Welcome.

A University of the City: NYU in NYC—1831-2031 presents the story of a complex, ever-changing relationship—dating back nearly 200 years and extending well into the future—between America's greatest city and the university whose name it shares.

It is in many ways a parallel and deeply intertwined story, as both city and university have evolved in startling, often unimaginable ways—both continually pushing back boundaries, and defying traditional categories.

Indeed, it was the growing city's need for a new kind of academic institution—metropolitan in character, democratic in spirit, and responsive to the demands of a bustling commercial culture—that led to the founding in 1831 of the "University of the City of New-York," the first of its kind in America.

As that city grew to become a supreme engine of upward mobility in the 20th century, it was New York University (as it became known) that again redefined the nature of private higher education—no longer a bastion of privilege, but an avenue of opportunity for vast numbers of New Yorkers, who would contribute immeasurably to their city's rise.

Today, as New York seeks to navigate an increasingly globalized economy, and maintain and extend its place in the topmost tier of world cities, it is NYU—itself transformed into one of the country's leading centers of research and teaching—that is yet again overturning tradition, pioneering a new educational model: a "global network university" designed to meet the challenges of the deeply interconnected worldwide culture of the 21st century.

In a sense, this new development is the latest chapter in the extraordinary ongoing story of a "university of the city"—an institution that for nearly two centuries has served as not only a mirror to the metropolis, but a powerful force in its race into the future.

We hope you enjoy the exhibition.

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Panel 1: Aerial view courtesy of Google Earth.

Panel 2: Otto Boettlicher, Seventh Regiment on Review, Washington Square, New York, 1852. Oil on canvas. The Edward W. C. Arnold Collection of New York Prints, Maps, and Pictures, Bequest of Edward W. C. Arnold, 1954. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Luther S. Harris, Around Washington Square New Brick Colleges of Greenwich Village, John Hopkins University Press. 2003. New York, 1852. Lithograph by C. Bachman. Printed by Sarony & Major.

Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York, The J. Clarence Davies Collection. *New York University from Washington Square.* Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York, Gift of Mrs. Stanley Rumbough Jr., 1952. *Washington Place.* ca. 1850. Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York, Print Archives.

Panel 3: Thomas Hart Benton, *The Artist's Show. Washington Square.* New York, 1948. Oil and tempera on canvas. Gift of Jerome K. Ohrbach. Courtesy of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University. Luther S. Harris, Around Washington Square: An Illustrated History of Greenwich Village. John Hopkins University Press. 2003. Edward Hopper, *Roofs, Washington Square,* 1926. Watercolor over charcoal on paper. Courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. Bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Photo: Richard Stoner. *Washington Square.* ca. 1900. Schomburg Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture / Photographs and Prints Division. *Labor Day Demonstration in Washington Square,* 1912. Courtesy of Brown Brothers. *NYU Main Building.* ca. 1895. Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York, Wurts. Bros. Collection. John French Sloan, *Arch Conspirators,* 1917. Etching. Edition 100. Courtesy of Keith Christie and Nancy Sloan. *Washington square.* ca. 1900. Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York, Gift of Miss Dianne Farrow. *Washington Square Arch.* ca. 1900. Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York, Print Archives. *Washington Square North.* Glass negative from photo by Percy Fridenberg. Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York, Print Archives. View of MacDougal Alley photographed by Jessie Tarbox Beals.

Panel 4: *Burt Glinn, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, and Barney Rosset in Washington Square Park,* 1957. Courtesy of Magnum Photos. *Edward V. Koch Flipping Guitar in Washington Square Park.* 1980. © Fox Koch. Photo: Courtesy of Vivian Cassella and Wayne Archives. View of Washington Square Outdoor Art Exhibit photographed by Jessie Tarbox Beals. *New York University,* south view with residence hall and lecture hall buildings, between 1927 and 1931. photographed by Ben Schnall. Courtesy of the Marcel Breuer papers, 1920-1986, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Panel 5: Jenny Holzer, *For the City.* 2005. Photographed by Attilio Maranzano. Presented by Creative Time. © 2005 Jenny Holzer, member Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Contemporary views of New York University. Photographs © NYU Photo Bureau,photographed by David S. Allee. View of Abu Dhabi campus photographed by Carlos Garcia.

1831–1894 University on the Square

The Spirit of the Age

Founded in 1831 by a farsighted group of merchants and clergymen, the "University of the City of New-York" (as NYU was originally known) was envisioned from the start as something new: an institution dedicated to the values and needs of the city—intended to gather and focus the intellectual energies of New York, contribute materially to its growth, and reflect its burgeoning scale and complexity.

New York, looking south from Union Square, 1848. With their city quickly becoming the commercial and cultural capital of America ("the London of the New World," as one newspaper said), New York's leaders—including former Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin—gathered for three days in January 1830 to conceive an educational institution that might "correspond," one wrote, "with the spirit and wants of the age and country."

View of the original University Building, 1850. The new university would be "a social investment and a direct response to the needs of the rising mercantile classes in New York," one founder wrote, training the "merchants, mechanics, farmers, manufacturers, architects, and civil engineers" that the new metropolis would need to expand.

The charter of the University of the City of New-York, 1831. Founded for both those students "who devote themselves to scientific or literary pursuits," and those "intended for the learned professions, commerce, or the mechanical and useful arts," the new university sought—as no American college before it—to encompass the full sphere of intellectual and practical activities in an emerging urban culture.

Course of Instruction, 1836. In October 1832, the first classes began in rented quarters in Clinton Hall—a block south of City Hall on Nassau and Beekman Streets—in contemporary subjects such as architecture, civil engineering, astronomy, chemistry, sculpture, painting, English and modern languages, as well as classical Greek and Latin.

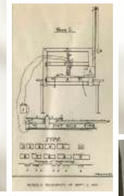
University of London, 1830s. Two recently founded universities in Europe served as inspiration for the proposed university in New York—the University of London (1826), which sought to educate large numbers of students in practical subjects at modest cost, and the University of Berlin (1810), whose commitment to advanced scientific research helped to propel Germany's commercial and industrial progress.

University of Virginia, 1825. In many ways, the founders' vision of a metropolitan university—drawing on the resources of a great city, and responsive to its needs—stood diametrically opposite to that of the University of Virginia, founded six years before by Thomas Jefferson, who deliberately placed his new institution in a rural setting, far from the distractions—or stimulation—of the city.

New York's only seat of higher learning in 1830 was Columbia College—an Episcopalian day school, founded in 1754 as King's College, and still located in its colonial-era building in lower Manhattan (above). Approached by city leaders with the idea of transforming their tiny, exclusive college into a university for the metropolis, Columbia's trustees refused, setting the stage for an entirely new institution.

An Exotic Combination

Soon after it opened, the University Building—an "exotic combination," one man later wrote, "of apartment house, scientific laboratory, clubhouse, and [bohemian] haven"—became a cauldron of innovation in technology and the arts, and the birthplace of several pioneering inventions—including at least one, the electric telegraph, that would help to usher in the modern world.



Developed in 1837 in Samuel Morse's rooms on the upper floors of the University Building, the electric telegraph (shown here in a later drawing by Morse) accelerated the transmission of information from the pace of a man of horseback to the speed of light, forever changing the nature of life and business—especially in New York, which could now receive and transmit financial news and market prices almost instantaneously.

No one embodied the breadth of the early university better than Samuel F.B. Morse, a professor of painting and sculpture and one of the greatest American artists of his era, who would nonetheless be best remembered as the inventor of the electric telegraph—and the code it employed that still bears his name—an invention that arguably did more than any other single innovation in history to advance human communication.

John W. Draper (left) and a view of his University Building study (above). Trained as a doctor, Draper served as professor of chemistry and natural history from 1838 until his death in 1882. From his studio in the University Building, he carried out seminal research in a wide variety of fields—including chemistry and physiology—and developed one of the first chemical batteries to power the Morse telegraph.

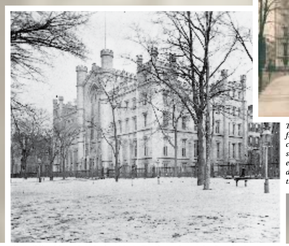
Another powerful new way of "seeing" was pioneered at NYU when physics professor Daniel Webster Hering became the first American to employ the magical new technique developed by Wilhelm Röntgen to peer beneath the skin. This X-ray image of a hand—complete with pinky ring—was taken on February 5, 1896.

In 1839, Draper employed his chemical mastery to dramatically improve a new technique from France—Daguerreotype photography—by cutting exposure times from nearly an hour to less than a minute. Constructing a glass-roofed studio atop of the University Building, Draper took some of the earliest photographs ever made in America, including the first portrait of a woman's face—that of his sister, Dorothy Catherine Draper.

In 1840, from his rooftop studio in the University Building on Washington Square, Draper took what is thought to be the first photograph ever made of the moon. This somewhat later image was produced by Draper's son and collaborator, Henry Draper, a fellow NYU faculty member and one of America's first astrophotographers.

University on the Square

Despite its founders' ideals, the "university" of New York emerged at first as a modest and mostly conventional college—dominated not by advanced practical courses but traditional classical studies, and home not to a large and diverse student group but, mostly, to a circle of middle-class Protestant New Yorkers. Yet its handsome Gothic building soon emerged as an important presence on Washington Square, which itself became one of the city's most gracious neighborhoods.



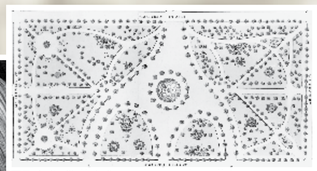
The University Building (shown here in the 1860s) offered an urbane mix of academic spaces on its lower floors and rental apartments above—rooms and studios whose extraordinary roster of tenants included the artist Winslow Homer, the inventors Samuel F.B. Morse and Samuel Colt (who perfected the revolver there), and the architects A.J. Davis and Richard Morris Hunt.

The original University Building, designed by the firm of Town, Davis & Dakin and opened in 1835, was constructed in the newly fashionable Gothic Revival style and built entirely in white marble—a pioneering example of the "Collegiate Gothic" that would come to dominate American campus architecture throughout the 19th century.

Once a burial ground, Washington Square was transformed in 1826 into a military parade ground and public square, as shown in this 1851 painting by Otto Boettcher. Seventh Regiment on Review, with the still-new University Building in the background, along with the twin-spired South Dutch Reformed Church, now demolished.

Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY

Described as "probably the most beautiful room of its kind in America," the vaulted three-story chapel at the center of the University Building was intended to evoke the soaring architecture of King's College Chapel, Cambridge. Its prominence served as a reminder that, despite its founders' original civic, non-denominational intent, the university remained deeply enmeshed within the city's Protestant establishment.



In 1870, Washington Square, no longer a parade ground but a city park, was redesigned to allow a better flow of carriage traffic from Fifth Avenue, whose foot lay at the north end of the square, to the streets to the south.

By the time the University Building opened, the blocks around Washington Square were lined with elegant Greek Revival row houses—including one at 21 Washington Place (shown here, adjacent to the University Building) in which the writer Henry James was born in 1843.

"A Sorry Place"

After the Civil War, as rival institutions—including Columbia—surged forward in size and ambition, the undergraduate college on Washington Square remained a small, tradition-bound institution, unable to offer the kind of amenities that students increasingly demanded. In 1881, the college almost closed its doors, before a new generation came along to remake it entirely.

Rooftop view of the University Building. Throughout the 19th century, the University suffered from financial problems and an undergraduate enrollment that never exceeded 150 students. "Our university is seated in a population of half a million," John W. Draper bemoaned in 1853. "What is the reason that with difficulty we draw [from that only] seventy paying students, and in our pecuniary affairs are always embarrassed?"

In the 19th century, the University College's students—for the most part the sons of middle-class New York families—generally lived at home. A handful of free spirits, however, continued the tradition of renting tower rooms in the University Building. Here the artist John Richards (at left) and friend pose on the crenellated roof, with the Jefferson Market Courthouse rising in the distance above the rooftops of Greenwich Village.

Studio art classes, early 20th century. In 1873, the University had established an art school whose classes were made available (on a non-degree basis) to women—the first female students to attend NYU.

Members of the class of '94 in front of the University Building, 1891. By the early 1890s, NYU was unable to compete with "collegiate" schools such as Yale and Princeton. "With no dormitories, no campus, and no athletic teams," one historian later observed, "the University College seemed, to the average youth of [the time], a sorry place." In response, NYU would look to create a vast new undergraduate campus in the Bronx.

The Learned Professions and Useful Arts

If the undergraduate program struggled for decades to fulfill the vision of its founders, NYU's professional and graduate programs—in law (1835), medicine (1841), arts and sciences (1886), and education (1890)—were a success from the start, contributing to New York's stunning commercial rise across the 19th century, and improving the quality of life for thousands of New Yorkers, rich and poor.

By the late 1890s, the NYU Law School was distinguished not only by its sheer size—a total of 500 students in its daytime and evening divisions—but also by its role as an engine of upward mobility for native-born and immigrant New Yorkers—including (as this 1905 image attests) some of the first African-American and women students ever to attend law school in the United States.

Law Library, 1920s. Founded in 1835, just four years after the university itself, the Law School—the first such school in New York—became a crucial source for the thousands of legal professionals that the 19th century city needed not only for its growing commercial activity, but also for its civil and governmental affairs.

A Bellevue faculty member lectures in the surgical amphitheatre, around 1900. In 1898, NYU's Medical Department merged with the city-owned Bellevue Hospital Medical College and soon expanded its teaching and clinical facilities within the great medical complex emerging along the East River in the 20s, where it remains to this day.

Laboratory in the University Building, around 1875. In the late 1860s NYU became a leader in American scientific studies with a new chemical laboratory, a new School of Engineering, and a new graduate-level School of Practical and Analytic Chemistry—the second program in the country (after Yale) to offer an academic Ph.D., and the forerunner of the full-fledged Graduate School of Arts and Science, founded in 1886.

Established in 1841, the NYU Medical Department almost instantly had a positive impact on the city; within a dozen years the school had trained more than 1,200 doctors and was treating two thousand poor New Yorkers annually. Two decades later, in 1865, came the founding of the NYU College of Dentistry—the oldest and largest dental school in the country.

Together, NYU and Bellevue would transform medical care in New York—from a landmark 1866 Medical School report on "Hygiene and Public Health" that led to the founding of the New York City Health Department, to the world's first ambulance service, which had begun at Bellevue in 1869 (shown here in a view from the 1890s).

1894–1941 | A New Era

Second Founding

In the early 1890s, under the visionary leadership of President Henry MacCracken, the university reinvented itself, drawing together its far-flung schools, adding new programs in education and business, and expanding its scientific and engineering programs. In what he called a "second founding," MacCracken built an entirely new campus in the Bronx, on a bluff overlooking Manhattan—a stunning second home for what was now known by a new name: New York University.

For its new campus, NYU chose the architect Stanford White (of McKim, Mead & White)—whose father, Richard Grant White, '39, had been among the University's first graduates. As White began work, his partner Charles F. McKim was drawing up a no less visionary master plan for Columbia University—now one of the nation's largest academic institutions—which was planning its own move to a new campus uptown.

Discarding the conventional 19th century "collegiate Gothic" style of architecture, White employed a classical approach that recalled ancient Rome as well as Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia. White's elegant plan offered a new vision for the modern university: a coordinated campus layout, arrayed symmetrically around a central open space, and focused on the domed Gould Library.

Constructed mostly between 1892 and 1899, the fifty-acre Heights campus was largely complete by the time these female summer-school students attended in 1917.

Commencement, University Heights, 1936. Unlike the commuter orientation of Washington Square, the Heights campus was conceived as "a dormitory college of the accepted pattern," said MacCracken, whose students could "develop a sound body for the sake of a sound mind, [and] cultivate the social side of life more than ever before."

Commencement at the University Heights campus, with the semi-rural landscape of upper Manhattan in the distance, 1910s.

Student Army Corps training during World War I. Encircling the back of Gould Library was the "Hall of Fame"—the first of its kind in the world—an imposing colonnade filled with commemorative busts of political and literary figures who, in the founders' words, "by wealth of thought or else by mighty deed, served mankind in noble character."

Swarming Life

By the 1920s, NYU had taken on a role like no other private university in American history: a vast educational machine, by which tens of thousands of upwardly mobile New Yorkers—most of them Jewish and Catholic students, from working and middle-class families—could receive college-level training and move into the professions or business. With the largest private enrollment in the country—an astonishing 40,000 students by 1930—NYU had in many ways become the great urban university its founders dreamed of—a strikingly democratic institution, intended to mirror and sustain the vast metropolis.

Main Building, 1930s. In the 1920s and '30s, NYU's downtown branch offered an education to nearly all qualified students, regardless of background. With students who were "famished... for knowledge, any kind of knowledge," and a young and creative faculty, Washington Square College was, in one professor's later words, "the most exciting venture in American education that I had ever heard of."

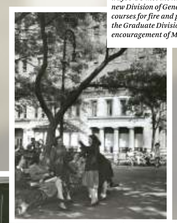
As enrollments exploded, NYU scrambled to hire part-time instructors, including a young Harvard-educated writer from North Carolina named Thomas Wolfe, who, while working on his first novel, Look Homeward, Angel, *taught English from 1924 to 1930. There is "no other way in which a man coming to this terrific city," he wrote, "could have had a more ...stimulating introduction to its swarming life, than through the corridors and classrooms of Washington Square."*

Woman's varsity swimming team, 1920s. Lacking most conventional "collegiate" amenities, Washington Square College obligated its athletic students to use borrowed facilities, such as the pool of the Church of All Nations on Second Avenue.

The legendary lawyer, diplomat, and civil-rights activist James Weldon Johnson taught poetry and creative writing at NYU from 1932 until his death in 1938—the first black professor at NYU, and one of the first African Americans to be appointed to a predominantly white institution of higher learning.

View of Washington Square North, late 1930s. By the 1930s, NYU's community had been transformed once again by the construction of several elegant apartment houses on Washington Square West and the arrival of a towering Art Deco apartment hotel at 1 Fifth Avenue (shown here at center).

The expansion of the Medical School (shown here) was only one of the ways NYU met the needs of the growing city—through adult classes at the new Division of General Education; through the School of Education's courses for fire and police candidates and school teachers; and through the Graduate Division of Training in Public Service, founded with the encouragement of Mayor La Guardia, himself an NYU alumnus.

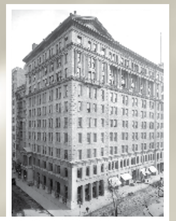


Washington Square, early 1940s. To make room for the university's vast and growing enrollment, NYU reclaimed almost all the floors of the Main Building, then spread outward to acquire several nearby structures, including the former Asch Building, site of the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in 1911.

Chemistry lab class, late 1930s. As early as 1935, NYU's enrollment—which had dipped only slightly in the early Depression years—returned to its late-1920s peak. Sustained by part-time jobs (many federally assisted), which supported nearly a third of all students, enrollment continued climbing until the end of the decade, peaking at 47,525 in 1939.

Knowledge Factory

Moving nearly all of its undergraduates to its new Bronx campus, NYU turned Washington Square into a bustling center for graduate and professional training—including one of the first university-affiliated business schools (1900)—to serve what had become the undisputed commercial capital of America and the second-largest city in the world. Then, in 1914, NYU made the fateful decision to bring undergraduates back downtown on a permanent basis through the founding of Washington Square College—which soon became the largest private college in America.



In 1894, after rejecting Stanford White's proposal to dismantle the historic but rapidly deteriorating University Building, stone by stone, and rebuild it as the centerpiece of the new campus uptown—the university chose to raze its ancestral Gothic-style home for a new ten-story loft building by Alfred Zucker, a German-born architect who would design nearly a dozen similar buildings nearby, most of which would ultimately be acquired by NYU.

Though far larger than its neo-Gothic predecessor, the new Main Building shared a similiar "mixed-use" urban concept, combining commercial offices on its lower seven floors (whose rental income would fill the school's coffers) with academic space above. If unsuitable for undergraduates, MacCracken believed, Washington Square's central location in downtown Manhattan made it ideal for graduate and professional training.

Having shifted its undergraduates to the Heights in 1894, the university decided in 1914 to establish a new four-year program downtown called Washington Square College, to serve commuter students. It soon became the fastest-growing college in America, exploding from 500 students in 1919 to more than 7,000 by 1929 (including members of the "Washington Square Players," shown here).

Women's Ward, Bellevue Hospital, 1890s. NYU and Bellevue would meet the needs of the growing city through public resources as well as landmark achievements in public health—including the first outpatient clinic, the first pathology and bacteriology lab, the first department of forensic medicine, and the training of such scientific pioneers as Walter Reed, Albert Sabin, and Jonas Salk.

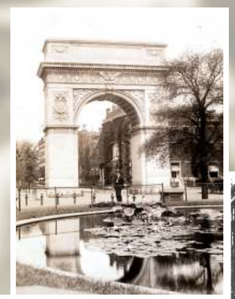
Looking north from Washington Square, 1895. As crowded tenements filled the blocks south of Washington Square, tall industrial buildings rose to the north and east, and once-gracious row houses on the square itself were subdivided into multi-family dwellings. NYU "found itself no longer the center of a charming suburb," one man wrote, "but instead crammed into a commercial metropolis."

Without easy access to the rolling landscape of the Heights campus, Washington Square College students employed urban ingenuity to make use of any space they could find. This view shows the NYU fencing team atop the roof of the Main Building in 1929. At center are the future Olympians, Miguel and José DeCapriles.

NYU Medical College Building, from First Avenue, 1920s. After merging with Bellevue Hospital Medical College in 1898, the NYU College of Medicine dramatically expanded its presence in the East 20s, adjacent to Bellevue Hospital, with a series of new teaching and research buildings.

"Free & Independent Republic"

Since the University Building opened in the mid-1830s, NYU has been located in the heart of one of America's most vital and culturally significant neighborhoods. A storied residential community in the 19th century, Washington Square and Greenwich Village emerged around the time of World War I as the nation's first true bohemia—a cauldron of progressive ideals, social activism, and artistic creativity.



Washington Square Arch from the fountain, about 1900. Completed in 1895 by the architect Stanford White, the elegant marble arch at the foot of Fifth Avenue soon became the focal point and symbol not only of Washington Square and NYU, but all of Greenwich Village.

As late as 1834, when this view was taken, the 1830s Greek Revival row houses along Washington Square North remained some of the most desirable residences in the city. Known as "The Row," they had been immortalized in the 1881 novel Washington Square, *by Henry James—who had been born in a similar house a block away on Washington Place, next door to the original University building.*

Women marching in a 1912 Labor Day demonstration in Washington Square. Long a focal point for political activism, the square would be the scene for labor rallies in the 1910s, antiwar demonstrations during World War I, Socialist political rallies during the Great Depression, and peace demonstrations in the years before World War II.

The Artists Show, Washington Square, New York (1946), *by Thomas Hart Benton. The district's reputation as America's artistic center took hold in the public mind with the founding of the Washington Square Outdoor Art Show in 1932—captured in this postwar work by the American Regionalist Thomas Hart Benton, who had lived in Greenwich Village and made the city a setting for much of his work.*

Art © Benton Testamentary Trusts/UMB Bank Trustee / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

On the night of January 23, 1917, the new spirit of cultural and political emancipation taking shape around Washington Square was pronounced official, when—as depicted in John Sloan's etching Arch Conspirators*—Sloan, Marcel Duchamp, and a few friends climbed to the top of the Washington Square Arch, fired off cap guns, and declared the founding of the "Free and Independent Republic of Washington Square."*

Washington Square, 1900 *by Paul Cornoyer. Still a redoubt of the city's social elite, the Row would gradually change character within the next decades, as older families migrated uptown, and the blocks north of Washington Square became home to a new population of artists, writers, and political radicals.*

By the start of the 20th century, the picturesque blocks north of Washington Square—lined with former stables turned into artist's studios—were gaining a reputation as "New York's Left Bank," America's first true artistic community. This 1907 photograph by Jessie Tarbox Beals shows the young daughters of the artist Edwin Willard Deming sketching in MacDougal Alley.

Perhaps the most powerful creative relationship between Washington Square and its resident artists was that of Edward Hopper, who lived and worked at 3 Washington Square North from 1913 until his death in 1967. For decades, in paintings such as Roofs, Washington Square *(1926), he would transfigure the neighborhood's distinctive urban architecture into one of the great imaginative landscapes of the 20th century.*

Image © 2006, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh

1941–1973 | Expansion and Controversy

A Novel Experiment

The coming of World War II transformed NYU. At Washington Square, the Heights campus, and the Medical School, civilian education gave way to the training of soldiers, sailors, and medical corpsmen. Behind the scenes lay even greater changes, as federally funded wartime research presaged the massive postwar expansion in higher education.

Officer candidate outside the Main Building, 1943. While overall enrollment dropped more than 30% during wartime—from 47,000 students in 1939 to 30,000 in 1943—NYU bustled with military trainees, through the Navy's V-12 program, the Army's Specialized Training Program, and the Medical Administrative Corps.

Military students in front of Gould Library, October 1943. By war's end, more than 29,000 men and women had come through NYU's military programs.

Main Building with service flag, early 1940s. NYU carried out over 40 federal wartime research contracts in fields ranging from chemotherapy, neuropsychiatry, and tropical diseases, to advanced naval weaponry research by the Applied Mathematics Group under Richard Courant—forerunner of the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences.

From 1943 to 1945, women dominated civilian enrollment at NYU, as elsewhere. In 1943, the Guggenheim School of Aeronautical Engineering and Chance-Vought Aircraft began what they called a "novel experiment": an eight-month aeronautics training program for over ninety women students studying mathematics or physics.

Sculptural Essays

The expansive spirit of the postwar decades saw major investment in NYU's far-flung facilities around New York—including distinguished architectural commissions on the Heights campus, the Medical Center, and the Institute of Fine Arts on the Upper East Side, which had emerged as one of the world's leading centers of art history scholarship.

Founded in 1934 as a refuge for European art historians, the Institute of Fine Arts moved in 1958 into James B. and Doris Duke's mansion on Fifth Avenue, a 1912 château designed by Horace Trumbauer. The historic structure was renovated by a young, then little-known Philadelphia architect named Robert Venturi—whose provocative writings and buildings would soon revolutionize architectural theory.

In 1947, looking to expand its historic medical complex along the East River, NYU commissioned the modernist architects Skidmore, Owings & Merrill to create an ambitious master plan for the future: a coordinated array of white glazed-brick structures, including the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine (1951) and University Hospital (1963).

Commissioned by NYU in 1956 to prepare a new plan for the Heights campus, the Bauhaus-trained Marcel Breuer created what one man later called "a modern set of sculptural essays," whose stark reinforced-concrete buildings centered on Begrisch Hall (1964), a dramatically cantilevered lecture hall that seemed to float above the ground.

A Different Scale

By the 1950s, NYU had begun to imagine a future beyond the limitations of a commuter school at Washington Square. To provide space for student housing, new academic buildings, and collegiate amenities, the university—despite community opposition—joined with city and state officials, including the all-powerful planning czar Robert Moses, to redevelop eighteen acres southeast of Washington Square Park.

Student registration, 1964. At a time when most private universities accepted very few minority students, and many colleges (including most of the Ivy League) remained off limits to women, NYU's student population was all but unique (and, as it turned out, prophetic) in its diversity. But the sheer numbers of students continued to strain the crowded physical plant, leading the university to search for ways to expand.

NYU had already begun pushing south of Washington Square in the late 1940s with a controversial full-block land clearance for its Law School (the "H"-shaped structure toward left of this 1961 model), but its ambitions leapt in scale in 1954, when it backed a Robert Moses-sponsored urban renewal plan that called for nine existing city blocks to be cleared for new academic buildings and housing.

Most of the urban renewal site was to be filled with Washington Square Village, a private housing project designed by Paul Lester Weiner: three immense slabs filled with luxury apartments. Rental troubles forced the developer Paul Tishman to forego the third slab, and in 1960 he sold the unbuilt southern property to NYU—which ultimately purchased Washington Square Village itself for faculty and graduate student housing.

When completed in 1959, the two slabs of Washington Square Village, each 17 stories tall and nearly 600 feet long, recalled the work of the famed modernist architect Le Corbusier, especially his "Unité d'Habitation" of 1948. The project offered "a different scale," the critic Siegfried Giedion argued, "a reflection of what Europe produces best in that domain."

In 1960, NYU commissioned I.M Pei & Partners to develop the remaining urban renewal parcel for faculty and graduate-student housing, as well as middle-income cooperative apartments. Pei's initial proposal—a slender 29-story tower surrounded by a series of lower structures—was rejected for excessive ground coverage.

As built, Pei's 1966 design for University Plaza (later known as Silver Towers) consisted of three concrete towers placed in a "pinwheel" arrangement around a central lawn and large freestanding sculpture, "Sylvette," based on a 1934 work by Pablo Picasso.

The Vast Throng

In the postwar decades, NYU consolidated its reputation as New York's quintessential "metropolitan" university—an avenue of educational advancement for the city's middle classes and a training ground for New York's professional and managerial community. The school's Washington Square neighborhood, meanwhile, took hold even more firmly in the public imagination as a center of "bohemian" culture and spirit.

Washington Place, late 1940s. Perhaps no other university in America was more affected than NYU by the postwar explosion in enrollment, as veterans flooded back to college under the GI Bill. By 1945, the student population had matched its prewar peak and then kept growing, until by 1949, an incredible 70,376 students were attending NYU.

Washington Square Park, from the Main Building, late 1940s. In 1945 alone, NYU took in more than 12,000 veterans—far more than any other university in the country—straining the already crowded facilities. "An empty seat in a classroom has become a rarity," Chancellor Harry W. Chase observed in 1946, "an empty classroom a mirage."

Among a field of talented postwar faculty members, two stood out for their pioneering contributions and the enduring institutions founded upon their work. Dr. Howard A. Rusk's revolutionary approach to the treatment of disabled patients (above)—emphasizing activity in place of bed rest—led to the creation in 1951 of the Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine.

Forced to leave the University of Göttingen in 1934 after the Nazi rise to power, the legendary mathematician Richard Courant brought to NYU his vision of a collaborative group of mathematical scholars, from a range of disciplines, working together to address complex scientific problems—the foundation of the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences.

Washington Square Art Show, 1950s. "Once upon a time it was a small show," Kate Simon observed in 1959, "limited in size to the Square itself. It has now achieved the dignity of a catalog and spills over onto the walls of New York University...."

Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso in Washington Square Park, 1957. Although they had originally met at Columbia, the "beat generation" writers Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac soon made their way down to the Village, extending into a new era the decades-old reputation of the area—and especially Washington Square—as America's great center of free-spirited culture.

Left: David Sears folksinging in Washington Square Park, 1959. Right: Edward I. Koch, a 1948 graduate of NYU Law School, in Washington Square Park, 1956. In the late 1950s, Washington Square Park became a popular destination for "weekend beatniks"—young people who congregated around the large central fountain, performing folk songs.

The Battle of Washington Square

In the 1950s and '60s, Washington Square Park's long history as a focal point for political activism and social change continued with antiwar protests, but perhaps even more significantly, through a fateful struggle over the shape of the park itself—a conflict which, pitting Jane Jacobs against Robert Moses, marked a crucial turning point in attitudes about urban redevelopment.

The struggle for Washington Square Park began with a 1956 plan by Robert Moses to ease the bus and automobile traffic which—as it had for most of the century—still passed under the Washington Square Arch and into the park itself.

Robert Moses proposed a four-lane sunken highway (shown above in a 1956 rendering) that would cut the park in two, its halves connected only by a pedestrian bridge. In response, Village residents, led by Jane Jacobs and others, proposed a radical alternative: closing the park to traffic altogether.

Organizing a community group specifically devoted to fighting Moses's project—one of the first such groups in the city's history—Jacobs and her colleagues convinced a state assemblyman to support their plan on a temporary basis. On June 25th, 1958, Jacobs's three-year-old daughter Mary and a friend carried out a "ribbon-tying" ceremony. Within a year, the park had been permanently closed to traffic.

Student protest, Washington Square Park, March 1968. During the Vietnam War, NYU students frequently gathered in the park to protest American policy—and their own university's collaboration with the federal government.

In the mid-1960s, under the leadership of President James Hester, NYU presented a new vision for Washington Square, designed by the architects Philip Johnson and Richard Foster. At its heart was an enormous new central library, NYU's first, faced in red sandstone (above, at center)—a structure intended not only to consolidate previously scattered collections but also to provide a symbol for the entire university. To extend the library's impact, NYU's older buildings on the square would be remodeled with similar stone facades.

A vast central atrium rose the entire twelve-story height of Elmer Holmes Bobst Library—intended, the architect Philip Johnson said, to provide a sense of "monumentality." The festivities for the opening of the library building (whose architectural impact on Washington Square Park had itself been a source of controversy) was muted by the university's worsening financial crisis and the city's growing economic and social problems.

By 1973, as New York reeled from years of rising unrest, crime, and financial troubles, and as the fortunes of NYU—which had been running annual deficits since 1965—lurched toward disaster, the university reluctantly sold the Heights campus to the City University of New York in order to regain solvency. The historic uptown site was soon transformed into Bronx Community College, while NYU regrouped once again around Washington Square, to face an uncertain future.

1973 – 2010 | The Global University

A New Position of Eminence

In 1831, NYU had been founded on two ideals, born of the great urban universities of London and Berlin that had been its models: *democratic promise* and *academic excellence*. Since the 1920s, NYU had been fulfilling its democratic promise as no other private university in America; now, emerging from the crises of the '70s, it daringly sought to fulfill its founders' other dream – to transform itself from a respected metropolitan institution to a global seat of learning, in the top tier of world universities.

Robat Library, 1991. By the mid-1980s, with NYU's financial health restored and New York itself emerging at last from decades of social and economic troubles, the university was poised for a new era of growth. But few could have imagined that NYU was about to become "the success story in contemporary American higher education," as one scholar wrote.

Main Building and Washington Square Park, 2000. In 1984, seeking to achieve what its recently appointed president, John Brademas, called "a new position of eminence in American higher education," NYU undertook one of the first billion-dollar capital campaigns in academic history. Raising two million dollars a week for five hundred weeks, the university reached its goal in only ten years.

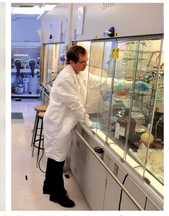
Expanded and renamed in 1982, the Tisch School of the Arts was one of the first NYU divisions to be reconceived. Its acclaimed graduate drama program included a student playwright named Tony Kushner, whose Pulitzer-Prize winning "gay fantasia on national themes," Angels in America, had one of its early workshop productions at the school (shown here) before traveling to Broadway with many of its NYU cast members.

Dancers in an NYU studio, 2002. As President Brademas noted in the late 1980s, NYU's rise to preeminence in the performing and visual arts through both Tisch and Steinhardt School, has built upon its location "in one of the most flourishing art communities in the world, Greenwich Village, and in the cultural center of the world – New York City."

Tisch student Christine Turner directing on location, 2003. In the 1960s, an NYU film student named Martin Scorsese pioneered a new kind of American moviemaking on the streets of New York, changing cinema forever and drawing a galaxy of younger talents—Oliver Stone, Spike Lee, Ang Lee, Susan Seidelman, Jim Jarmusch, and Amy Heckerling, among others—who made the Tisch School of the Arts one of the most prestigious film schools in the world.

NYU, where the era of instantaneous communication had been born in 1837 with Morse's telegraph, continued to advance the state of the art through the Courant Institute's crucial 1970s work on ARPANET (shown here), predecessor of the Internet, and the Interactive Telecommunications Program, the innovative new media program whose faculty and students helped establish New York's "Silicon Alley" in the 1990s.

NYU Langone Medical Center, 2009. More than its founders could ever have imagined, NYU had become a crucial wellspring for the city's professional communities, from social work and city planning to teaching and nursing. "One-fifth of the lawyers, one-sixth of the physicians, and two-thirds of the dentists practicing in New York City are graduates of NYU," one official noted, "and, save only for Harvard, NYU has educated more leading executives than any other university in the country."



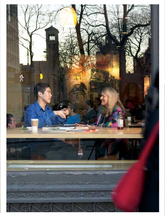
Molecular Design Institute, 2009. Nowhere has the university's commitment to expanding its resources and facilities been more productive than in the sciences, where new centers—such as the Molecular Design Institute, opened in 2006—are both expanding the frontiers of basic scientific knowledge, and applying key discoveries in areas such as medicine and public health.

Commencement, Washington Square Park. By 1995, as NYU's billion-dollar campaign came to a close five years ahead of schedule, the university had accomplished the near-impossible, dramatically raising the academic rankings, professional stature, and student selectivity of nearly every one of its divisions and departments. Its transformation from regional commuter school to premier research university was almost complete.

Entrance to the Silver Center for Arts and Science (formerly the Main Building). In 1991, NYU's chancellor, L. Jay Oliva, was tapped as the university's new president. Under Oliva—a historian who had spent his entire academic career at NYU—the pace of transformation continued without stop. One of his primary goals was to ensure that the fast-rising stature of the professional schools and arts divisions were matched by an equivalent commitment to the humanities and social science departments—many of which, including economics and philosophy, are now ranked among the best in the world.

The Global University

Because of its history of immigration, its extraordinarily diverse population, and the presence of the United Nations, New York has long been considered one of the most international of all world capitals. In the 1990s and 2000s, as part of its rebirth, NYU committed itself to reflecting and extending this global spirit, bringing in thousands of students from overseas, and creating a series of "international study sites" in cities around the world. Today, as President Sexton has noted, "no university has a greater global presence."



Student cafe overlooking Washington Square, 2003. NYU's global commitment began with a host of new international centers in New York, adding to the venerable Deutsches Haus and Maison Française the Hagop Kevorkian Center, Casa Italiana, the Glucksman Ireland House and the King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center. Each year nearly 5,000 international students come to NYU—among the highest number of any American university.

NYU students in Madrid, 1994. Even as foreign students poured each year into New York, NYU students have fanned out across the globe to new "international study sites" that draw on the strengths of their host cities, such as economics and theater in London, art history in Florence, music in Prague, public health in Accra, business in Shanghai—as well as similar sites in Paris, Madrid, Berlin, Buenos Aires, and Tel Aviv.

In 2009, NYU's global mission expanded dramatically with what President Sexton termed "an audacious step in higher education": NYU Abu Dhabi, the first comprehensive liberal arts university in the Middle East to be operated by an American research university. Funded by the Abu Dhabi government and open to outstanding students from around the world, the Abu Dhabi campus, like the home campus in New York, will serve as a "portal" for students to enter NYU's global network university.

Villa La Pietra. In 1994, NYU's global presence gained a powerful centerpiece when Sir Harold Acton bequeathed Villa La Pietra, a 57-acre estate in Florence—at the time the largest single gift made to an American university. Today La Pietra serves as a center for international conferences and as the home to over four hundred students.

For the City

Crucial to the transformation of NYU over the past 25 years has been the stunning renaissance of New York itself. The renewed desirability of the city – especially among young people – has helped make NYU one of the most sought-after academic destinations in the world. At the same time, the university has embraced its urban location as never before, recognizing that its unconventional college setting in the heart of a bustling city is, in fact, one of its greatest assets.

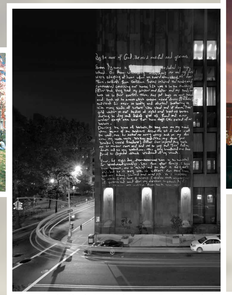
View of the Main Building (now Silver Center), 2009. Like many European universities—but relatively few in America—the NYU "campus" is the city itself. Fitted squarely into the city's grid of streets and blocks, "it is hard to differentiate where NYU stops and New York City starts," Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg has noted. "That is one of the real keys to NYU—the city goes right through it."

Main Building lounge, overlooking Washington Square, 1994. By the 1990s, NYU had recognized that its location in one of the country's most historic communities could offer an unusually immersive kind of cultural experience. "Our constant interaction with New York City flows directly from our intellectual mission," President Oliva declared. "Our academic efforts, department by department, school by school, connect to the city around us."

Village Improvement Program in Washington Square Park, 1991. NYU students become true New Yorkers not only through cultural immersion but also by contributing public service to the city through a myriad of volunteer programs, including help in hospitals, settlements, and soup kitchens, pro bono legal assistance, tutoring in public schools, and the refurbishment of the city's parks (above).

Lobby of the Main Building, 1993. Like generations before them, today's NYU students have shown characteristic urban ingenuity in transforming the bustling spaces of the city into unconventional—and often surprisingly intimate—academic settings.

Washington Square Park, 1995. For more than 150 years, the role of the traditional campus "quad" at NYU has been filled by Washington Square Park—the historic, complex, often hotly contested 10-acre public open space where NYU students and faculty inevitably mingle with a larger urban population, including tourists, street performers, chess players, skateboarders, and local residents and families.



For the City, by Jenny Holzer, 2005. Few projects better explored the close, complex relationship between the university and the contemporary city than Holzer's temporary artwork, which projected declassified government documents (released through the Freedom of Information Act) onto the walls of the Bobst Library, turning its façade into a giant outdoor screen, and the surrounding streets into a kind of open-air theater.

"Now, more than ever," the university's newly appointed president, John Sexton, declared on September 11, 2001, "we must embrace our roots in New York City." Two weeks later, the rebuilding of lower Manhattan began with the groundbreaking for a new complex for NYU's School of Law.

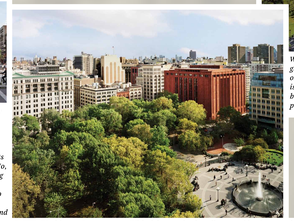
Idea Capital

In the tightly linked economy of the 21st century, President Sexton has noted, society is being shaped increasingly by "idea capitals"—cosmopolitan world cities, located all around the globe, which draw to them—and gather together—the culture's most gifted, creative, and transformative individuals. In the decades to come, New York's pre-eminence will rely ever more firmly on its status in the spheres of intellect, culture and education – and, therefore, on advanced academic institutions such as NYU.

Washington Place, 2009. In the mid-2000s, a second major capital campaign secured NYU's position within the very top tier of higher education in the United States. Yet among its academic peers it would remain all but unique—an institution that "overturns conventional notions of an American university," one observer has written, "and thrives in a vibrant, energetic, and often chaotic urban context."

Union Square Park, 2009. By the late 2000s, NYU, regularly ranked among the top "dream schools" in America, was drawing the largest undergraduate applicant pool of any private university in the country—an astonishing 38,000 applications for its 4,300 freshman places in 2009. Three-quarters of its students now came from outside the metropolitan area—and only one in ten from New York City.

Astor Place 2009. Now a truly national university, NYU faced a new challenge—to find housing for out-of-town students within the densely built neighborhoods around its campus: the East Village, NoHo, Union Square. A mix of leasing and construction increased the number of beds from 4,500 to the requisite 12,500, but inevitably put pressure on—and sometimes increased friction with—existing communities.



Washington Square, 2009. With eighteen schools, colleges, and institutes and more than 44,000 students, NYU at the start of the 21st century had become a vast urban institution, by far the largest private university in the country, and one that was again expanding the basic concept of higher education through its innovative vision of a "global network university": a linked constellation of educational sites around the world, anchored by portal campuses in New York, the Middle East, potentially Asia, and elsewhere.

Washington Square, 2009. For all its reach through time and space, NYU's new global vision "flows...naturally out of New York City," President Sexton has observed. "NYU, because of its personality—the personality of the immigrant—is always looking for the better tomorrow. It's never been a place that looked backward. It's always looked forward....And NYU has tremendous magnetic power...because [it is] conjoined with the magnetic power of New York City."