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The 100 Greatest New York City Artworks, Ranked

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When the artist Florine Stettheimer returned from a sojourn in Europe during the 1910s, she vowed to paint New York City as she saw it. She wrote a poem in which she spoke of a place where “skytowers had begun to grow / And front stoop houses started to go / And life became quite different / And it was as tho’ someone had planted seeds / And people sprouted like common weeds / And seemed unaware of accepted things.” She continued on, concluding ultimately that “what I should like is to paint this thing.”

She did so, producing works such as *New York/Liberty* (1918–19), in which downtown Manhattan’s busy port is shown with a chunky Statue of Liberty

welcoming a ship. It's a bombastic vision of all that New York has to offer, and it's one of the works that make this list, which collects 100 of the best pieces about the city.

The works ranked below take many forms—painting, sculpture, photography, film, performance, even artist-run organizations whose activities barely resemble art. They pay homage to aspects of New York life across all five of its boroughs. Secret histories are made visible, the stuff of everyday life is repurposed as art, and tragic events from New York lore are memorialized. Binding all of these works is one larger question: What really makes a city?

These 100 works come up with many different answers to that query, not the least because a significant number of them are made by people who were born outside New York City.

Below, the 100 greatest works about New York City.

85 **Anicka Yi, *Force Majeure*, 2017**



Anicka Yi, *Force Majeure*, 2017.

Photo : ©2023 Anicka Yi/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/Photo David Heald/Courtesy of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

Like many of Anicka Yi's most famous works, *Force Majeure* was alive. Literally. The splotches lining its agar-coated tiles were not produced by paint but by bacteria, which were allowed to grow throughout the period the piece was on view at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. These bacteria were sourced from the city's Chinatown and Koreatown neighborhoods and were then given second life in a refrigerated environment on the Upper East Side. In allowing the bacteria to grow of its own accord, Yi asserted the piece as its own ecosystem, both beautiful and self-sustaining—not unlike the two majority-Asian neighborhoods she was drawing on.