

Reflection: A Visit to The Museum of the City of New York

Note: El Museo Del Barrio was closed for exhibit on Saturday April 1st I was able to take a picture of myself however I wrote about the Museum of NYC which was opened across the street.

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1. What is the history of this museum, and what was the reason it was placed in this community?

The Museum of the City of New York (MCNY), founded in 1923, attempts to facilitate a better “understanding of the distinctive nature of urban life” in New York City, one of the most influential metropolis in the United States and the world (MCNY, 2023). To achieve this, MCNY engages visitors by celebrating, documenting, and interpreting the city’s past, present, and future via its collection of exceptional items. Since its inception by Henry Collins Brown in 1932, the MCNY underwent several transformations and amassed a considerable collection of unique items over the next few decades. Some of its popular initial items include Eugene O’Neill’s manuscripts, a man’s suit worn to George Washington’s Inaugural Ball, and the Carrie Walter Stettheimer dollhouse. MCNY’s contemporary collection consists of about 750,000 items, including prints, photographs, decorative arts, paintings, sculptures, toys, costumes, and theatrical souvenirs.

2. What stood out as most prominent among the museum’s exhibits? What made this the case for you?

Today, MCNY has a wide variety of exhibitions whose themes reflect the city’s lifestyle, culture, politics, and economic activities from different eras. The exhibitions on view include *New York Now: Home, Food in New York, City of Faith, Raise Your Voice, New York at Its Core, Activist New York, Timescapes, and Starlight* (MCNY, 2023). Although each of these exhibits has a unique story and perspective about New York and its people, I find the *City of Faith, New York at Its Core, and Activist New York* quite outstanding. The *City of Faith* focuses

on the city's complex relationship between religion and public space as well as the nature of secularism in the city. *New York at Its Core* explores the city's history and future through the themes of money, density, diversity, and creativity, as well as their influence on the city's current status and its inhabitants. Lastly, the *Activist New York* is about the city's history of activism and the people who have propelled social change from the 19th century to today. I believe that the three exhibitions cover or highlight some of the most significant topics that affect almost all people living in New York.

3. Does the staff represent the topic or group of people exhibited in the museum? Why or why not?

MCNY's staff consists of 89 full-time and 41 part-time employees. In addition, the Museum is supported by 70 volunteers and governed by a 43-member (max. 50) Board of Trustees (MCNY, 2020). The Museum is an equal opportunity employer and its staff is as diverse as New York City. As a result, the Museum offers equal employment opportunities for all applicants and employees. It highly discourages unlawful discrimination based on an individual's age, citizenship status, color, creed, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, marital status, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation, among others (MCNY, 2023). Therefore, the staff is a true representation of the groups of people, topics, and themes depicted in the Museum's exhibitions.

4. What is something you learned or was challenging to you about this visit?

I have learned several things from my visit to the Museum of the City of New York. First, I have learned that cities have unique historical and cultural backgrounds, that often shape people's lifestyles and world perspectives. Second, those historical and cultural aspects should be

preserved to help future generations understand how certain things came to be. Third, I have learned that urban life has a unique set of opportunities and challenges that cut across generations based on their predecessors' sociodemographic characteristics such as race/ethnicity and emigration status. Lastly, I was impressed by the Museum's effort to work with various external stakeholders in activities and programs aiming to enhance the lifestyle and experiences of the people of New York City, especially the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society.

References

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