NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MUSEUM & LIBRARY

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY RECEIVES PROMISED GIFT OF
MORE THAN 100 WORKS FROM THE ELIE AND SARAH HIRSCHFELD COLLECTION
OF NEW YORK SCENES

Dr. Louise Mirrer, president and CEO of the New-York Historical Society, has announced an extraordinary promised gift from philanthropists and art collectors Elie and Sarah Hirschfeld. The couple’s “Scenes of New York City” collection comprises 130 artworks dating from the mid-19th through the 21st-centuries, including works by Isabel Bishop, Marc Chagall, David Hockney, Edward Hopper, Yvonne Jacquette, Jacob Lawrence, Louise Nevelson, Georgia O’Keeffe, Norman Rockwell, and Andy Warhol, among others. The collection of paintings, works on paper in various media, and sculpture includes 113 works by 82 artists not currently represented in New-York Historical’s collection. The works are united by a thematic thread that celebrates New York City: its buildings, bridges, parks, landmarks, and people.


Robert Henri’s *Snow in Central Park* demonstrates a stark depiction of the urban grounds. The rough brushstrokes, muddied snow, and oppressive sky rebuke the prettiness of Impressionist winter renderings popular at the time. The painting is characteristic of the Ashcan School that Henri founded—a movement focused on gritty and unidealized views of city life in New York that helped to usher in a vital American modernity.

*Gramercy Park* is a hallmark of Norman Rockwell’s early career. The painting offers a rare glimpse into the artist’s childhood and student days in New York City. At the same time, it presages the signature features of his mature work: the penchant for visual storytelling and celebration of the everyday that would transform him into one of the most popular and beloved illustrators of 20th-century American life.


Harlem Renaissance artist Jacob Lawrence, celebrated for his documentation of the black experience in America, was just 23 years old when he completed a series of 60 small paintings about “The Great Migration” of African Americans from the rural south to the urban north in 1941. *Harlem Diner*, a prelude to that series, depicts the African American experience during the Great Depression and the anguish experienced in an era of joblessness.
Pioneering abstractionist Georgia O’Keeffe executed this work (and its corresponding painting in the Brooklyn Museum’s collection) around the time she left New York to live permanently in New Mexico. She may have created them as homages to her success in the city and also as a monument to the power of bridges to connect people and places—thus as a gateway to her new life. The drawing’s sweeping cables create a valentine to New York, a place where she and legendary photographer Alfred Stieglitz launched their seminal careers.

World-renowned artist Louise Nevelson created *America* *New York* in 1965. The dramatic all-black assemblage exemplifies her signature cubist-style sculpture. It comprises a series of boxes, made of found scraps of wood, that slot together to form a darkly dreamlike construction evocative of a futuristic human figure or anthropomorphic skyscraper—a metaphor, perhaps, for the city or city life. Nevelson, who described New York as her “mirror,” persevered against early gender-based discrimination to become one of the most significant sculptors of the 20th century.

The Italian artist Giorgio de Chirico painted *Interno metafisico a Manhattan* while visiting New York in 1972. The painting unsettles with its unexpected jumble of inanimate objects set in a distorted and claustrophobic interior that floats against the city sky. The composition reworks Manhattan into a dreamlike and impossible world. It exemplifies the artist’s mature metaphysical paintings—his reengagement with a style spearheaded during his early career that profoundly impacted the French avant-garde and Surrealists.


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As an important contributor to the Pop Art movement of the 1960s, David Hockney is considered one of the most influential British artists of the 20th century. Although he resides part-time in California, he also visits New York where he drew this high-key, optimistic view—a verdant slice of Central Park, bordered by the skyscrapers of Central Park South and framed by a purple window casement—from his room on a high floor of the Mayflower Hotel. The hotel closed its doors in 2004 shortly after Hockney painted this watercolor.