



Definition Jay from Above, 2010, photograph by Bobbito Garcia © Bobbito Garcia

CITY/GAME: BASKETBALL IN NEW YORK
OPENS FEBRUARY 14 AT MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
New Exhibition Explores the Energy, Excitement and Impact of
the Iconic Pastime in the Big Apple

New York, NY (January 14, 2020) -*City/Game: Basketball in New York*, a new exhibition at **Museum of the City of New York**, intertwines New York’s vibrant history of street and playground basketball with the narratives of the players, coaches, and moments that have made the city’s high school, college, and professional game the stuff of legend. On view from February 14, 2020 through January 18, 2021, *City/Game* features original objects and ephemera (including many never shown before) along with photography, historic audio, and video. The show underscores the energy and diversity of the iconic urban pastime, and allows visitors to see how New York and basketball have shaped each other through historic highs and lows.

The story of basketball is a saga of New York’s schoolyards, street corners, gymnasiums, and packed arenas, where a shared sports culture cuts across race, ethnicity, class, and language. From early roots in immigrant communities to renowned celebrity players, the sport reflects the city’s cultural, social, and economic history.

“Basketball’s history and development is inextricably tied to New York,” says **Whitney Donhauser**, Ronay Menschel Director and President of the Museum of the City of New York. “*City/Game* captures the excitement and evolution of this quintessentially urban game and the energy of the diverse New Yorkers who play it and love it.”

City/Game highlights New York’s three professional teams—the New York Knicks, Brooklyn Nets, and New York Liberty—and their predecessors, as well as high school and college teams with legendary rivalries and players with ties to the city. Highlight objects will appeal to basketball fans, sneakerheads, and New York City culture lovers alike, with historic jerseys, trophies, and basketballs used by some of New York’s most beloved players, including Kevin Durant’s Nets Nike NBA Statement Edition jersey designed by artist Eric Haze, Spencer Dinwiddie custom sneakers, a Jeremy Lin jersey from the height of “Linsanity,” a 1970 Knicks championship banner, and a ball signed by the original Liberty team members.

The exhibition is organized in three major sections:

- **A LINEAGE OF COACHES, PLAYERS, AND PLACES** – Visitors will learn about key threads of basketball history from early days in New York through today and how they reflect the changing physical and social makeup of the city. Since its start during the early 20th century, basketball’s minimal equipment and space requirements have long appealed to urban and working-class communities. Starting in the 1920s and 30s the (largely indoor) game was principally an immigrant sport, with strong roots in Jewish and Catholic communities. At the same time, African Americans were honing their skills in such legendary “Black Five” teams as the Rens (from Harlem’s Renaissance Ballroom). The narrative also traces both college and professional teams, including the inception of the Knicks and their historic seasons in the 1970s. The section will also profile some of New York’s greatest players, coaches, and streetball stars, including outstanding pros from the three professional teams today: Nets, Knicks, and Liberty.
- **PROVING GROUNDS** – New York City is home to more than 1800 outdoor courts, and with a ready-made audience drawn from the city’s streets and neighborhoods, these spaces are the ultimate proving grounds for many players. The section reveals how and why the city has yielded an exceptional roster of local legends, including Hall of Famer Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, WNBA trailblazer Nancy Lieberman, and Las Vegas Aces guard Epiphanny Prince, who scored 113 points in a single game as a high school player at Murry Bergtraum. New York’s high school coaches have nurtured players and future coaches who have transformed the game on a national and international level, and scouts frequently visit many high schools in the city known for producing top talent. Photographs and ephemera from schools like Christ the King and Archbishop Molloy High Schools and St. John’s University, as well as public courts like The Cage, Rucker Park, and GOAT Park, tell the story of New York’s rising stars.
- **CULTURES OF BASKETBALL** - New York players have long brought style and improvisation to the city game, and from fashion and footwear to music, art, and even the way we speak, the many styles of basketball have shaped New York – and vice versa. This section illuminates the indelible impact of basketball on wider culture – from Hall of Famer and Knicks legend Walt “Clyde” Frazier, who became one of the first major style icons of the NBA, to And1 Mixtapes and the soundtrack of basketball. Sneaker culture, graffiti-inspired street art, and “trash talk” are highlighted as some of the many ways that basketball has permeated all aspects of New York City life.

PUBLICATION

A companion book, ***CITY/GAME: BASKETBALL IN NEW YORK*** —edited by *New York Times* sports columnist William C. Rhoden and with a foreword by Frazier—will be released by the Museum and Rizzoli to coincide with the opening of the Museum’s exhibition. The book serves up a fascinating collection of essays and interviews, as well as an expertly curated collection of new and archival images tracing the sport’s history from the 19th century to the present. Covering topics including the era of the “Black Fives,” the glory days of the Knicks in the 1970s, the city’s Jewish basketball stars, NYC-style trash talk, and the epic streetball tournaments held in Rucker Park and the Cage on West 4th Street, which were home to Hall of Famers Julius “Dr. J” Erving and Nate “Tiny” Archibald, and scores of New York playground basketball legends. **CITY/GAME** is a comprehensive guide for any New York basketball fan.

RELATED PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

A stimulating roster of film screenings, lectures, and panel discussions featuring historians, journalists, players, and coaches will accompany the exhibition. The Museum will also offer hands-on activities for children, teachers, and families to introduce them to the richness of the sport and the expanse of its history.

WINTER [BASKET] BALL

Tuesday, February 11

The Museum of the City of New York's annual winter gala will offer a sneak preview of City/Game. Honoring Abdul-Jabbar, this evening of dinner and dancing will also feature BOUNCE - the Basketball Opera, tours of the exhibition, and appearances by several NBA and WNBA players. The evening raises funds for the museum's exhibitions, public programs, and education programs that serve over 50,000 students and teachers.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL AND NEW YORK CITY: THE REMARKABLE JOURNEY

Friday, March 13

"WHEN THE GARDEN WAS EDEN": REMEMBERING THE 1970s NY KNICKS

Tuesday, May 5

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

City/Game is curated by Dr. Lilly Tuttle, Museum of the City of New York. The exhibition was designed by WeShouldDoItAll.

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Supporters

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About the Museum of the City of New York

The Museum of the City of New York fosters understanding of the distinctive nature of urban life in the world's most influential metropolis. It engages visitors by celebrating, documenting, and interpreting the city's past, present, and future. 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. For more information please visit www.mcny.org.

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