



# “ARTS FOR LIVING”: CAN ARTISTS SURVIVE IN NEW YORK CITY?

**HENRY STREET SETTLEMENT**  
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Find us on       
@HenryStreetSettlement

10TH ANNIVERSARY

**Lillian Wald Symposium**

Wednesday, April 9, 2025, 6 — 8 p.m.

Abrons Arts Center





Henry Street Settlement is situated on the Lenape island of Manhahtaan (Mannahatta) in Lenapehoking, the Lenape homeland. We pay respect to Lenape peoples, past, present, and future, and their continuing presence in the homeland and throughout the Lenape diaspora. We offer our care and gratitude to the land, water, and air of Lenapehoking.

Nulelìntàmuhëna èli paèkw Lenapehoking Kulawsihëmo ènta ahpièkw. Nooleelundamuneen eeli payeekw Lunaapeewahkiing. Wulaawsii kw neeli apiyeekw.

We are glad because you people came to Lenapehoking. Live well when you are here.

Thank you to the Lenape Center and Emily Johnson for their partnership with Abrons Arts Center in developing this land acknowledgment.

# About Henry Street Settlement

Henry Street Settlement’s mission is to open doors of opportunity for Lower East Side residents and other New Yorkers through social service, arts, and health care programs. The organization is distinguished by its commitment to listening to and learning from our neighbors—and then acting to meet the most pressing needs of our community.

## Henry Street Programs

### Health & Wellness

Community Consultation Center: mental health services  
Continuous Engagement between Community and Clinic Treatment (CONNECT)  
Dale Jones Burch Neighborhood Center  
The Parent Center  
School-Based Mental Health Clinics  
ACCES-VR vocational rehabilitation  
Public benefits enrollment  
Living in Place

### Transitional & Supportive Housing

Shelters for homeless families  
Third Street Women’s Residence  
Third Street Supportive Housing  
Aftercare services

### Education

Athletics & Community Enrichment Services (A.C.E.S.)  
Afterschool in public schools and Henry Street sites  
Community schools  
Early childhood education  
Expanded Horizons College Access & Success Program  
Jacob Riis Cornerstone—afterschool and enrichment  
Middle School Success Center  
Summer camps  
Youth Opportunity Hub

### Arts & Humanities

Abrons Arts Center: theater, dance, visual arts, and interdisciplinary performances and exhibitions  
Obie Award-winning theater  
Music, visual arts, dance, and theater classes  
Artist residencies  
NYCHA Arts Initiative  
Subsidized studio and theater rentals  
Arts in schools  
The House on Henry Street exhibition  
Hope & Resilience: COVID Oral History Project  
Queer history walking tours of the Lower East Side and East Village

### Older Adult Services

Meals on Wheels  
Naturally Occurring Retirement Community: social work and nursing services; case management  
Older Adult Center  
Senior Companion Program  
Sewing classes

### Community Engagement & Advocacy

Department of Integration & Community Engagement (D.I.C.E.)  
Community Advisory Board  
Community Response Team  
Volunteerism

### Employment

Work readiness and placement  
English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); 2-generation programming  
GED preparation  
Customized staffing services for employers  
Arrive to Thrive  
ATTAIN Lab free computer access  
Train & Earn  
Youth employment and apprenticeships

# Reading List

## Artists Surviving in NYC:

*Art Monster: On the Impossibility of New York* by Marin Kosut

## Gentrification:

*St. Marks is Dead: The Many Lives of America’s Hippest Street* by Ada Calhoun

*CHARAS: The Improbable Dome Builders* by Syeus Mottel

*The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination* by Sarah Schulman

*The Lofts of SoHo: Gentrification, Art, and Industry in New York, 1950–1980* by Aaron Shkuda

*Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* by Sharon Zukin

## Artists and Urban Planning:

*Counter Institution: Activist Estates of the Lower East Side* by Nandini Bagchee

*Contested City: Art and Public History as Mediation at New York’s Seward Park*

*Urban Renewal Area* by Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani

*Arts for Living* by Kim Förster

*DIY on the Lower East Side: Books, Buildings, and Art After the 1975 Fiscal Crisis*

by Andrew Strombeck

## Artists Housing:

*Affordable Housing in New York: The People, Places, and Policies that Transformed a City*

edited by Nicholas Dagen Bloom and Matthew Gordon Lasner

*Loft Low: The Last of New York City’s Original Artists Lofts* by Joshua Charow

*The Twilight of Bohemia: Westbeth and the Last Artists of New York* by Peter Trachtenberg

## Lower East Side Artists:

*(There are too many books about Lower East Side artists to include all on this list. This is a small sampling.)*

*Sweet Oblivion: The Urban Landscape of Martin Wong* by Dan Cameron and Carlo McCormick

*Memories of the Revolution: The First Ten Years of the WOW Café Theater*

edited by Jill Dolan, Holly Hughes, and Carmelita Tropicana

*The Queer Nuyorican: Radicalized Sexualities and Aesthetics in Loisaída* by Karen Jaime

*Offbeats: Lower East Side Portraits* by Clayton Patterson and John Strausbaugh

*Maybe the People Would Be the Times* by Lucy Sante

*Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration* by David Wojnarowicz



**The Lillian Wald Symposium**—named for Henry Street’s founder—is a free annual gathering that fosters discussions about the most pressing issues of our time. This year’s symposium— *“Arts for Living”: Can Artists Survive in New York City?*—marks the 10th anniversary of this event series. It also coincides with the 50th anniversary of the Settlement’s community arts center, built in 1975 at 466 Grand Street and named, at the time, the “Arts for Living Center”—now known as the Abrons Arts Center.

Tonight, our panelists will discuss whether New York City can remain a magnet and incubator for creativity across the visual and performing arts at a time when affordable living/working space and access to resources continue to shrink in the city. Panelists will look back at the history of the Lower East Side, and New York City more generally, as a haven for artists; address how and why this city has nurtured artist communities for so long; and discuss what is needed to sustain a culture of creativity today.

# Past Symposiums

- 2024** Welcoming New Migrant Neighbors: Can NYC Live Our Ideals?
- 2023** Taking Care of Each Other: How Do We Meet the Need for Mental Health Services in NYC?
- 2022** What Is a Living Wage: Making Ends Meet in NYC
- 2021** Black Communities on the Lower East Side: Exploring Four Centuries of History
- 2020** Who Gets to Vote?
- 2019** Can New York City’s Affordable Housing Crisis Be Resolved?
- 2018** Nevertheless, She Persisted: Illuminating the Life & Legacy of Lillian Wald
- 2017** Immigrant New York: The New Majority
- 2016** Can We End Homelessness?



# Meet Our Panel

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**Anne del Castillo**

Anne del Castillo is the senior policy advisor for creative sector strategy for the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, where she oversees the development and administration of NYC Create in Place, a new citywide initiative to safeguard the city’s cultural and creative infrastructure. As commissioner of the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment under two administrations, she led the recovery of New York City’s \$150 billion creative and nightlife economy through the pandemic, and expanded the agency from two to five divisions with over 90 staff and an annual budget of \$20 million. A distinguished executive with more than 20 years’ experience in arts and entertainment, nonprofit administration, and public policy, del Castillo is the recipient of the New York State Senate Woman of Distinction Award, the New York Foundation for the Arts Hall of Fame Honor, and the Public Counsel of the Year Award from the Association of Media and Entertainment Counsel.



**Maura Cuffie-Peterson**

Maura Cuffie-Peterson is a facilitator, strategist, and designer. Currently, she serves as the director of strategic initiatives for the Guaranteed Income program at Creatives Rebuild New York. From 2018 to 2021, she was the senior program officer for ArtPlace America. During that time she conceived and executed the Local Control, Local Field(s) initiative, a novel approach to participatory and trust-based philanthropy. This initiative placed over \$12.5 million directly under the control of practitioners across the country. She has held a variety of positions in arts, culture, and organizational change. As a co-founder of the Free Breakfast Program collective, she participated as a Create Change Fellow with the Laundromat Project in 2015 and in the inaugural cohort for leaders of color in EmcArts’ Arts Leaders as Cultural Innovators Fellowship in 2016.



**Valentina Di Liscia**  
Moderator

Valentina Di Liscia is a writer, editor, and translator based in New York City. She is the news editor at the arts magazine *Hyperallergic*, where she focuses on the intersection of visual culture, human rights, labor movements, and activism with a special interest in Latin America and Spanish-speaking communities in the United States. Her reporting and criticism have appeared in *Hyperallergic*, the *Financial Times*, *Jewish Currents*, and the *Brooklyn Rail*, among others. She received the Brodsky Scholarship for Latin American Art History at Hunter College, where she is working on a thesis on the Mexican artist Helen Escobedo.



**Ashley Ferro-Murray**

Ashley Ferro-Murray, Ph.D., is the program director for the arts at the Doris Duke Foundation, where she drives and oversees grantmaking and other efforts to advance the foundation’s support for performing artists. Previously, Ferro-Murray was the senior curator of theater and dance at The Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, where she commissioned and produced new works by artists including Laurie Anderson, Maria Hassabi, Jaamil Olawale Kosoko, Andrew Schneider, and Sage Ni’Ja Whitson. A founding board member for Bienal de las Artes de Cuerpo, Imagen y Movimiento de Madrid, she is a frequent public speaker whose research has been published most recently in *The Drama Review* and in collections published by Bloomsbury Press and Duke University Press (forthcoming). Ferro-Murray serves on New York State DanceForce and on the International Presenting Commons and TURBA (an international journal of live arts curation) advisory boards. Her doctoral degree is in performance studies with a designated emphasis on new media.



**Nile Harris**

Nile Harris is a performer and director of live art. He has done a few things and hopes to do a few more, God willing.



**Sharon Zukin**

Sharon Zukin is professor emerita of sociology and of earth and environmental sciences at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center, and writes extensively about art, architecture, and real estate in New York City. She is the author of *I Loft Living*, *The Cultures of Cities*, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*, and *The Innovation Complex*, and is working with Alice Arnold on a documentary film about the artists’ community in SoHo and the urban housing crisis.