



Traveling  
Exhibition

# HARLEM

by Camilo José Vergara

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## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION



Camilo José Vergara, *Carolina Meat and Vegetable Market*, 1970. Inkjet print. New-York Historical Society, Gift of the artist

*Harlem*, an exhibition of ninety-four photographs taken by MacArthur Fellow Camilo José Vergara, records the changes that New York City's Harlem neighborhood sustained in the last decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century. Revealing a significant American story, the photographs serve as witness to the changes that have occurred in one of the nation's most vibrant and famous neighborhoods. Otherwise known as the capital of black America, Harlem is home to many influential leaders of the civil rights movement and to generations of authors, musicians, visual artists, and actors. The neighborhood is defined by its evolving population and by its buildings, which have an organic quality of their own.

The tour which begins in fall 2014 marks the first time these photographs will travel for exhibition.

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Camilo José Vergara, *Formula 50*, 2005. Inkjet print. New-York Historical Society, Gift of the artist

The exhibition represents a compelling account of urban transformation indicative of urban centers throughout the United States. Influenced by Henri Cartier Bresson, Walker Evans, Helen Levitt, and Aaron Siskind, Vergara began photographing Harlem in 1970. "At that time," he recalled, "Harlem was like a run-down version of Paris where life was lived on the streets, amid the fading glory of its grand boulevards. Once imposing and elegant buildings were now derelict; the streets looked dirty; parks were semi-abandoned and dangerous yet a culture, different and separate from mainstream America was thriving in Harlem's many nooks and crannies." This was the Old Harlem, a place that continued to produce new generations of artists, musicians, and writers. Seduced by its vitality, Vergara repeatedly returned over four decades to photograph the many facets of the neighborhood. By photographing the present, Vergara preserves the past. The exhibition has become a living historical record of Harlem, demonstrating with "before" and "after" images, how one of the nation's most important neighborhoods has been redefined.

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The work is best explained by its photographer:

“Since 1977, I have been recording changes in the urban world, becoming along the way an archivist of decline, a documentarian of walls, buildings, and city blocks. Bricks, signs, trees, and sidewalks: these were things that spoke to me as truthfully and eloquently about urban reality as the people. I felt a people’s history—their accomplishments, failures and aspirations—were not only reflected in their faces and their bodies, but in the material world in which they lived and which they helped to shape.... If I did not get an image right the first time, I could return the following week....I chose to record the changing nature of the city itself...I saw my mission as compiling a record of the destruction and violence done to New York at the height of America’s urban crisis of the 1960s and 1970s.”



Camilo José Vergara, *Street Evangelist*, 2008. Inkjet print. New-York Historical Society, Gift of the artist



Camilo José Vergara, *All Saints Roman Catholic Church*, 1993. Inkjet print. New-York Historical Society, Gift of the artist

*“Mr. Vergara takes us through all these dramatic shifts in function, fashion and fortune with an attitude of studied neutrality. He shoots storefronts always straight on, from the same distance, in unmoody light. The results are urban photography as archaeological field work. Over the span of eight images, we see many changes, but we aren’t asked to feel good or bad about them. We’re meant to think: Look what life does.”*

- *New York Times*, May 29, 2009

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## EXHIBITION FACT SHEET



Camilo José Vergara, *253 West 125<sup>th</sup> Street*, 2008, Inkjet print.  
New-York Historical Society, Gift of the artist

**Contents:** 94 framed ink-jet prints, including 50 prints at 16 x 20 inches, 36 prints at 24 x 30 inches, and 8 prints at 26 x 34 inches presented in nine sections: 1. Introduction; 2. Storefronts; 3. Transformations; 4. Landmarks and Benchmarks; 5. Religion; 6. Graphics; 7. Obama; 8. Statues; and 9. Heart of Harlem. The exhibition also includes a time-lapse Power Point presentation that animates the transformations of some sections of Harlem.

**Size:** 200 running feet (with moderate double hanging)

**Dates:** Available for travel beginning fall 2014 for up to 12 week loan periods

**Educational Resources:** Visit <http://vergara.nyhistory.org> , a dedicated website that offers educators teaching resources including an online gallery, lesson plans, and a virtual gallery to share student work.

**Organization:** The exhibition is organized by the New-York Historical Society

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## EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

### I. INTRODUCTION

*Headed to Harlem*, 1970

East Harlem, 1970

Harlem, 1970

East Harlem, 1970

East Harlem, 1970  
1355 Park Avenue

East Harlem, 1970

Untitled, 1970

Untitled, 1970

*Chilling on the Avenue*, 1970  
Park Avenue & 125<sup>th</sup> Street

*Carolina Meat and Vegetable Market*, 1970  
43 Lenox Boulevard

151 East 123<sup>rd</sup> Street, 1977

### II. STOREFRONTS

319 West 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 1977

319 West 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 1996

319 West 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 2007

20 East 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 1977

20 East 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 2007

135 East 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 1980

135 East 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 2002

2038 Fifth Avenue, 1992

2038 Fifth Avenue, 1996

2038 Fifth Avenue, 1999

2038 Fifth Avenue, 2007

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65 East 125th Street, 1977

65 East 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 1980

65 East 125th Street, 1988

65 East 125th Street, 1996

65 East 125th Street, 1997

65 East 125th Street, 2001

65 East 125th Street, 2007

## III. TRANSFORMATIONS

Untitled (Harlem Welcomes President Clinton), 2001  
West 125<sup>th</sup> Street from Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard

Untitled (Marathon), 2008

*Grant Houses*, 2007

West 124th Street from Morningside Avenue, view looking west

View NW from Frederick Douglass and West 143<sup>rd</sup> Street, 1988

Frederick Douglass Boulevard and West 143<sup>rd</sup> Street, 2001

Frederick Douglass Boulevard and West 143<sup>rd</sup> Street, 2007

*Pentecostal Faith Church*, 1994

Malcolm X Boulevard (Lenox Avenue) at West 129<sup>th</sup> Street

Malcolm X Boulevard (Lenox Avenue) at West 129<sup>th</sup> Street, 2007

## IV. LANDMARKS AND BENCHMARKS

*Astor Row*, 2008

South side of West 130th Street between Fifth Avenue and Malcom X Boulevard (Lenox Avenue)

*Strivers' Row*, 2007

139<sup>th</sup> Street between Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard and Frederick Douglass Boulevard

*Renaissance Ballroom and Casino*, 2008

West 137th Street at Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard

Madison Avenue towards East 127<sup>th</sup> Street, 1982

View south along Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard from West 117th Street, 1992

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*All Saints Roman Catholic Church*, 1993  
Northeast corner of 129<sup>th</sup> Street and Madison Avenue (47 East 129<sup>th</sup> Street)

*Corinthians Baptist Church*, detail, 1997  
1908 Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard at West 116th Street

*Mount Morris Fire Watchtower*, 2007  
Marcus Garvey Park (120<sup>th</sup> to 124<sup>th</sup> Street, between Park and Madison Avenues)

East 132<sup>nd</sup> Street east of Madison Avenue, 2001

2371 Frederick Douglass Boulevard, 2001

East 132<sup>nd</sup> Street at Madison Avenue, 1998

Untitled (Entrance to Taino Towers), 2007  
2383 2nd Avenue, Spanish Harlem

Untitled, 1998  
Malcolm X Boulevard

Untitled, 2008  
131<sup>st</sup> Street

Untitled (Sky Watch Tower), 2008  
Malcolm X Boulevard between West 137<sup>th</sup> and 138<sup>th</sup> Streets

## V. RELIGION

*Christ Temple*, 2007  
405 Malcolm X Boulevard

*St. Joseph of the Holy Family*, 2009  
405 West 125th Street

*Corinthians Baptist Church*, 2007  
St. Nicholas Avenue at West 116th Street

Untitled, (Prayer Warriors at Deliverance Temple of Faith), 2002  
2451 Frederick Douglass Boulevard

*Reverend Thomas D. Johnson*, 2008  
132 West 116th Street

*Pierre Gaspar, Street Evangelist*, 2008  
West 116th Street at Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard

*First Haitian Baptist Church*, 2007  
315 West 141st Street



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*First Haitian Baptist Church*, 2002  
315 West 141st Street

75 East 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 2009

## VI. GRAPHICS

East 118<sup>th</sup> Street at 2nd Avenue, 1991

Northwest corner of West 124th Street at Malcolm X Boulevard, 1995

East 125th Street between Park and Lexington Avenues, 1994

Untitled, 1989  
The Johnson Houses, New York City Housing Authority, Lexington Avenue at East 115th Street

242 West 116<sup>th</sup> Street, 2008

*Formula 50*, 2005  
West 125<sup>th</sup> Street west of Frederick Douglas Boulevard

359 West 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 2009

*Day of the Puerto Rican Day Parade*, 2007  
163 East 116<sup>th</sup> Street

Frederick Douglass Boulevard at West 135th Street, 2008

## VII. OBAMA

253 West 125th Street, 2008

Untitled (Election Day), 2008  
Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard at 125<sup>th</sup> Street

*Mr. Long*, 2008  
West 139th Street at Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard, 2008

## VIII. STATUES

*Lafayette and Washington*, 2008  
West 114th Street at Morningside Avenue and Manhattan Avenue

*Higher Ground*, 2005  
Northeast corner of Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard at West 125<sup>th</sup> Street

*Swing Low*, 2008  
Frederick Douglass Boulevard and West 122<sup>nd</sup> Street

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Untitled, 2009  
Frederick Douglass Boulevard and 110<sup>th</sup> Street

## IX. HEART OF HARLEM

*Frank Suarez*, 2008  
2164 Frederick Douglass Boulevard

2807 Frederick Douglass Boulevard, 2007

*Sam*, 1995  
274 West 140<sup>th</sup> Street

West 125<sup>th</sup> Street at Morningside Avenue, 2007

*Eddie*, 1990

Lexington Avenue at East 124<sup>th</sup> Street, 2007

Lexington Avenue at East 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 2007

*Rasheedah*, 2008  
West 135<sup>th</sup> Street at Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard

*CC*, 2008

Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard at West 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 2005

Madison Avenue at East 125<sup>th</sup> Street

Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard at West 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 2008

West 125<sup>th</sup> St. near Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard, 2007

*Carrie and Archie*, 2007  
Northeast corner of 125<sup>th</sup> Street at Malcolm X Boulevard

Looking north along Frederick Douglass Boulevard from West 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 2008

Untitled (Mr. Butterfly Pin), 2007  
71 East 125<sup>th</sup> Street

West 125<sup>th</sup> Street west of Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard, 2007

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As a host of *Harlem*, you will receive:

- Curatorial and registrarial information
- Shipping, handling, and installation instructions
- Sample press release and press images
- Access to educational resources, including lesson plans and curriculum materials available for download
- Ability to link to and from the New-York Historical Society website

## ABOUT THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Founded in 1804, the New-York Historical Society comprises New York's oldest museum of history and art, as well as an internationally renowned research library that includes a distinguished collection of prints, photographs, and architectural drawings. Collections span over four centuries, reflecting the history, culture, diversity, and continuing evolution of the city and state of New York as well as the nation. The museum houses materials relating to the founding of our country, the history of art in America, and the history of New York and its people. One of only 20 U.S. members of the prestigious Independent Research Libraries Association, the library is widely recognized as a principal source of primary and secondary materials for the study of New York history and is one of the foremost American history research institutions in the world, ranking in pre-20<sup>th</sup> century Americana with the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress. These collections provide the foundation for research and for exploration of the nation's richly layered past and support our commitment to creating a forum for discoveries, debates, and discussions surrounding the making and meaning of history.