

Leagueline

1Q 2026



FINANCIAL CONCERNS

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Hello, my fellow ALNNJ members, thank you for the opportunity to serve as your President for the Architects League of Northern New

Jersey. It is an honor, and I appreciate the trust you have placed in me. I would also like to thank our past President, Christopher Brand, for his leadership and for continuing to guide our programs with care and consistency.

Since joining the Board in 2017, I've had the chance to work with many dedicated colleagues. The relationships formed over the years have meant a great deal, and I look forward to continuing that work together in the year ahead.

We will maintain our focus on offering strong speakers, meaningful tours, our Leagueline publication, and the informal gatherings that give our members time to connect. We are also preparing for the annual Trade Show and several events in recognition of AIA NJ's 125th Anniversary.

In April, we plan to bring back the ALNNJ Girls' Tower Challenge as part of Architecture Week. Reengaging with our communities remains important, especially as our towns evolve. Having a voice in that process is essential to our work as architects.

Emerging professionals are the future of our practice, and I encourage you to support them in your offices, invite them to participate in League events, and welcome them to join as Associate Members. For those on the path to licensure, please remind them of the EPiC programs and study materials available to them.

We have a committed group of Officers and Trustees, and I look forward to working with them. Thank you again for the opportunity to serve. I look toward the coming year with a steady sense of purpose.

Eric Lam, AIA
2026 President

PAST PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



As the year closes and winter is upon us, I want to extend a thank you to all the members, sponsors, supporters, and board members

for a great year. It would not have been possible without your volunteerism, support, and willingness to continue and better the Architects League of Northern New Jersey.

A special thank you to Joe David and Robert Epstein for all their work in restarting the Design Awards; to Fay Logan for his many years of service to the board;

and to Luly Melarti, Fay Logan, Stacey Ruhle Kliesch, and Susana Babic for all they did to bring wonderful programs and events throughout the year.

I look forward to what Eric Lam and Cheryl Fothergill have planned for us next year. I am sure it will be wonderful, and all the members will enjoy another year of great programs, events, and celebrations.

I want to close by congratulating the Design and Service Award recipients. Your excellence in design, service, community, and achievement should be celebrated and is a high mark of the Architects League.

Chris Brand, AIA
2025 President



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Leagueline

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Financial Concerns



Leagueline 1Q 2026
Anthony Lovino, AIA
Editor

Welcome to year 2026! There seems to be so many things happening and changing around us...for good and bad. This Leagueline issue covers a range of topics that have a common thread of financial issues impacting our profession and personal lives. I try to remain optimistic on both fronts and hope you can as well.

Within this issue we report on news from AIA National and their new funding model which supports local sections like ours. Their new funding commitment will have an impact on the programs and services for all AIA members. We also reiterate AIA's position on the recent change to the definition of Professional Degree by the federal government and its implications. Also included is the ABI index that gives a snapshot of the financial health of the profession in the region and across the country. A final brief topic is a cautionary tale about a large engineering company that was scammed out of millions of dollars.

Lastly, there has been a debate within the League's board and within our own editorial team as to the choice of media by which we deliver our Leagueline. We are happy to say that we will be sticking with this print edition and will continue to have our digital presence on the website. Regardless of the medium, the Leagueline and the Architects League needs you to volunteer. There are so many ways you can get involved and so much you can gain personally and professionally by doing so. Attend one of our meetings or events, join a committee, go wild and join the board of trustees, or my favorite...join the Leagueline to help create this publication. The social aspect of being a member of any organization tends to be where the value of its membership is truly felt.

Anthony Lovino, AIA
Leagueline Director/Editor

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Leagueline

The Architects League of Northern New Jersey
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faywlogan.aia@gmail.com



About the AIA National Money

By Kevin Watkins, Chief Membership Officer

On October 8, 2025, AIA National's Chief Membership Officer, Kevin D. Watkins, CAE, issued an email to the component presidents about the approval of an investment fund aimed to support each chapter financially. The following is the announcement in its entirety.

I am thrilled to share news that the AIA Board of Directors approved a transformational \$10 million investment in our chapter network. This proposal was the result of dedicated efforts and collaboration between our volunteer and staff leaders, who worked together to bring this initiative to fruition. The approved investment represents the largest commitment of its kind in our Institute's history and is more than a financial milestone; it is a statement of belief in our distributed leadership model and recognition that strong chapters build a strong profession.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:



\$8M coming your way:

Special one-time payment distributed December 15, 2025



LONG-TERM funding secured:

\$25M Board-designated fund ensures chapter support for 25+ years



Strategic partnership opportunity:

\$2M fund available for chapter-led initiatives aligned with the duration of AIA's Strategic Plan

AIA's 2025 President, Evelyn Lee, and the Board of Directors appreciate the work and partnership of our chapters. They look forward to building on that collaboration as we work together in the next era of AIA to advance the profession and create a bright future.

AIA's strength has always been rooted in the partnership between national, state, and local organizations working together to serve our 100,000 members. Every tier plays a vital role in delivering value, advancing the profession, and creating the connections that make membership meaningful. This investment amplifies that collaboration and positions all of us for sustained success. I want to walk you through the three components of this investment and what it means for your chapter.

PILLAR ONE: AIA CHAPTER SUSTAINABILITY FUND (FORMERLY COMPONENT INVESTMENT FUND)

The Component Investment Fund has been essential to supporting chapter operations, programming, and member services. Moving forward, we are securing this funding for the long term through a dedicated investment fund that ensures stability and predictability for decades to come. Here's how it works:

- We are establishing a \$25 million Board-designated investment fund managed by AIA and a third-party investment partner, with all proceeds reinvested to ensure longevity
- AIA will budget \$1 million annually from our operating budget and transfer it to the investment fund each year
- An additional \$10 million from future business proceeds will be contributed to ensure 25+ year viability
- Distributions per current policy will continue quarterly at 5% of AIA's annual operating expense budget, paid according to your existing statewide agreements

What this means for you: Financial certainty. You can plan with confidence knowing that chapter funding is secured through a sustainable investment model rather than being subject to annual budget pressures. The mechanics stay the same—quarterly distributions based on the August 1 member count—but the foundation is now rock solid.



PILLAR TWO: AIA STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT FUND

We are establishing a \$2 million fund to support component-led initiatives that align with AIA's strategic priorities and amplify our collective impact. This fund will provide up to \$400K per year for the duration of AIA's next Strategic Plan, which will be finalized in the coming months. Recognizing that chapters are uniquely positioned to activate these priorities in local communities, this fund is designed to transform chapters from funding recipients to strategic partners in advancing our shared mission.

The Strategic Alignment Fund will support initiatives that:

- Amplify AIA's strategic priorities through local and regional programming
- Encourage innovation and collaboration across the component network
- Create measurable impact for members and the profession

Exact details on how to access these funds will be shared once the Strategic Plan is finalized. We'll be working closely with the CACE ExCom to develop these guidelines, and we encourage you to begin considering how your chapter might leverage this opportunity to do transformational work that benefits the entire profession.

PILLAR THREE: 2025 AIA CHAPTER PARTNERSHIP INVESTMENT

In recognition of the essential role chapters play in delivering member value and in support of your work implementing AIA's evolving strategic direction, we are making a special one-time investment of \$8 million to be distributed in December 2025. Combined with the already budgeted \$3.2 million Component Investment Fund payment, this brings the total 2025 chapter investment to \$11.2 million for fiscal year 2025.

This investment provides immediate resources for:

- Capacity building and infrastructure improvements
- Enhanced member services and programming expansion
- Strategic initiatives that strengthen your local community

What This Means for Our Partnership: This investment represents a turning point in how AIA supports chapters. It recognizes that the member experience begins locally, that chapters are essential partners in delivering on AIA's mission, and that when we invest in chapter capacity, we strengthen the entire profession. This investment is designed to amplify your impact and ensure you have the resources to continue building thriving local communities of architects."

For the Architects League, this one-time payment comes at a time when it can be used to reinforce the chapter's financial strength as the Board continues to deliver value to the membership.



Federal "Professional Degree" Definition Excludes Architecture — Member Briefing

The Department of Education is proposing a much narrower definition of "professional degrees" for federal student-loan purposes, and architecture is not included on the proposed professional-degree list.

What's happening: The Department of Education is proposing a much narrower definition of "professional degrees" for federal student-loan purposes, and architecture is not included on the proposed professional-degree list.

Why it matters: The federal definition will control which graduate programs qualify for higher "professional program" loan caps starting July 1, 2026. If architecture remains excluded, many M.Arch and other graduate architecture students could face lower federal borrowing limits (\$100,000 vs \$200,000).

What's next: The proposal finalized its negotiated rulemaking process in November and will be put out for public comment in early 2026; final definitions and program lists will determine the real-world impact.



WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU



Architects / Practitioners

State licensure requirements do not change; NAAB-accredited B.Arch/M.Arch/D.Arch remain professional degrees for licensure. The main risk is the education-to-workforce pipeline if costs rise or enrollment drops.



Firms

Potential recruitment and retention pressure if students need more private financing or delay graduate study.



Students / Emerging Professionals

Your NAAB-accredited degree still counts for licensure, but federal aid treatment may change if the proposal is finalized.

WHAT AIA IS DOING

- Requesting formal clarification from the Department of Education on architecture's omission and intended impacts.
- Coordinating with partner organizations across education and licensure to present a unified response.
- Preparing comments and policy options to restore recognition of architecture as a professional degree for federal aid purposes.

What you can do:

- There will be a formal comment period on this rule some time early in 2026. Keep your eyes peeled for an email from AIA Government Affairs asking for you to submit comment.
- While this rule is proposed by the Department of Education, Government Affairs is advocating that Congress take a more comprehensive approach to the student loan cap issue. We'll be reaching out to you in the coming weeks to write your member of Congress about this, as well.
- Tell your colleagues and friends that this is happening. Share with your network within the architect community, but also more broadly on social media. This rule affects a vast array of professionals, and many may not have heard about this issue yet. Share this page on social media!

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

The proposed professional-degree list reduces coverage from thousands of programs to a small set of fields, excluding many disciplines that lead to licensure-based professions. Architecture is among the excluded fields in the current proposal.

Undergraduate loans: Federal Direct Loan limits for bachelor's students stay the same: caps are set annually by year in school and remain relatively low compared with graduate borrowing.

Graduate loans starting July 1, 2026: A new federal law ends Grad PLUS and replaces it with hard borrowing caps.

Graduate programs (non-professional): up to \$20,500 per year and \$100,000 lifetime in federal loans.

Professional programs (as ED defines them): up to \$50,000 per year and \$200,000 lifetime.

Why architecture's exclusion is consequential: Programs not listed as "professional" are treated as standard graduate programs for these caps—so architecture graduate students could be limited to the lower borrowing tier even though architecture degrees are professional for licensure.



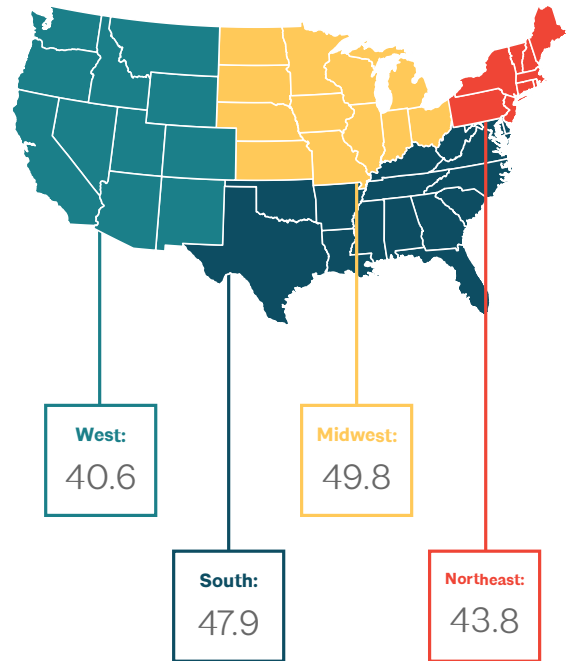
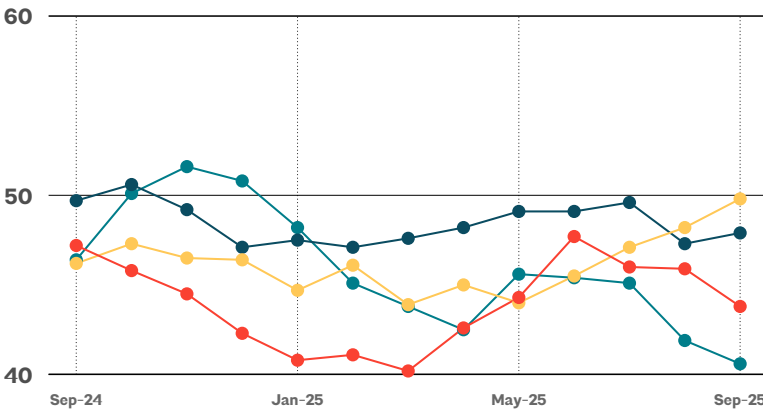
AIA/Deltek Architecture Billings Index (ABI)

September 2025

Regional

Firm billings continue to decline across the country.

Graphs represent data from September 2024–September 2025 across the four regions. 50 represents the diffusion center. A score of 50 equals no change from the previous month. Above 50 shows increase; Below 50 shows decrease. 3-month moving average.



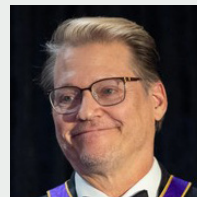
2026 AIA-NJ President Jessica O'Donnell, AIA, NCARB

Jessica O'Donnell, AIA, NCARB has fostered and progressed transformative change within the AEC industry by empowering others with opportunities to expand their knowledge. Her leadership has advanced

practice, increased the impact architects have on society, and expanded the architectural community.

With a focus on affordable and attainable multi-family housing, Jessica is passionate about creating places of belonging and empowering individuals to positively impact our global community. She is a national volunteer leader with AIA, NCARB, ACE Mentorship, and NAAB where she works to amplify diverse thoughts and ideas to elevate the built environment.

Jessica was the co-founder of AIA New Jersey's Emerging Professional Community (EPIC), 2019 President of AIA West Jersey, the 2022 Chair of AIA's Young Architects Forum (YAF), Steering Committee Chair for the YAF Mission 2130 event, and the 2025 Moderator of the AIA Strategic Council. She is a 2022 AIA Young Architect award recipient, a 2022 BD+C Network's 40 under 40 honoree, and a 2024 Engineering News Record New York Top Young Professional.



2026 AIA President Illya Azaroff, FAIA

Azaroff is an architect, geographer, and internationally recognized leader in disaster response, climate adaptation, resilient design, and regenerative planning strategies with over 30 years experience.

Azaroff is the founder of +LAB architect whose mission is to build resilient capacity while giving underserved communities greater voice and visibility. He is a professor at New York City College of Technology (CUNY). Azaroff works with cities, governing bodies, and design teams around the world to build resilient capacity.

He has served AIA in several key roles, including as the 2021 AIA New York state president, on the Strategic Council (2016-2018), and as founder of DFRR Design for Risk and Reconstruction committee at AIANY (2011-2021). Azaroff holds a Master of Architecture degree from Pratt Institute and bachelor's degrees in Geography and Architecture from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Source: aia.org

A Cautionary Tale

By Anthony Iovino, AIA

We all likely receive numerous emails and texts weekly attempting to extract our information. As we enter the AI era, we all need to be more diligent in our protection of our businesses and personal assets and information. As a dramatic example of this, a shocking event happened a few months ago to an international engineering firm, ARUP, which feels like a precursor of things to come. They fell victim to a deepfake scam that cost them an astounding \$25 million dollars.



Apparently, this started with a phishing scam that snagged a finance department employee in Hong Kong who then was convinced to attend a video conference with multiple senior executives to discuss a transaction. The people on the video were real-time deepfake video representations of the executives, who directed the finance employee to transfer the money to the scammers.

A more in-depth account can be found here: www.adaptivesecurity.com/blog/arup-deepfake-scam-attack

A sophisticated scam like this was successful because the scammers were able to gain the trust of the employee. Just imagine what scams are possible as this technology develops further. The exploitation of our trust in what we read, see, and hear will be a significant challenge for all of us.

Protecting against such scams will be paramount but this should not overtake our normal lives nor make us paranoid. Most of our New Jersey architectural firms have only one location where we can talk directly to who is making the request, actual face-to-face communication. May this tale serve as a reminder to stay aware of such deceptions and to regularly remind our co-workers and families of this issue.

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Events

2025 Architects League Design Awards



BUILDING OF THE YEAR AWARD
Fern Hill Passive House
by Mowery Marsh Architects



DESIGN MERIT AWARD
Chabad Fort Lee
by Cybul Architects



DESIGN MERIT AWARD
The Cliff
by Pereiras Architects Ubiquitous



PEER DESIGN AWARD
Cliffside Park Library and Recreation Center
by Arcari + Iovino Architects

2025 Architects League Service Awards

TRUSTEES AWARD:
Luly Melarti

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD:
Ruchi Dhar

ARCHITECTS LEAGUE SERVICE AWARD:
Anthony Iovino

HARRY ALLAN LUCHT PAST PRESIDENTS AWARD:
Chris Brand

ARCHITECTS LEAGUE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD:
Ben Lee

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD:
Xiomara Paredes

ANTON VEGLIANTE AWARD (Highest Individual Honor):
Fay Logan

IN MEMORIAM



Robert Stern
1939-2025

"The recent passing of Robert A.M. Stern, FAIA, marks the loss of one of New York's most influential architectural figures—an architect, historian, and educator whose career helped shape both the physical and cultural landscape of the city. His impact spanned seven decades of influence and accomplishment. Throughout his long and distinguished career, Bob contributed to the education of multiple generations of architects, and raised public awareness of the importance of preservation and the role design plays in communities and in our society at large."

Sources: aiany.org & ramsa.com/RAMS

IN MEMORIAM



Frank Gehry, FAIA
1929-2025

"Frank Gehry, FAIA, an AIA Gold Medal winner, redefined architecture, transforming buildings into works of art that inspire and uplift. Several of his iconic projects were also honored with the prestigious AIA Twenty-five Year Award, a testament to their enduring impact on our profession and culture. His courage to challenge tradition shaped skylines and minds alike, setting a new standard for creativity in our field. Frank's legacy lives on in every architect he inspires and every city forever changed by his work."

Stephen Ayers, FAIA, Interim EVP/CEO of AIA
Source: aia.org



Arthur Davis Lecture & November Meeting
Wednesday, November 19, 2025

On November 19, members of the League attended the annual Arthur Davis Lecture at the Ridgewood Country Club in Paramus. To start the evening, Cheryl Fothergill, AIA presented a short video of interviews with ALNNJ members who have served as AIA-NJ State Presidents.

Next, architectural historian Tim Adriance presented "The Jersey Dutch House of Bergen and Rockland Counties", an in-depth look at a building type that originated in this area. A descendent of the original Dutch settlers as well as a restoration expert, Tim brought a personal touch and familiarity with the houses to his talk.

After the lecture, Joe David, AIA announced the winners of the 2025 ALNNJ Design and Membership Awards, which will be presented at the 2026 Installation Dinner on January 24 at Acqua in Edgewater.



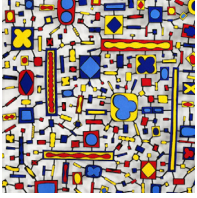
New Members

Ashutosh Aadiya Lohana, Assoc. AIA
Viktor Navek, Assoc. AIA
Rowena Ori-Aquino, Assoc. AIA
Anna Zaat, AIA

The Architects League looks forward to your involvement and participation. Please introduce yourself at the next live meeting or event.

Calendar

1Q January, February, March 2026



Tom Nussbaum: But Wait, There's More!

New Jersey-based artist. thru January 4, 2026
Montclair Art Museum
montclairartmuseum.org



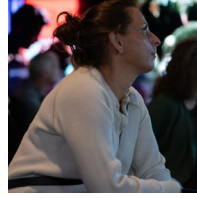
Holiday Displays at the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building

Two displays - Best Friends Forever: Holiday Greeting Cards from NYPL's Picture Collection and A Dickens Christmas. thru January 4, 2026
New York Public Library
nypl.org



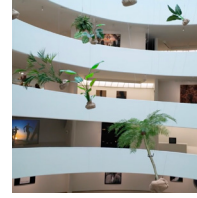
Christmas Tree and Neapolitan Baroque Crèche

Twenty-foot blue spruce looms over a vivid eighteenth-century Neapolitan Nativity scene. thru January 6, 2026
The Met Museum
metmuseum.org



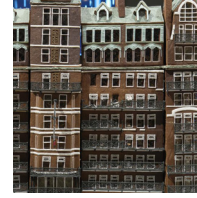
You Are Here

Draws on the rich archive of movies set in New York, combining thousands of cinematic moments across 16 screens. thru January 19, 2026
Museum of the City of New York
mcityny.org



Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers

Almost 90 works—from black-soap paintings and spray-painted text works to large-scale sculptures, film, and video—fill the museum's rotunda. thru January 19, 2026
Guggenheim New York
guggenheim.org



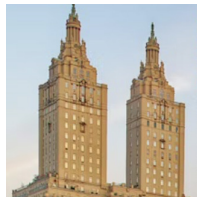
Gingerbread NYC

The Great Borough Bake-Off 2025 with the theme, "Iconic New York." thru January 19, 2026
Museum of the City of New York
mcityny.org



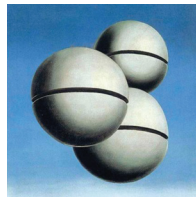
2026 ALNJJ Installation & Awards Dinner

Join us for a night of celebration, recognition, and camaraderie. January 24, 2026
Acqua, Edgewater, NJ
Visit alnjj.org for up-to-date information



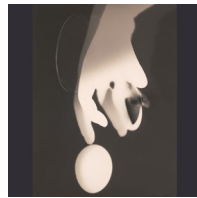
Emery Roth's New York Apartment Buildings

Virtual program at 6:00pm. Designs by Roth have shaped the ideal of residential luxury evoked in the phrase "prewar building." January 27, 2026
The Skyscraper Museum
skyscraper.org



Voice of Space: UFOs and Paranormal Phenomena

Explores profound mysteries at the intersections of human experience, belief, and the unknown. thru February 1, 2026
The Drawing Center
drawingcenter.org



Man Ray: When Objects Dream

A visionary who pioneered the rayograph, a new twist on a technique used to make photographs without a camera. thru February 1, 2026
The Met
metmuseum.org



Endless Limits: The Work Of James Howell, 1962-2014

An artist known for his minimalist paintings that explore the vast tonal range of the color gray. thru February 8, 2026
Parris Art Museum
parrisart.org



Songs of New York

Immersive interactive experience that introduces visitors to a full range of music from and about New York City. thru February 8, 2026
Museum of the City of New York
mcityny.org

Community Artist



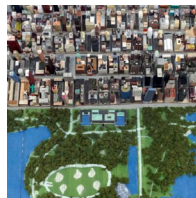
Time Exposed: Hiroshi Sugimoto's Seascapes

Presents the decade-long project of the well-known photographer, Hiroshi Sugimoto (Japanese, b. 1948) for the first time. thru February 8, 2026
Parris Art Museum
parrisart.org



Ken Ohara: Contacts

Photographic chain letter - Mailing a stranger his camera pre-loaded with film, with instructions to photograph their lives and then return the camera back to the artist. thru February 8, 2026
Whitney Museum of American Art
whitney.org



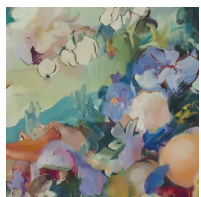
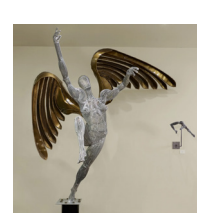
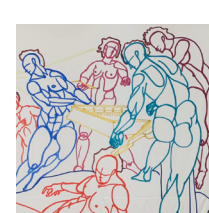
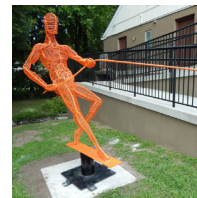
He Built This City

Celebrates the extraordinary vision and dedication behind one of the most ambitious handmade representations of New York City ever created. February 12, 2026
Museum of the City of New York
mcityny.org



A Century of The New Yorker

The New York Public Library's major exhibition. thru February 21, 2026
New York Public Library
nypl.org



Flora Yukhnovich's Four Seasons

Work that is at once modern and timeless by translating historic compositions into contemporary abstractions. thru March 9, 2026
The Frick Collection
frick.org



Designing Motherhood

Human reproduction through the lens of design. thru March 15, 2026
Museum of Arts and Design
madmuseum.org



Contemporary Volumes

The book is reimagined not only as an object of content, but as a site of transformation. thru March 2026
Morris Museum
morrismuseum.org



New York at Its Core

400 Years of NYC History capturing the human energy that drove New York to become a city like no other. Ongoing
Museum of the City of New York
mcityny.org

Jack Howard-Potter

I work to capture movement in a medium that does not move. Using steel, which is an inherently rigid material, I work to convey a sense of fluid action in space. My work explores the wide range of movement of the human figure informed through my study of drawing the human anatomy. My sculptures seek to convey the motion of the body in extremely stressful and beautiful positions; the moment that a dancer is at the peak of a jump, the weightless split second before a body succumbs to gravity. I am describing an ephemeral action in steel to convey this moment for eternity. I want the viewer to visualize the actions that led up to a given pose and the actions that will follow it. Using the brightly colored surfaces separates the figures from the landscape, making them stand out in much the same way people do when they wear clothes. The brilliant colors serve as protection for the steel from the corrosive outdoor environment as well as adding excitement to the steel to aid in the sense of movement. The work explores the range of possibilities and flexibility of the material as well as the subject. Jack's work is on display at Leonia's Boyd Sculpture Park and on exhibit at the Nevelson Chapel in St Peter's NYC until Jan 30, 2026 (the church under the Citicorp Building).

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