

The Arts and Everyday Life in New York

Institute for Teachers, Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers

New York Public Library, July 15-19, 2024

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In 1961, Jane Jacobs wrote about the “sidewalk ballet” on her street in the West Village while, uptown, the largest performing arts complex in the world arose amidst the rubble of a demolished neighborhood. Lincoln Center embalmed in marble this new attention to the arts—their prestige and inherited privilege. Backlash to the complex’s grandeur and cost prompted the mayor to create a municipal office on cultural policy that now commits more city money for the arts than the entire budget of the National Endowment for the Arts.

This fusion between New York and the arts is now taken for granted, but how and why did this occur? What do the arts mean to New York? Who benefits? Through reading, writing, and consultation of the library’s resources, we will investigate how the arts became rooted in the city’s infrastructure, economy, daily life, sense of place—and how that changed what it means to be a New Yorker.

Reading+Conversation

We will gather every morning around the seminar table for spirited discussion of the readings and materials (ideally without distraction by electronic devices). We will consider a range of materials, from scholarly writings to memoirs to films to policy proposals. What do these different sources tell us? How do they define or describe the significance of the arts in New York? What assumptions are working about what the arts are and who they are for?

Research+Writing

Every afternoon after lunch you can spend time utilizing the vast resources of the Library to research a topic related to the arts in New York. This should be prompted by your personal interest: perhaps a building, organization, place, neighborhood, artist, supporter, place, artwork, movement—there are sure to be materials in the Library about it!

We will also use research and writing to further our conversation each day and to work toward a footnoted essay (perhaps 750 to 1500 words) that builds from your research and thinking. We will discuss what you have learned and written about on our final day together.

Schedule

Monday, July 15: The Choreography of New York

Anatole Broyard, *Kafka was the Rage: A Greenwich Village Memoir* (1993): chs.1-4 (pp.3-33)

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961): ch.2 (pp.37-71)

Edwin Denby, “Buildings, Dancers, and People in the Streets” (1965) (pp.171-80)

Elizabeth Kendall, “NYC’s Gift of Motion,” *New York Times* (2020)

Watch: Trisha Brown, [Roof Top](#) (1973; 3mins)

Visit NYPL Room [Milstein Division?]

Tuesday, July 16: Lincoln Center

Watch: [The Place and the Idea](#) (1968; 14mins)

Watch: [The Case Against Lincoln Center](#) (1968; 2mins)

Listen: [Recording of Miles Davis at Philharmonic Hall](#), 12 February 1964 (1hr; listen to however much you'd like)

Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (2010): ch.4 (pp.157-96)

Prudence Peiffer, *The Slip: The New York Street That Changed American Art Forever* (2023): intro (pp.xi-xx)

Mariana Mogilevich, "Arts as Public Policy: Cultural Spaces for Democracy and Growth," from *Summer in the City* (2014): pp.195-222

Wednesday, July 17: Graffiti+Hip Hop

Norman Mailer, "The Faith of Graffiti," *Esquire* (May 1974)

Watch: Grandmaster Flash, [The Message](#) (1982)

András Tokaji, "The Meeting of Sacred and Profane in New York's Music: Robert Moses, Lincoln Center, and Hip-hop," *Journal of American Studies* 29 (1995): 97-103

Joseph Ewoodzie Jr., *Break Beats in the Bronx: Rediscovering Hip-Hop's Early Years* (2017): ch.1 (pp.17-50)

Wesley Morris, "How Hip-Hop Conquered the World," *New York Times* (2023)

Thursday, July 18: Who Benefits?

Sarah Miller-Davenport, "The Cultural Center of the World: Art, Finance, and Globalization in Late Twentieth-Century NY" *Journal of Urban History* (2024): 123-44

Sarah Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination* (2012): ch.4 (16pgs)

Watch: [Don't Bomb These Walls](#) (2011; 19mins)

Create NYC: A Cultural Plan for All New Yorkers (2017): Executive Summary (pp.3-15)

The People's Cultural Plan for Working Artists and Communities in NYC (2017) (17pgs)

Friday, July 19: Your Views on the Arts+New York

Tiana Read, "The Shed Sucks: A Dispatch from New York's Latest Cultural Megaspace," *Nation* (2019)

William Deresiewicz, *The Death of the Artist* (2020): ch.6 (pp.86-106)