lived in Naples. Exactly why the multiple paintings of New York’s great fire were produced, and for what intended clientele, is unknown; clearly Calyo anticipated demand for views of one of the most noteworthy disasters in the city’s history. But he reached an even larger audience when, in 1836, the publisher Lewis P. Clover issued and sold prints of two of his fire images as adapted and engraved by the New York aquatint engraver William James Bennett.

This early foray into mass production—presumably for a fee paid by Clover and/or a cut of the price charged to “subscribers” buying the prints—placed Calyo in the vanguard of a new industry in which art was used to sell



above  
Nicolino Calyo  
*Burning of the Merchants’ Exchange, New York, December 16th & 17th, 1835*  
Gouache on paper  
Museum of the City of New York  
Bequest of Mrs. J. Insley Blair,  
52.100.7

opposite  
Calyo jumped on the craze for panoramas, such as John Banvard’s of the Mississippi, by producing several of his own.

Admission ticket,  
*Banvard’s Panorama of the Mississippi River, c. 1847*  
Museum of the City of New York  
Gift of Mr. Harry MacNeil Bland,  
50.161.126

news reportage to an urban mass market. By the 1830s, New York’s publishers of engravings and lithographs, mostly clustered in the area immediately east, north, and south of City Hall Park, were seasoned entrepreneurs of everything from scathing political cartoons and abolitionist broadsides illustrating the horrors of Southern slavery to under-the-counter pornography. Artists drafted sketches that these firms transformed into prints. The expanding metropolis was becoming an increasingly newsworthy topic, its daily dramas and scandals recounted in the pages of penny newspapers sold on street corners. A visually spectacular event like the Great Fire beckoned to artists and publishers as a potentially lucrative subject, as well as an opportunity to advertise talent. Calyo, Clover, and Bennett were not alone in capitalizing on the fire: the Museum possesses seven prints issued by other New York engravers and lithographers, including the young Nathaniel Currier, also documenting the fire’s destruction.

Over the rest of his long career, the kind of implicit social commentary so present in *Cries* seems to have been largely absent from Calyo’s work. In the mid- and late 1840s, he would turn to another genre—the popular public entertainment known as the “panorama” or “cosmorama.” These were huge landscapes painted on oversize or continuous sheets of canvas that gave viewers a life-size or larger-than-life sensation of being at the place depicted. Sometimes panoramas were

presented as static images blanketing the walls of specially designed 360-degree rotundas, such as the one opened by public subscription in 1818 in City Hall Park to show the work of John Vanderlyn and other painters. In fact, shortly after his arrival in Baltimore, in 1834, Calyo had advertised his *Grand Cosmorama*, apparently an assemblage of large paintings of scenes in Naples, Rome, Constantinople, Mexico City, Pisa, and Gibraltar (some clearly based on fancy or other artists' works rather than on direct experience), charging an admission fee of 25 cents, "Children half price." To amplify the size and grandeur of these four-by-five-foot vistas, Calyo helpfully placed "magnifying lenses" in front of them. Thirteen years later, in an exhibition hall called the Great Cosmorama at 315 Broadway, Calyo displayed his paintings of "the Bombardment and Surrender of Vera Cruz, the Battle of Buena Vista, and several other battle pieces, in which correct likenesses of Gen. [Zachary] Taylor and several other of our heroes are given." As an advertisement in the *New York Herald* noted, "The cosmorama also includes a magnificent view of Niagara Falls,

*opposite*  
 Stoppani Hall on lower Broadway was a popular venue for showing "Monster Works of Art," including some promoted by the famous showman P. T. Barnum. Calyo exhibited a panorama there in 1850.

Broadside playbill, 1851  
 Museum of the City of New York  
 Gift of Mr. Daniel W. Jones Jr.,  
 58.277.29

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## Calyo's *Cries of New York* pointed to a future in which other documentarians would similarly take to the streets to portray and classify the city's mobile street people.

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an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, views of some of the principal cities, and interior of St. Peter's, Rome." Again, the price of admission was 25 cents and half-price for children. The *Great Cosmorama's* proprietor, S. Vannucchi, Calyo's countryman, then took these Mexican War, Niagara Falls, and European scenes on the road, showing them in Philadelphia—where a newspaper claimed that they had been "visited and admired by over 50,000 persons in the City of New York"—and eventually to New Orleans, where Vannucchi resettled in the early 1850s.

Panoramas could also be displayed as a long strip of "moving" pictures unrolled on stage while a narrator described the passing sights. In April 1850, after a prolonged sketching trip down 450 miles of the Connecticut River from New Hampshire to Long Island Sound, Calyo chose Boston as the site for unveiling his panoramic painting of the river. Eight months later, after also being exhibited in Syracuse, New York, Calyo's *Facsimile of the Connecticut River* arrived in Stoppani



Hall at 396 Broadway just in time for Christmas Eve revelers to enjoy it. Here, in the city Calyo called home, it was unrolled for paying audiences at his usual admission price. An accompanying guidebook issued by the Vesey Street publishing house of H. Ludwig & Company proclaimed it (in terms that would have made P. T. Barnum proud) as "a truly national picture, a stupendous Work of Art . . . beyond all cavil, not only the largest, but the most splendid and faithfully executed Work of Art ever presented to the public." The showing of different stretches of the river was accompanied by orchestral music and punctuated by the performances of a "comic vocalist and improvisator," a "harmonist and campanilgian" (glass harmonica player and bell ringer), and a magician.

Nicolino Calyo continued to paint for the rest of his life, turning out landscapes and genre scenes, including multiple views of Niagara Falls (which he had sketched in person in 1844); Western Indian encampments (probably imaginary); and the Bay of Naples. When he died in 1884 at his home at 139 East 50th Street, he had been painting a portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte "from memory" only days before, according to one obituary.

Five decades earlier, he had embraced the opportunities the growing city offered for scraping together a career by entertaining as well as enlightening and "elevating" urban viewers. By catering to New Yorkers' fascination, delight, and unease with their city's carnivalesque street life, and immersing himself in its emerging commercial print and stage culture, Calyo demonstrated both his familiarity with neoclassical artistic traditions and his evolution away from them and into a new world. His *Cries of New York* also pointed to a future in which other documentarians—the photographers Jacob Riis, Alice Austen, Berenice Abbott, Lewis Hine, and others—would portray and classify the city's mobile street people in order to educate viewers, visually map New York's social geography, or promote the possibility of urban reform.

*Steven H. Jaffe is editor-in-chief of City Courant and a curator at the Museum.*



# MONEY

New York has always been a money town—a fierce marketplace and global financial engine. A place of both great opportunity and inequality, the city has also pioneered reforms to temper the hardships created by its competitive economy.

“Overlooking my late husband’s bonds, I find one from you. Please come and discharge [your debt] or otherwise you may expect trouble.”

Mary Alexander  
(1694–1760), merchant

John Wollaston  
*Mary Spratt Provoost Alexander*,  
c. 1750, Oil on canvas  
Museum of the City of New York  
Gift of William Hamilton Russell,  
50.215.4



“Did you come to America to see the Empire State Building? No, you came to America to make more money.”

AJ Gogia  
Taxi tutor and entrepreneur

Julie Glassberg for  
*The New York Times*, Redux, 2012



Jasmine from  
video installation  
*Then & Now & Then*  
by Neil Goldberg

I just celebrated my one-year anniversary in New York, and I celebrated by working. Which is appropriate.

A piece of sheet music and related artifacts in the World City Gallery of New York at Its Core provide a glimpse into a time when race relations played out in new ways on Broadway.

# Blackbirds of 1928

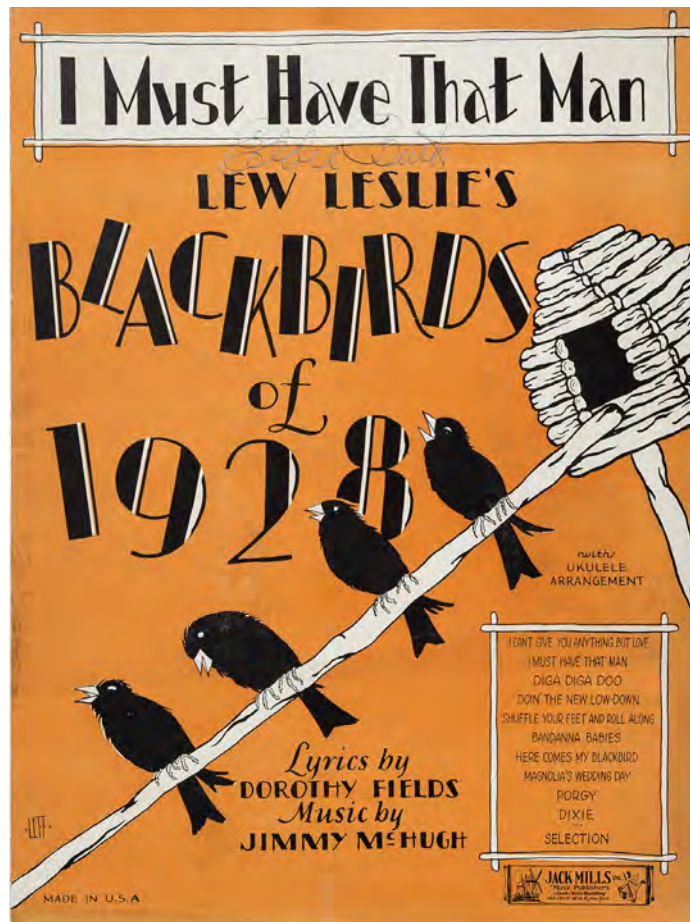
Morgen Stevens-Garmon and Steven H. Jaffe



On

May 9, 1928, a musical revue called *Blackbirds of 1928* opened at the Liberty Theatre on 42nd Street. One week later, *Variety* magazine noted that the show “started moderately . . . getting around \$6,000 in the first six performances, but should build.” In fact, by the time the show closed one year later, it had set the record for the longest running musical revue performed by an entirely African-American cast.

The Roaring Twenties was a golden age on the Broadway stage. New York had been the nation’s theatrical capital since the mid-19th century, a reflection of the city as a place of increasing wealth and investment in cultural endeavors; as the landfall for arriving European creative artists and a magnet for native ones; and as the largest single urban market for the performing arts. The prosperity and ebullience of the 1920s confirmed the primacy of the Great White Way and



previous page  
Adelaide Hall in  
*Blackbirds of 1928*  
White Studio, New York  
Gelatin silver print  
Museum of the City of New York  
Gift of Harold Friedlander,  
68.80.377

left  
“I Must Have That Man”  
Sheet music from  
*Blackbirds of 1928*  
Private collection



top  
Lew Leslie in an  
undated photograph  
New York Public Library  
Theatre Collection

above  
Florence Mills as  
Ruth Little in  
*Shuffle Along*, 1921  
White Studio, New York  
Gelatin silver print  
Museum of the City of New York,  
F2013.41.7071

its Midtown cross streets as the densest concentration of theaters and theatrical businesses in the Americas. Perhaps more significant than the amount of theatrical activity was New York’s role as an incubator of artistic products that brought together the talents and traditions of different ethnic and racial communities, generating creative experiments that often pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable and desirable in American popular culture. *Blackbirds of 1928* is an important and revealing chapter in that story.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, native-born Yankees, African Americans, and immigrants from Ireland, Germany, Italy, Eastern Europe, and China brought their own bodies of music, dance, drama, and humor to the stages of the Bowery, Grand Street, Chinatown, and lower Broadway, where they mingled or influenced each other in often complex ways. Now, in the 1920s, two groups still largely outside the mainstream of American society—African Americans and Eastern European Jews—found opportunities for collaboration on Broadway, although racism often kept their relationship an unequal one.

Lew Leslie, *Blackbirds*’s creator and producer, was a pioneer in this novel cultural melding. Born Lewis Lessinsky around 1889, in upstate New York, to Russian-Jewish immigrant parents, he found fame creating all-black musical revues.

In 1922 Leslie engaged the black singer-dancer Florence Mills and her husband, the dancer U.S. Thompson, and six “Dixie vamps” to perform on the Broadway stage in his *Plantation Revue*. Two years later came *Dixie to Broadway*, and in 1926 Leslie took his company to London to perform another revue, again built around Mills. This one he called *Blackbirds*. Leslie intended his new *Blackbirds* to make its New York debut after the London run, but Mills, exhausted from constant performing, became ill in England. Returning to New York, she died on November 1, 1927. More than 30,000 mourners flocked to a Harlem funeral home to view her coffin; tens of thousands more came to the Mt. Zion AME Church for the service and lined the streets for her funeral procession.

Mills's brief Broadway career coincided with an era of increased visibility for African Americans on the city's stages. The trend began in the mid-1890s and accelerated in the 1910s and 1920s when migrants from the American South and immigrants from the Caribbean turned Harlem into a black mecca, and performers such as Mills gravitated to New York with its perceived professional opportunities. Born in 1896 in Washington, D.C., to former slaves, Mills formed a vaudeville trio with her two older sisters while still a child and toured the country singing and dancing. In 1921 she made her Broadway debut as the star of the wildly successful musical *Shuffle Along*, the first Broadway production to be entirely written and performed by African Americans. *Shuffle Along* ran for an impressive 504 performances. Composer Eubie Blake used syncopated jazz rhythms in the songs, and lyricist Noble Sissle eschewed the stereotypical thick dialect that white songwriters usually assigned to black performers. The show featured a serious love song that ended in a romantic embrace between two African-American characters, something that had never been done before on a Broadway stage. White audiences and critics went wild for it. *Shuffle Along* brought Mills nationwide fame and prompted Lew Leslie to produce his revues as showcases for her talent.

Before *Shuffle Along*, African-American characters had been, in a sense, "present" on New York's stages, but most often as

below  
The Blackbirds Chorus,  
c. 1928  
White Studio, New York  
Museum of the City of New York,  
68.80.11808

Before *Shuffle Along* in 1921, African-American characters had been "present" on stage, in a sense, but only as caricatures portrayed by white actors, musicians, and dancers performing in blackface.

caricatures portrayed by white actors, musicians, and dancers performing in blackface. The application of burnt-cork makeup by white performers portraying stereotypical comic black characters in minstrel shows generated what was arguably America's most popular form of mass entertainment between the Jacksonian era of the 1830s and the Jazz Age of the 1920s. New York played a crucial role in the rise of this theatrical form; Thomas D. Rice, a white actor who took to the stage of the Bowery Theatre in 1833 to sing and dance his enormously popular number "Jump Jim Crow," was a key figure in the spread of the genre nationwide. Reflecting and reinforcing white racist assumptions about the alleged stupidity, shiftiness, and laziness of both enslaved and free blacks, the minstrel show evolved to include multiple stock characters: the "Master of Ceremonies" or interlocutor was often the straight man interacting with the simpleminded musicians, "Tambo" (for tambourine) and "Bones" (for bone castanets), who sat on either side of a semicircle of performers. Comedic skits were punctuated with song-and-dance numbers meant to represent "authentic" re-creations of slave behavior.



Characters spoke in a heavy dialect intended to imitate African-American speech patterns. It was a case of imitation as the sincerest form of flattery, as the genesis of minstrelsy on the New York stage had two sources of inspiration: black New York performers such as William Henry Lane, known as “Master Juba,” one of the early developers of tap dancing, and also, most likely, black laboring men who danced while working on or near Manhattan’s waterfront. By the mid-19th century, in one of the more ironic developments in American cultural history, African-American performers began wearing blackface makeup. In many parts of the country and for a very long time, appearing in the dark makeup that emphasized lips and eyes was the only way African Americans could appear on stage at all.

Things began to shift at the turn of the century, when Will Marion Cook, Bert Williams, and others brought black musical comedies to Broadway. Eugene O’Neill’s 1920 drama *The Emperor Jones*, starring Charles S. Gilpin, helped make way for serious performances by African Americans, while *Shuffle Along* in 1921 increased opportunities for black musicians, comedians, singers, and dancers.

## Reworked minstrel skits that stuck squarely to tried-and-true formulas and avoided any serious interaction between the races were the basis of the comedic scenes in *Blackbirds of 1928*.

Although Jewish immigrants were an infrequent presence on New York’s stages for most of the 19th century, by the turn of the century, when hundreds of thousands of Jews, including Lew Leslie’s parents, arrived from Eastern Europe, New York witnessed a golden age of Yiddish theater. First- and second-generation Eastern European Jews, barred from many of the city’s exclusive schools, clubs, and white-collar professions, were able to make a mark on Broadway as songwriters, producers, impresarios, and agents. In another ironic twist on the minstrel legacy, Broadway-based Jewish singers such as Al Jolson, Eddie Cantor, and Sophie Tucker gained success—and legitimacy—as truly “American” performers by donning blackface and singing “plantation,” ragtime, or blues songs for cheering white audiences.

Lew Leslie grew up in an era when New York Jews could “fit in” and create success for themselves by embracing and purveying inherited images of African Americans. But rather



opposite  
Tube of blackface makeup belonging to Eddie Cantor, c. 1912–1942  
Museum of the City of New York, 65.77.32

above  
New York actors in blackface, 1906  
Byron Company, Gelatin silver print  
Museum of the City of New York, 93.1.1.6947

seating areas) in playhouses, halls, and emerging jazz clubs across the country.

After Florence Mills died, Leslie continued to develop his *Blackbirds* revue at a newly leased club on West 57th Street, Les Ambassadeurs, where he tried out new and reworked numbers from the show on the after-theater crowd in anticipation of taking it to Broadway. For the all-black cast, Leslie engaged singer Aida Ward who had been a part of the London *Blackbirds* company. Ward was perfect for the sweet love songs and rousing gospel leads, but Leslie needed someone like Florence Mills for the more risqué song and dance numbers. He chose Mills’s young *Shuffle Along* costar, Adelaide Hall. Born in Brooklyn in 1901, Hall, like Mills, started performing locally with her sister. Her professional stage career began with a small part in the chorus of *Shuffle Along*. In 1925 she toured Europe with the revue *Chocolate Kiddies*, but she had returned to the United States and was performing on the African-American vaudeville stage when Leslie enlisted her for *Blackbirds*. The producer was also able to secure the veteran vaudeville performer Bill “Bojangles” Robinson as his star dancer. To perform the comic sketches and round out the cast, Leslie hired Tim Moore, a former boxer turned comedian. Moore was a well-known vaudeville performer before he signed with Leslie, having begun his stage career as part of a traveling minstrel troupe. Reworked minstrel skits formed the basis of the comedic scenes in *Blackbirds of 1928*; they stuck squarely to tried-and-true formulas, avoiding any serious interaction between the races for the traditional plantation scenes and Harlem settings.

For music, Leslie mixed established figures and newcomers. African-American bandleader Allie Ross was well known in

than hire only white performers to mimic blacks, Leslie was willing to foster and employ black talent. Harlem was becoming home to a growing pool of gifted black musicians, singers, dancers, comedians, and other entertainers, many of whom toured on the vaudeville circuit, usually performing for segregated all-white or all-black audiences (or biracial audiences strictly confined to different

# The Chinese Opera House

Howard McLean  
*Chinese Theater*, c. 1905  
 Oil on canvas  
 Museum of the City of New York  
 Gift of Collection of  
 Robert R. Preato, 91.76.23

**Founded in 1893, the Chinese Theater served Lower Manhattan's growing Chinatown community, which numbered between 2,000 and 4,000 people.**

Located at 5–7 Doyers Street, and sometimes known as the Chinese Opera House, it was the first permanent Chinese-language theater east of San Francisco. Like other newcomers, Chinese New Yorkers imported their own native cultural forms, including Cantonese opera, a performance of which is shown here in a turn-of-the-century painting by Howard McLean (b. 1879).

Given a U. S. law that prevented most Chinese women from joining their husbands in America, a concession to anti-immigration forces in Congress, the audience depicted by McLean is all male. Cantonese opera was a powerful reminder of home for these men who, in pursuit of work and income, found themselves 8,000 miles from their villages and towns in southeastern China.

Such traditions stood in jarring contrast to “yellowface” musicals and vaudeville acts, in which white performers donned makeup to caricature Chinese characters for white audiences in nearby Bowery theaters, much as blackface minstrels lampooned African Americans. By the early 1900s, when McLean painted this respectful scene, the city's mix of authentic ethnic theaters, restaurants, and shops piqued the curiosity of outsiders while meeting the needs of the city's diverse communities, and this theater became a popular tourist destination.

Steven H. Jaffe



the jazz clubs of Harlem and Midtown. He had gone to London with Leslie's original *Blackbirds* and was the bandleader at Les Ambassadeurs. Leslie had commissioned the young team of Jimmy McHugh and Dorothy Fields, both white, to write songs for his club, and he again turned to the pair to write for the Broadway-bound revue. Composer McHugh, a Boston native, started his career in music publishing working at one of the many firms of New York's Tin Pan Alley, the nation's premiere songwriting and music-publishing district. He had had some early success with other lyricists, but teaming with Dorothy Fields marked the beginning of an especially fruitful partnership. Fields was the daughter of the famous vaudeville star, theater owner, and producer Lew Fields, a Jew who had enjoyed enormous popularity on the Bowery and Broadway stage playing a comic German character starting in the 1880s. At just 23, Dorothy was trying to make a name for herself without relying on her father's connections. For *Blackbirds*, the duo's Broadway debut, they composed about ten songs; the most enduring, "I Can't Give You Anything but Love, Baby," went on to become a jazz standard performed by Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Judy Garland, Doris Day, Dean Martin, and Billie Holiday, to name a few. In 2014 Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga recorded it as a duet.

One song that caused a stir was Hall's solo "Diga Diga Doo." Performed with the *Blackbirds* Chorus, the number was meant to be risqué. Hall's mother found it too much so. On August 8, 1928, the *New York Amsterdam News* reported that Mrs. Hall forbade her daughter to perform the song. Leslie was able to

Tap shoes owned by Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, c. 1925  
Bronzed, mounted on wood  
Museum of the City of New York  
Gift of Negro Actors Guild of America, 51.298



## Broadway was a major force in the transformation of American popular dance during the 1920s, a change brought about by the appropriation of African-American dance steps by white performers.

get Hall to sing "Diga" the following night with the caveat that her mother would stand in the wings to insure the dance did not have too many "wiggles" in it.

No one censored the tap dance stylings of Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. Growing up in Richmond, Virginia, he began dancing outside local theaters and watering holes at just five years old. By 13 he had graduated to playing the "pickaninny" character in minstrel shows, dancing and telling jokes from the edge of the stage. It was winning a dance contest in Brooklyn in 1900 that jump-started his touring career, and for the next couple of decades he danced, sang, and performed comedic routines in vaudeville theatres around the country, usually for white audiences. Robinson turned 50 years old during his Broadway debut in *Blackbirds*, in which he charmed critics and audiences with his solo number "Doin' the New Low Down."

Whether in the form of risqué wiggles or more respectable tap dancing, Broadway was a major force in the transformation of American popular dance during the 1920s, a change brought about by the appropriation and dissemination of African-American dance steps by popular white performers. In the 1910s, white Broadway stars, such as the songwriter Irving Berlin, a Russian-Jewish immigrant, and the ballroom dancers Vernon and Irene Castle—along with black collaborators like the bandleader and composer James Reese Europe—had helped launch a nationwide dance craze rooted in black syncopated ragtime music and in steps such as the Grizzly Bear and the Turkey Trot that were already popular in working-class dance halls. The new dances delighted young white dancers while alarming reformers who worried about sexually "indecent" recreations. During the Roaring Twenties, this revolution continued, as the Charleston and the Black Bottom, originally African-American dances, reached white audiences through the all-black Broadway musical *Runnin' Wild* (1923–24) and *George White's Scandals of 1926*.

As for Bill Robinson, already a seasoned vaudeville performer, his popularity in *Blackbirds of 1928* helped pave the way for even greater success: He would go on to make 14



GEORGE GERSHWIN'S MUSICAL "PORGY AND BESS" DIRECTED BY ROUBEN MAMOULIAN

## Race as a serious issue surfaced on the dramatic stage with the opening of the play *Porgy*—later made famous by the Gershwins' *Porgy and Bess*—with its predominantly African-American cast.

films, including roles as half of Hollywood's first interracial dance couple with child star Shirley Temple in 1935. He became the nation's highest-paid black performer, honorary "Mayor of Harlem," and a global exemplar of the art of tap dancing.

By the time *Blackbirds of 1928* closed, it had run for 518 performances, the third longest-running show of the 1927–28 season, in which an estimated 12 million people saw 281 different Broadway productions. The season's most successful show, with a run of 572 performances, was *Show Boat*, a musical that also played a pivotal role in Broadway's racial history, as well as in the broader history of American theater. Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein's work redefined what was possible... for the genre by weaving songs into a coherent book and introducing serious themes, including an examination of race and morality in America through the tragic ending of two of its lead characters. Prior to *Show Boat*, so-called "book" musicals, with a single cohesive plot, such as *Good News*—the second longest-running show of the 1927–28 season—were gaining in popularity, but the form allowed for only comedic story lines.

Set on a Mississippi river boat at the turn of the 20th century, *Show Boat* tells the story of the crew and a group of performers



above  
Bill Robinson and  
Adelaide Hall in Lew  
Leslie's *Blackbirds of 1928*  
Clipping  
Museum of the City of New York,  
F2017.41.13.

opposite  
George Gershwin's  
musical *Porgy and Bess*  
directed by Rouben  
Mamoulian, c. 1936  
Postcard  
Museum of the City of New York,  
F2012.41.1

who entertain the boat's passengers. The leading lady for the show-within-a-show is Julie LaVerne (played by white actress Helen Morgan), a biracial woman who has been passing for white and is married to her white costar. When a jealous crew member reports the couple to the authorities, Julie's husband, Steve (Charles Ellis), adopts a simple ruse in order to claim that he, too, is part African American: a moment before the

police arrive, he cuts Julie's hand and swallows some of her blood. The couple avoids the charge of miscegenation, but as newly revealed African Americans, they are no longer allowed to perform on stage with whites for an all-white audience. Julie and Steve are cast out from their home on the river boat. The second act, set years later, reveals that Steve has abandoned Julie, and she has fallen on hard times. The show's other young romantic couple struggle through difficulty and are joyfully reunited in the finale, but for Julie and Steve there is no happy ending. While today's Broadway audiences have become familiar with tragic couples in musicals such as *Les Misérables* or *The Phantom of the Opera*, in the 1920s, such drama in a musical was revolutionary. *Show Boat's* integrated cast was also a rarity: when it opened in December 1927, it was the first Broadway production to feature black and white cast members performing songs together onstage at the same time.

Race as a serious issue also surfaced on the dramatic stage during the 1927–28 season. Three months before *Show Boat's* premiere, the play *Porgy* opened at the Guild Theatre featuring a predominantly African-American cast. More famous now in its adapted form as George and Ira Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess* (1935), the play *Porgy* was written by white South Carolinians DuBose and Dorothy Heyward. In the story, a disabled African-American beggar named Porgy fights for the love of the ill-used Bess. The play is interwoven with stories of other black residents of the Charleston, South Carolina, neighborhood where Porgy lives. Like *Show Boat*, the drama ends with uncertainty, in this case about Porgy and Bess's future.

*Porgy* and *Show Boat* serve as examples of how some New York producers, directors, writers, and actors were grappling with the nation's racial issues on stage at the same time that *Blackbirds* premiered. These shows, although often criticized now for their depictions of African Americans, represent a



contrast to the portrayals in *Blackbirds of 1928*. White audiences loved the minstrel-inspired scenes and sexualized dances found in *Blackbirds*, but they also enjoyed the more nuanced depictions of African Americans found in *Show Boat* and *Porgy*. As testament to the latter show's influence, *Blackbirds* included a *Porgy*-inspired number that mocked the play's serious tone. A note in the *Blackbirds* program offered "apologies to the Theatre Guild and Dorothy and Dubois [sic] Heyward."

*Blackbirds of 1928* had a complicated and, in some respects, troubled afterlife. After closing on Broadway in June 1929, the company traveled to Paris for a run of summer performances, and then went on a tour of the United States in the fall of 1929. But three of the show's stars fell out with Leslie. Bill Robinson left the show probably over a disagreement with Leslie over his salary during the European tour; comedian Tim Moore left and came back again, also following a salary dispute. In December, several weeks after *Variety* reported that Adelaide Hall was upset over the order and appearance of her name on a theater marquee when the company performed in Cleveland, she suddenly quit the show and was replaced by Harriet Calloway. Hall continued performing on the vaudeville touring circuit, but an angry Leslie ensured that she was banned from performing any of the numbers she made famous in *Blackbirds*.

Try as he might, Lew Leslie was never able to replicate the success of *Blackbirds of 1928*. In 1930 he launched his next Broadway venture, *The International Review*, again with songs by Jimmy McHugh and Dorothy Fields. Despite featuring the future standards "Exactly Like You" and "Sunny Side of the Street," the show was a flop, closing after only 95 performances. Leslie produced subsequent iterations of *Blackbirds* in 1930, 1933, and 1939, but none proved as long lasting or lucrative as the original version. The last of these, which featured a young Lena Horne, was the final show Leslie would take to Broadway. He gave up producing and became a talent agent. He died in 1963 after a prolonged illness.

The show's black performers continued their careers and lives along paths shaped by the predicaments and constraints that African-American

*below*  
After closing in New York, *Blackbirds* opened in Paris at the Moulin Rouge in 1929.  
Program  
Museum of the City of New York,  
X2017.42.4

*opposite*  
"Blackbirds of 1933"  
caricature by Angela,  
1933  
Reproduction of clipping  
Museum of the City of New York.  
Theatrical production files



Lew Leslie's new Negro revue, "Blackbirds of 1933," opens tonight at the Apollo. Among the entertainers pictured above are Martha Thomas, Speedy Smith, Eddie Thomas, John Worthy, Louise Madison.

**Blackbirds of 1928** had a complicated afterlife. After closing on Broadway, the company traveled to Paris for a short run. Several subsequent iterations of the show never proved as successful as the original.

artists faced in New York and throughout the country. Bill Robinson enjoyed the broadest popular success of any of the *Blackbirds* veterans, although he would die in poverty in 1949. Aida Ward, another *Blackbirds* star, toured the country as a singer and was a regular performer at New York's segregated Cotton Club, where African Americans performed for all-white audiences. She retired from show business in 1950. Comedian Tim Moore continued performing on Broadway, as a solo act, and on the radio until retiring from show business in 1946. He came out of retirement in 1951 to take the role of the henpecked George "Kingfish" Stevens in the television series *Amos 'n' Andy*. Adapted from a 1930s radio program of the same name, the show's stereotyped depictions of black characters built on the long legacy of minstrelsy performance. It garnered immediate protest from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and was cancelled in 1953.

Adelaide Hall ultimately found satisfaction by leaving the country. Following *Blackbirds*, she continued performing on the

Ensuing decades brought changes to Broadway, with the revue format giving way to the book musical, changing depictions of racial issues, and more opportunities for African Americans both on stage and as writers, directors, and producers.



vaudeville touring circuit. In 1930 she reunited with Robinson for performances at vaudeville’s famous Palace Theatre on Seventh Avenue and 47th Street. The pairing of Robinson and Hall proved especially popular, and that fall the two costarred in the Broadway musical *Brown Buddies* at the Liberty Theatre. Hall next embarked on a series of concert tours across the United States and Europe. By the end of the 1930s she had settled more or less permanently in England. British audiences adored Hall, but the success of her European performances was not the only reason she stayed abroad. Like her contemporary, the dancer Josephine Baker, Hall felt that American racism dulled all her achievements. A perfect example was when she attempted to buy a home in the New York City suburb of Larchmont in Westchester County in 1933, and neighbors took her to court, to ensure that their

street would remain all white. Hall won the court case, but she did not stay in the house long. Life in England gave her the freedom to enjoy the fruits of her success.

The ensuing decades would lead to changes both in the form of the Broadway musical and the presence of African Americans in New York’s performing arts. The transformation begun by *Show Boat* in 1928 would continue, with the revue format gradually giving way to book musicals—most notably the groundbreaking *Oklahoma!* (1943), which fully integrated song, dance, and dialogue in support of a single cohesive narrative. Meanwhile, the meanings of black theater also changed. Responding to *Blackbirds of 1928*, the African-American newspaper the *Pittsburgh Courier* in May 1928 had acknowledged Leslie’s success in creating a show that “paves the way for more artists to work.” But the paper then went on to request that the producer’s next piece “have Negro men to write the book and music, for they understand and can best express the true Negro soul.” Rather than Lew Leslie, it would be the city’s experimental theater troupes fostered by the Great Depression of the 1930s, including the Players’ Theatre Workshop, the Negro People’s Theatre, the Suitcase Theatre, and the New Deal-funded Negro Theatre Project, that would provide creative opportunities for black New Yorkers, such as actress Rose McClendon, writer Langston Hughes, producer-director Dick Campbell, visual artists Gwendolyn Bennett and Romare Bearden, and many others.

After World War II, the number of African Americans performing on Broadway grew, and shows became more integrated, but there were still very few works created by African Americans. Although recent seasons have increased diversity on stage, there is still a dearth of black playwrights, composers, and lyricists on Broadway. In the last ten years, only about nine plays and six musicals by African Americans have graced the Broadway stage. Most recent among these was George C. Wolfe’s *Shuffle Along, or The Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and All That Followed* (2016), an adapted and augmented version of the Eubie Blake–Noble Sissle hit. If the history of one piece of sheet music sitting in a museum case reminds us of anything, it is that, while Broadway and society as a whole have come a long way, there is still work to be done.

Costume for Lena Horne in *Blackbirds of 1939*, c. 1938  
Frances Feist  
Rendering  
Museum of the City of New York,  
66.118.1

*Morgen Stevens-Garmon is the Museum’s associate curator, Theater Collection. Steven H. Jaffe is editor-in-chief of City Courant and a curator at the Museum.*

# DIVERSITY

The power of New York's economy has drawn people from around the world. The resulting diversity has caused social conflict, but New York has also been a model of cross-cultural interaction and tolerance.

"This immense metropolis is becoming the rendezvous for emigrants of all the nations of the earth."

Felix Varela  
(1788-1853),  
Cuban-born Catholic  
priest

The V. Rev. Felix Varela, D.D.,  
c. 1853  
Library of Congress Digital  
Collections



"What I learned in childhood among the Latinos of the Bronx proved to be as relevant to my success as my Ivy League schooling."

Sonia Sotomayor  
U.S. Supreme Court  
Justice

Sonia Sotomayor, 2010  
© 2011 Timothy  
Greenfield-Sanders,  
National Portrait Gallery



Hari from  
video installation  
*Then & Now & Then*  
by Neil Goldberg

When I grew up in Jackson Heights, Queens, I went to school with everybody. It wasn't diversity. We didn't need to name it.

# Jennie June



# Transgender History

BIOGRAPHY OF A PASSIVE PEDERAST. 455



Fig. 3. The same subject shown in Figure 1. in female attire.

*opposite*  
Most photographs of transgender people from the early 1900s were taken by doctors or the police. This individual was known as “Loop-the-Loop” and lived in New York at the same time as Jennie June.

Jennie June  
From R. W. Shufeldt,  
“Biography of a Passive  
Pederast,” *American  
Journal of Urology and  
Sexology*, Vol. 13  
(1917)  
Columbia University Library,  
Special Collections

*In its more than 70 interactive displays, New York at Its Core tells the history of the city through individuals like Jennie June, an elusive, early 20th-century memoirist who defied gender codes.*

Stephen Vider

Jennie June was a transgender advocate before the term “transgender” was invented. June was born to a middle-class Christian family in Connecticut in 1874. Her given name is unknown, but she was assigned male at birth, even though she regarded herself as more feminine than masculine. June reflected later in life, “Can the reader conjure up any worse fate for a girl . . . than for Nature to disguise her as a boy?” The turning point in her life came in 1890: She moved to New York and, like many others, quickly discovered the city’s vibrant, and sometimes rough, sexual subcultures. She led, in her words, a “double life,” attending college and earning a living as a man while enjoying a private social and sexual life as a “fairy” or “androgynous,” blurring the boundaries between male and female. But what made June most unusual was that, in the early 1900s, she took the nearly unprecedented step of writing about her life to insist on the social and legal tolerance of sexual and gender minorities. She completed a draft of her autobiography by 1905 but did not publish her work until the late 1910s in two books, *Autobiography of an Androgynous* and *The Female-Impersonators*, quotes from which are displayed throughout this article.

Both books have been central sources for scholars studying LGBT history and literature since the 1970s, but June’s story has rarely been integrated into mainstream narratives of the

history of New York. In *New York at Its Core*, June appears in one of more than 70 interactive displays that give visitors a chance to meet figures from the city's past. The curatorial team behind the exhibition chose some figures for their cultural or political prominence; others, like Jennie June, were less well known in their own time, but their stories connect to important aspects of the city's history.

Bringing June to the Museum of the City of New York presented a number of questions and challenges that speak to larger questions about public history—most centrally, how do histories change depending on when and where we look at them?

The initial idea to include June in the exhibition came from *New York at Its Core* Project Assistant (and now Princeton graduate student) B. J. Lillis. As Lillis recently recalled: “I felt very strongly from the beginning that *New York at Its Core* should include the city's queer community—for lack of a better term—in the 19th century, because it is such a huge part of the city today. But most people don't know that it has been part of New York's underground cultural life going back centuries.”

While museums, libraries, and films have frequently documented LGBT life in the 20th century (including in the Museum's exhibition *Gay Gotham: Art and Underground Culture in New York*), queer life and culture in the 19th century is often overlooked, in part because it does not conform to contemporary understandings of gender and sexuality.

One of the first challenges in writing about Jennie June is language: How to describe her? Jennie June lived at a moment when scientists and writers were first working to identify and categorize sexual and gender minorities. Although she maintained a professional life as a man, she considered herself neither fully male nor female and used a variety of terms to categorize herself and others like her, including “androgynous,” “sexual intermediate,” and “invert.” She also referred to herself as a “fairy”—a term used within the sexual subcultures of New York to refer to effeminate men and



*above*  
This 1877 drawing depicts seven Manhattan residents, including a “fairy” (top right), who is distinguished by foppish clothing and a feminine figure.

From *Pictures of New York Life & Character* (New York: G. W. Averell & Co., 1877)  
National Library of Medicine

*opposite*  
*The Female-Impersonators* by Ralph Werther and Jennie June (“Earl Lind”) Published by *The Medico-Legal Journal*, 1922  
New York Academy of Medicine

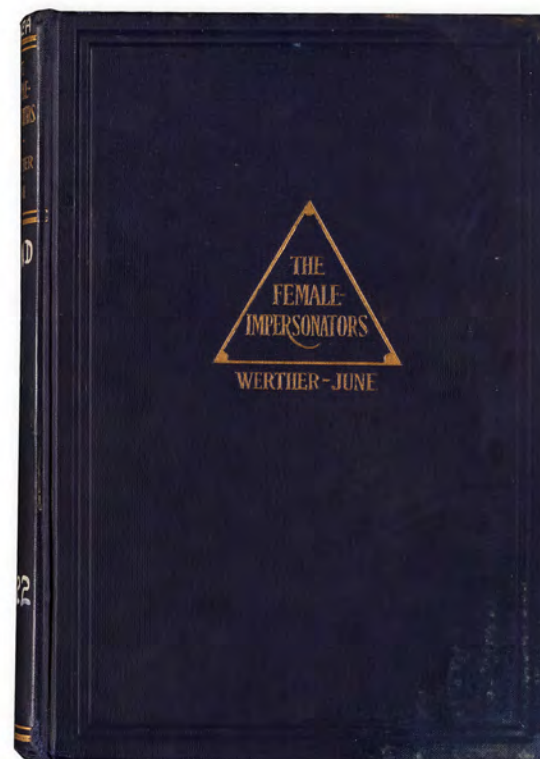
transgender women—that is, people assigned male at birth who broke with conventional codes of masculinity in their language, dress, physical mannerisms, and sexual behavior.

It is important to note that at the time, the categories of identity we understand as gender and sexual orientation were thought to be dependent upon one another. A person's biological sex was expected to determine sexual desire: men “naturally” desired women and women “naturally” desired men. This intertwined understanding of gender and sexual orientation means that categories we might use today like “gay” or “transgender” cannot be easily applied to people of Jennie June's time, at least not without careful reflection.

*“Fairies are extreme dressers and excessively vain. I proclaimed myself as a female-impersonator [by] wearing white kid [gloves] and large red neck-bow with fringed ends . . .”*

The earliest scholarly work drawing on Jennie June's writing, most notably George Chauncey's *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890–1940* (1994), tended to use her work as evidence of New York's gay male subcultures and almost exclusively referred to her using male pronouns and the male pseudonyms under which she published, Ralph Werther and Earl Lind. This choice is not historically wrong: Jennie June used all these names at different moments, and for much of her day-to-day life, she appears to have presented herself as male. But June also found her voice, and is known to us today, precisely because she crossed and resisted the gender and sexual conventions of her time. In the limited space of a museum exhibition, privileging male pronouns and pseudonyms could obscure what made June's story unique.

We chose to refer to June using female pronouns and the name “Jennie June” in part because of our own social context—living at a moment of increased transgender



visibility. Jennie June's experiences felt important to document at this moment as part of a transgender history, a history that encompasses and acknowledges the many ways people in the past have experienced gender outside of the male-female binary. It also felt important to honor and affirm the part of June's experience and identity that was most contested at her own time, and in doing so, to affirm that gender identity and/or expression are still being contested today.

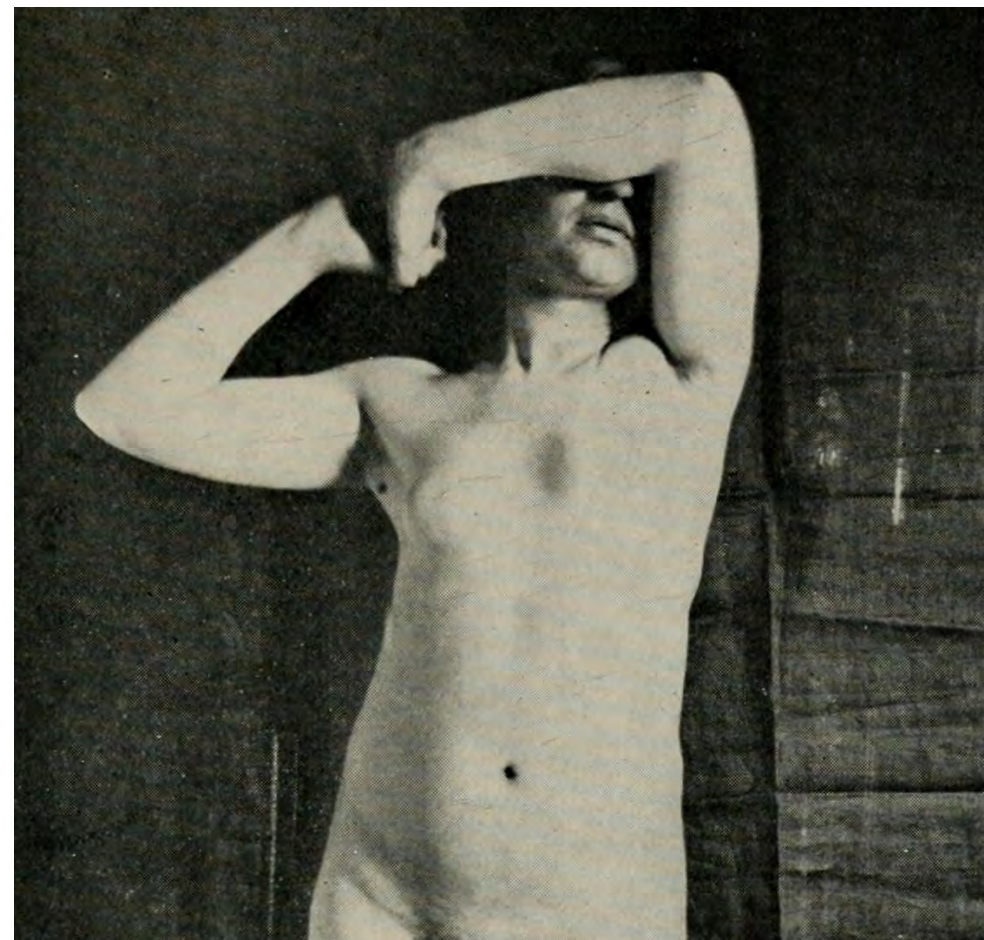
Another challenge was finding images of Jennie June to document her story: June included many photographs of herself in her two books, but only two show her face—in one, she is a child, in another her body is submerged in water. The other portraits were taken by medical doctors, including two by Robert W. Shufeldt, an anatomist, eugenicist, and amateur photographer whose books ranged from *The Osteology of Birds* to *The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization*. He also had an ongoing fascination and practice with so-called "fairies." His photographs of Jennie June are both clinical and classical: they show June standing naked, borrowing a stance from a small Greek statue in the background. In one, we see June only from behind; in the other, we see her from the front, but covering her face with her arm. Such photographs were typical of medical depictions of gender variance and homosexuality in the early 20th century but can appear objectifying, even dehumanizing, to audiences today.

For the Museum's interactive installation on June, contextualizing those photographs became part of the story. Much of what we know about gender and sexual minorities in the late 19th and early 20th century comes from medical and legal records, and June's inclusion of the photographs in her books reflects her complex relationship to medical science. Both of June's memoirs were published by the *Medico-Legal Journal* after she tried, but failed, to have them published by a mainstream press. Both had introductions written by the journal's sympathetic publisher, physician and lawyer A. W. Herzog. And both moved to integrate June's personal experiences with current medical understanding.



*below*  
Jennie June as a baby in Connecticut, ca. 1875

*opposite*  
Sexual minorities were studied by medical doctors, such as R. W. Shufeldt, who took this photograph of June, as well as the one of "Loop-the-Loop," which appears on page 50. Both photos from *The Female-Impersonators* New York Academy of Medicine



*"I know I shall be accused of exaggerated ego for the way I talk about myself . . . but seven articles have been published about myself in medical journals . . . How many people can go into a library, call for magazines, and gaze at pictures of themselves?"*

At the same time, we recognized that the goal of June's profile, and all of the Museum's interactive profiles, was not only to convey June's own experience but also to reveal the larger social world she lived in and documented. How did New York City provide a space for June to find and express herself? June's writings reveal an underground sexual geography that could not have been discussed in the mainstream press.

June first moved from Connecticut to New York City at the age of 16 to attend an all-male college uptown—possibly Columbia. In school she presented herself as male, but almost

# Angel Bear

**In the 1980s, as the AIDS epidemic devastated the creative community of New York City—then home to the nation’s largest LGBT population—numerous grassroots organizations emerged to raise awareness and provide support for those afflicted with the disease.**

Among the communities that rallied most fiercely was the Broadway stage: In 1987, the Actors Equity Association founded Equity Fights AIDS, and in 1988 the Producers Group founded Broadway Cares. The two groups merged in 1993. One of the organization’s signature fundraising projects was an annual auction of teddy bears dressed as characters in current Broadway shows. Designed and fabricated by leading costume designers, and autographed by the actors, writers, and composers associated with the productions, these handcrafted bears brought in more than \$2 million between 1998 and 2012.

This bear is dressed as the character of The Angel from Tony Kushner’s groundbreaking, epic, two-part play, *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*, whose plot centers on homosexuality and the AIDS crisis. The Angel makes a dramatic appearance at the end of Part I, dressed in white feathered wings, a silk gown, and studded leather armor crisscrossing her chest—a costume designed by Toni-Leslie James. Tony Kushner, who won a Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award for the work, signed the bear’s legs. In 1998 the Museum received the bear as a donation from Leon Constantiner, the successful bidder at the auction.

Lilly Tuttle, associate curator

A teddy bear dressed as The Angel, from *Angels in America*, 1998, by Lynn Carroll and Karin Westin  
Museum of the City of New York  
Gift of Leon Constantiner, 98.38.2



*above*  
June's memoirs reveal that gender and sexual outlaws were at constant risk of arrest and incarceration, including at The Tombs in Lower Manhattan.  
Postcard, c. 1915  
Museum of the City of New York, 2011.34.2421

*opposite*  
Newspaper clipping from the *New York World* describing a raid on an infamous "androgynous" gathering place, nicknamed "Paresis Hall."  
Library of Congress

immediately she began exploring neighborhoods and spaces where working-class and middle-class people mixed and where gender and sexuality were more fluid. It was during these excursions that she adopted the name "Jennie June"—and while she does not appear to have worn dresses or skirts, she wore clothing considered extravagant or unconventional for men, such as red neckties and white gloves. Such clothing was widely understood to signal that June was a fairy, interested in sexual encounters with men.

Beer halls and bars that catered to fairies and men seeking them were clustered in New York's entertainment districts, amid theaters, music halls, and brothels. In the late 1800s, many were on the 14th Street "Rialto" east of Union Square, where the Academy of Music (once the city's leading opera house) presented vaudeville entertainment from the mid-1880s until the 1920s, when it was demolished. Just north of 14th Street, in Stuyvesant Square park, June socialized and flirted with a group of young men who belonged to a local Christian men's club. One evening, she was also attacked by several men who "looked upon a fairie [sic] as necessarily a monster of wickedness."

Another recreational zone for June was the Bowery south of Astor Place and north of Houston Street, New York City's chief red light district of the 1880s and 1890s. One spot frequented by Jennie June was a bar and brothel at 392 Bowery. In the 1890s, one of the upper rooms was rented by a group of "androgynes" known as the Cercle Hermaphroditis. Outsiders called it "Paresis Hall"—a derogatory nickname referring to a form of syphilis-induced insanity. Later, newspapers of the 1910s and 1920s would delve more deeply into the queer underworld of Manhattan—especially as it evolved in

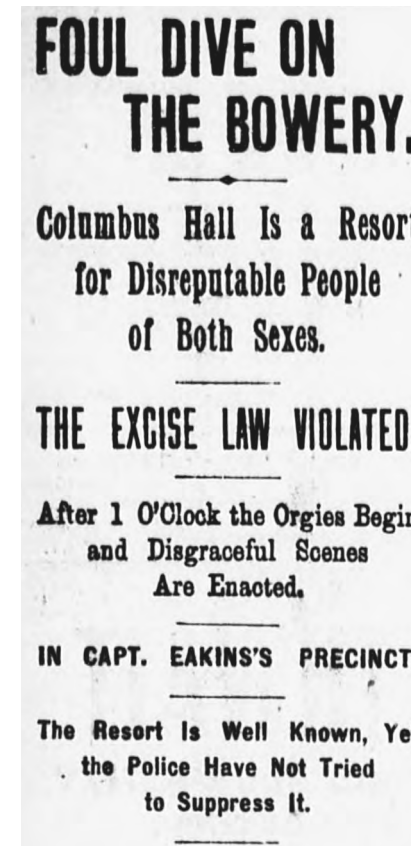
*"Paresis Hall bore almost the worst reputation of any resort of New York's Underworld. Preachers would thunder Phillipics against the Hall, referring to it as 'Sodom.'"*

Greenwich Village and Harlem—but much of what scholars know about this earlier period of queer life in Manhattan comes from Jennie June's writing.

June's sexual "sprees," as she called them, were not, however, without consequence. After graduating from college with honors, she went on to graduate school, but was expelled when a doctor she had seen in hopes of curing her "sexual inversion" informed the university president about "the double life my nature forced me to lead." Like other fairies of her time, Jennie June also faced the routine threat of police harassment and arrest. One of Jennie June's friends recounted being incarcerated at the New York City house of detention

known as "The Tombs." Upon arrest she was "thrust into an iron-barred bus along with a score of hardened male criminals—just as if I were myself a male!" This part of June's story felt especially important to document, given the threats of legal and social prejudice and violence that transgender people still face today.

June's thinking and writing about gender and sexual identity were also shaped by frequent visits to the New York Academy of Medicine, then located on 44th Street just west of Fifth Avenue. As June detailed in *Autobiography of an Androgyne*, it was in the library of the Academy of Medicine that she read foundational scientific writings on sexual and gender variance, including Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* and Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion*, texts that informed her writing as well as her understanding and acceptance of herself. In 2004, the





academy's library (located since 1927 on 103rd Street, in a building next door to the Museum) acquired original editions of both of June's published books. There is no way to know whether June might have visited the Museum: our building opened to the public in 1932, and there is no record of June's life or writing after 1922.

Ultimately, June saw the principal contribution of her writing as a form of advocacy for sexual and gender minorities. In *The Female-Impersonators* she explains her motives for writing: first, to reform laws that criminalized sexual and gender variance and led to incarceration of people she called "innocent stepchildren of Nature"; second, to help halt "the continuous string of murders" of queer and transgender people; and third, to put an end to suicide among queer and transgender people "as the result of bitter persecution." These three goals eerily echo many of the aims of the transgender rights movement today, when transgender people—especially transgender people of color—continue to face grave threats of harassment and violence, including from the police.

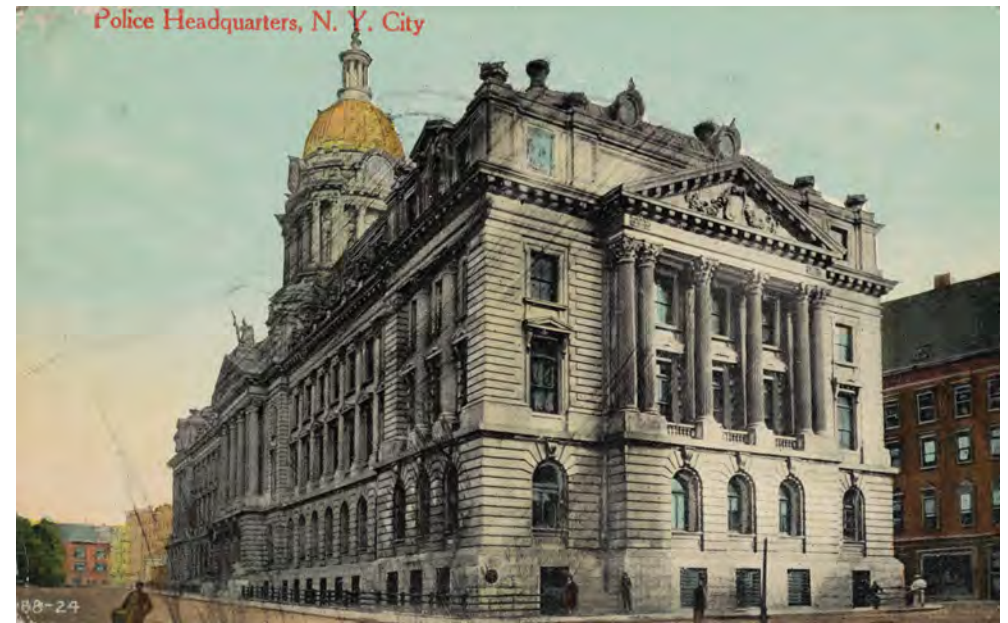
June's dedication to legal reform is perhaps best symbolized by her own request for memorialization. Scholar Randall Sell recently uncovered part of the manuscript for Jennie June's planned, but never published, third book, *The Riddle of the Underworld*. That excerpt, housed at the National Library of Medicine, included June's instructions for a plaque to be created in her memory on the Lower East Side, near the site of her "debut"—where she first took the name "Jennie June." She asked that it be placed on the Grand Street facade of a



left  
Mulberry Street, one of the places June would go on "female-impersonator sprees."

Unknown photographer, after 1905  
Hand-colored gelatin silver transparency  
Museum of the City of New York, 90.13.2.215

opposite  
Police headquarters, New York City, c. 1912  
Postcard  
Museum of the City of New York, F2011.33.1429



*"My faerie apprenticeship was in large part passed within two hundred feet of the site [of the present palatial Police Headquarters] then occupied by a public market . . ."*

new police building. June wrote that the idea originated as a joke from a friend whom June once escorted on a tour of her sexual stomping grounds. But the ironic notion of placing such a plaque on the police building (now luxury apartments) also reflects June's ongoing resistance to prejudice, criminalization, and marginalization experienced by gender and sexual minorities—goals that remain urgent today. While such a plaque may never be installed, the interactive display in *New York at Its Core* works to achieve a similar end: to make June's story and her world known and to convey their relevance for people living in and visiting New York today.

*Stephen Vider was an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Museum of the City of New York from 2015 to 2017. He was co-curator of Gay Gotham: Art and Underground Culture in New York (2016–2017) and curator of AIDS at Home: Art and Everyday Activism (2017). He is currently a visiting assistant professor at Bryn Mawr College.*

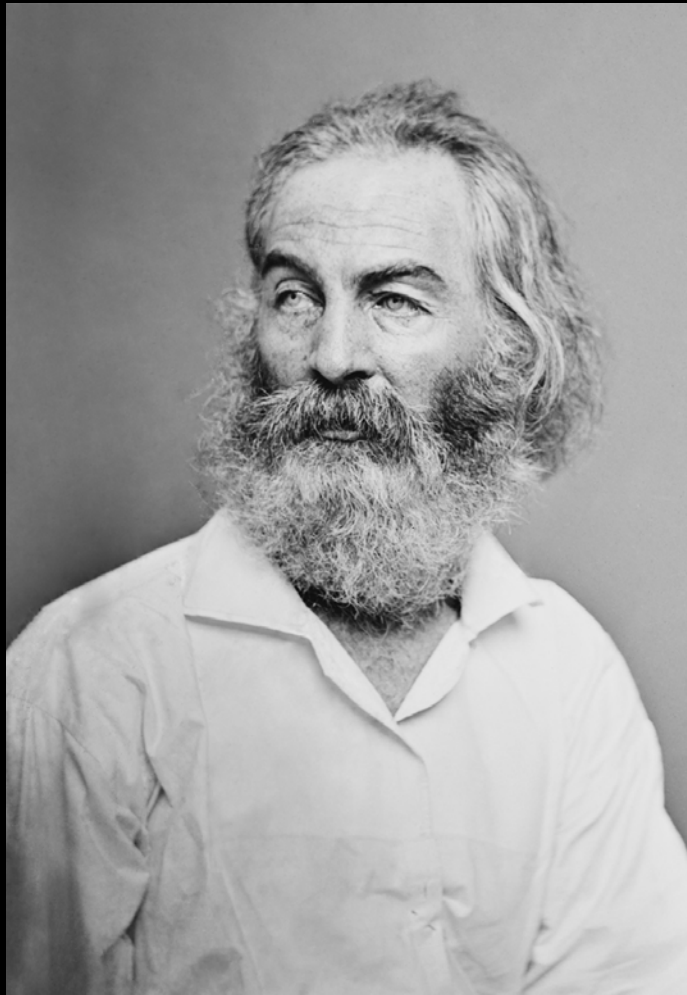
# DENSITY

A defining feature of New York, density is both an asset and a challenge. The concentration of people fuels commerce and culture, while the stresses of the crowded city have spurred innovations to make New York more livable.

“Keep your woods, O nature, and the quiet places by the woods. . . give me faces and streets!”

Walt Whitman  
(1819–1892), poet

Mathew Brady  
Walt Whitman, 1862  
Albumen print on carte  
de visite mount  
Library of Congress,  
Prints & Photographs  
Division



“Those who can, build. Those who can’t, criticize.”

Robert Moses  
(1888–1981),  
“Master Builder”

Robert Moses, 1958  
Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Miguel from video  
installation  
*Then & Now & Then*  
by Neil Goldberg



I will not *not* interact with people here. That’s one of the rights you have here as a citizen of New York is the phenomenon of friction.



# Gazing into the Future

## An Interview with Hilary Ballon

Madeline Rogers

The *Future City Lab*, the third gallery of *New York at Its Core*, represents the Museum's unequalled commitment among city museums worldwide to connecting past, present, and future. Its curator, Hilary Ballon, served as co-curator of the entire exhibition, and with her expertise in urban planning she took the lead in the creation of the *Future City Lab*. *City Courant* Executive Editor Madeline Rogers interviewed Dr. Ballon by phone in May 2017, weeks before her untimely death on June 16, 2017, at age 61. Her legacy is sustained by Kubi Ackerman, Director of the *Future City Lab*, who worked closely with her to bring the gallery to fruition. The interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

**Please talk briefly about your role in the development of *New York at Its Core* and the *Future City Lab*.**

When I became co-curator of *New York at Its Core*, for a couple of years [Chief Curator] Sarah Henry and I worked very closely on developing the intellectual framework of the project. We eventually arrived at the idea of capturing the essence of the city in four key words—money, density, diversity, and creativity—which would become the framework for each of the three galleries.

I would like to focus on the *Future City Lab*, an interactive space that offers visitors an opportunity to weigh in on the city's future. It's highly unusual—perhaps unprecedented—for a history museum to tackle the future in this way. How did you and your colleagues make that audacious choice?

It was extremely bold. That said, it had long been the mission of the Museum to address the city's past, present, and future, so it was not a foreign idea. Having that foundation—that commitment to thinking through what New York would become—obscured for us exactly how innovative and radical a move it was, because the *Future City Lab* is not an exhibit: it is a forum for urban civics, an attempt to bring people together to think creatively about what the city could become. It's not just laying out plans that some organization has come up with, like Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC [2007]. Rather, it is a thinking space; a space of provocation where people first get the nuts and bolts of the basic challenges facing the city, and then say, "Okay, what do we do about this? These are really serious issues and if the city's going to prosper, if we are going to prosper, if our children and grandchildren are going to prosper, what can we do about it?"

So in a sense you are asking visitors to actively engage in urban planning.

That's where the big curatorial challenge came in, because our desire was not to preach. It was not to say, "this is what the city should do," or to put together a bunch of talking heads and say, "Here is what the 10 smartest people on this subject think should be done. Choose the advice you think smartest." It was rather to empower the visitor to engage with the issues.

That's a very democratic approach, certainly. And it plays into New Yorkers' well-known love of expressing their opinions.

***"Future City Lab is not an exhibit: it is a forum for urban civics, an attempt to bring people together to think creatively about what the city could become."***

previous page  
Hilary Ballou  
Filip Wolak for Museum of the  
City of New York

opposite  
Entrance to the  
*Future City Lab*  
Thomas Loof for Museum of the  
City of New York



We were certainly mindful of the opinionated nature of New Yorkers, which we saw as a considerable asset. On the other hand, we felt that the Museum was fundamentally a space of education and the *Lab* had to be more than a space for pronouncements. We felt an obligation to provide information that would help people get past the opinions they had when they walked in the door, to equip them with some knowledge about the subject so that when they opined it was from a deeper base. Marrying the Museum's educational mission with an invitation to visitors to share their perspective was very important. We didn't want one without the other.

In the *Future City Lab*, visitors are invited to respond to and comment on five aspects of living in New York: Getting Around, Housing a Growing Population, Living with Nature, Making a Living, and Living Together. How did you arrive at those five challenges?

We started with the four key words from *New York at Its Core*—money, diversity, density, and creativity—and we asked ourselves how those key words would play out over the next generation. In some instances, there's a clear correlation

**“There are other diverse cities in America, but what differentiates New York is there is a much wider spectrum of diversity, with immigrants coming from many more places.”**

between those words and our five challenges. Making a Living, for example, which correlates with our key word “money,” has historically been something that New York City offers people to improve their lives and rise up the ladder. The question of economic mobility became the focus of our Making a Living challenge. We present a considerable amount of data about a widening income gap between the wealthy and the poor, about a flattening of income at the lower end of the spectrum, about the increasing difficulty of rising up the ladder, about the growth of jobs at the low end of the spectrum rather than the growth of middle-income jobs, which provide a real platform for mobility.

Living with Nature, on the other hand, didn’t correlate specifically to one of the four key words, but we saw it as an existential problem for the 21st century because of the impact of climate change on our coastal city. “Living with Nature” is also a phrase that describes the ordinary human experience of how to connect with nature in a dense, urbanized environment. People need nature and contact with greenery. They not only need access to parks to play, but they need nature woven into their daily lives as a source of well-being.

**Prior to working on *New York at Its Core* you had a long and fruitful association with the Museum, most notably as curator of two of its most successful shows: *Robert Moses and the Modern City*, in 2007, and *The Greatest Grid*, in 2011. How did your background in urban planning inform your approach to *New York at Its Core* in general and to the *Future City Lab* in particular?**

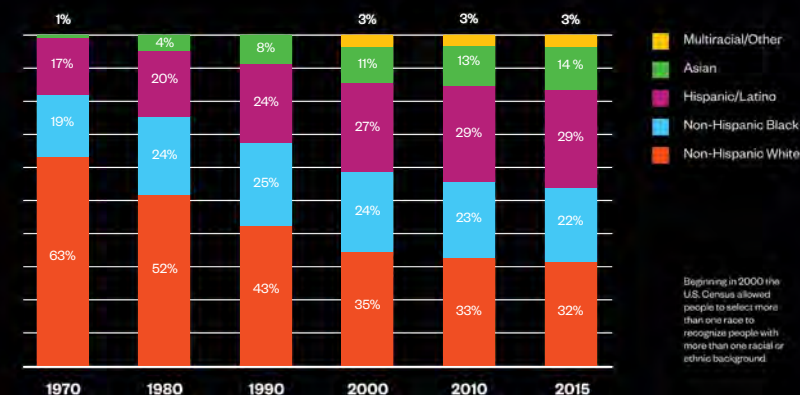
Actually a big objective of the *Future City Lab* was not to make it seem like a planning exhibition; not to make it seem like a dry set of impersonal issues relevant only at an abstract policy level. The goal throughout was to take these big challenges and

WHO ARE NEW YORKERS?

NO MAJORITY RACIAL OR ETHNIC GROUP

Over the past half century, New York has become more diverse, and unlike in most global cities, no group is in the majority. But the mix is changing. In recent years the Asian and Hispanic populations have been increasing, accounting for 80% of the population growth since 2010, while the non-Hispanic white and black populations have been declining.

New Yorkers by Race and Ethnicity, 1970–2015



An infographic from the “Living Together” section of the *Future City Lab* showing New York’s changing ethnic mix. Source: U. S. Census Bureau, 1970–2010, American Community Survey 2015

make them feel relevant to you as an individual and to bring them home, so to speak.

**How did you achieve that?**

There is quite a variety of content, the purpose of which is to elicit responses from people who were not likely to be moved by abstract policy questions. By having short videos in which people talk to one another or that describe how people scrape by in New York—the idea was to connect large-scale problems with human experience, with the way people live in New York. That was certainly a motive behind the photography we commissioned from Joseph Michael Lopez. His photographs provide portraits of 20 different neighborhoods, reminding us that New York City is not a consistent or abstract domain; it’s a patchwork of many kinds of places, each with a different personality. His photographs bring out the personalities

# Mapping NYC

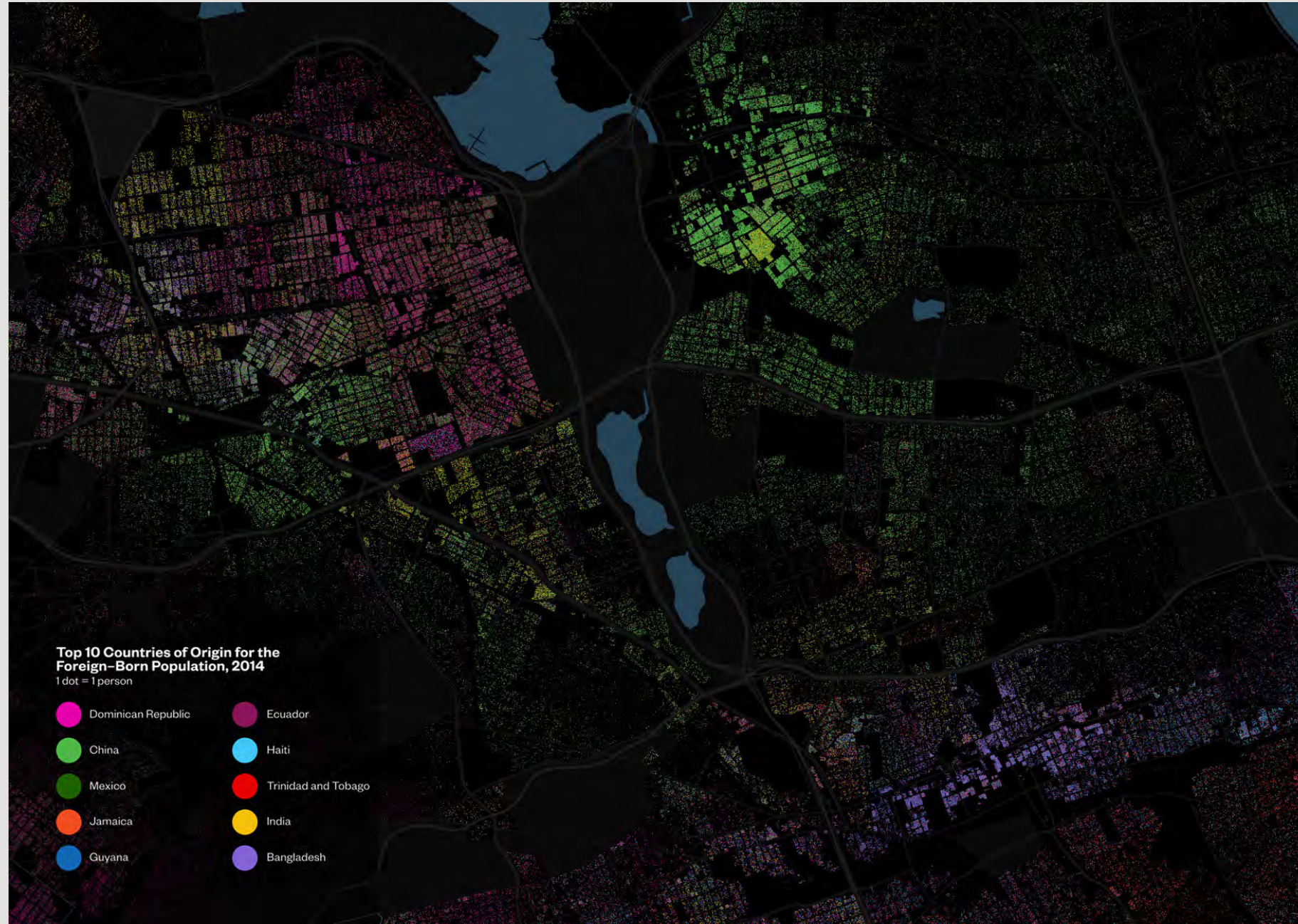
The first thing that greets visitors to the Museum's *Future City Lab* is a curved screen displaying a series of nearly 100 maps shown over the course of a 45-minute presentation.

*Mapping NYC 2000–2050* may be the largest publicly accessible display of spatial data on New York City in existence. Its purpose is to introduce visitors to the five key challenges explored in the gallery.

*Mapping NYC* employs a variety of visualization techniques and mapping genres. Shaded choropleth maps illustrate distribution and difference, as in a series of maps that show job concentration across the five boroughs. On dot maps, each one of New York's 8.5 million residents is represented by a point corresponding to characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and income (Queens detail, right). Other maps show change over time, including one series that charts shifts in population density and distribution from 1970 to 2015. It clearly shows that while the city's total population increased, gains were unevenly distributed, and many areas are less dense now than they were in the past.

The maps and their sequencing are designed to expose implicit connections: How do income and transit access correlate? How do historical wetland areas correspond to areas most threatened by rising seas? Some maps show the city as part of its larger region and others zoom in, reminding us that the city comprises distinctive neighborhoods. In short, *Mapping NYC* reminds us that maps are not just for wayfinding; they can also tell powerful stories.

Kubi Ackerman, director of the *Future City Lab*



**“New York does have a very significant, hugely creative, trendsetting history of planning major infrastructure projects that would equip it to face the challenges of future generations.”**

of those places: the racial and ethnic diversity, the culinary diversity, the fact that buildings look different, and the street celebrations look different, and so forth.

And each of those neighborhoods relates to our five challenges, but they manifest differently in different parts of the city. Climate change doesn't look exactly the same everywhere you go in New York; the challenges of diversity are not homogenous throughout the city—they're inflected depending on whether you are in Crown Heights or Corona or Bensonhurst.

**By encouraging visitors to become planners, you are implying that planning is a worthwhile exercise as opposed to allowing cities to grow organically, as some urban places do.**

There's a long history of planned cities. Cities that grow organically typically become stifled by the ad hoc patterns they arrive at; in a way, this is the story of the 1811 grid of Manhattan. In 1807 the city leadership said, “Considering how dynamic the port is, considering the extraordinary rate of growth of our economy, if we are going to sustain this we're going to have to think about how we can accommodate that growth so that it is optimized.” The grid is an outcome of that kind of thought process. In fact, throughout the city's history there have been these critical milestones when the government recognized that, given the scale of the city, given the magnitude of the problem, it was not possible for ad hoc solutions to take care of things. There needed to be a large-scale governmental intervention to cope. This was true when it came to supplying the city with fresh water. This was true when it came to dealing with the tenement housing problem and the poor quality of housing those tenements provided. This was true when it came



Interactive games in the *Future City Lab* allow visitors to step into the role of designer or planner.  
Filip Wolak for Museum of the City of New York

to the risks of fire; it was true when it came to dealing with mass transit. New York does have a very significant, hugely creative, trendsetting history of planning major infrastructure projects that would equip it to face the challenges of future generations.

**Is that kind of large-scale thinking still possible in your opinion?**

We have seen in recent years some skepticism about the ability of the city to face that next set of challenges. There was talk of that sort after 9/11, which brought back a certain Robert Moses-type nostalgia for the strong man who could break through the bureaucratic obstacles that seemed to stymie big projects. But I think it's climate change that has called into question the city's capacity to meet truly big challenges because climate change transcends political jurisdictions. Think of the problems individual city departments have coordinating with one another; climate change is a case where many states have to coordinate with one another. And then there's so much worry about the federal government and its relationship to the city. Of course, we planned the *Future City Lab* before we imagined that there would be a president who doubted the science of climate change, but that has to make us a little more worried about how we proceed going forward and what the city can do when there's a recalcitrant or skeptical federal government.



**“Part of the migration back to the city by younger people has to do with their disenchantment with the automobile and their recognition that they can have a life independent of cars.”**

**You’ve studied many cities. How does New York compare? How is it like other cities? How is it different?**

New York City—and I primarily mean Manhattan, and perhaps Brooklyn—is different from other cities because it is not dependent on automobiles. Most American places, cities included, are automobile dependent, and so that appreciation of mass transit, of the role of the subway as the lifeblood of the city, I think is very distinctive to New York. Part of the migration back to the city by younger people has to do with their disenchantment with the automobile and their recognition that they can have a mass-transit life, a life independent of cars, in New York.

The second thing that is distinctive about New York is its diversity. It is the most diverse city in America, with more

*above and opposite*  
 “What If . . .” table in the  
*Future City Lab*  
 Thomas Loof for Museum of the  
 City of New York

than a third of its population immigrants. If you include the children of immigrants, two-thirds of the population are immigrants or the children of immigrants. There are other very diverse cities in America, Los Angeles among them, but what differentiates Los Angeles or Houston or other diverse cities from New York is that there is a much wider spectrum of diversity in New York than in other cities. Most of the immigrants in Los Angeles come from Mexico and two or three other places, and you’ll find that to be the case in Houston as well, whereas in New York City, immigrants come from many more places.

Density comes into play, too: when all those extraordinarily diverse groups are living in extremely compact conditions, you might expect it to yield friction, but the relative tolerance of New York is one of its striking characteristics. I don’t mean to idealize it; of course, there are episodes of friction and places of friction, but on the whole, New York has done a miraculous job—like alchemy—in translating its diversity into a source of tolerance, into a source of strength. We have come to appreciate that our neighbors have different value systems from our own, but they’re not inherently bad; they are just different. I think our capacity to live harmoniously with people unlike ourselves is part of the genius of New York City.

**I’d like to ask you to take off your professional hat, and talk about your personal history and relationship to the city.**

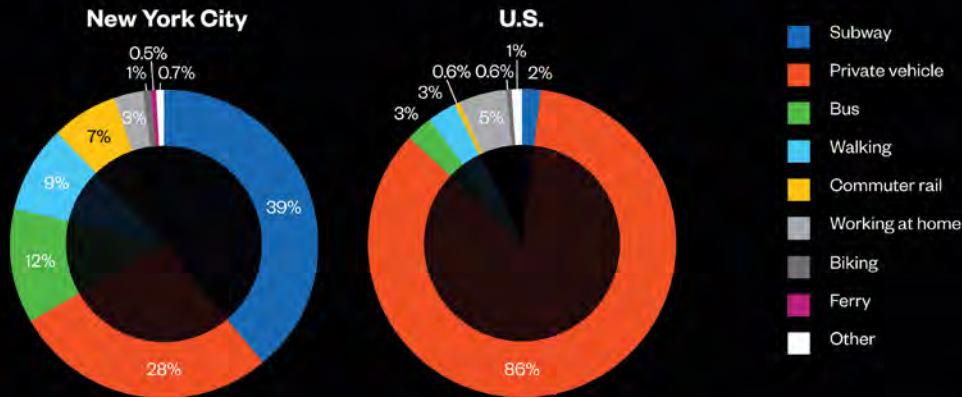




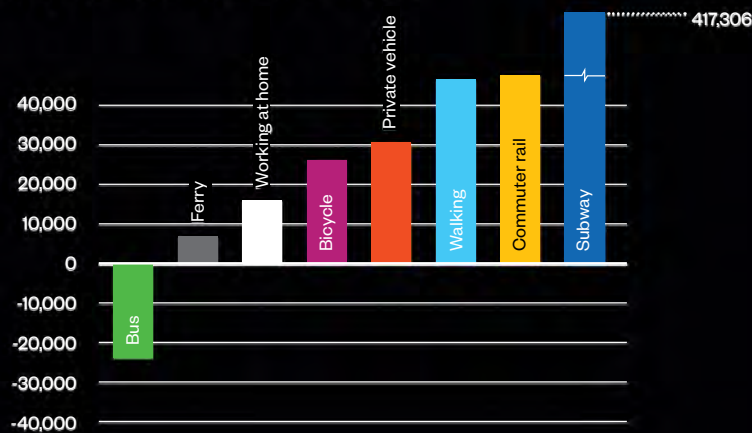
# COMMUTING

New York's vast transit infrastructure, including trains, subways, buses, and ferries, is critical to the economy and social life of the region. A majority (57%) of New York workers commute to their jobs by public transit, while less than a third (29%) commute by car, compared to 84% nationwide. Bus ridership has declined because of service cuts and long rides due to traffic. As jobs spread out across the city, a growing number of New Yorkers are able to walk and bike to work.

## Transportation to Work in New York City and the U.S., 2015



## Change in Means of Transportation to Work, New York City Workers, 2006–2015



Source (top and bottom): American Community Survey 2015

An infographic from the “Getting Around” section of the *Future City Lab* shows how New Yorkers get to and from work. Source: American Community Survey 2015

**“What gives me hope for the city is its history; the fact that New York has been filled with stories of tremendous resilience and creativity in response to very severe challenges.”**

I was brought up in the suburbs, but New York was my point of reference. As soon as I was allowed—in junior high school, it seems to me—I set off every weekend on explorations of New York. The city felt to me like the center of my life even though I didn’t go to school in Manhattan. In so many ways, I felt like I was a New Yorker.

**Obviously, you have a great love for the city. Are there things about it you hate?**

I have been lucky throughout my New York years to have outlets from the denser, most difficult parts of the city. For a good many years, I taught and I lived at Columbia University. That campus gave me a wonderful reprieve because of nearby Riverside Park and because of the openness of the campus itself and the scale of the buildings. At a certain point, my husband and I chose to raise our family outside the city, in part because of affordability. I live right outside the city and I face the problems that commuters face, which is a huge challenge for the city and for me personally.

**What are your fears for New York, and what gives you hope?**

Leadership and governance matter crucially, and that is my source of worry because we are obviously in a polarized age, and signs of our ability to transcend those differences and work collaboratively to come up with solutions to big problems . . . well, there aren’t many. We’re not surrounded by positive examples. What gives me hope for the city is its history—the fact that New York has been filled with stories of tremendous resilience and creativity in response to very severe challenges. I have no reason to doubt that future generations will bring to bear the same resourcefulness in the face of those challenges.

*Madeline Rogers is executive editor of City Courant.*

# CREATIVITY

New York's potent blend of money, diversity, and density has sparked creativity across all spheres of life. Creativity drives New York's relentless change and energy, attracting yet more money, diversity, and density, and continually redefining the urban condition.

"I have more brains, common sense and knowledge generally than any two engineers civil or uncivil that I have ever met."

Emily Roebling (1843–1903), Brooklyn Bridge construction manager

Emily Warren Roebling, c. 1860–1880 Library of Congress New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection



"Designing a dream city is easy; rebuilding a living one takes imagination."

Jane Jacobs (1916–2006), urban activist

Mrs. Jane Jacobs, 1961 Library of Congress Phil Stanzola New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection



John from video installation *Then & Now & Then* by Neil Goldberg

The tension of the margins and the center is really part of the core of what New York's about. A lot of artistic energy comes from that.

# Gotham

## The Greatest Classroom

Franny Kent

**F**Engage, inform, and activate—this is at the heart of all the programs we offer! For more than a decade, the Frederick A. O. Schwarz Education Center has facilitated programs for tens of thousands of children and adults to teach them about our city’s past, present, and future: the challenges and solutions we’ve encountered over our history, the contemporary issues we face, and the complexity of how decisions we make today will affect our city’s future.

Whether we are teaching toddlers introductory skills, giving teachers new content and pedagogical methods to use in the classroom, inspiring creativity and curiosity in schoolchildren, or providing families with memorable shared experiences, the Museum as a whole—and our new groundbreaking exhibition, *New York at Its Core*—truly has something for everyone.

If we want to give children, their parents, and teachers an opportunity to explore urban issues and culture, New York offers endless inspiration. And we now have the tools to teach science, technology, engineering, and math to explore the urban ecosystem and the environment of New York City—an archipelago whose relationship to New York Harbor has shaped its existence for thousands of years.

Vicki Martens for Museum of the City of New York





Built around four key words, money, diversity, density, and creativity, *New York at Its Core* allows us to present educational experiences—80 percent for public schools; the rest for families, preschoolers, and adult learners—that encompass much of the human experience. Take our newest STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) program, *The Nature of Urban Planning*. It is our contribution to a New York City Department of Education program called *Budding Scientists—The Urban Ecosystem*, which supports the exploration of New York’s complex ecosystem by elementary school students and their teachers, both in the classroom and out of doors. In our inaugural year of participation, fifth-graders discovered what it means to live with nature in the city through an authentic, hands-on, inquiry-based field trip that reinforced the student’s natural curiosity and creativity.

As a complement to their fieldwork, students and teachers gathered at the Museum’s *Future City Lab*, a unique feature of *New York at Its Core*, which allows visitors to ponder and solve the challenges that will face New York going forward—among them: how to live in harmony with nature as a city dweller. In the *Future City Lab*, students studied the human impact on the environment. Through interactive games they designed parks, streets, and buildings. Along the way, they learned about sustainable materials, urban infrastructure, mapping, and ways the city will confront the changing climate.

In addition to this STEM program, the Schwarz Center offers 60- to 75-minute gallery or history lab field trips for students in grades K to 12 every day throughout the year, an initiative led by Senior Education Manager Joanna Steinberg. These programs promote discussion and inquiry and are tailored to

above  
Elementary school students in the *Future City Lab*  
Sarah Greenbaum for Museum of the City of New York

opposite  
A group of teachers visiting *New York at Its Core* during the kickoff of the Museum’s professional learning initiative, Election Day 2016  
Laurabeth Lima for Museum of the City of New York

students’ preexisting knowledge and interests. They cover a variety of topics and encourage critical thinking and deep analysis of primary sources that complement New York City’s social studies curriculum.

Ongoing career development is essential for New York’s teachers. The Museum offers an array of programs built around *New York at Its Core*, from weeklong courses on topics ranging from photography and social activism to after-school lectures by historians on topics ranging from the Black Lives Matter movement to the natural history of Manhattan. Assistant Director of the Center EY Zipris and Education Coordinator Maeve Montalvo kicked off this initiative on Election Day 2016. On that day, 358 teachers came to the Museum to explore *New York at Its Core*. It was the largest teacher group we had ever hosted at the Schwarz Education Center.

A series of free seminar days over the ensuing months demonstrated yet again that New York City and *New York at Its Core* are inexhaustible resources for learning. The four

**A series of seminars for teachers demonstrated that New York City and New York at Its Core are inexhaustible resources for learning.**



daylong seminars included: *Teaching and Learning about Health and Fitness*, co-sponsored by the New York City Department of Health; *Rhythm & Power*, which exposed teachers to the history of the city by embracing its many beats, from salsa to Sondheim, in workshops, gallery tours, and performances; *Game Day*, an immersion in the art and science of games and game design, with ideas for using games as teaching tools; and *Water Ways*, a program offered in partnership with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection that examined the history and science of water and its impact on our city's growth. Similar professional learning programs inspired by *New York at Its Core* will be offered again during the 2017–18 school year, beginning on Election Day 2017.

At the other end of the age spectrum, the Museum piloted a program for toddlers, which started in 2015 and expanded in 2017, to embrace the rich opportunities presented by *New York at Its Core*. Designed for children ages two to four years old, *NYC Tots* empowers children to realize their full potential and to direct their learning through the power of play in both self-guided and collaborative experiences, including sing-alongs, gallery visits, hands-on object exploration, and art-making. In the expert hands of Family Programs Coordinator Lauraberth Lima and Family Programs Assistant Jennifer Robbins, these intergenerational explorations encourage close looking at primary sources using music, games, and other age-appropriate activities to get our youngest visitors comfortable and excited about being in the Museum. Weekly themes included *Learning to Look*, *Colors in the City*, *Shapes in the City*, *Animals in the City*, *People in the City*, *Getting Around the City*, and *Nature in the City*. Toddler programs will be offered on select days in fall 2017 and spring 2018.



*left and opposite*  
*NYC Tots*, for ages two to four, encourages learning through play. Lauraberth Lima for Museum of the City of New York



**The ebb and flow that define the city's history provide a magnificent opportunity to teach the whys and wherefores of New York as it exists today and how our choices continue to shape it.**

New York has been described as the city that never sleeps, the city that is never finished, and the city that is a beacon of hope for people all over the world. The ebb and flow that define the city's history provide a magnificent opportunity to teach the whys and wherefores of New York as it exists today and how our choices and actions continue to shape it. The Frederick A. O. Schwarz Education Center staff at the Museum is proud of the experiences we've provided for tens of thousands of children and adults each year to help develop their understanding of this city and their roles as citizens in shaping its future.

*Franny Kent is director of the Frederick A. O. Schwarz Education Center.*

# The Sole of the City

**New York is for strollers and dancers, for the destitute and the rich, for the young and the old, for the work-weary and the leisure classes. These shoes from *New York at Its Core* tell the tale.**



Chinese men's slippers belonging to Lee B. Lok, c. 1897  
National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, 1992.0620.24



Women's shoes worn to George Washington's inaugural ball, 1789  
Spitalfields silk, linen, and white kid  
Museum of the City of New York  
Gift of Mrs. Henry Wheeler de Forest, 54.209C-D



Boots worn by Mrs. Potts in Disney's Broadway production of *Beauty and the Beast*, 1993–1994, Ann Hould-Ward, Barbara Matera Ltd., Costume Armor Inc., Martin Izquierdo Studio  
Museum of the City of New York  
Gift of the Buena Vista Theatrical Group, Ltd., 2004.1.1



A lone baby shoe found under the attic floorboards of presumed slave quarters in a Brooklyn farmhouse, late 18th–early 19th century  
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation/  
Hendrick I. Lott House Preservation Association

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