

PEOPLE

PLACE

INFLUENCE

A Field Guide

Soon after its founding, the Museum of the City of New York began collecting art and other materials related to the life of the city. Today MCNY has an estimated 750,000 items, including hundreds of thousands of images of the city in prints, photographs, drawings, and paintings, along with vast holdings of clothing, furniture, toys, documents, and an entire collection of materials related to the history of theater in New York. A small sampling of this vast collection is on view in this gallery.=

The Museum's collection is full of beauty and intrigue, but it is also uneven in its representation of the city's history. This gallery shows objects that reflect the interests of the Museum's founders and early patrons, while also presenting the ongoing efforts of curators and community members to build a collection that can more fully tell the stories of a changing city.


For 100 years the Museum has devoted itself to a set of enduring themes: collecting objects that tell the stories of the diverse PEOPLE of New York; the changing look and configuration of this urban PLACE; and the importance of this city through its INFLUENCE on everything from fashion

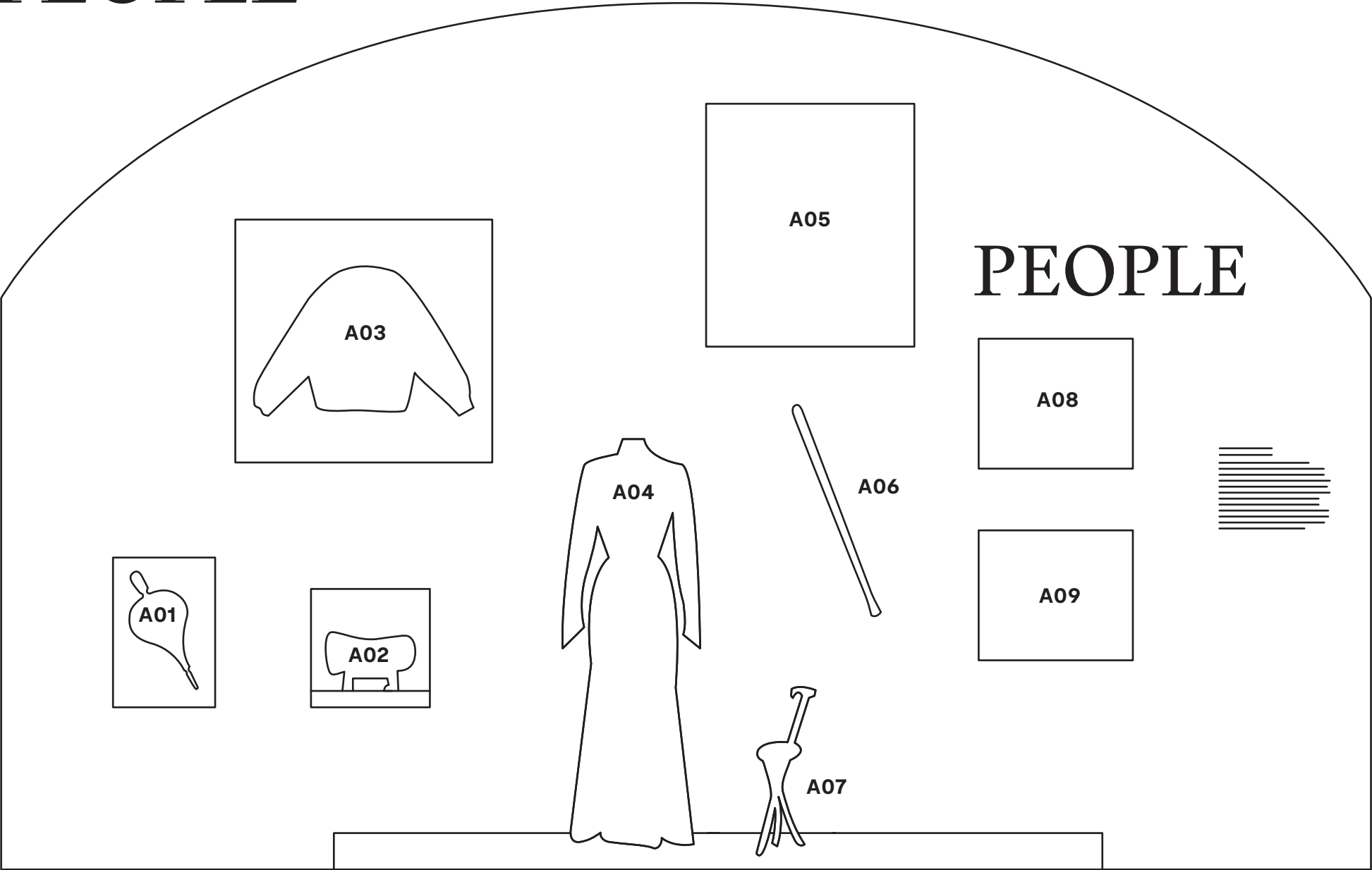
and style to art, politics, and business. Museum practices have evolved since 1923 and today this expansive collection, like the city itself, remains a work in progress. We invite your reflections on how these objects tell the stories and on how we can continue to develop these themes to more fully reflect New York. Yet there is much work ahead to meet the vision of truly representing this city. As we reflect on the past 100 years, this exhibition looks ahead to our next century by looking back on how this Museum has worked to capture New York City as a place, a population, and a center of global influence, and asks what is next for New York's museum.

People, Place, and Influence: The Collection at 100 is made possible in part by Mrs. William T. Comfort, the Havemeyer Family, Stanford and Sandra Ladner, Leon Levy Foundation, and Daryl B. Uber.

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A01
Bellows
Unknown maker, c. 1820

Wood, leather, brass, and paint
Gift of Mrs. Lyman Rhoades, 1953 (53.94)

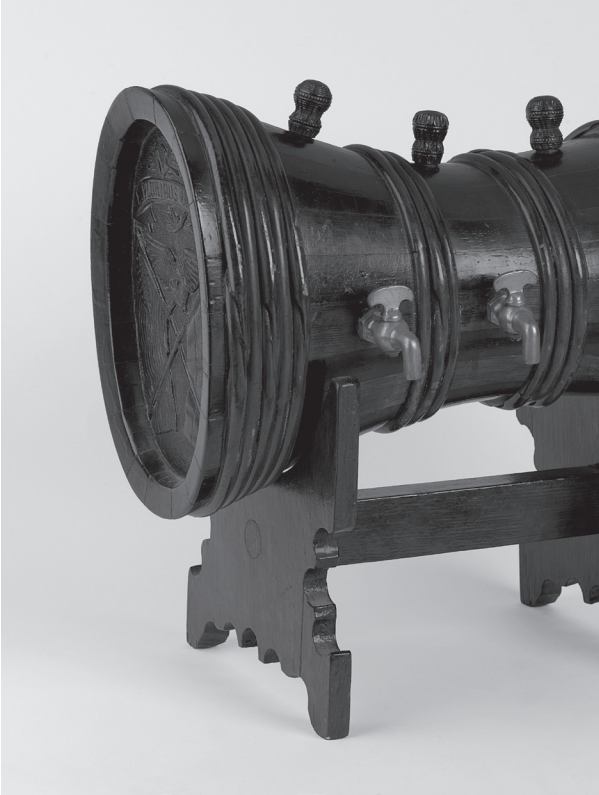


This ornate pair of bellows was created by an unidentified inmate at Welfare Island, as today's Roosevelt Island was sometimes known because of the numerous prisons, asylums, and almshouses located there. The inmate created a set of bellows, for reasons that are unknown, for the wives of ten of the most prominent New Yorkers of the day.

A02
Demonstration keg
Laurence Kaminski, 1893

Wood
Gift of Mrs. Peter Kaminski, 1975 (75.45.1A-B)

Polish immigrant Laurence Kaminski spent three years creating this keg to demonstrate his skill as a cooper, or barrel maker. Kaminski, who emigrated from Poland to Greenpoint, Brooklyn in 1873, offered \$1,000 to anyone who could duplicate his handiwork. According to his daughter-in-law, who donated the keg to MCNY, he had no takers on his challenge.



Detail of demonstration keg

A03

Mayor David Dinkins's warmup jacket

Chalk Line Apparel,
1990–1993

White nylon satin, polyester knit, polyester flannel, and metal snaps

Gift of the Hon. David N. Dinkins, 1994 (94.10.1)

Former mayor David Dinkins donated this jacket to MCNY as a representation of his tenure as mayor of New York from 1990 to 1993. The city's first Black mayor, Dinkins rose through the Democratic Party organization in Harlem and was Manhattan Borough President before running for mayor.

A04

Marian Anderson's concert gown

Unknown maker, 1947

Emerald green silk taffeta, black cotton embroidery, black sequins, black paillettes, and black plastic multi-shaped beads

Gift of Ms. Bette Midler, 1993 (93.85.4)

The acclaimed contralto singer Marian Anderson broke many barriers during her career. While she is perhaps best known for her performance of "My Country 'Tis of Thee" at the Lincoln Memorial in 1939—after she was prevented from singing to an integrated audience at an indoor venue—she later became the first Black performer to sing at the Metropolitan Opera, and the first to sing at two presidential inaugurations (for Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1957 and John F. Kennedy in 1961).

Anderson lived for a time on Fifth Avenue and 101st Street, one block from MCNY. In 1993 singer and actor Bette Midler purchased some of Anderson's concert gowns for MCNY's theater collection to honor Anderson's legacy as an extraordinary performer and civil rights pioneer.

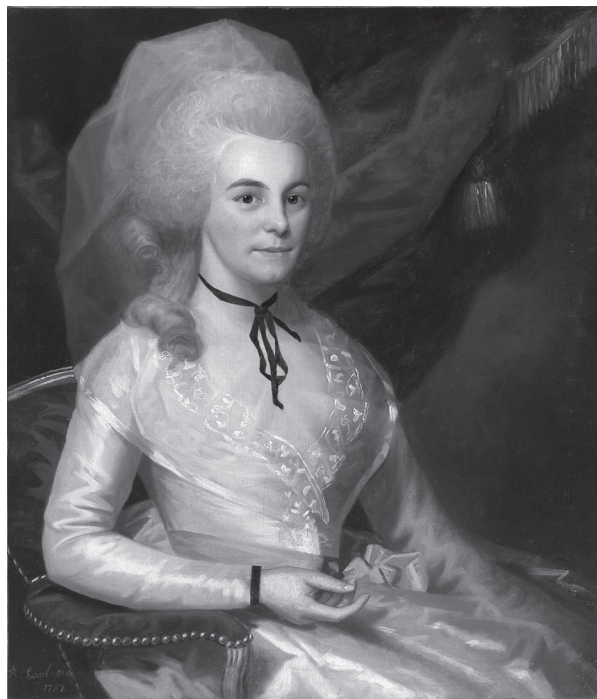
A05

Portrait of Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton

Ralph Earl, 1787

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. Alexander Hamilton and General Pierpont Morgan Hamilton, 1971 (71.31.2)



Although Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton is closely associated with New York City and her husband, Alexander Hamilton, her portraitist Ralph Earl is more typically associated with Connecticut. From 1786 to 1788, Earl was imprisoned for failing to pay his debts and painted this portrait of Hamilton while he was incarcerated.

A06

Stickball bat

Unknown maker,
early 20th century

Wood

Gift of James F. and Jean C. Wortman, 1996 (96.80.13)

A quintessential sport for urban kids, stickball was traditionally played in the streets of New York City neighborhoods. This particular bat came from the childhood collection of a Brooklyn resident who played in the 1950s and '60s and is part of MCNY's sizable collection of toys.

A07

Folding seat

Stafford-Johnson Seating
Corp., c. 1939

Maple and rubber

Gift of Anne Joyce Wyman, 1995 (95.3.2)

This folding seat may have been used by a fairgoer and perhaps purchased as a souvenir at the 1939 World's Fair, in Flushing Meadows Park, Queens—or it may have been an innovative demonstration chair. MCNY holds a significant collection of design drawings, rare color slides, and ephemera related to this landmark showcase of "The World of Tomorrow."

A08

Afghan Independence Day Festival, Kissena Park, Flushing, NY

Ed Grazda, 2001

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Joy Giving Something, Inc., 2020 (2020.10.161)

A09

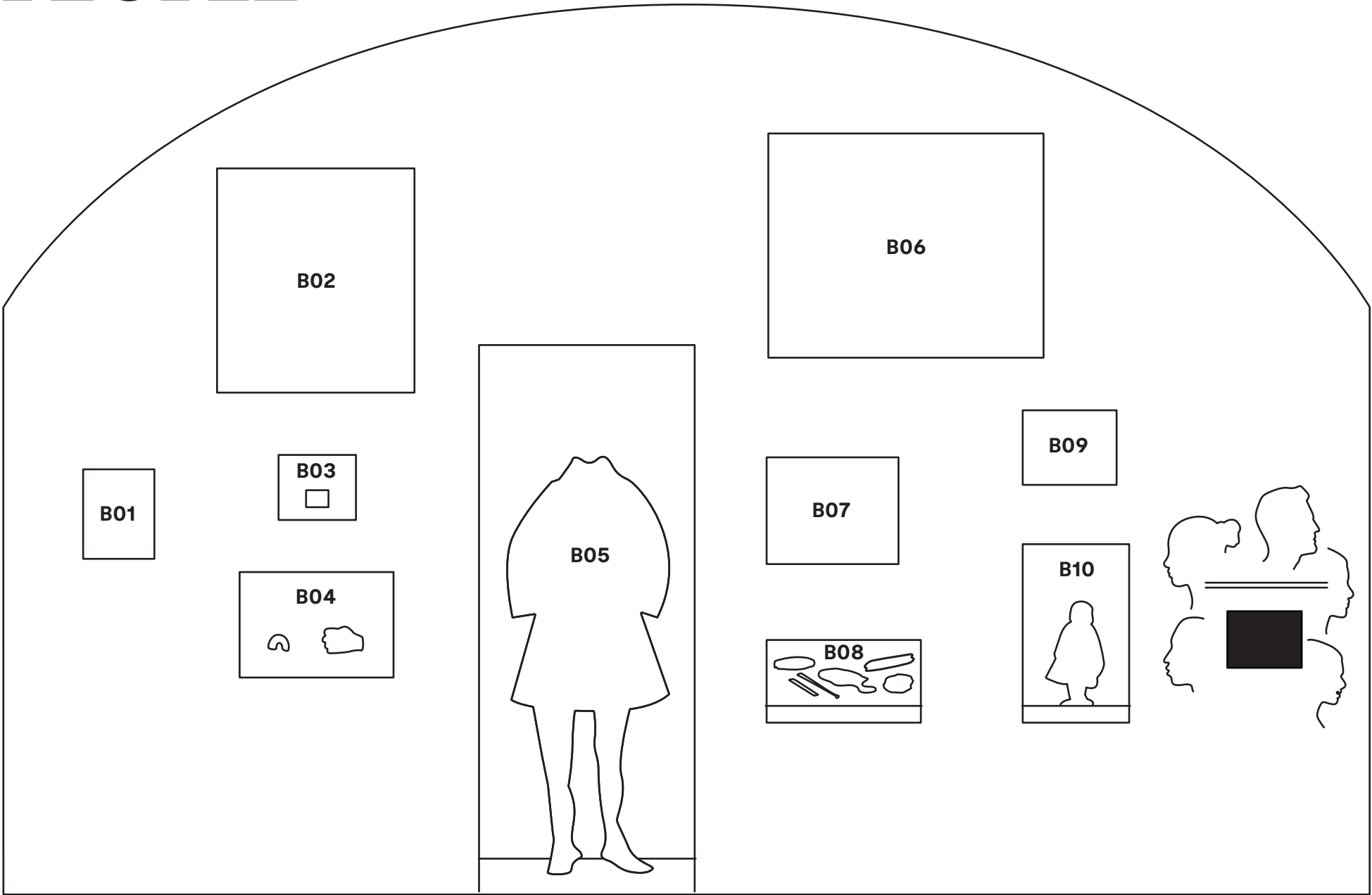
Chris Sawyer Breaking on Broadway, Upper West Side

Martha Cooper, 1983

Digital print

Gift of Martha Cooper, 2016 (2016.12.5)

The work of photographer Martha Cooper complements MCNY's larger holdings of materials related to graffiti and hip hop. Despite the economic downturn of the 1970s and '80s—which led to a decline in the city's national image—the era was a period of groundbreaking and lasting artistic innovation across the five boroughs. The Museum's collection reflects that era in photographs and artworks.



B01
Untitled
Andreas Feininger, c. 1941
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Mr. Andreas Feininger, 1955 (55.31.9)

B02
Portrait of George Washington
Gilbert Stuart, 1796
Oil on canvas
Bequest of John Hill Morgan, 1946 (46.1)

Gilbert Stuart, the preeminent 18th-century portraitist, is credited with creating the familiar image of George Washington. The first of the Stuart portraits was owned by Samuel Vaughn, a close friend of Washington's. Stuart's subsequent replicas of this likeness were all known as "Vaughn type." This portrait is one of the first replicas from Washington's sitting and considered to be one of the finest examples of this portrait type.

B03
Cole Porter's cigarette case
Verdura, 1940
Gold
Gift of Mr. Hubbell Pierce, 1969 (69.16.1A-B)

Though he was born in Indiana, Cole Porter's work has long been identified with New York City due in part to his 1930 musical *The New Yorkers*, which featured the song "I Happen to Like New York." A mainstay of the Broadway stage for over 40 years, Porter composed numerous beloved musical numbers. This cigarette case was created by the Italian jeweler Fulco di Verdura to commemorate Porter's *Broadway Melody of 1940*.

B04
Cast of boxer Jack Johnson's right hand
Walter H. Jacobs, c. 1909
Plaster
Gift of Dr. Walter H. Jacobs, 1940 (40.21.1)

Boxer Joe Louis's mouthguard
Walter H. Jacobs, c. 1937–1942
Rubber
Gift of Dr. Walter H. Jacobs, 1942 (42.79.5)

This cast of the right hand of Jack Johnson, the first Black world heavyweight champion, was created by Walter H. Jacobs, a dentist who also fabricated mouthguards, such as this one used by Joe Louis, for numerous boxing legends. MCNY holds several casts of legendary fists made by Dr. Jacobs.

B05

John Jay’s coat and waistcoat

Unknown maker, c. 1770–1780

Coat of burgundy silk velvet and cream silk satin; waistcoat of white linen compound weave and white cotton embroidery

Gift of Mrs. Wells in memory of her husband, a descendant of John Jay, 1979 (79.104.1, .2)

This ensemble belonged to John Jay. They are just one example of many garments in the MCNY collection worn by Revolutionary-era political icons during the years that New York was the US’s first capital, which were later collected by notable New Yorkers as markers of the city’s deep historic significance. Jay and his wife Sarah Livingston regularly hosted parties and were known for their form of simple, yet elegant self-presentation that reflected the values of post-Revolution New York.

Jay was a diplomat, statesman, and governor of New York who served as the first Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court. He was a leading abolitionist who signed New York’s gradual emancipation law, although he and his family owned slaves.

B06

Rainy Late Afternoon, Union Square

Childe Hassam, 1890

Oil on canvas

Gift of Miss Mary Whitney Bangs, 1969 (69.121.1)


Noted American impressionist Childe Hassam developed his style for depicting urban life while living in Paris in the 1880s. When he returned to the US, he rented a studio on Fifth Avenue near 17th Street and was frequently drawn to the street life and buildings in the vicinity.

When this painting was donated to MCNY, it was described as a “previously unknown work” by this important artist.

B07

Sketches

Thomas Nast, 1871

 01

Engraving with pen and ink on paper

Gift of Mrs. Mabel Nast Crawford, 1943 (43.239.2)

German-born political cartoonist Thomas Nast, who immigrated to New York as a boy, created the iconic image of the bloated, corrupt William Magear “Boss” Tweed. These sketches include a self-portrait, a likeness of Tweed, and a human face with features like a tiger, the symbol of Tammany Hall.

Nast, who has been credited with bringing down the “Tweed Ring” with his devastating illustrations, inscribed this page with the words: “Bosses come and go, but our good work goes on forever.”

B08

John D. Rockefeller’s dressing set

Tiffany & Co. and Theodore B. Starr, c. 1912

Ebony and sterling silver

Gift of Mr. David Rockefeller, 1998 (98.60.1A-F)



Detail of brush from John D. Rockefeller’s dressing set

This dresser set of ornate brushes and other personal grooming tools was donated by David Rockefeller, the grandson of John D. Rockefeller Sr. and bears the initials of the family patriarch. Since Rockefeller had alopecia and was nearly bald, these brushes were primarily decorative.

In the 1930s MCNY acquired Rockefeller’s bedroom and dressing room when his home was demolished to make way for Rockefeller Center. This set was put on display in the dressing room when it was installed at MCNY. Today, the rooms are in the collection of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

B09

Indians (Iroquois) at 511 Broome Street

Jacob A. Riis, c. 1890; printed later

Gelatin silver printing-out-paper

Gift of Roger William Riis, 1990 (90.13.4.288)

At the end of the 19th century, Jacob Riis was a pioneer in pairing journalism with photography to expose—and sometimes sensationalize—living conditions in New York’s poorest neighborhoods. His collection of photography was largely forgotten after his death, until his negatives were discovered by photographer Alexander Alland and donated to the Museum of the City of New York, which held the first exhibition on his reform work in 1947.

The Haudenosaunee women in this image were residents of the New York Indian Colony, a community around Broome Street where about 100 Indigenous people lived and worked as models, performers, and craftspeople.

B10

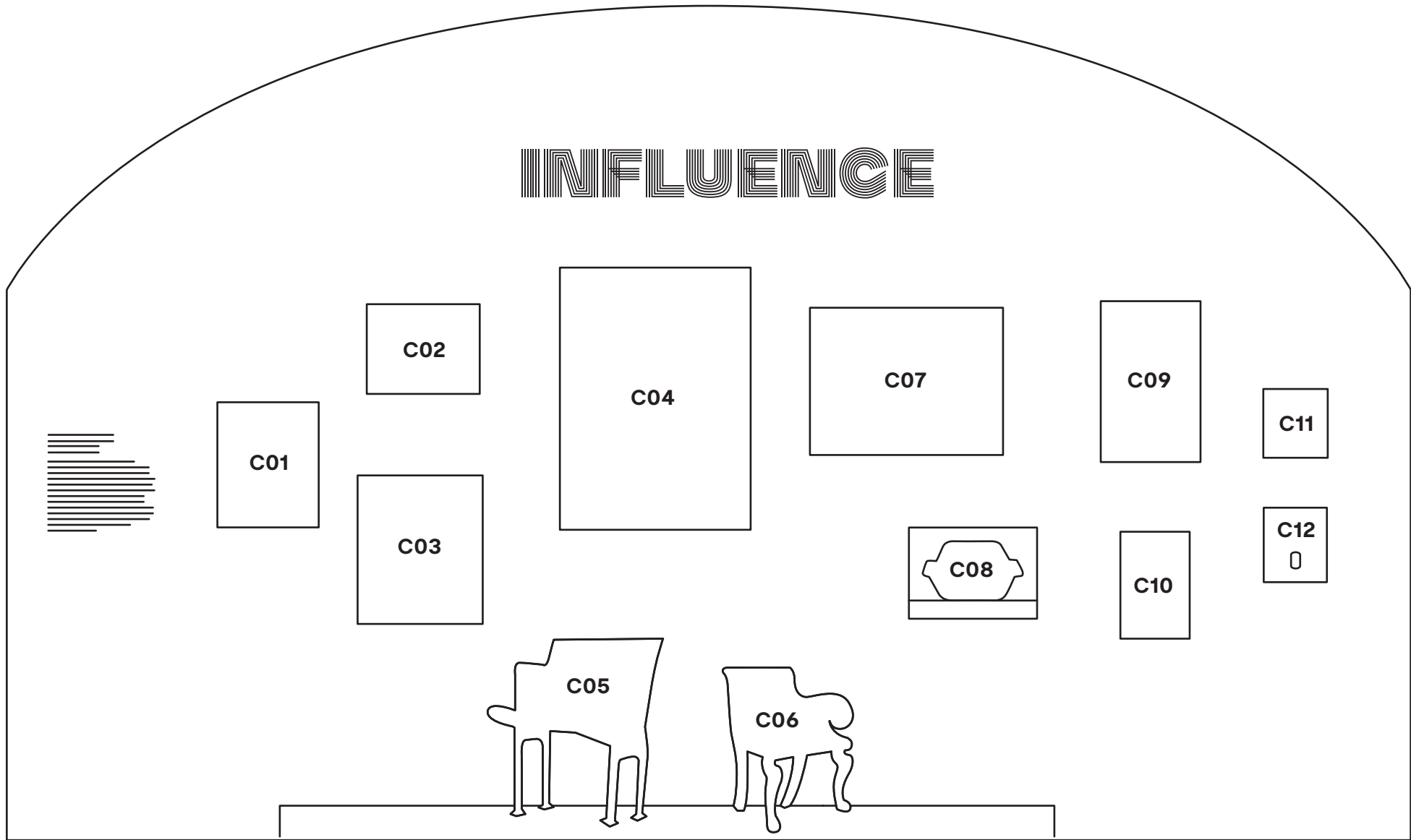
Brooklyn Sanitary Fair doll

Unknown maker, 1864

Porcelain, leather, felt, and velvet

Gift of Mrs. C. F. Pope and Mrs. F. B. McGay, 1927 (27.126.1)

One of the first objects to be accessioned into the MCNY collection, this doll was purchased in 1864 at the Brooklyn Sanitary Fair. During the Civil War, such fairs were a form of civic engagement, staffed largely by women who sold goods to raise funds to support the war effort. The Brooklyn Sanitary Fair was held at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, then on Montague and Court Streets. It lasted for two weeks and raised more than \$400,000.



C01

Photograph of Anna May Wong

Carl Van Vechten, 1932

Gelatin silver print
Gift of Carl Van Vechten, 1942 (42.316.231)

Novelist, critic, and photographer Carl Van Vechten notably documented the stars and cultural tastemakers in New York in the 1920s and '30s, paying particular attention to the Harlem Renaissance. MCNY holds some 2,200 photographs taken by Van Vechten including his portraits of Langston Hughes, Billie Holiday, and Gertrude Stein.

Anna May Wong, often described as the first Chinese-American movie star, worked for a time in Paris to avoid the pervasive typecasting she experienced in Hollywood. Shortly before this photograph was taken, Wong had starred in a successful run of *On the Spot* on Broadway.

C02

Drawing of Eustace Tilley, Eugene Kelly, Dudley Graham, and “Talk of the Town”

Rea Irvin, 1925

India ink on paper
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Rea Irvin, 1967 (67.100.73)

Illustrator Rea Irvin created the image of the character Eustace Tilley for the inaugural issue of *The New Yorker*, published on February 21, 1925. Tilley still appears in modified form on the magazine’s annual anniversary issue. Over a 33-year career, Irvin drew more than 160 *New Yorker* covers. He and his wife donated this sketch of Tilley to the Museum in 1967.

C03

Costume design for Brick in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Lucinda Ballard, 1955

Watercolor on paper
Gift of Miss Lucinda Ballard, 1964 (64.7.15)

In 1947 Lucinda Ballard won the first-ever Tony Award for Best Costume Design. Ballard created costumes for several works by Tennessee Williams as well as for the original Broadway productions of *The Sound of Music* and *Annie Get Your Gun*. MCNY holds nearly 700 of Ballard’s original watercolor designs.

C04

Yellow Building

Sandra “Lady Pink” Fabara, 1985

Acrylic on canvas
Gift of Mr. Martin Wong, 1994 (94.114.4)

Artist and collector Martin Wong mentored young graffiti artists and encouraged them to translate their ephemeral work onto canvas. In 1994 MCNY acquired a vast collection from Wong, including 300 works of art and 55 sketchbooks by these artists. Sandra “Lady Pink” Fabara was one of the few female artists in the circle mentored by Wong.

C05

Stadium chair

Unknown maker, pre-1973

Wood and metal
Gift of The Office of Mayor John V. Lindsay, 1973 (73.240)

The original Yankee Stadium was in use from 1923 to 1973. In 1973 the team got a new home and a new owner when George Steinbrenner bought the team from CBS. The stadium construction was a controversial move at a moment when the city was on the brink of bankruptcy.

C06

Armchair

Duncan Phyfe, 1825–1827

02

Birch and mahogany
Gift of Mrs. H. Casimir De Rham, 1936 (36.110.2a, b)

In the first decades of the 19th century, Scottish-born Duncan Phyfe established himself as a sought-after furniture maker to New York’s most prominent families. From his shop on Fulton Street, Phyfe produced furniture with elements of classical design that became fashionable among his New York patrons.

This chair came from the home of merchant Stephen Whitney, who commissioned it in 1825 for his home at 7 Bowling Green and is emblematic of MCNY’s significant collection of furniture that spans the colonial era through the 19th century. It was displayed in MCNY’s period alcove recreating the drawing room of the Whitney residence, installed in 1936.

C07

“A Spill Out” On The Snow

Currier & Ives, 1870

03

Hand colored lithograph
Gift of Harry T. Peters, 1958 (58.300.100)

Nathaniel Currier and James Merritt Ives ran a prolific printmaking firm in lower Manhattan in the 19th century. Their lithographs depicted a range of both urban and rural subjects, but they are most associated with bucolic, wintry scenes that appealed to a national appetite for pastoral scenes in an age of rapid industrialization. In the 1950s, collector, scholar, and sportsman Harry T. Peters donated over 2,000 Currier & Ives prints to MCNY, making it one of the most significant collections of the firm’s work.

C08

Chef Burger prop from Cats

John Napier, 1982–1990

Plastic
Gift of Mr. Peter Neufeld, 1990 (90.21.4)

Cats was a Broadway blockbuster that ran for 18 years. The production featured a unique design that set the action in a junkyard, pulling audiences “into a world that uses real objects to conjure up fantasy,” as noted by the scenic and costume designer John Napier.

C09

Voice orchestrations for “Give My Regards to Broadway” and “The Yankee Doodle Boy”

George M. Cohan, c. 1904

Ink on paper
Gift of the Edward B. Marks Music Corporation, 1968 (68.123.202)

After a start in vaudeville, songwriter and lyricist George M. Cohan made his mark on Broadway before World War I and is considered to be the father of the Broadway musical. His 1904 show *Little Johnny Jones* featured the songs “Give My Regards to Broadway” and “The Yankee Doodle Boy.” MCNY holds a large collection of materials related to Cohan’s work, including original, annotated sheet music.

C10

Original inscription to Mourning Becomes Electra

Eugene O’Neill, 1931

04

Ink on paper, glass, and wood
Gift of Mrs. Eugene O’Neill, 1942 (42.237)

Born in 1888 in what is now Times Square, Eugene O’Neill was one of the most celebrated playwrights of the 20th century. MCNY’s theater collection holds numerous handwritten drafts of O’Neill’s early works. This original inscription is from the play trilogy *Mourning Becomes Electra*, a Civil War-era retelling of the *Oresteia* cycle, originally written in the 5th century BCE.

C11

Stained glass window sketch

Louis Comfort Tiffany, c. 1915

Watercolor on paper
Gift of Miss Grace M. Mayer, 1958 (58.326.1)

While New York native Louis Comfort Tiffany’s company and his name eventually became synonymous with stained glass, he began as a painter and created watercolor studies for glass works throughout his career. Grace Mayer, MCNY’s first curator of photography, donated this piece to the collection in 1958.

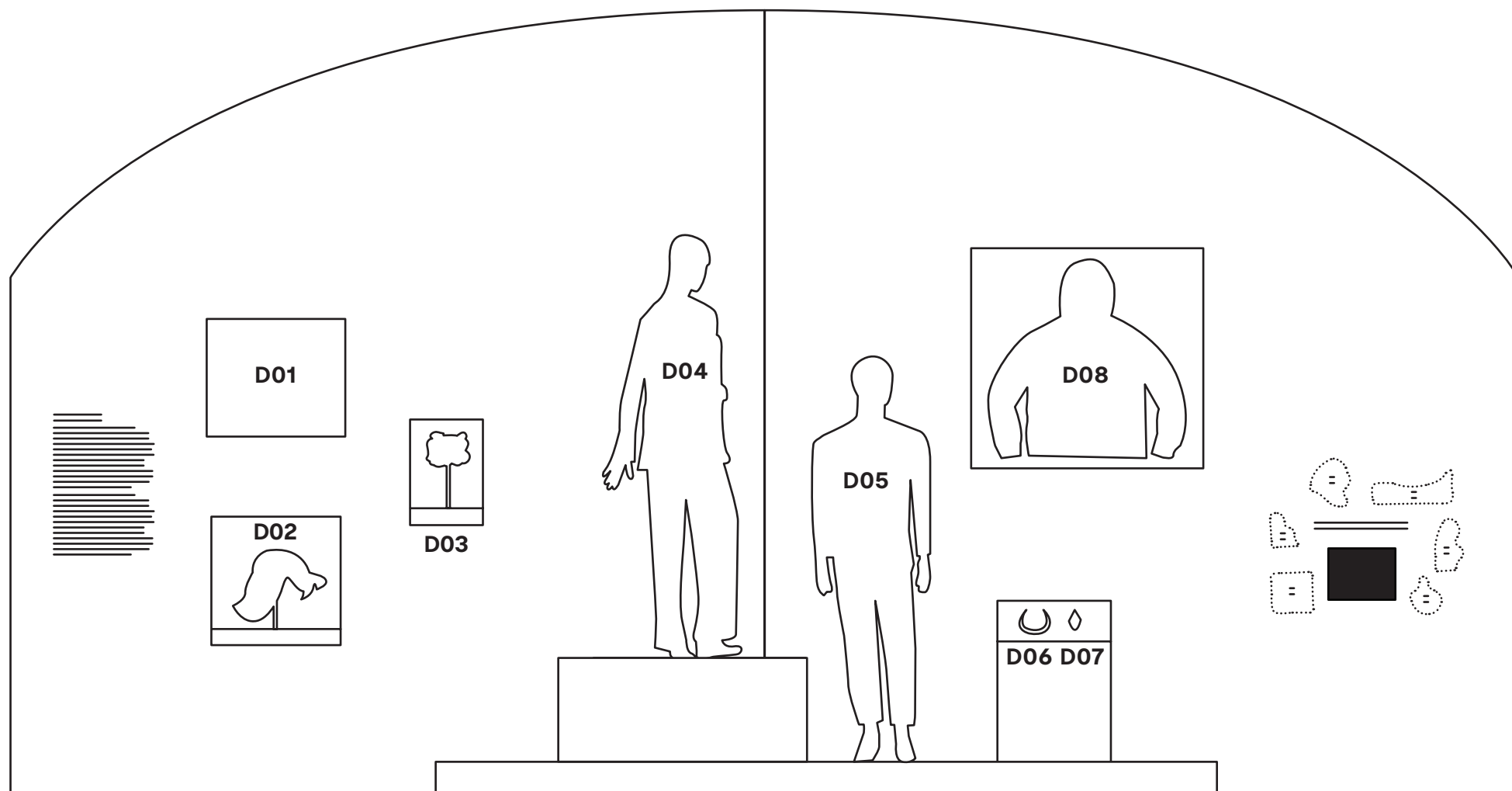
C12

Jar of fairy dust from Peter Pan

Nu-Tone Products Corp., 1954–1960

Plastic and paper
Gift of Mary Martin, 1968 (68.128.8)

In the musical *Peter Pan*, which opened in 1954, Peter sprinkles Wendy, John, and Michael with fairy dust so that they can fly with him to Neverland. In 1955 the musical was the first Broadway production to be broadcast in color on television. Mary Martin, who won both Tony and Emmy Awards for playing Peter, donated this prop glitter, which was used as “fairy dust” to MCNY in 1968.



D01

Untitled (Man in yellow hat and jacket)

Jamel Shabazz, 1981

Chromogenic color print

Gift of Martin Z. Margulies Foundation, 2020 (2020.17.18)



Courtesy of Jamel Shabazz

D02

Julia Tiffany Weld's headdress

Louis Comfort Tiffany, 1913

Peacock feathers, gold lamé, metal beaded net, polychrome glass pailletes, and cream cotton muslin
Gift of Julia Tiffany Weld, 1975 (75.21.1)

In 1913, to mark his 65th birthday, Louis Comfort Tiffany held an elaborate "Egyptian fete of the time of Cleopatra" to celebrate his appreciation for the culture and visual style of ancient Egypt. Those invited to the event were expected to attend in costumes of the period that were approved by a committee in advance. He created this headdress and a matching collar for his daughter Julia, who later donated them to MCNY.

D03

Toque hat

William J., 1952

Black silk velvet and metal wire
Anonymous gift, 2019 (2019.25.1)



Many New Yorkers knew Bill Cunningham for his street fashion photography published in *The New York Times* beginning in 1978, but he began his career in New York as a milliner, making hats as William J. Cunningham recalled that as a young man "I could never concentrate on Sunday church services because I'd be concentrating on women's hats."

D04

Lauren Bacall's evening ensemble

Halston, c. 1975



Black silk knit and plastic sequins
Gift of Lauren Bacall, 1985 (85.78.4A-D)

Bronx-born film star Lauren Bacall, who began her career as a model, was a frequent fixture on the International Best Dressed List. MCNY holds numerous garments worn by Bacall, including many suits designed by Halston, the New York designer who rose to fame with a roster of celebrity clients drawn to his sleek yet sophisticated designs.

Encapsulating this dynamic between designer and muse, Halston once famously said, "You are only as good as the people you dress."

D05

Tom Wolfe's ensemble

Vincent Nicolosi, tailor; Jay Lord Hatters, hatter; Carlin Poster, shirt manufacturer; Sutton East, tie designer; Church's, shoe manufacturer, 1980–1987



Suit of cream wool gabardine, mother-of-pearl buttons; hat of cream felt and blue grosgrain ribbon; shirt of white, blue, and red striped cotton plain weave, and white plastic buttons; tie of white silk novelty weave printed with red and black poppy motif; shoes of cream suede, brown leather, and cotton lacing
Gift of Sheila Wolfe, 2023 (2023.18.1a, b; .4; .8; .12; .19, .24a, b)

Author Tom Wolfe, a Virginian who later became a New Yorker, captured the climate of 1980s New York in his novel *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. Wolfe was a style icon known for his dapper look. His signature was a white suit, which reflected his southern roots and sense of formality.

Wolfe worked with the custom tailor Vincent Nicolosi and designed many of his clothes himself. This outfit is part of a recent gift of selections from Wolfe's wardrobe to MCNY's costume collection.

D06

Gold mesh necklace with pendant points

Giacinto Melillo, late 19th–early 20th century

Gold
Gift of Mrs. Roswell Miller, 1947 (47.25.78)



Detail of gold mesh necklace

This piece was produced by Neapolitan silversmith and jeweler Giacinto Melillo, who was inspired by ancient art of the Roman, Greek, Etruscan, and Byzantine periods. The delicate design points to a cultural interest in art history that was prevalent at the time.

D07

Brooch pendant

Tiffany & Co., 1900–1910

White diamonds, blue sapphire, white gold, and yellow gold
Bequest of Helen V.S. Young, 1982 (82.163.1)



Detail of brooch pendant

D08

The Yard Hooded Work Jacket printed with In the Yard of Doomsday (1979)

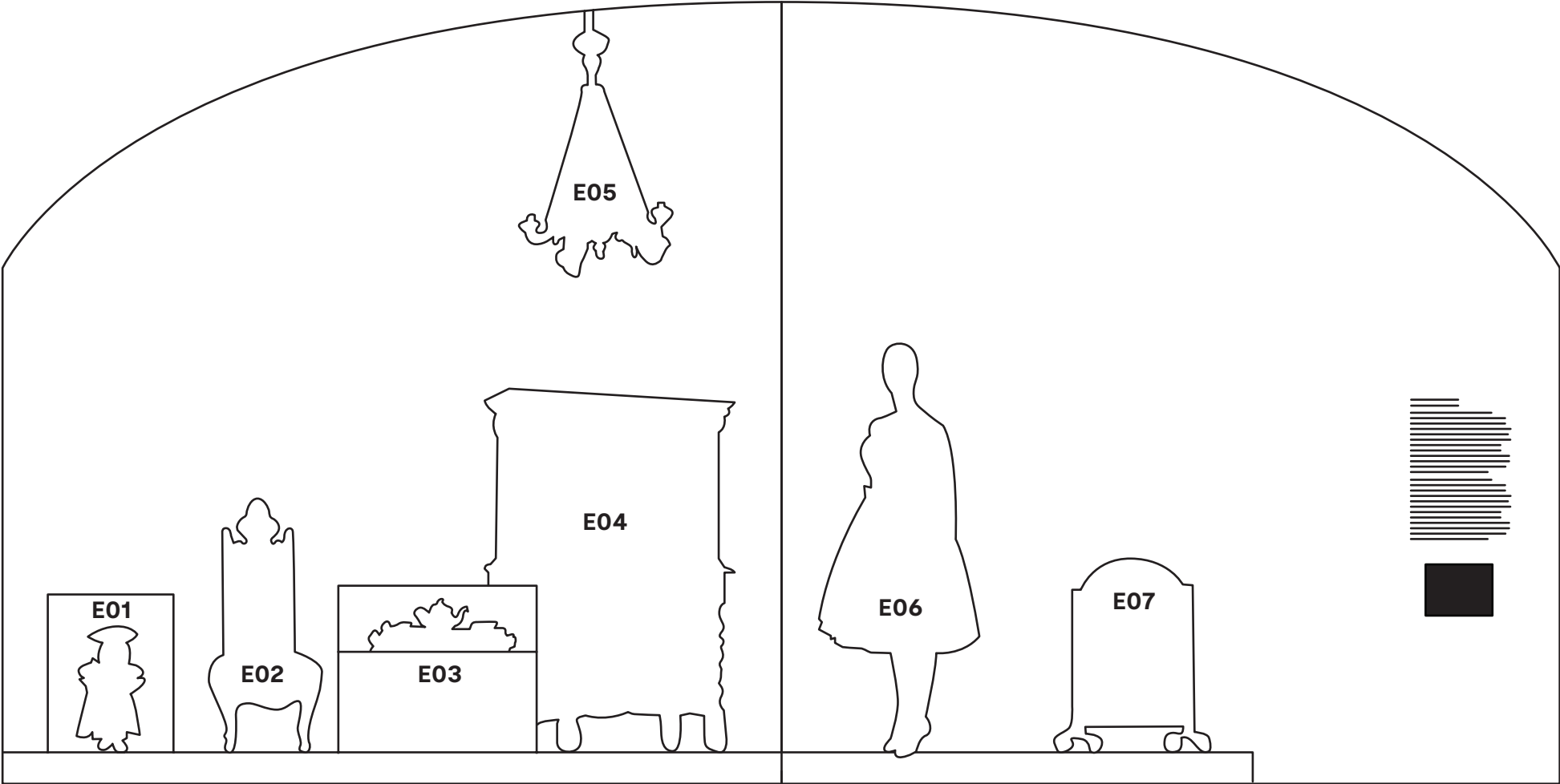
Lee Quiñones, artist; Supreme, designer, 2018



Polychrome printed cotton canvas, black cotton knit, black cotton plain weave, polyester batting, plastic, and metal
Anonymous gift, 2021 (2021.3.1)

This jacket, from a special edition by Supreme, is printed with a drawing by graffiti artist Lee "LEE" Quiñones that is in MCNY's collection. The drawing is a preparatory study for a mural that was shown at the New Museum's *Events: Fashion Moda* exhibition in 1981.

Supreme, a streetwear brand founded in New York City in 1994, has a long history of working with graffiti artists to create signature collections; their first such partnership was with Rammellzee, whose work is also in MCNY's collection.



E01
Constable twin doll
Maison Jumeau, c. 1890

Porcelain, mohair, and wood
Gift of Mrs. Constable MacCracken, 1968 (68.67.4)

Bisque, or porcelain, dolls were highly popular during the later decades of the 19th century. Jumeau, the French maker of this doll, earned a reputation for dolls in elegant fashions that reflected popular styles. This doll was purchased in Paris for Edith and Marie Louise Constable, whose family owned the Arnold Constable & Company department store.

It is part of the vast and notable MCNY toy collection, which complemented the costume and decorative arts holdings as a window into earlier eras of elite life in New York City.

E02
Chair
Auguste-Émile
Ringuet-Leprince, 1850–1860

Fruitwood and bronze
Gift of Rev. William H. Owen, 1933 (33.393.15)

The French maker of this chair produced furniture in both Paris and New York and the style reflects the trend among mid-19th-century New Yorkers for French goods. This chair came from the 23rd Street home of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Sands Brooks, the founder of Brooks Brothers clothing store, and was a component of a period alcove from 2001 to 2010.

E03
Tea set
Tiffany & Co., 1897

Gold
Estate of Katharine Colt Sloan, 1951 (51.301.1-4)



Sugar bowl from tea set

MCNY holds a significant collection of silver designed by Tiffany & Co., and many pieces that were created as ceremonial gifts. This tea set was crafted from 18-carat gold for Samuel Sloan, president of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad Company, as an 80th birthday and Christmas gift. The Irish-born Sloan immigrated to New York City as a baby and served as president of over 16 railroad companies during the Gilded Age when fortunes were made off the railroad boom.



Detail of tea set

E04 Cabinet-on-stand Unknown maker, 1679–1680

Walnut, rosewood, oak, brass, gilding, and silver
Gift of the Descendants of Livingston / Fauconner Families, 1996 (96.188.1A-D)

This ornate cabinet was probably made by Dutch cabinetmakers working in London. The elaborate floral inlay is representative of cabinet work from the 1680s that reflected the popularity of flower paintings and the availability of a range of wood imported from Asia. The owner of this cabinet arrived in New York in 1702 to serve as a secretary to the colonial governor of New York. MCNY's collection is rich in objects from the earliest days of European colonial settlement and the legacy of New Amsterdam was a key motif for the Museum's early leaders.

E05 Gasolier Unknown maker, 1860–1870

Glass and bronze
Gift of Miss Laura J. Edwards, 1930 (30.106.1)

E06 Cocktail dress Scaasi, 1956–1957

Off-white silk taffeta with red and black printed dots, black silk satin, off-white silk faille, and white synthetic fiber net
Gift of Mrs. Peter Baumberger, 1983 (83.121.8)



Details of cocktail dress

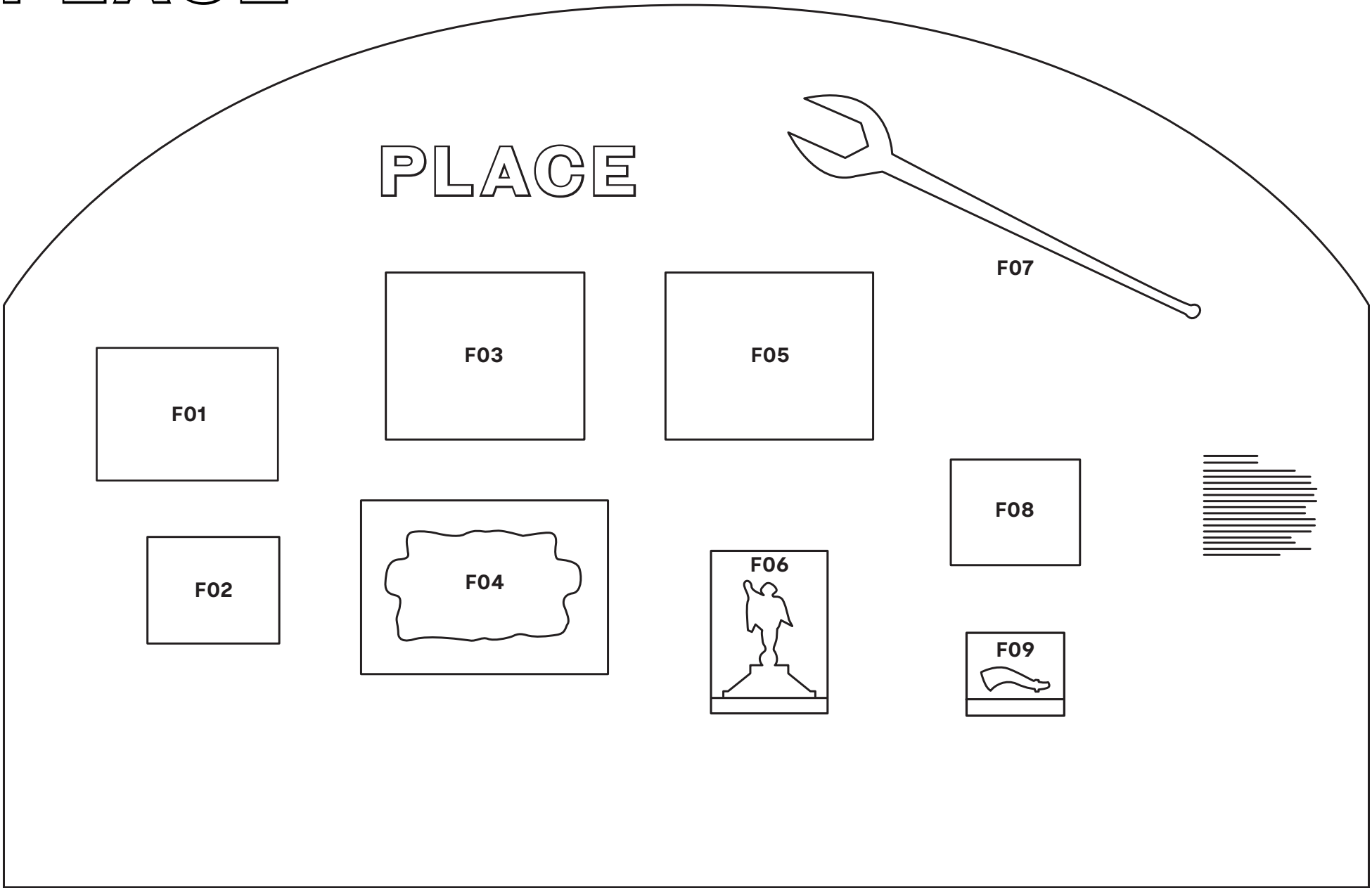
Canadian-born Arnold Isaacs began his fashion career learning the craft in the French House of Paquin before moving to New York City to apprentice with designer Charles James. He began his independent design label in the mid-1950s using the reverse of his last name to create Scaasi. He was celebrated throughout his career for chic and sometimes whimsical designs worn by socialites, first ladies, and celebrities.

E07 Ecran (fire screen) François II Foliot and Louis-François Chatard, 1779

Beech, gilding, polychrome wool embroidery, and polychrome silk jacquard weave
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Bonsal in loving memory of Henrietta Fairfax Morris (Mrs. Stephen Bonsal), 1991 (91.121.3)



Gouverneur Morris, a New Yorker who wrote the preamble to the Constitution and was US Minister to France, brought this fire screen to New York during the French Revolution, when the Republican government sold many objects from the royal collections. Formerly owned by Queen Marie Antoinette at Versailles, the screen was used by Morris at Morrisania, his Bronx estate, until the end of the 19th century. It is emblematic of an affinity for European finery among New York's elite during the Revolutionary era.



F01
Lower Broadway
Saul Steinberg, 1952

Ink and pencil on paper
Gift of the Saul Steinberg Foundation, 2019 (2019.17.4)

Romanian-born Saul Steinberg began submitting drawings to The New Yorker about military life overseas when he was serving as a Naval Intelligence officer during World War II. Over the course of his career, he had over 1,200 drawings published in that publication, creating a playful catalog of imagery of New York City. Steinberg’s work complements a vast MCNY archive of drawings and cartoons that depict life in New York.

F02
East Fifty-Ninth Street
Samuel H. Gottscho, 1933

Gelatin silver print
The Gottscho-Schleisner Collection. Gift of Samuel H. Gottscho/Gottscho-Schleisner, 1934 (34.102.20)

Samuel Gottscho began his career as a photographer in the early 1900s capturing the magical look of Coney Island at night. He later gained success as an architectural photographer. His firm, Gottscho-Schleisner, documented significant building developments and private homes between the two world wars. MCNY holds a significant portion of the Gottscho-Schleisner archive of commissioned work as well as Gottscho’s own dramatic portraits of a modern city on the rise.



F03

Maintenance Tunnel, Shaft 2B, City Tunnel No. 3, Bronx, New York Stanley Greenberg, 1992

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Pamela and Arthur Sanders, 2005 (2005.5.1)



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F04

Subway presentation tray Tiffany & Co., 1913

Sterling silver

Gift of H. Crane and Jane Lincoln Miller, 2023 (2023.11)

Many ceremonial silver pieces in the collection honor major construction projects. This silver tray was commissioned from Tiffany & Co. to commemorate the tenure of Cyrus Chace Miller, who served as the third Bronx Borough President from 1910 to 1914. The tray recognizes Miller's collaboration with the Rapid Transit Committee during an era of unprecedented growth of public transit in the Bronx, and was a recent gift to MCNY.

F05

Perisphere Hugh Ferriss, 1937

Charcoal on board

Gift of World's Fair Board of Design, 1941 (2011.15.130)

Although trained as an architect, Hugh Ferriss defined himself by drawing the works of other architects in a moody, monumental scale. This rendering dramatically depicts the Trylon and Perisphere, the two outsized modernist structures that became the visual symbols of the 1939 World's Fair, whose theme was "The World of Tomorrow." This 2011 addition to the MCNY collection complemented the Museum's vast holdings related to the World's Fair, which were donated by the World's Fair Board of Design in 1941.

F06

Mercury

Joseph Henry Freedlander, 1930–1935

Bronze

Gift of George A. Schriever, 1986 (86.162)

Joseph Henry Freedlander, the architect of MCNY's home at 1220 Fifth Avenue, also designed a series of art deco traffic lights to run along Fifth Avenue. Intended to replace the work of policemen directing traffic, the signals were ornate bronze towers topped with this figure of Mercury. The last of Freedlander's towers was removed from service in 1964.

F07

Wrench

Unknown maker, 1869–1883

Steel

Gift of City of New York Department of Transportation, 1985 (85.83.4)

This massive wrench was used in the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge, a herculean infrastructure project that took over a decade to complete, linking the cities of New York and Brooklyn.

F08

Empire State Building Construction

Lewis Wickes Hine, c. 1930

10

Gelatin silver print

Permanent Loan, Empire State Building (L638.8)



Skyscrapers, and their construction, were a continual source of fascination for photographers in the first decades of the 20th century. Lewis Hine, himself an activist and advocate for labor issues, created some of the most renowned and familiar images of the Empire State Building's rapid ascent and the workers constructing the iconic tower.

F09

Powder horn

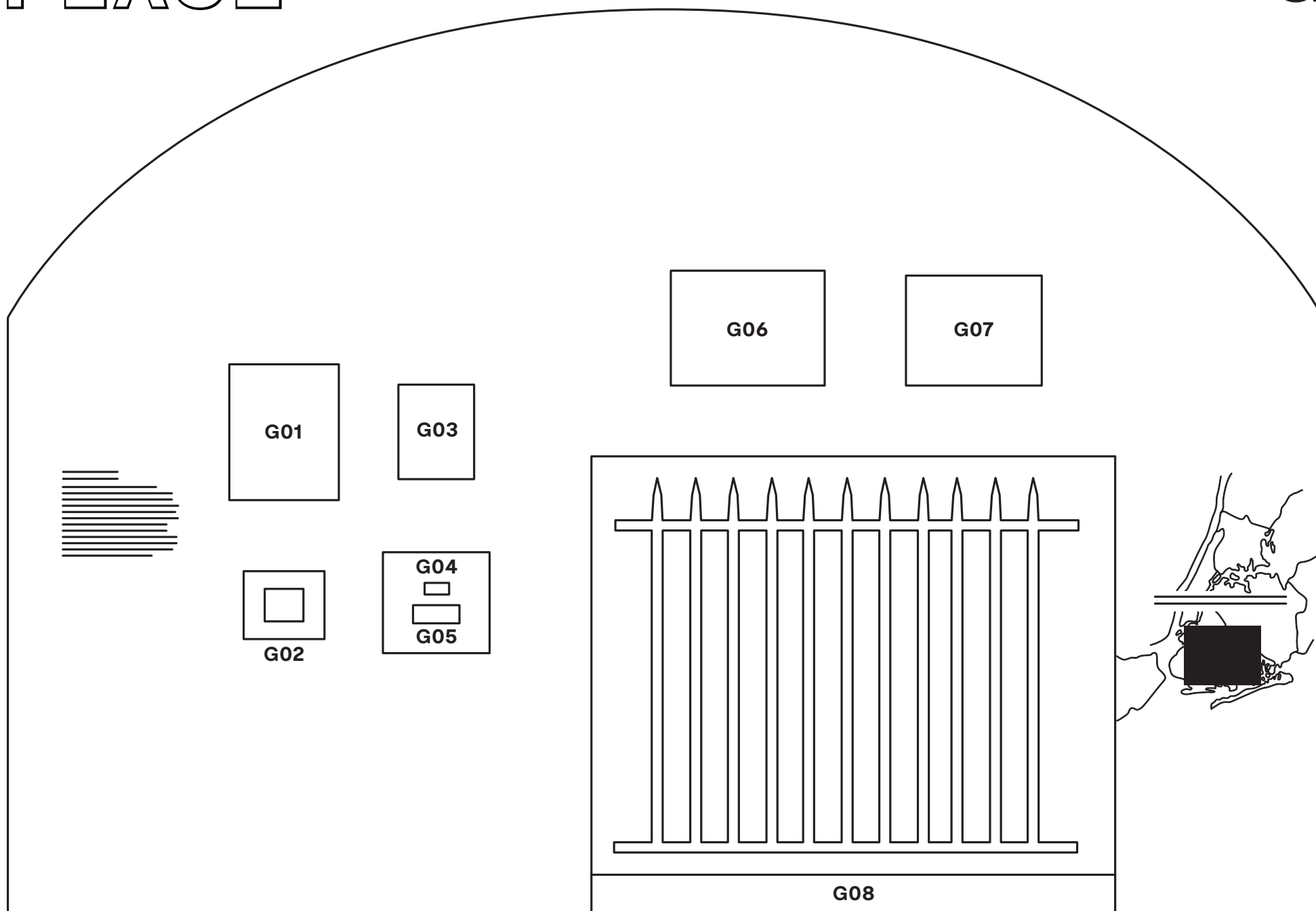
Unknown maker, 1754–1763

Horn, metal, and wood

Gift of Mrs. J. Percy Sabin, 1936 (36.340)



This engraved powder horn depicts New York City during the era of the French and Indian War (1754–1763), showing some of the rivers, settlements, and forts in what was still a British colony.



G01

Court of the First Model Tenements in New York City

Berenice Abbott, 1936

Gelatin silver print

Museum purchase with funds from the Mrs. Elon Hooker Acquisition Fund, 1940 (40.140.48)

In 1937 MCNY exhibited Berenice Abbott's series *Changing New York*, a landmark project funded by the Federal Art Project that documented the rapidly transforming city. MCNY holds the 695 negatives Abbott created for the project as well as multiple versions of the 307 photographs printed by Abbott herself.



G02

Wallabout, Brooklyn, first Meserole house

Unknown maker, c. 1848

Daguerreotype

Gift of Miss Sally Meserole Hollins, 1942 (42.121)

This 1848 daguerreotype of a house in Wallabout, a village in Brooklyn that dates to the 17th century, is one of the earliest photographs in MCNY's collection.

G03

Stadthuys of New York
in 1679

Louis Oram, c. 1880

Watercolor on paper

The J. Clarence Davies Collection. Gift of J. Clarence Davies, 1929 (29.100.1634)

The foundational collection gift to MCNY came from Bronx real estate mogul J. Clarence Davies who had collected thousands of views of New York to promote enthusiasm for the city and, by association, for his business. Later, under the leadership of influential photography curator Grace Mayer, MCNY became one of the leading repositories of views of New York and its people.

G04

Fragment of glass from
the Crystal Palace
Unknown maker, c. 1853

Glass

Gift of John C. Lowe, 1936 (36.407)



Constructed in 1853 in the space that is today Bryant Park as a vast exhibition space to showcase industrial progress, the Crystal Palace burned to the ground in an astonishing 25 minutes in 1857. This fragment was collected by an onlooker in the wake of the fire.

G05

Original stage fragment
of the Metropolitan
Opera House

Unknown maker, 1883–1892

Wood and brass

Gift of the Metropolitan Opera Guild, Inc., 1943 (43.346)

Prior to its current home at Lincoln Center, the Metropolitan Opera House (the Met) was located on Broadway between 39th and 40th Streets. Between its opening in 1883 and the final performance in 1966, the Met underwent numerous physical changes including a total overhaul in 1892 after a devastating fire. It also evolved from its status as a showplace of wealth for New York's elite to a more democratic performing arts venue.

G06

Hopper House, Brown
Morrels Home

Eliza Greatorex, 1870

Pen-and-wash drawing

Gift of Stephen C. Clark, in memory of his father, Alfred Corning Clark, 1935 (35.408.58)



Irish-born Eliza Greatorex, a pioneering female artist, was stylistically affiliated with Hudson River School painting. Yet she eventually shifted to pen-and-ink drawing and turned her attention to New York City, which had been her home since 1840. In 1875, on the eve of the nation's centennial, she published *Old New York, From the Battery to Bloomingdale*, as an elegy to buildings threatened during the post-Civil War real estate boom in New York.

G07

Cornelius Vanderbilt
Residence, West 57th
Street

Byron Company, 1920

Gelatin silver print

Byron Company Collection. Gift of Percy Byron, 1993 (93.1.1.10529)



For 50 years, starting in 1892, the Byron Company was one of New York's preeminent photography studios. MCNY holds nearly 25,000 Byron prints, which curator Grace Mayer persuaded Percy Byron to donate to the Museum when the firm closed its doors. Among these is this view of the Vanderbilt mansion on 57th Street, the largest private residence in New York at the time of its demolition in 1926. Bergdorf Goodman department store is at this location on Fifth Avenue today. The mansion's grand exterior gate sits at the entrance to the Conservatory Gardens across the street from MCNY at 105th Street and Fifth Avenue.

G08

Section of fence

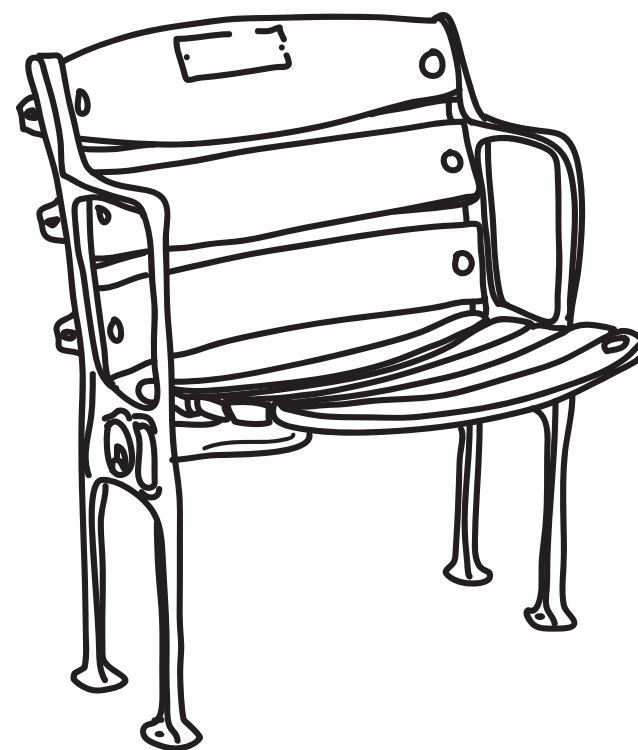
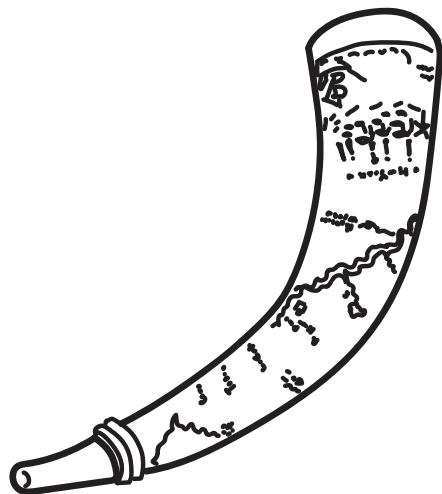
Unknown maker, c. 1771

Wrought iron

Gift of City of New York, Parks Department, 2019 (2019.31.4)

This fence protected a statue of King George III at Bowling Green, in lower Manhattan. In July 1776, rebels opposed to British rule pulled down the statue in a legendary act of political defiance. It is thought that the decorative elements of the fence were removed and used as artillery during the American Revolution. The statue itself was melted down for ammunition; MCNY holds a small remnant of it in the collection.

PEOPLE



PLACE



INFLUENCE

