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The Museum of the City of New York Presents

NY AT ITS CORE

***Museum's First Permanent Exhibition Explores
New York City's Dramatic 400-Year Story of Transformation from
Dutch Settlement to Post-WWII "Capital of the World" to the
Challenges and Opportunities "The City that Never Sleeps"
Faces in the Future***

***Framed around the key themes of Money, Density, Diversity, and Creativity,
NYC's History Comes Alive Through the Stories of
Innovation, Energy, Struggle, and Vision of
Generations of Immigrants, Politicians, Tycoons,
Dreamers, Master Builders, and Everyday New Yorkers***

New York, NY (November 18, 2016): The [Museum of the City of New York](#) presents its greatly anticipated permanent exhibition [New York at Its Core](#). Five years in the making, *New York at Its Core* is the first-ever museum show to comprehensively interpret and present the compelling story of New York's rise from a striving Dutch village to today's "Capital of the World," a preeminent global city now facing the future in a changing world. *New York at Its Core* presents the city's dramatic historical narrative in two galleries covering the years from 1609, when Henry Hudson took his voyage up the river that would later bear his name, through Hurricane Sandy in 2012, and culminates with the *Future City Lab*, a first-of-its-kind interactive space designed to encourage visitors to contemplate the challenges the city will face in the years to come and design for themselves the city of the future.

The exhibition captures the human energy that drove New York to become a city like no other and a subject of fascination the world over. Entertaining, inspiring, important, and at times bemusing, New York City "big personalities," including Alexander Hamilton, Walt Whitman, "Boss" Tweed, Emma Goldman, JP Morgan, Fiorello La Guardia, Robert Moses, Jane Jacobs, Donna Karan, Jay-Z, and dozens more come to life throughout the exhibition via state-of-the-art interactive technology that allows

Museum guests to delve into the stories of the people who helped New York become New York. Visitors will also virtually “meet” lesser-known New York personalities, like Lenape chieftain Penhawitz, free African colonist Maria Van Angola, and Lower East Side denizen Susie Rocco. Even animals like horses, pigs, beavers, and oysters, which played pivotal roles in the economy and daily life of New York, get their moment in the historical spotlight.

Nearly 450 historical objects and images, almost 40% of which come from the Museum’s own rich collection, will be complemented by hi-tech maps, data visualizations, multimedia installations, and dozens of “people interactives”, inviting visitors to fully engage in a multitude of ways with the unprecedented range of stories presented in *New York at Its Core*.

Occupying the entire first floor in three interactive galleries of the Museum’s landmark building at the top of New York’s Museum Mile, *New York at Its Core* is shaped by four themes – *money*, *density*, *diversity*, and *creativity* – that provide a lens for examining the character of the city. The exhibition argues that a distinctive blend of these key themes has produced a powerfully creative environment that has made New York a center of innovation in the arts, business, science, politics, and urban development for over four centuries.

Among the hundreds of rare objects in *New York at Its Core* are: a ceremonial Lenape war club making its return to New York after centuries spent in a Swedish castle (c. 1600 – 1650); diamond, onyx, and gold cuff links owned by William M. “Boss” Tweed (1868); a field drafting set owned by Calvert Vaux (c. 1865); a sterling silver and wood ceremonial shovel from the groundbreaking of the first subway (1900); a silver cocktail shaker and cup, made by Tiffany and Company during Prohibition (1928); badges owned by Robert Moses: “Chairman, Triborough Bridge Authority” and “Commissioner, Department of Parks, City of New York,” (1924-60); a Studio 54 guest list, including Liberace, Ringo Starr, and Lindsay Wagner (1978); and Milton Glaser’s original concept sketch for the “I Heart New York” campaign (1976).

“*New York at Its Core* is a dramatic statement that our dynamic and diverse city is central to the Museum’s identity and mission of bringing history to life for New Yorkers of all ages and backgrounds, as well as the thousands of tourists who visit us every year,” said Whitney Donhauser, *Ronay Menschel Director* of the Museum of the City of New York. “Never before has the entire exhilarating story of New York’s successive cycles of challenges and reinvention been told with more precision, passion, humanity, or excitement.”

“*New York at Its Core* is the capstone of the Museum’s decade-long modernization and expansion,” said Jamie Dinan, Chairman of the Board of the Museum of the City of New York. “There has never been an ongoing exhibition that recounts the full scope of New York City’s history — in spite of the fact that nearly 60 million tourists visit the city each year. We envision *New York at Its Core* as a gateway to the city itself, and, with its opening, look forward to educating and enlightening visitors about New York’s storied past and exciting future for years to come.”

Gallery 1 – Port City, 1609 - 1898

The first gallery of *New York at Its Core* is **Port City, 1609-1898**, which takes the story of the city from the time of Henry Hudson’s voyage of discovery to the creation of today’s five-borough city of Greater New York. Visitors will learn about more than 220 key objects from this period, including a ceremonial war club from the native people of the area, the Lenape; a slice of a wooden pipe that formed the original water system of the city; and William M. “Boss” Tweed’s gold tiger-headed cane.

These striking, one-of-a-kind artifacts are complemented by innovative interactive installations that enable visitors to digitally “meet” New Yorkers of the past – from Henry Hudson and Peter Stuyvesant to Chinatown pioneer Wong Chin Foo and anarchist Emma Goldman. These characters are set against immersive digital projections of historic New York street scenes that fade into contemporary views of the same scenes created for the exhibition by New York photographer Jeff Chien-Hsing Liao.

“Creating *New York at Its Core* has been an immense intellectual and cultural undertaking,” said Sarah Henry, chief curator at the Museum of the City of New York. “I am proud of our team’s work to create this groundbreaking exhibition, and I look forward to it providing a place where visitors from around the world can come to discover how our city has changed over time and thoughtfully discuss key issues that will affect its future.”

Gallery 2 – World City, 1898 - 2012

The exhibition’s second gallery, ***World City, 1898-2012***, showcases the dizzying evolution of New York as it grew into the modern global metropolis we know today. Cycles of financial growth and crisis reshaped the city’s economic, cultural, and social life throughout the 20th century, as did the influx of new waves of people from across the country and around the world. The gallery dramatically shows the repeated challenges – extremes of wealth and poverty, the Great Depression, the fiscal and urban crises of the postwar era, crumbling infrastructure and rising prices, the devastation of Hurricane Sandy, and the terrorist attacks of 9/11 – that tested and ultimately affirmed the creativity and resilience of the residents of a teeming metropolis that had become the most influential city in the world.

More than 200 historic objects and images in the second gallery are displayed around a central video installation, which uses vivid, overlapping footage to immerse visitors in the rhythms and dynamism of the 20th-century city. The gallery also features a touchscreen filled with moving silhouettes of notable people who embody the exhibition’s themes of money, density, diversity, and creativity – ranging from industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie to trailblazing feminist Gloria Steinem and hip-hop mogul and entrepreneur Jay-Z.

Gallery 3 – Future City Lab

The third gallery of *New York at Its Core* is the ***Future City Lab***, which brings the focus to New York’s present and looks to the future. This cutting-edge interactive space invites Museum visitors to explore five central challenges and opportunities that New York will face in coming generations: how the city will house its growing population; how it can continue to offer opportunity to new generations of arrivals in an increasingly competitive global era; how the city can retain and foster its defining diversity; how New Yorkers will get around in the 21st-century city; and how the city can prepare itself for rising waters in an age of climate change.

The *Future City Lab* is an unprecedented technological and educational achievement, in which visitors are able to access information about New York City’s present and imagine its future through a variety of media installations and interactive activities, including:

- **Mapping NYC 2000 – 2050**: A portrait of New York City in a series of nearly 100 maps presented alongside images and data visualizations on a striking three-dimensional array of monitors that represent the largest compilation of visual information about the city available anywhere.

- **Interactive Games:** Visitors can design a building, redesign a street, or create a new park, using a fun, intuitive touchscreen interface that allows for creativity and gives feedback on how their choices affect several metrics relating to the key themes of the gallery. Designs can then be shared with other museumgoers on the larger-than-life streetscape wall, where motion sensors allow visitors to appear in their scenes and become a part of the future they've designed. Visitors can also share their designs on social media or via email.
- **Neighborhood Spotlights:** Each of the five key challenges that shape the gallery is explored within the context of its impact on four different neighborhoods, for a total of 20 throughout the five boroughs, lending a human touch to the bounty of maps, data, and urban planning activity. Neighborhoods are represented primarily through the lens of photographer Joseph Michael Lopez, whose photographs are displayed alongside historical images of the city as well as contextual data.
- **What If Table:** The What If Table allows those in the *Future City Lab* to compose their own "What if?" questions about New York City and join conversations about the city's future with everyone from their fellow museumgoers to exhibition curators, area experts, and academic scholars.
- **Video Installations:** Throughout the gallery, video series will show how a diverse array of New Yorkers live and think and get along with each other in the city that never sleeps. *Then&Now&Then* by Neil Goldberg explores the hopes and dreams and fears of over 50 New Yorkers via on-the-street interviews, and three more video series illuminate the lived experience of people around the five boroughs: *Making it Work* profiles New Yorkers at a variety of different jobs; *Strangers Aren't Strange* brings together for in-depth conversation people from different walks of life who have superficial daily interactions; and *Building Bridges* highlights community groups that help create conditions for diversity to flourish.
- **Data Nook:** The Data Nook offers a peek behind the numbers of the *Future City Lab*, inviting visitors to explore the layers of complexity and curatorial choice behind every statistic and data point in the gallery.

New York at Its Core – Technology

Throughout the exhibition and particularly in the *Future City Lab*, technology plays a key role in presenting the past, present, and future of New York City. With *New York at Its Core*, the Museum is pursuing a boldly 21st-century approach by embracing interactive technology as a storytelling tool, and enlisting cutting-edge hardware and software to directly engage every visitor in the story of New York City. To assist in this effort, the Museum engaged Local Projects, the experience design studio behind the 9/11 Memorial Museum and Cooper Hewitt.

Together, the Museum and Local Projects integrated storytelling with experiential technology to bring the past, present, and future to life throughout all three galleries. Highlights of the hi-tech installations include a digital mural of famous New Yorkers who are responsive to passing visitors, and an interactive city simulation where visitors can design their own building, park, or street, and then transport themselves into their own city simulation using Kinect motion sensors, where they can play alongside virtual city residents.

"New York City is a dynamic force for change," said Jake Barton, Founder of Local Projects. "We're using innovative design to reveal the oldest layers of history written into the streets, allowing visitors to meet the New Yorkers who built this city centuries ago. The Future City Lab invites New Yorkers to create their

personal vision for the future, and then embeds them inside streets, parks, and buildings of their own design."

In creating *New York at Its Core*, the Museum of the City of New York was advised by a committee of distinguished scholars, including: Thomas Bender, Elizabeth Blackmar, Peter Derrick, Hasia R. Diner, Joshua Freeman, Evelyn Gonzalez, Owen Gutfreund, Kenneth T. Jackson, Lisa Keller, Thomas Kessner, Julia Ott, Carla Peterson, Lynne Sagalyn, John Kuo Wei Tchen, Mike Wallace, Craig S. Wilder, and Sean Wilentz.

The Museum was also advised on the *Future City Lab* by a committee of scholars, including: Vishaan Chakrabarti, Owen Gutfreund, Jill Lerner, Mitchell Moss, Charles J. O'Byrne, Jerilyn Perine, Lynne Sagalyn, Joseph L. Salvo, and Van C. Tran.

The exhibition is organized by Sarah M. Henry, Hilary Ballon, and Steven H. Jaffe; exhibition design is by Studio Joseph; experience design by Local Projects; and graphic design by Pentagram.

New York at Its Core is the capstone of the Museum's decade-long \$100 million renovation and is accompanied by a redesigned website, also launched this fall. As a precursor to the exhibition, the Museum relaunched its popular and critically acclaimed *Timescapes* documentary in July, reaffirming the Museum's mission to tell the story of New York's origins and where the city is going in innovative and engaging ways.

New York at Its Core is made possible by: James G. Dinan and Elizabeth R. Miller, Pierre DeMenasce, the Jerome L. Greene Foundation in honor of Susan Henshaw Jones, Thompson Family Foundation, Heather and Bill Vratatos, and the Charina Endowment Fund. Additional support is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Zegar Family Foundation, Tracey A. and Kenneth A. Pontarelli, Jill and John Chalsty, Dyson Foundation, The Robert A. and Elizabeth R. Jeffe Foundation, Valerie and Jack Rowe, Mary Ann and Bruno A. Quinson, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and an anonymous donor.



New York at Its Core Grand Opening is Proudly Presented by 

For more information about *New York at Its Core*, visit [New York at Its Core](#).

About the Museum of the City of New York

Founded in 1923 as a private, nonprofit corporation, the Museum of the City of New York celebrates and interprets the city, educating the public about its distinctive character, especially its heritage of diversity, opportunity, and perpetual transformation. The Museum connects the past, present, and future of New York City, and serves the people of the city as well as visitors from around the world through exhibitions, school and public programs, publications, and collections. To connect with the Museum on social media, follow us on Instagram and Twitter at @MuseumofCityNY and visit our Facebook page at [Facebook.com/MuseumofCityNY](https://www.facebook.com/MuseumofCityNY). For more information please visit www.mcny.org.

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