

■ history

THE PEOPLE'S GIFT

AN HISTORIAN UNCOVERS LADY LIBERTY'S LITTLE-KNOWN PAST

by John Bringardner / GSAS '03

The journey to the top of the Statue of Liberty is like a trip abroad. You need a ticket and an ID, and when you finally make it to your destination—after a boat ride, extensive security checkpoints, and a strenuous hike—everyone speaks a foreign language.

For historian Edward Berenson, director of NYU's Institute of French Studies, the visit was the rare research mission that didn't require a passport. In his latest book, *The Statue of Liberty: A Transatlantic Story* (Yale University Press), Berenson unpacks the largely misunderstood story behind the statue's French origins, and traces its path as one of America's most famous symbols.

When the statue was first conceived of in 1865, France had experienced nearly a century of revolution and counterrevolution. In the midst of Napoleon III's authoritarian regime, a small group of liberal Frenchmen imagined a monument to the United States—which had just emerged from the Civil War a battered but still-united, democratic republic—that would also serve as a rebuke to their own dictatorial government.

By the time the statue was dedicated in 1886, Napoleon III was gone, replaced by the moderate French Third Republic. Lady Liberty quickly settled into her role as an American icon, one whose meaning has continued to shift with the tides of culture and history.

Berenson spoke with *NYU*



PHOTO COURTESY PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION, THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
IN 1882, BARTHOLDI WROTE: "THE STATUE COMMENCES TO REACH ABOVE THE HOUSES, AND BY NEXT SPRING WE SHALL SEE IT OVERLOOK [ALL OF PARIS]."

Alumni Magazine about the copper colossus, and his own re-education in American history.

YOUR BOOK IS PART OF THE "ICONS OF AMERICA" SERIES, BUT MUCH OF IT TAKES PLACE BEYOND OUR SHORES.

It's amazing how little most Americans know about the French history of the Statue of Liberty.

Basically they think it was a gift from France, which it wasn't. It was a gift from *certain* French people to the American people—the governments were not involved.

None of the editors I worked with, for example, knew that Gustave Eiffel had built the skeleton. Nobody knew there was an Eiffel tower inside the Statue of Liberty.

WERE YOU FAMILIAR WITH THE STATUE'S HISTORY WHEN YOU TOOK ON THE PROJECT?

I knew a lot about the French iconography, the history of Marianne, [their national] symbol of liberty, and all that kind of thing, so what I had to do in order to write this book was learn about the American side of the story.

WHAT WAS THE AMERICAN RECEPTION LIKE? HAD THERE EVER BEEN SUCH A GIFT FROM ONE PEOPLE TO ANOTHER?

It's pretty unusual. There were a few skeptics in the U.S. who referred to the statue as a Trojan Horse, but most of the opposition wasn't that explicit. It was more like: Why should we want this? We don't have classical Greek and Roman statuary; that's not who we are as 19th-century Americans. So when [French sculptor Frédéric Auguste] Bartholdi first tried to sell the idea, a lot of Americans were befuddled.

One of the other things I learned is just how decentralized the United States was at the time, and so people from Philadelphia, much less San Francisco, couldn't possibly see why they should care about a statue that's going to go up in New York Harbor.

THE STATUE WAS PROPOSED AT THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR. WERE THE FRENCH MAKING A SPECIFIC STATEMENT?

It's completely fascinating. Emperor Napoleon III wanted the South to win the Civil War because he wanted to see a weak and divided U.S.—he had designs on Mexico.

So there's a whole geopolitical thing, and that's why it's really important to specify that it wasn't a gift from the French government, because that government was pretty hostile to

the U.S., and certainly hostile to its democratic values.

WHAT WAS YOUR RESEARCH PROCESS LIKE?

There was a lot to do. Bartholdi's wife, who outlived him by a decade, deposited his papers in the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers, which is the training institute for technology. It's mainly a massive archive of press clippings—from French papers and American papers, from German papers—and that was phenomenal. I had free rein, so I could follow the public opinion about it, and then I found all kinds of images.

And one of the things I discovered is that, because of all the drawings of the Statue of Liberty, the illustrated press, [it] was a reality before it even went up—and not just a reality, but a celebrity.

One of the reasons why this foreign import, which didn't really have any intrinsic meaning here, could get accepted in this country, and then embraced, is because the mass media of the time made the statue so much of a reality that by 1880 or so, most Americans couldn't imagine *not* accepting it.

HOW DO YOU THINK THE BOOK WILL BE RECEIVED IN FRANCE?

It has a different meaning, but there's a real pride that a lot of French people feel about the Statue of Liberty. There are 13 replicas in France, three in Paris and the rest sprinkled around the countryside. Once Bartholdi made the model, it made sense to run off some copies. And the foundry ran off a lot of copies.

Now there's an entrepreneur who just created another dozen because he was able to make a digital mold from the original plaster model. He's selling them for more than a million dollars apiece. ■

■ architecture

Fifth Avenue's Grande Dame

AT 100, DUKE HOUSE IS A WINDOW INTO NEW YORK CITY HISTORY

by Megan Doll / GSAS '08

At the Institute of Fine Arts, the very walls are a piece of architectural history. In a well-appointed marmoreal dining room that looks across Fifth Avenue to Central Park and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, students unpack their lunches. Across the main hall, they attend chandelier-lit lectures in a former ballroom. The upstairs bedrooms and vast closets that once stored socialite Doris Duke's luxurious dresses now house volumes on art history. On the topmost floor, faculty members hold office hours in erstwhile servants' quarters.

study but also its object as the institute celebrates Duke House's centennial this year. Constructed between 1909 and 1912, the house is a notable survivor of the wave of modernization that swept New York City in the early 20th century. "These kinds of buildings are rare," NYU historian Jon Ritter (IFA '99) notes. "Most of them came down after World War II, or even earlier, in favor of the large apartment buildings that line Fifth Avenue now." Indeed, the Landmarks Preservation Commission called Duke House "one of the last reminders of the Age of Elegance."

To mark the occasion, faculty members are preparing a series of events, including public lectures and a seminar led by ar-

The mansion, which has been home to the Institute of Fine Arts, or IFA, for the past 54 years, will not only be the site of

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 21)



PHOTO COURTESY NYU ARCHIVES
BUILT FOR TOBACCO MAGNATE JAMES B. DUKE, THE HOUSE WAS MODELED ON AN 18TH-CENTURY FRENCH MANSION.

the insider

BEST OF NEW YORK

NYU FACULTY, STAFF, AND ALUMNI OFFER UP THEIR FAVORITES

by Renée Alfuso / CAS '06

HOP A FERRY TO GOVERNORS ISLAND FOR SOME GREEN PEACE OR THE TRAIN TO BROOKLYN FOR A SIP OF NOSTALGIA

ISLAND GETAWAY

In the middle of New York Harbor lies 172 grassy acres that were closed to the public for more than 200 years. But now a free, seven-minute ferry ride takes urbanites to the revamped oasis every weekend. “**GOVERNORS ISLAND** is like a pastoral, artsy wonderland a stone’s throw away from the towering skyscrapers of Lower Manhattan,” explains Courtney E. Martin (GAL ’04), *NYU Alumni Magazine* contributing writer and author of *Do It Anyway: The New Generation of Activists* (Beacon Press). Martin is drawn to the isle for its outdoor sculpture garden, miles of car-free biking, and history: It was originally used as a military outpost, and Fort Jay still stands as a national monument with ranger-guided tours. Today, the island has a more bohemian vibe, with frequent exhibitions and a whimsical miniature golf course with 18 holes that were each designed by a different artist. The park also hosts an array of concerts, crafts workshops, and

special events such as the Jazz Age Lawn Party, where visitors dress in 1920s attire for Charleston lessons, live music, and a vintage motorcar show. If you’re simply looking for some R&R, head to Picnic Point, where stunning views of the harbor and Statue of Liberty may be enjoyed from free-standing hammocks in the grass. Says Martin: “In one little boat ride, you feel like you are a world away.”

Governors Island is open Saturdays, Sundays, and holiday Mondays from May through September.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.GOVISLAND.COM

GAME ON

Last year, 4.2 million Americans tuned in to watch the final match of the UEFA Champions League—Europe’s most prestigious soccer club tournament—and that’s not counting the hordes of fans that flocked to sports bars in New York City. “Watching a big game at a bar is the next best

thing to actually being there,” says NYU men’s soccer forward Kyle Green (CAS ’13). “There’s a buzz in the air that you just don’t get watching at home—which turns into a frenzy when goals are scored.” Green, who turned 21 last fall, stops by campus hangout Josie Woods Pub to catch games between classes. But on weekends, he heads to **DEMPSEY’S** in the East Village to watch the European footballers duke it out on the bar’s 10 mounted plasma screens. “It allows you to watch multiple games at once, which is great for Champions League when half of the teams are all playing at the same time,” Green explains. The pub also offers pool and darts to go with its beer and hot wings. And when the U.S.-Europe time difference means early-morning matches for American fans, there’s always Dempsey’s traditional Irish breakfast—served with a pint, of course.

61 SECOND AVENUE, 212-388-0662; WWW.DEMPSEYSPUB.COM

THIRSTY FOR A THROWBACK

It’s hard to believe that carbonated water was once a rare import,

but before giants like Coke and Pepsi took over, soda jerks used to mix drinks to order with freshly made syrups in shops across the country. The difference between the two is made crystal clear at the **BROOKLYN FARMACY & SODA FOUNTAIN**, where instead of chemicals and additives, they make their own cola syrup with cinnamon, nutmeg, lavender, and citrus peels.

Co-founder Peter Freeman spent a year and a half cleaning the long-closed Carroll Gardens drugstore but couldn’t throw away the 1940s ointment tins and medicine jars that now adorn the shop’s antique wooden shelves. “It’s nostalgia reminiscent of a Norman Rockwell painting,” says Brooklynite Tim Senft (GAL ’99), deputy director of strategic communications at NYU. “The fact that the ingredients are locally sourced is an added bonus, because you know you’re getting quality nostalgia.”

All-natural ice cream from Hudson Valley’s Adirondack Creamery is used to create artisanal floats in sodas like lime or hibiscus, as well as sundaes topped

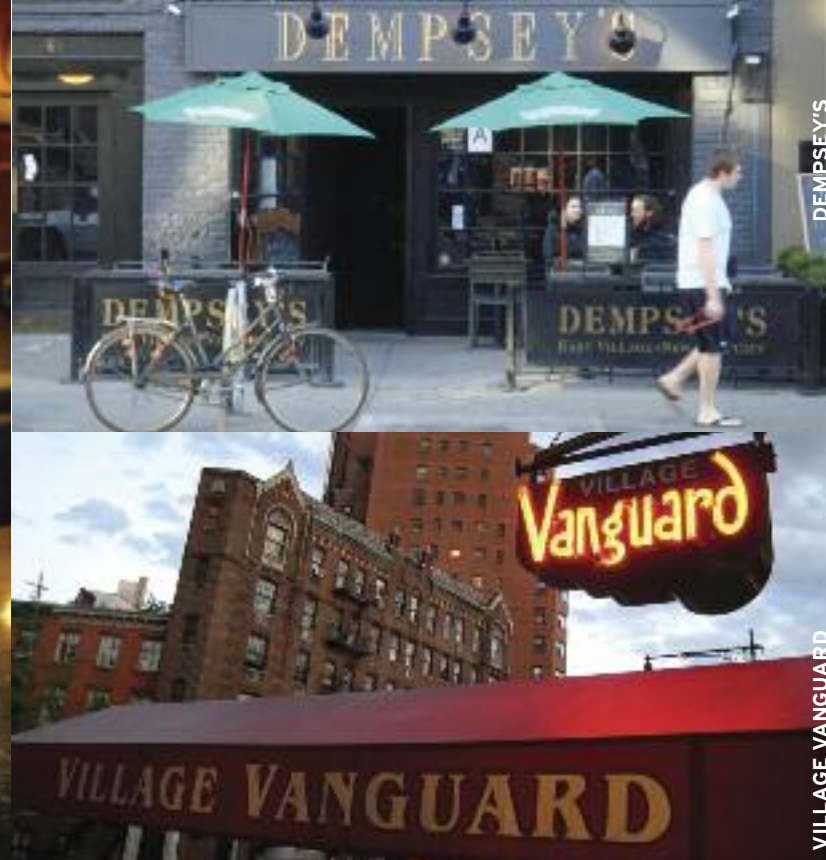
PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: COURTESY THE TRUST FOR GOVERNORS ISLAND; © JOHN CHANCE COTTI; COURTESY DEMPSEY’S; © SCOTT LENDER



GOVERNORS ISLAND



BROOKLYN FARMACY & SODA FOUNTAIN



DEMPSEY'S



VILLAGE VANGUARD

with whipped cream, caramel, and broken pretzels. No shop would be complete without a fizzy egg cream, and the Brooklyn Pharmacy puts its own spin on the classic with flavors like coffee, strawberry, and maple in autumn. The menu changes with the seasons, so this spring brings specials such as the cherry blossom shake and “Rhapsody in Blue”—fresh blueberry soda filled with black raspberry ice cream. For lunch, try the “Grumble, Grumble,” which gets you grilled cheese, soup, and an egg cream for less than 10 bucks.

513 HENRY STREET IN BROOKLYN, 718-522-6260; WWW.BROOKLYNFARMACY.BLOGSPOT.COM

ALL THAT JAZZ

“New York City is exceptional in that it has the greatest jazz clubs in the world,” says David Schroeder, director of jazz studies at Steinhardt. When he’s not teaching, Schroeder (STEINHARDT ’93) performs with his faculty ensemble Combo Nuvo at renowned venues such as the

Blue Note and Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola—the uptown, upscale Jazz at Lincoln Center nightclub that overlooks Central Park. For a more bohemian joint, he suggests Smalls, which is as intimate as its name implies. The downtown dive features up-and-coming musicians who jam all night long, and just \$10 buys admission to its after-hours sessions, which sometimes last until 8 AM.

But New York’s most legendary club, the **VILLAGE VANGUARD**, has been around since 1935 and is known as the genre’s mecca. “It’s the quintessential jazz club in the basement of an old building, and it has a totally unique acoustical sound,” Schroeder explains. In fact, the triangular-shaped room allows sound waves to reverberate and project out like an opera house, which is why more than a hundred jazz albums have been recorded there by icons such as John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, and Wynton Marsalis.

178 SEVENTH AVENUE SOUTH, 212-255-4037; WWW.VILLAGEVANGUARD.COM

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19)

chitecture historian Jean-Louis Cohen and the Frick Collection’s decorative arts curator, Charlotte Vignon, intended to peel back decades of history and survey the house’s former grandeur.

The stately limestone edifice, which stands at Fifth Avenue and East 78th Street, was built by Horace Trumbauer for James B. Duke, a tobacco tycoon whose substantial contribution to a college in Durham, North Carolina, prompted the college’s fourth name change to Duke University in 1924. Trumbauer and chief designer Julian Abele, one of the first prominent African-American architects, modeled Duke House after the Hôtel Labottière, an 18th-century mansion in Bordeaux, France.

Duke’s wife, Nanaline, and his daughter, Doris, donated the building to the IFA in 1958. Lat-

er that same year, the institute gave the now famous postmodern architect Robert Venturi his first commission: the renovation of Duke House. Venturi used a light touch, mounting the classroom furnishings—desks, bookcases, and the like—away from the walls, so as to leave the original paint, molding, and decorative flourishes undisturbed. Historian Ritter commends “this idea of modernizing [the space] for its new uses but also keeping the character of the old building.”

Venturi’s design will allow next fall’s seminar students to examine these modern additions alongside the original architecture. They will also learn about the furnishings and art collection once housed in the mansion before its donation. Professor Cohen explains: “Part of the idea is to reconstruct the house as it was in its age of splendor.” ■

The perfect home or pied-à-terre in Manhattan.



BUY, SELL or RENT through a company and agent you trust.

Dolly Hertz, NYU Alum
38 East 61 Street
New York, NY 10065
dolly.hertz@sothebyshomes.com
212.606.7601 office
914.646.1885 mobile
www.dollyhertz.com

Sotheby's
INTERNATIONAL REALTY

©MMVII Sotheby's International Realty Affiliates LLC. All Rights Reserved. Sotheby's International Realty is a licensed trademark to Sotheby's International Realty Affiliates LLC. An Equal Opportunity Company. Equal Housing Opportunity. Owned and Operated by Sotheby's International Realty, Inc.