Hyundai Terrace Commission: Marina Zurkow

The River is a Circle

Glossary

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Introduction

The Meatpacking District occupies a section of Lower Manhattan from West 14th Street south to Gansevoort Street, and from the Hudson River east to Hudson Street. In precolonial times, it was home to a Lenape trading post. During colonial occupation it was brought under cultivation and became farmland. Fort Gansevoort was built in 1812 in response to the looming war between the United States and Great Britain, but did not see action and was demolished several decades later. The area then became home to lively open-air markets selling local produce. The meatpacking industry that gives the neighborhood its name began developing in the early 1900s and was thriving by 1920. Eventually, a decline in the economy of New York City emptied the area of commercial activity but allowed it to become a nurturing ground for a variety of vibrant subcultures. After 9/11, the district was swept up in the gentrification that spread along the river's edges. The future is uncertain.

Tides

High Tide

Low Tide

Plants

Tobacco
An intoxicant, sometimes used in Indigenous ceremonies. Evidence of tobacco use in Northeastern America dates back to 2000 BCE.

Maize
Food staple, also known as corn. Originated in southern Mexico and gradually spread northward through trade networks and agricultural practices. Evidence of maize in the Northeast dates back to 290 BCE.

Wheat

Food staple. Wheat cultivation in New York began with Dutch and English settlers in the seventeenth century in the fertile soil of the Hudson Valley, along with regions in western New York. By the early eighteenth century, New York had become a major producer of wheat and flour, with New York City emerging as a key port for exporting these goods to Europe and the Caribbean.

Soya

Food staple. Native to East Asia and introduced to North America in 1764 by Samuel Bowen, a former employee of the Dutch East India Co. From the first crops planted in Georgia, Bowen patented soy sauce. Soy is now primarily grown in the Midwest, and the United States is number two in worldwide soybean production. In 2024, the national yield topped 118 million metric tons.

Coca

An intoxicant, derived from the leaves of coca plants (Erythroxylon coca, Inca: Kuka) indigenous to South America. It is used in Peru to combat altitude sickness. Large quantities of coca leaves were found in burial sites dating from 2500 BCE and are believed to have been used to assist the dead in the afterlife. It furnished the glamorized drug of choice for Americans in the 1970s and ’80s.

Cannabis

Cannabis is a genus of flowering plants known for its psychoactive and medicinal properties. Its primary active compounds are THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), which produces mind-altering effects, and CBD (cannabidiol), known for therapeutic benefits. Cannabis has been cultivated for centuries for various uses, including spiritual practices and the manufacture of textiles and rope. Today, it is widely used for both recreational and medicinal purposes, with its legal status varying across regions. In the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries, hemp, a variety of cannabis low in THC, was widely cultivated in the Northeast for its strong fibers.

Sorghum

Sorghum is a versatile, drought-tolerant grain crop originating in Africa. It's widely grown for food, animal feed, and biofuel production. Sorghum is rich in nutrients and naturally gluten-free, making it popular in gluten-free diets. In culinary use, it appears as whole grains, flour, or syrup. Sorghum is also valued for its resilience in arid climates, and for its potential to sequester carbon. It was introduced to the United States in the early nineteenth century, primarily through the transatlantic trade. It arrived via enslaved Africans, who brought knowledge of sorghum cultivation and its uses. It is often touted as a "food of the future" due to its resilience, nutritional value, and environmental benefits.

Seaweed

Seaweed is gaining recognition as a powerful resource for sustainable food systems in the United States, offering numerous environmental and nutritional benefits. Rich in essential nutrients and naturally high in protein, it's being incorporated into foods like snacks, seasonings, and meat alternatives. Seaweed farming requires no freshwater or fertilizer, making it a climate-resilient crop that also absorbs carbon and improves marine ecosystems. With growing interest in regenerative ocean farming, seaweed shows strong potential to enhance food security and reduce the environmental footprint of traditional agriculture.

Amaranth

An ancient grain with roots in Mesoamerican civilizations, amaranth is revered for its nutritional value and cultural significance. In the United States, amaranth gained renewed interest in the late twentieth century as part of the health food

movement. Rich in protein, fiber, and micronutrients like calcium and iron, amaranth is gluten-free and prized for its versatility. Its resilience in drought conditions has also sparked interest as a climate-adaptive crop.

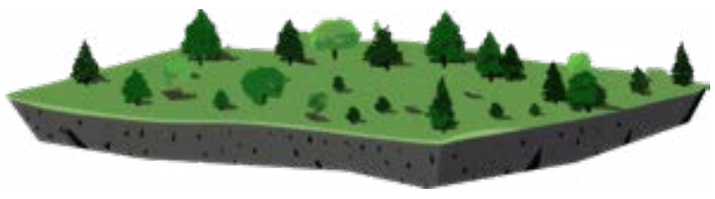
Psilocybe

“Magic Mushrooms” are an entheogen that was introduced to the United States by Gordon Wasson, an adventurous banker who met shaman Maria Sabena in Oaxaca, Mexico, and learned of the “little children” who help spiritual seekers connect to the ecosphere. Wasson wrote an essay for *Life Magazine* in order to raise public awareness of the mushroom’s transformative powers. It has recently been moving toward legalization and and is used in the treatment of terminal diseases and for end-of-life palliative care.

Lenape

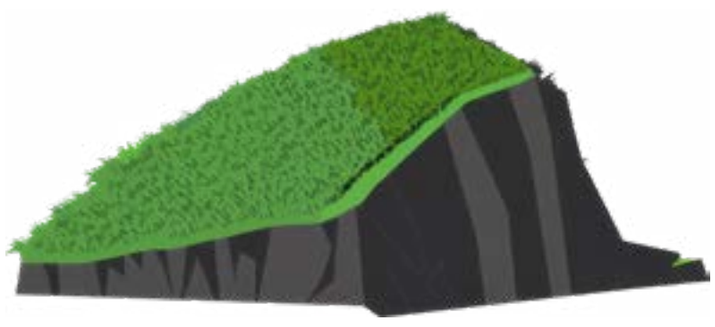
Beaver and Log
Beavers are considered a keystone species for their role as ecosystem engineers. They reorganize habitats to create wetlands that in turn alleviate flooding and improve water quality.

Deer
Deer provided meat, hides for clothing, bone for tools, and were centered in Lenape spiritual life, offered in tribute to the Keeper of the Game (Misinkhalikan, also known as Mesing'w, Masked Being).



An Island (1)

An Island (2)



An Island (3)

An Island (4)

Lenape Crops

Lenape gardens included corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, herbs, and some tobacco.

Lenape Village

Villages were semipermanent settlements (communities circulated with resource availability), containing multiple families. Estimates suggest there might have been around 15,000 Lenape people spread across approximately eighty settlement sites at the time of European contact.

The Pavonia Massacre (Kieft's War)

Pavonia (now Jersey City) is the

site of the 1643 massacre of Lenape people, enacted by Dutch West India Company governor Willem Kieft without the consent of his New Amsterdam council. Considered the first major act of violence by the Dutch colony against Indigenous communities, the attack set off three years of conflict and deserved retribution by other nations of the lower-Hudson Valley who rallied in support.

Turkeys

In Lenape culture, turkeys were considered a significant game bird, hunted for food. Their feathers were highly valued for decorating clothing. The three Lenape clans include the Turkey (Pële), alongside the Wolf (Tùkwsit), and Turtle (Pùkuwànku), indicating their importance to Lenape society.

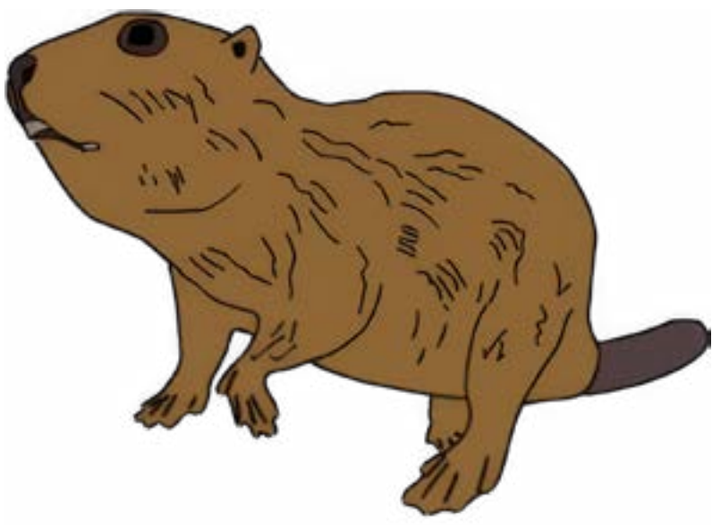
Wolf

Into the seventeenth century, Manhattan was home to wolves, black bears, and mountain lions. The island had more ecological communities per acre than Yellowstone at the time.

In addition to being a keystone species vital to its ecosystem balance, the Wolf (Tùkwsit) is also one of the Lenape clans.

Beaver (1)

In 1600, there were an estimated 1,000,000 beavers in Northern New York. Their pelts were a major trade item between the Indigenous peoples and European settlers and the economic basis of New Amsterdam. By 1890, there were none left (although the population has recently rebounded in the Bronx).



Beaver (2)

Colonial

Worker with Axe

Barrels

Beaver Hats (1)

To make felt hats, beaver skins were stripped of their outer guard hair and then combed, beaten, and dried. Depending on the quality of the hat, the size of the beaver pelts, and the richness of the felt, a single hat could require between one to five full-grown male pelts.

Bottle of Alcohol (1)
Alcohol was consumed by colonists and also used as coercive gifts in the trade negotiations with Indigenous nations.

Bottle of Alcohol (2)

Bottle of Alcohol (3)

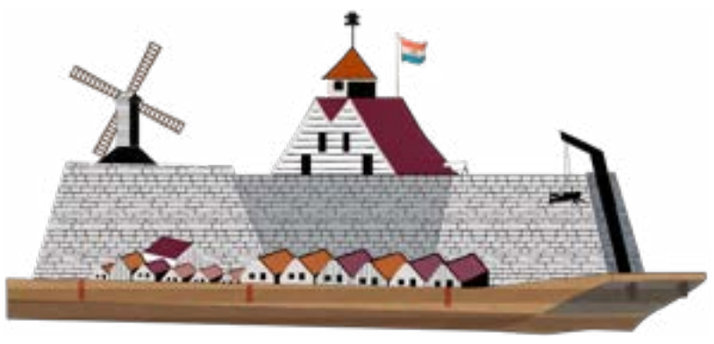
Bottle of Alcohol (4)

New Amsterdam Citizens
In its earliest settlement days, New Amsterdam possessed a complex mix of tolerance and subjugation: its society was

composed of free Black individuals, Jews, Catholics, and Protestants; but the Dutch West India Company, focused on infrastructure projects like building the fort and developing the colony, also practiced slavery.

Dugout Boat

Boat with Dutch Guard and Enslaved People



Fort Amsterdam
Built in 1625 by the Dutch West India Company, Fort Amsterdam was established at Manhattan Island's southern tip. Beyond its role as a military bastion and a symbol of Dutch authority, the fort was central to the colony's governance and judicial system. Note the man hanging from the gallows.

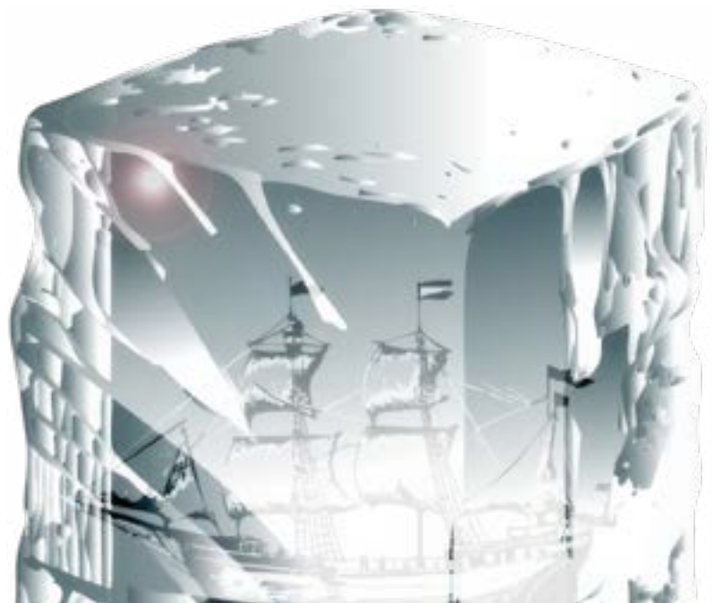
Dutch Guard and Enslaved Women

The Half Moon

This ship—the Halve Maen—was captained by Henry Hudson, who in the employ of the Dutch East India Company, sailed into what is now the New York Harbor in 1609.

A Ship Encased in an Ice Cube (1)

A Ship Encased in an Ice Cube (2)



A Ship Encased in an Ice Cube (3)

A Ship Encased in an Ice Cube (4)

A Ship Encased in an Ice Cube (5)

A Ship Encased in an Ice Cube (6)

A Ship Encased in an Ice Cube (7)

A Log (1)

A Log (2)

A Log (3)

A Log (4)

A Log (5)

A Log (6)

Slave Ship

This image of a ship holding enslaved people destined for the Americas bears a banner: “Am I not a man and a brother?” This was the seal created by Josiah Wedgwood in 1787 for the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade; the image became a widely recognized symbol of the British abolitionist movement and was used on medallions, pamphlets, and other materials to rally public support for ending slavery.

European Tobacco Smoker

Image based on one of the earliest woodcut illustrations of smoking, from 1616.

Tavern Scene

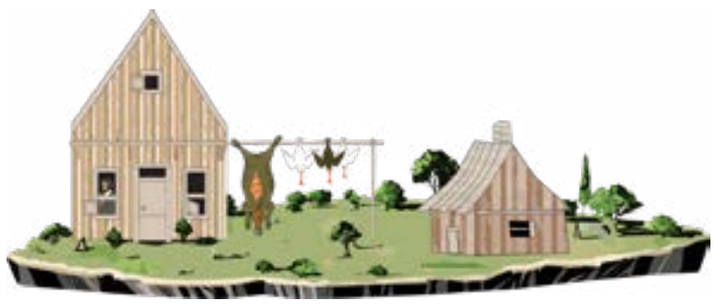
This image draws from Flemish genre painting, evoking the bawdy, chaotic energy of artists like Pieter Bruegel and Jan Steen. The lively tavern scene, with its mix of exposed flesh, playful gestures, and a multiracial

cast, reflects New Amsterdam's unique social fabric—a space of indulgence, irreverence, and relative tolerance.

Tobacco Shed
New Amsterdam played a key role in the tobacco trade, serving as a hub where tobacco from New Netherland and other North American colonies was gathered, traded, and shipped to European markets. This thriving exchange contributed significantly to the colony's economy and its connections to global trade networks.

Tobacco Worker
Tobacco production and trade in New Amsterdam relied on a diverse labor force that included white settlers, free Black workers, and enslaved people. This mixed workforce reflects the colony's complex social structure, where economic demands intersected with systems of both freedom and bondage.

Tobacco Workers



The Houses of Asser Levy and Anthony Janszoon van Salee

Levy, a Sephardic Jew, won the legal right for Jews to own property and is thought to be the first Kosher butcher in the “New World.” Van Salee was known as “The Turk;” his father was a Dutch pirate, who converted to Islam (“turned Turk”) and his mother a Morisco woman in Spain. He was a landholder, merchant, and scoundrel, and married to Grietje Reyniers, “the first prostitute in New Amsterdam.”

Person Tending Fire

19th Century

Cow Barge

Cattle were transported from New Jersey to slaughterhouses all along the Hudson River.

Henry Clay Steamship

On July 28, 1852—seven years after The Swallow catastrophe—the Henry Clay set off in a race against the Armenia from Albany to New York City. Just miles from its destination, a fire erupted from the engine, leading to what was the worst steamship disaster on the Hudson. This tragedy ultimately paved the way for reforms and stricter regulations in the shipping industry. Link

Gansevoort Market

Officially opened in 1884, Gansevoort Market was a vast open-air farmers' market located on the site of the former Fort Gansevoort. Initially a hub for produce, it quickly expanded, and within a few years, the West Washington Market was built across from it, specializing in meat, poultry, and dairy.

The Swallow Steamship

From 1836 until its demise in 1845, The Swallow was a luxury steamship that ran overnight between Albany and New York City. Touted as the fastest boat of its time, it could reach speeds exceeding seventeen miles per hour. To gain publicity, The Swallow frequently engaged in informal races against rival steamships, despite such competitions being outlawed for their significant danger. On April 7, 1845, during its journey from Albany to New York City, The Swallow struck a rock near Athens and sank in a catastrophe that killed upwards of forty people. Link

1970s

AIDS

AIDS Clinic

When AIDS devastated queer communities in the 1980s, many were abandoned by friends and family, left to face the illness alone. In small community clinics, compassionate doctors and nurses stepped in, offering dignity and care as the broader healthcare system ignored them. Black communities were hit especially hard, making up thirty percent of cases despite being only twelve percent of the population. The documentary *One Foot on a Banana Peel, One Foot in the Grave*, directed by Juan Botas, captures his daily experience of receiving IV

treatment with others brought together by the illness. As they share profound and mundane stories about their lives, they invent new ways of coping with life and death.

Boat with ACT UP Flag

The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) is an international grassroots organization formed in the West Village in 1987 in response to the inaction and slow response of the United States government and pharmaceutical companies to the AIDS pandemic. Through direct action, marches, and protests, the group advocated for more experimental drugs, lower costs, and an end to the stigma surrounding AIDS. Iconic actions included members chaining themselves inside the stock exchange to protest the high cost of the only approved drug, AZT, and staging protests outside *Cosmopolitan* magazine for spreading misleading information about HIV transmission.

Bottles

Liquor Bottle (1)

Liquor Bottle (2)

Butchers

Meatpackers (1)

In the twentieth century, the city-owned land that housed the open-air market at Gansevoort Street evolved into a hub for New York City's meatpacking industry. As demand for meat distribution grew, the area became home to specialized butchers, meatpackers, cold storage facilities, and slaughterhouses. These businesses played a crucial role in supplying fresh and processed meat to

restaurants, grocery stores, and markets throughout the city. The neighborhood's gritty, industrial character was defined by the constant movement of workers in blood-stained aprons, the hum of refrigerated trucks, and the distinct scent of raw meat. This period cemented Gansevoort's identity as a vital link in New York's food supply chain, blending labor, commerce, and urban industry.

Meatpackers (2)
New York City faced a severe fiscal crisis in the mid-1970s, reaching the brink of bankruptcy in 1975. This economic downturn had a significant impact on neighborhoods like the Meatpacking District. As city services faltered and crime rates rose, the area experienced increased neglect and decay. Many meatpacking businesses were already struggling due to industry shifts—improvements in refrigeration and transportation allowed meat distribution to consolidate outside Manhattan.

Meatpackers (3)

In the 1970s and ’80s, many of the neighborhood’s warehouses and industrial spaces were abandoned or fell into disrepair. The district became known for its gritty, marginal character, attracting underground communities. The abandoned piers and warehouses became informal gathering spaces for artists, queer communities, and sex workers. The lack of oversight and enforcement during the city’s financial crisis allowed these countercultural movements to thrive in the area’s overlooked spaces.

Meatpackers (4)

Meatpackers (5)

Meatpackers (6)

Establishments

The Mineshaft

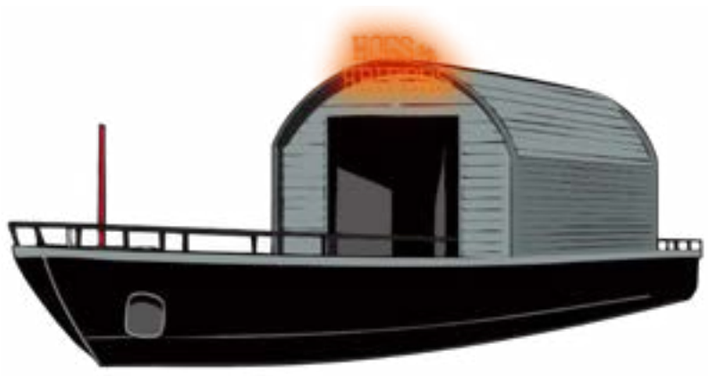
A legendary gay leather and BDSM club that operated from

1976 to 1985. Located at 835 Washington Street, the Mineshaft was known for its strict dress code—emphasizing leather, denim, uniforms, and fetish gear—and its no-frills, gritty interior. It catered to a hardcore crowd, and gained a reputation for its intense, sexually charged atmosphere, with multiple floors dedicated to cruising, BDSM play, and other intimate encounters. Unlike some nightlife spaces of the era, the Mineshaft maintained a no-drugs policy, focusing instead on physical connection and subculture authenticity. The Mineshaft was depicted in the controversial film *Cruising* (1980) directed by William Friedkin and starring Al Pacino, which garnered protests and praise for its representation of the gay community. A year later, the first cases of AIDS were reported in New York, which would cast a pall over the area as a destination for unbridled sexual behavior.

The Hellfire Club
The Hellfire Club catered to a

diverse crowd, including members of the LGBTQ+ community, fetish enthusiasts, artists, and nightlife adventurers. Known for its anything-goes atmosphere, the club was both a social space and a performance site where sexual expression, kink, and power dynamics were explored openly.

Drag Show
Drag queen luminaries were key figures in the flourishing underground performance scene.



Hogs & Heifers (Bar)
Hogs & Heifers was a rowdy dive bar that opened in 1992. Famous for its unapologetically brash atmosphere, the bar attracted a mix of locals, bikers, and celebrities. Bartenders famously danced on the bar, shouting into megaphones and encouraging patrons to leave behind their bras—which soon became part of the bar's infamous decor.

Manhole (Club)
A well-known gay bar and cruising spot in the 1970s and '80s.

Club

Discotheque

Crisco Disco

A gay disco in New York City, active during the late 1970s and early ’80s. It was known for its flamboyant, high-energy atmosphere and iconic decor—notably, a DJ booth made from a giant Crisco shortening can, a playful nod to Crisco’s use as a popular lubricant.

Florent

In 1985, Florent Morellet, a restaurateur, launched a 24-hour eatery called Florent in the former R & L Restaurant at 69 Gansevoort Street. The diner quickly became a hub for the LGBTQ+ community and downtown’s nightlife scene, attracting crowds with its energetic vibe and abundant drinks (and other substances). Morellet, known for his drag appearances and outspoken activism, notably displayed his T-cell count alongside the

restaurant's daily specials as part of his AIDS awareness efforts. He was also a driving force behind the establishment of the Gansevoort Market Historic District in 2003. Rising property costs ultimately led to Florent's closure in 2008.

The Liberty Inn
Operating from 1969 to 2023, The Liberty Inn was a notorious "hot sheet" motel on 14th Street, offering hourly rates. It shared space with The Anvil, a gay nightclub that occupied the building's ground floor during the 1970s and early '80s. Despite the neighborhood's transformation, The Liberty Inn maintained its distinct identity as a "Love Motel" for decades.

J's Bar and Grill,
Little Flatiron Building J's Bar was a well-known gay bar located in the Little Flatiron Building at the intersection of 14th Street, Ninth Avenue, and Hudson Street.

The Piers

The Piers (1)

The abandoned piers in the Meatpacking District became well-known cruising spots and a refuge for gay and trans sex workers, especially as police raids targeted nearby queer bars. These piers also attracted artists like David Wojnarowicz, Keith Haring, and Gordon Matta-Clark, who transformed the decaying structures with artworks that engaged with the space's social and cultural dynamics.

The Piers (2)

The Piers (3)

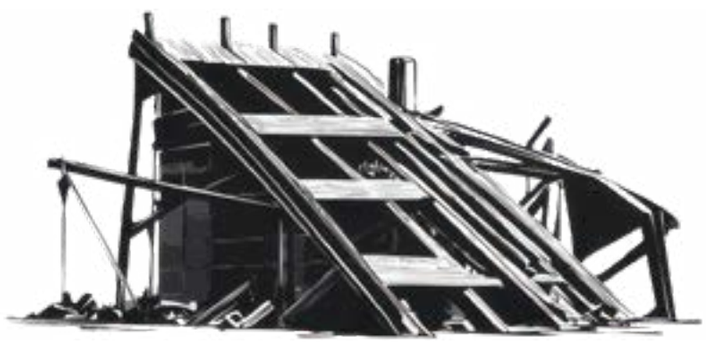
The Piers (4)

The Piers (5)

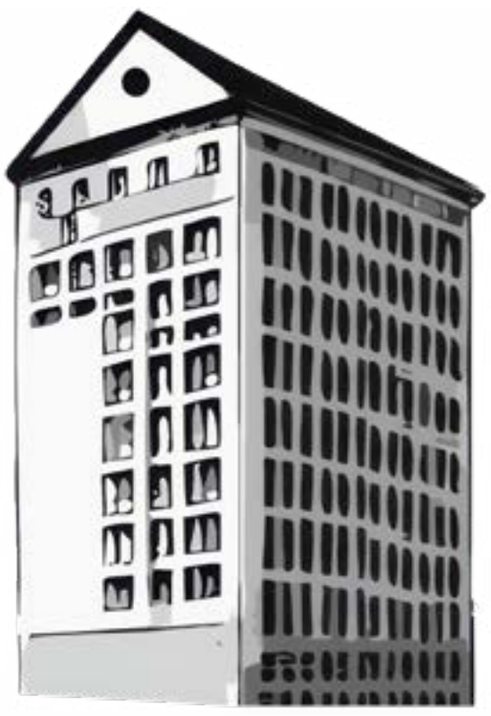
(featuring Keith Haring graphic)

The Piers (6)

The Piers (7)



The Piers (8)



The Piers (9)

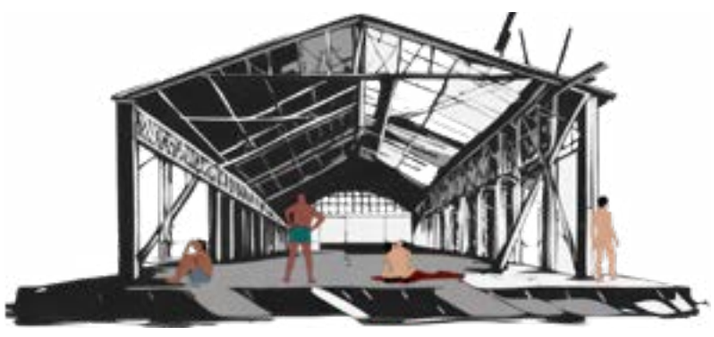
The Piers (10)

The Piers (11)

The Piers (12)

The Piers (13)

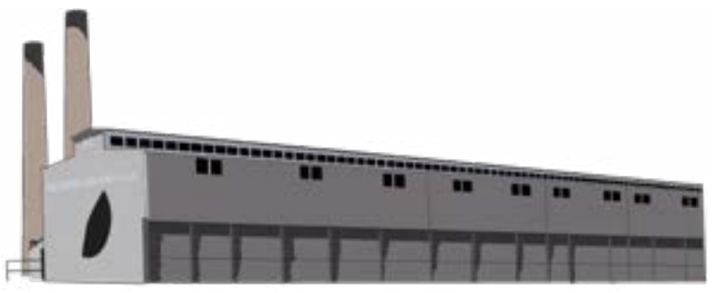
The Piers (14)
(featuring David Wojnarowicz graphic)



The Piers (15)

The Piers (16)

The Piers (17)



Day's End (Gordon Matta-Clark)
Artist Gordon Matta-Clark's *Day's End* (1975) was a site-specific intervention created at Pier 52. Matta-Clark cut massive geometric openings into the abandoned pier's walls and roof, transforming the abandoned industrial structure into a dramatic exploration of light, space, and environment. The altered building became a kind of open-air cathedral, where sunlight filtered through the cut-outs, creating dynamic patterns that changed throughout the day. *Day's End* not only

reimagined the decaying waterfront as a site of beauty and reflection but also challenged notions of public space, property, and artistic intervention. The project was unauthorized and eventually dismantled.

The Village People (1)

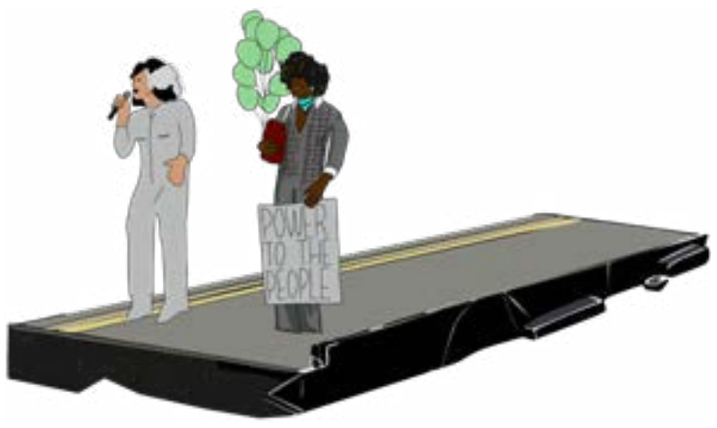
The Village People are a disco group formed in the late 1970s, known for their infectious anthems, flamboyant costumes, and over-the-top macho personas. With hits like “Y.M.C.A.,” “Macho Man,” and “In the Navy,” they became icons of both the disco era and LGBTQ+ culture. Their name pays homage to Greenwich Village, a historic hub for queer life and counterculture in New York City. Decades later, their music remains a staple at parties, pride celebrations, and sporting events worldwide.

The Village People (2)

Chunk of Highway

In 1973, a section of the West Side Highway dramatically collapsed under the weight of a truck near Gansevoort Street, marking the beginning of its gradual closure. By the mid-1970s, much of the highway had been abandoned, creating a strange, desolate landscape. The disrepair mirrored the broader struggles of New York City during its fiscal crisis, yet also fostered creative expression and marginalized communities who claimed these forgotten spaces as their own. This area became an epicenter for predominantly trans sex workers, known as “The Stroll.” A film about its history was released in 2023, directed by trans activists Kristen Lovell and Zackary Drucker.

Car and Sex Workers (1)

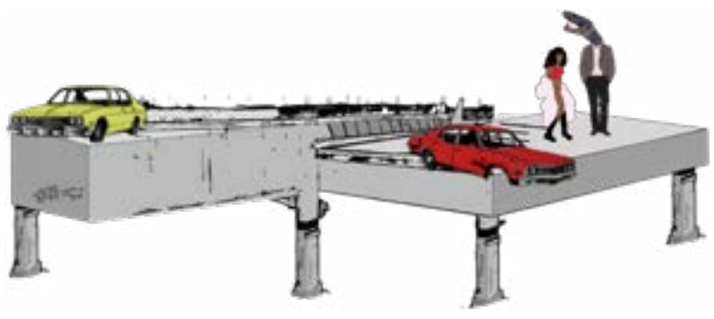


Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson

Sylvia Rivera (1951–2002) and Marsha P. Johnson (1945–1992) were trailblazing LGBTQ+ activists, recognized for their involvement in the Stonewall Riots and for founding Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR), an organization dedicated to supporting homeless and marginalized transgender people. Johnson died under suspicious circumstances at the age of 46 and is remembered in Andy Warhol's *Ladies and Gentlemen*. Rivera identified as a drag queen and viewed the fight for LGBTQ rights as a revolutionary cause. Her activism was shaped by her own experiences with homelessness, sex work, and substance abuse.

Car and Sex Worker (2)

Empty Building



Sex Worker and Customer
In an interview, *The Stroll* director Kristin Lovell described the men ("dates") as villainous and creepy—as snakes, or wearing ski masks.

The World Trade Center

World Trade Center (1)
The original World Trade Center (1973–2001), designed by Minoru Yamasaki, was an icon of New York, signifying its financial prowess (even as the city went bankrupt the year after its opening). It was destroyed in the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and 2,753 people died in the Twin Towers.

World Trade Center (2)

Gentrification

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, as gentrification accelerated, developers and city planners began reimagining the area. Many of the historic meatpacking buildings were converted into trendy restaurants, boutiques, and luxury residences. The opening of the High Line—an elevated park built on a disused railway track—further transformed the neighborhood into a fashionable destination, blending its industrial past with contemporary culture.

Drones

Big Drone

In December 2024, mysterious drones flying from New Jersey along the Hudson made headlines, prompting local and federal investigations. No breakthroughs have occurred thus far.

Drone (1)

Drone with Camera

Drone with Package

Drone (2)

Drone (3)

Drone (4)

Drone (5)

Monuments

Monument to the Extinct Beavers of NYC

New York once teemed with beavers; now we build gleaming monuments to the animals we

extirpated—a gesture steeped in guilt, grief, and longing. But no polished metal effigy can restore what's lost. Instead, it invites us to linger in remorse, not repair.

Statue of Liberty

The Statue of Liberty, a towering symbol of freedom and democracy, has stood in New York Harbor since 1886. A gift from France, the neoclassical sculpture by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi features Lady Liberty holding a torch high, welcoming immigrants and visitors with its iconic inscription: "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Monument to the Extinct Mammoths of NY

Fossil evidence, including bones and teeth confirm the presence of mammoths during the Ice Age in parts of what is now New York. They were part of the larger

megafauna that thrived in North America during the Pleistocene epoch. Their extinction was due to a combination of factors, including human overhunting, environmental changes, and habitat loss at the end of the Ice Age.

Monument to the Raccoon
Raccoons can be found throughout New York City, as they are a common and adaptable species that can thrive in urban environments.

Monument to the Turkey
There are now turkeys on Staten Island. In 1999, a woman released nine pet turkeys at the South Beach Psychiatric Center and the population has grown to the hundreds. The turkeys are beloved nuisances to traffic.

Monument to the Walrus
According to Woods Hole, walrus fossils were recovered from near the Holland Tunnel. Ancient walrus occupied a wide geographic area during the ice age that preceded the formation

of the Hudson River 13,000 years ago.

Monument to the Wolf (1)

Monument to the Wolf (2)

Monument to the World Trade Center

A nod to the memorial for the World Trade Center's Twin Towers, *Tribute in Light* was conceived by artists John Bennett, Gustavo Bonevardi, Richard Nash Gould, Julian LaVerdiere, and Paul Myoda, and lighting consultant Paul Marantz. It is illuminated yearly on September 11 from dusk to dawn. The eighty-eight xenon spotlights that comprise the two powerful beams cause considerable confusion

for migratory birds, who pass through NYC in large numbers in September. The NYC Bird Alliance monitors this, and when the threshold of migratory birds reaches 1,000, the installation is turned off for twenty minutes to allow migrating birds to regain their bearings.

Bottles

Pill Bottle (1)

By 2001, awareness of pharmaceutical pollution in waterways was growing. Studies in the late 1990s and early 2000s began to reveal that trace amounts of prescription drugs, including antibiotics, antidepressants, hormones, and painkillers, were accumulating in rivers, lakes, and municipal water supplies—largely resulting from urine, as well as improper disposal of medications.

Pill Bottle (2)

Pill Bottle (3)

Apartment Buildings

Apartment Building
Luxury buildings featuring expansive views, exclusive amenities, and steep price tags. This shift dramatically altered the character of the neighborhood, pushing out many long-standing businesses, artists, and working-class communities that once defined the area.

Apartment Building (1)

Apartment Building (2)

Apartment Building (3)

Apartment Building (4)

Apartment Building (5)

Apartment Building (6)

Apartment Building (7)

Apartment Building (8)

Apartment Building (9)

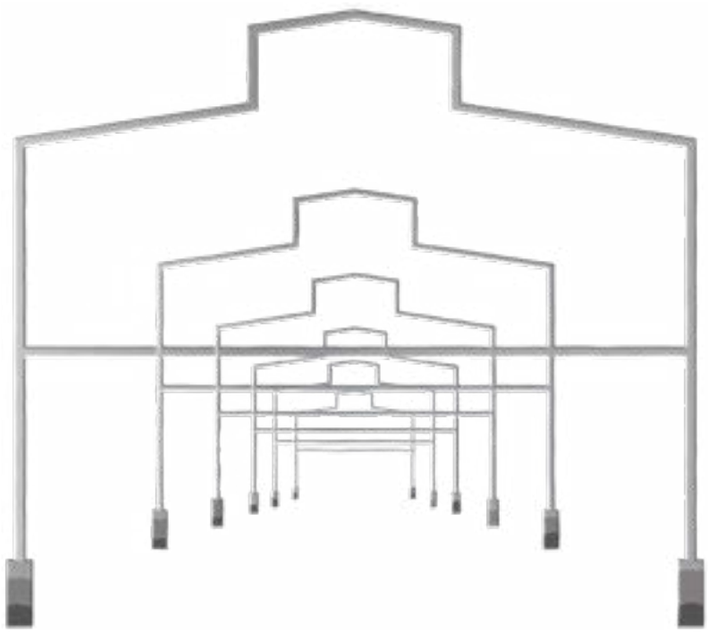
Apartment Building (10)

Apartment Building (11)

Apartment Building (12)

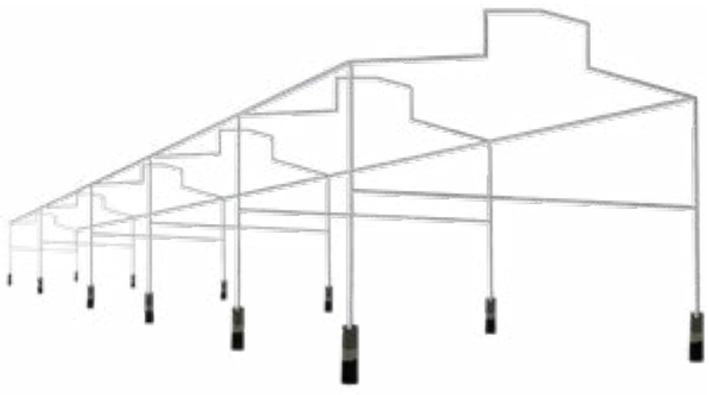
Apartment Building (13)

Public Spaces



David Hammons, Day's End (1)
David Hammons's *Day's End* (2021) is a monumental public sculpture on the Hudson River, paying homage to Gordon Matta-Clark's 1975 artwork of the same name. The skeletal structure precisely traces the outline of the former Pier 52

shed, evoking the industrial past while reflecting on absence, transformation, and the shifting relationship between the city and its waterfront. Though made in collaboration with the Whitney, *Day's End* is located on public land—belonging to everyone and owned by no one. A suspended paradox, its ghostly frame interacts with light and space, transforming the ever-changing urban landscape.



David Hammons, Day's End (2)

The High Line
Opened in 2009 (with subsequent extensions in 2011 and 2014)

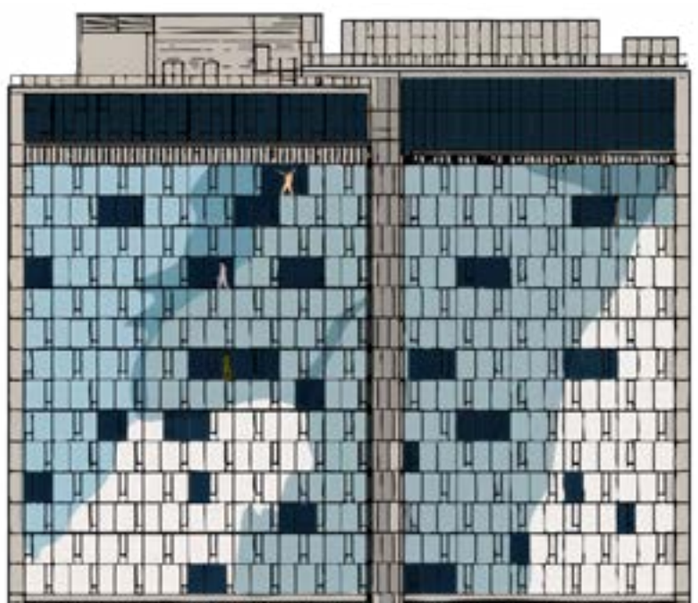
Commercial Enterprises

Gucci
The building that now contains the Gucci store in New York's Meatpacking District was once the site of Lee Brewster's Boutique, a significant space in LGBTQ+ history. Brewster,

a prominent drag queen and activist, ran the boutique as a haven for gender-nonconforming individuals, selling clothing and accessories designed for drag performers and trans customers at a time when such resources were rare.

Hermès
Opened in 2019

Apple Store
Opened in 2007

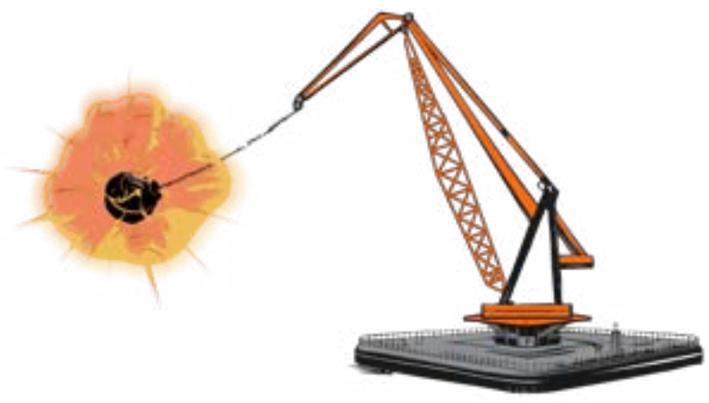


The Standard Hotel
Opened in 2009

Little Flatiron Building
Constructed in 1882 and now home to a restaurant and apartments. Originally a four-story factory for the Herring Safe & Lock Company.
By the 1970s several notable

gay clubs occupied the ground and basement floors: J's Hangout, The Hellfire Club, and the Manhole.

The Wrecking Ball



Wrecking Ball (1)

Futures

Administrative Buildings

Administrative Building (1)

Administrative Building (2)

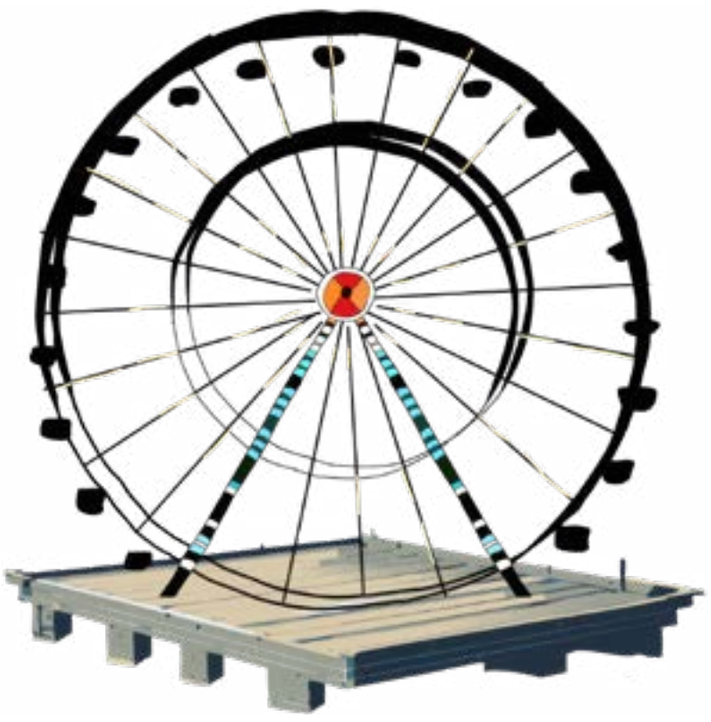
Administrative Building (3)

Administrative Building (4)

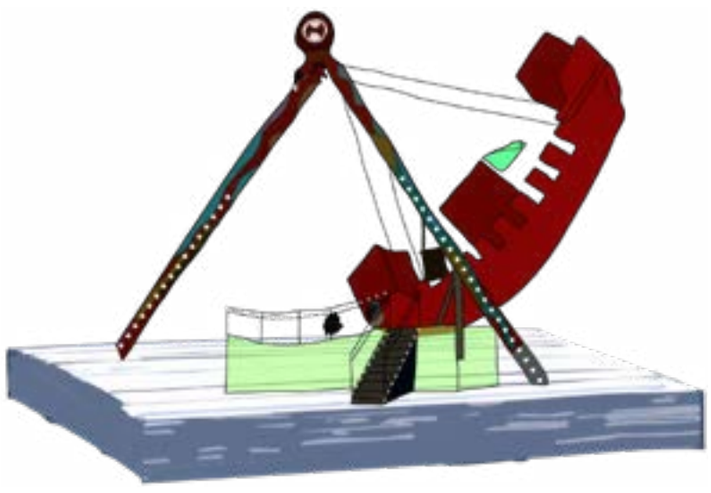
Public Pleasure

Dancers on Raft

Carousel



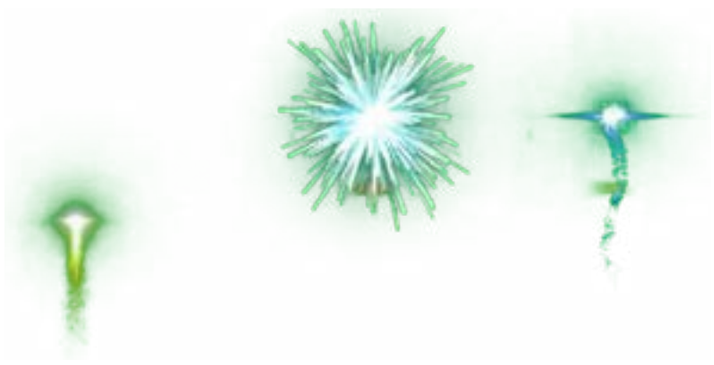
Ferris Wheel



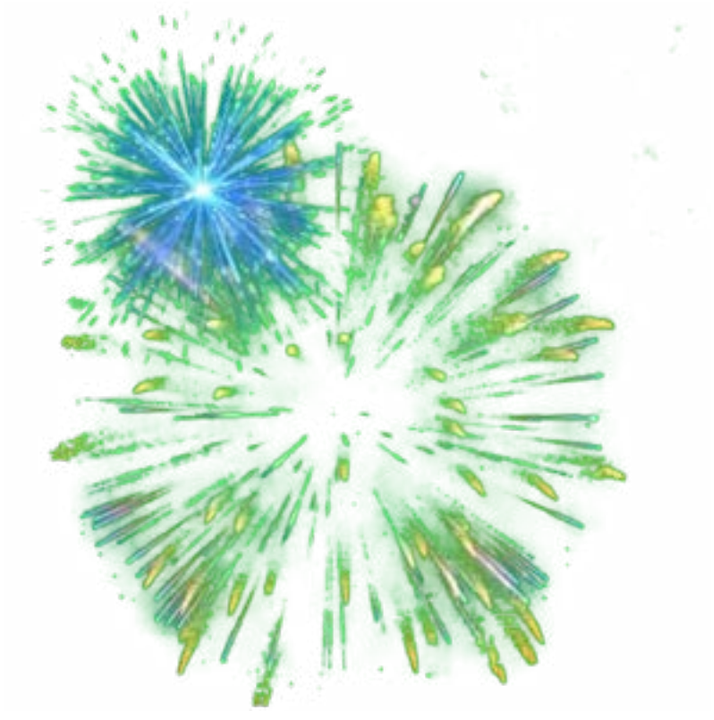
Swinging Ship Ride

High Striker

Dancing Robot



Fireworks (1)



Fireworks (2)

Dancers on a Raft

Future Temple

This “future temple” is a tribute to floating log churches—improvised places of worship, often constructed on barges or rafts, that appeared in North American frontier regions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These makeshift churches, built from rough-hewn logs, provided mobile spaces for religious gatherings, particularly in areas where settlers, traders, or loggers frequently moved along river systems.

Trapeze Artist on a Barge Crane

Arks

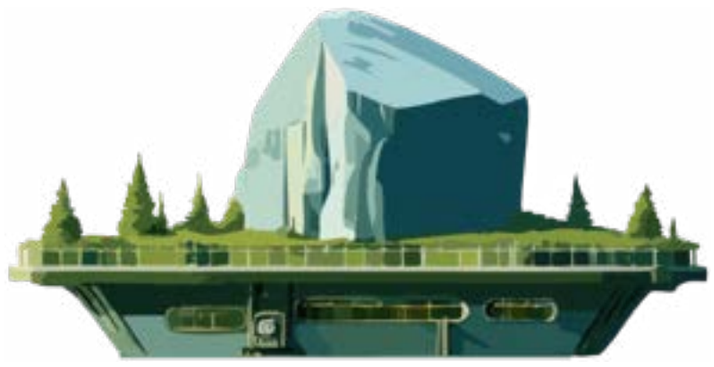
Ice Ark (1)
An ark designed to preserve a piece of a glacier.

Ice Ark (2)

Ice Ark (3)
Ark with walrus.

Ice Ark (4)

Ice Ark (5)



Ice Ark (6)

Ice Ark (7)

Ice Ark (8)

Rainforest Ark (1)
An ark designed to preserve a piece of rainforest and its inhabitants.

Rainforest Ark (2)

Rainforest Ark (3)

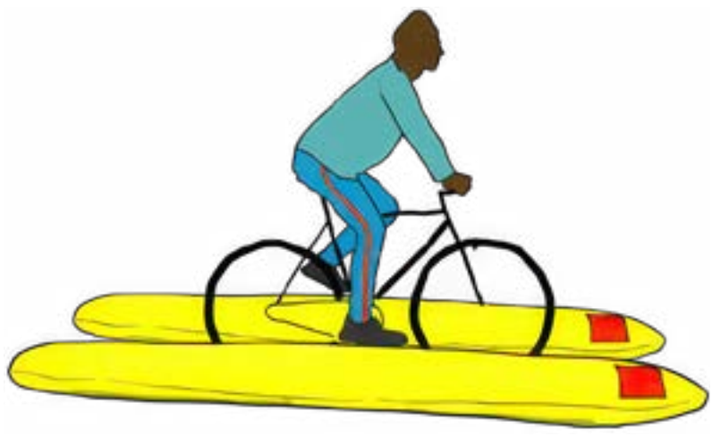
Rainforest Ark (4)

Rainforest Ark (5)

Rainforest Ark (6)

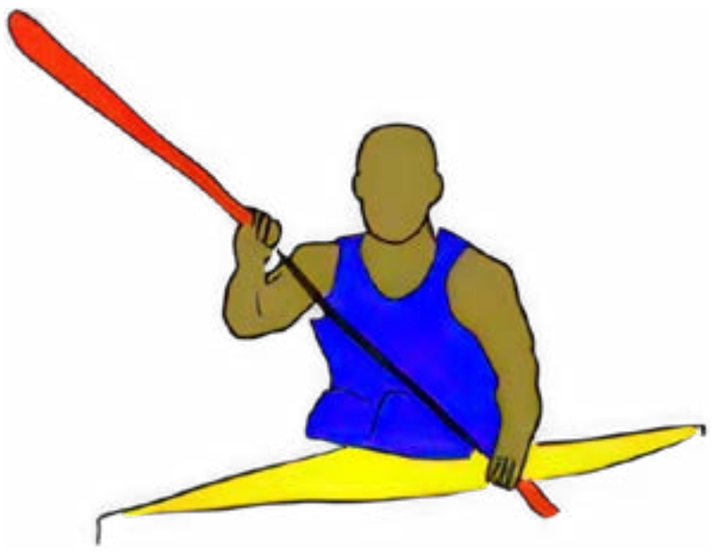
The Future is Lenape
A portrait of Joe Baker, Co-founder & Executive Director of the Lenape Center in Lenapehoking (the traditional lands of the Lenape, including Manhattan). He is an enrolled member of the Delaware Tribe of Indians (the European settlers' name for the Lenape).

Small Craft



Bike-Powered Boat

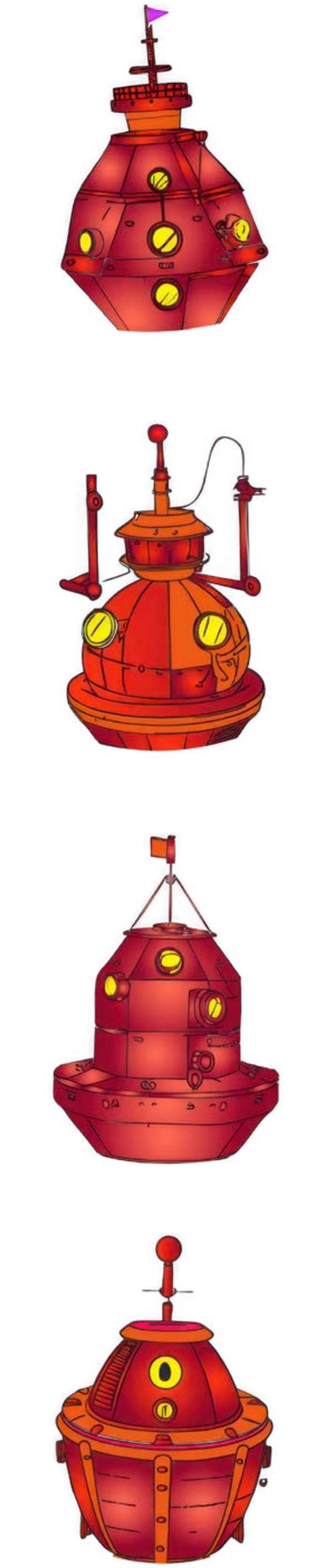
Swan Boat



Kayak

Rowboat

Buoys and Sensors

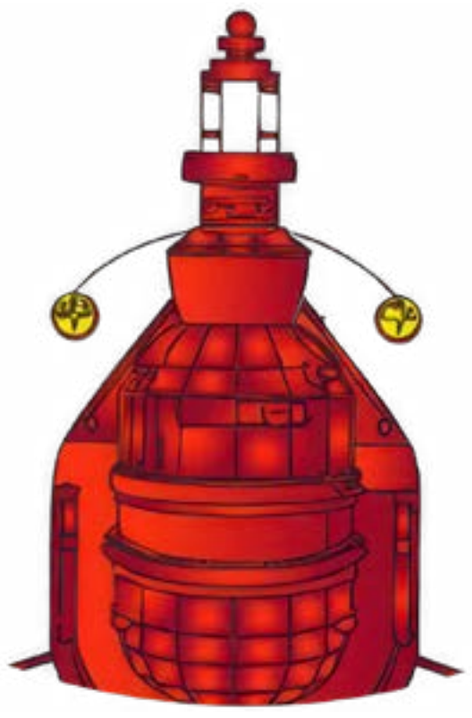


Buoy (1)

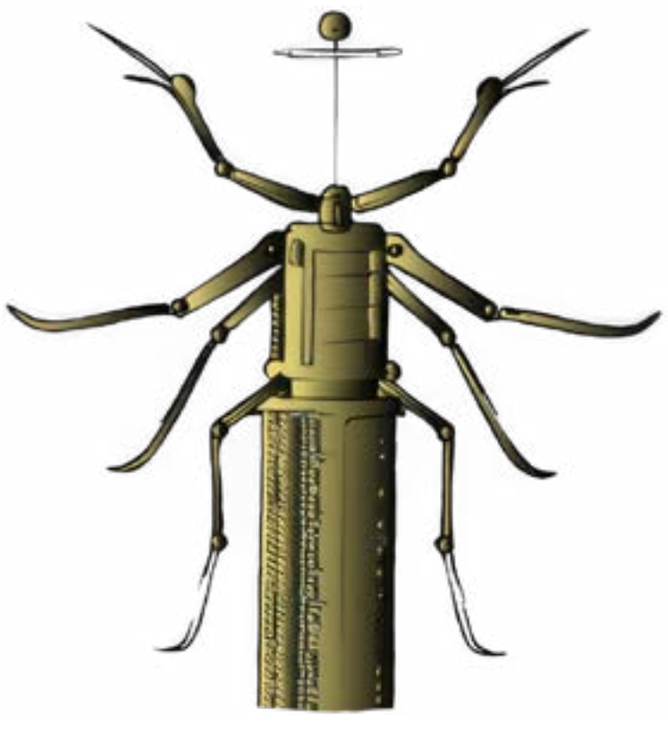
Buoy (2)

Buoy (3)

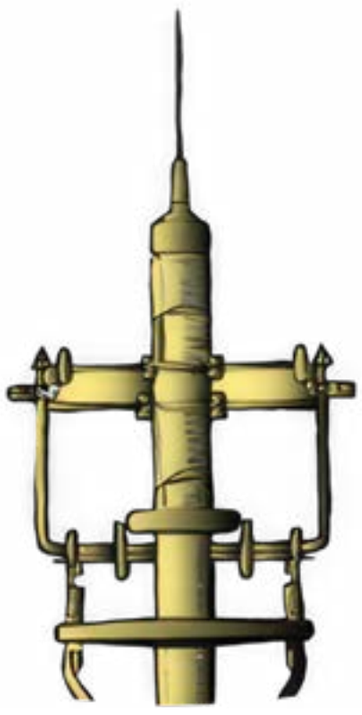
Buoy (4)



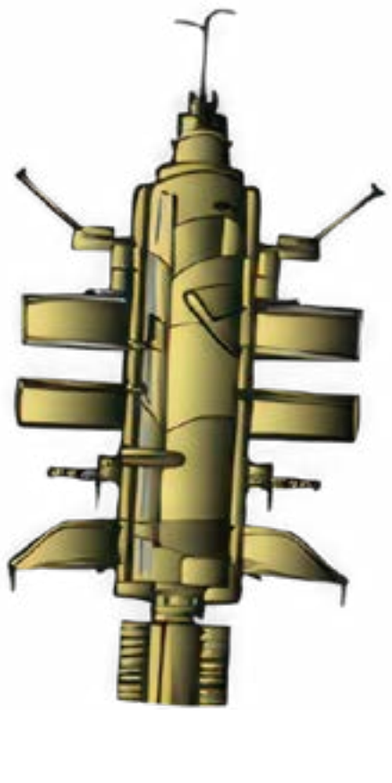
Buoy (5)



Water sensor (1)

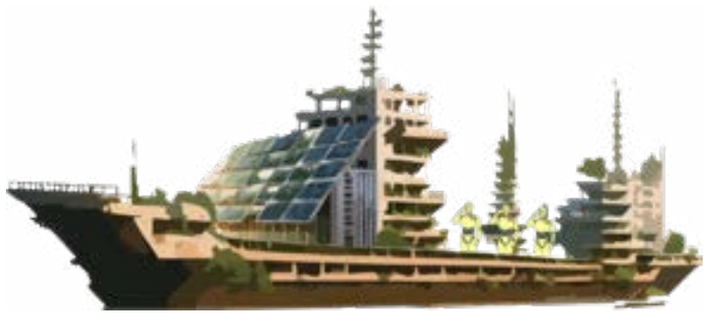


Water sensor (2)

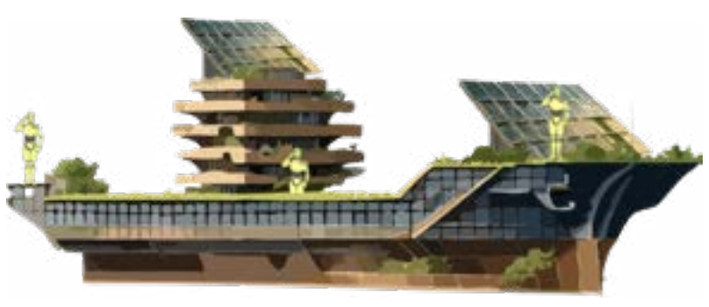


Water sensor (3)

Private Spaces



Gated Apartment Complex (1)
Robotic guards protect a rusting apartment compound.



Gated Apartment Complex (2)
Robotic guards protect a rusting apartment compound.

Gated Apartment Complex (3)
Robotic guards protect a rusting apartment compound.

Gated Apartment Complex (4)
Robotic guards protect a rusting apartment compound.

Gated Apartment Complex (5)
Robotic guards protect a rusting apartment compound.

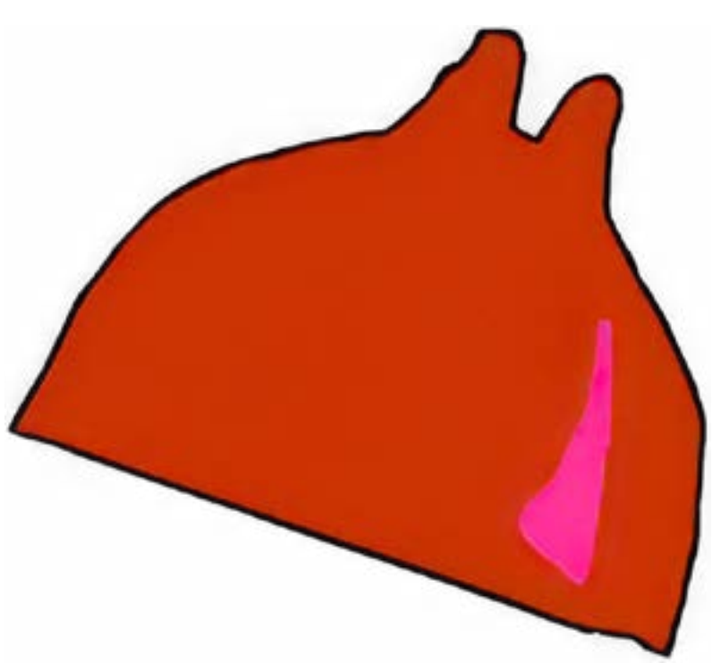
Armed Guard in Red Dinghy
Private hire security detail protects property.

Woman on Laptop Floating in Inner Tube

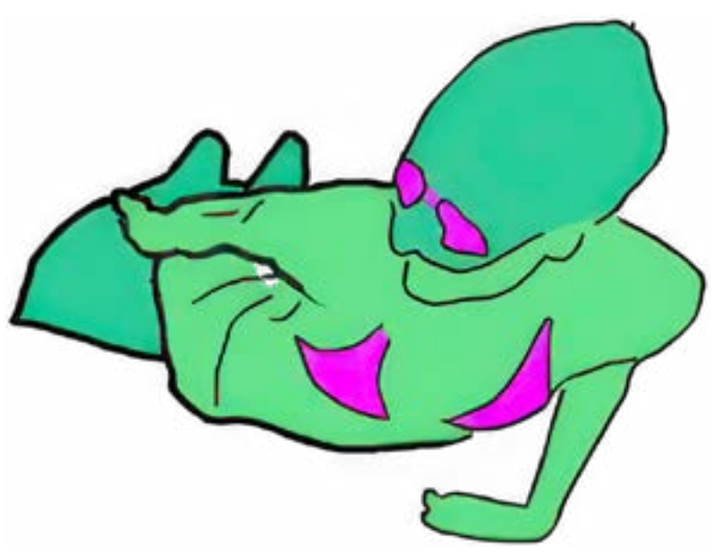
E-Waste Scavenger

Divers

Free Diver (1)



Free Diver (2)



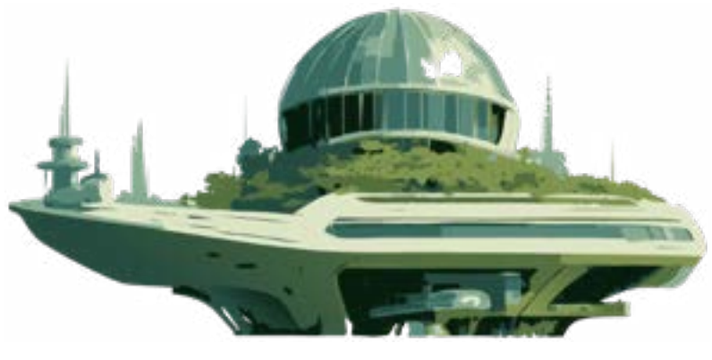
Free Diver (3)

Free Diver (4)

Private Spaces

Dome House (1)

Dome House (2)



Dome House (3)

Dome House (4)

Dome House (5)

Dome House (6)

Cooling Units

Cooling Barge (1)
A barge mounted with giant fans for cooling the air.

Cooling Barge (2)

A barge mounted with giant fans for cooling the air.

Grassy Patches

Grass Patch with Dead Tree and Beaver

Grass Patch with Dead Tree and Monkeys

Grass Patch with Cow

Grass Patch with Cows Little

Tiny Islands

Island with Tents (1)

Little Island with Trees (1)

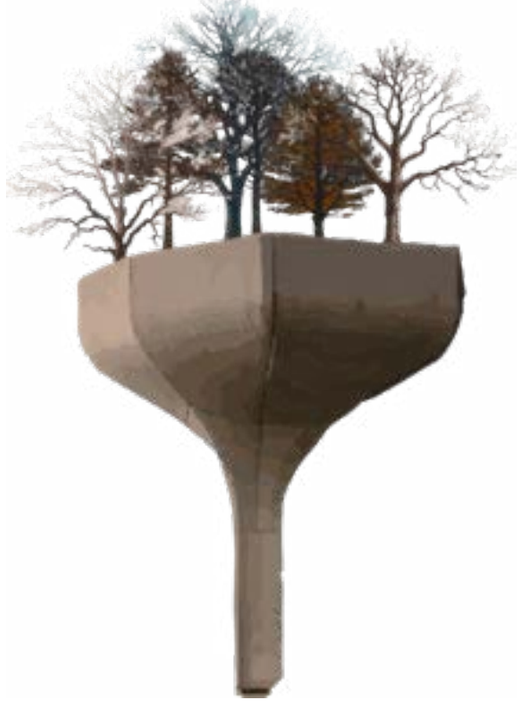
Little Island with Tent (1)

Little Island with Tent (2)

Little Island with Tent (3)

Little Island with Tent (4)

Little Island with Tents (2)

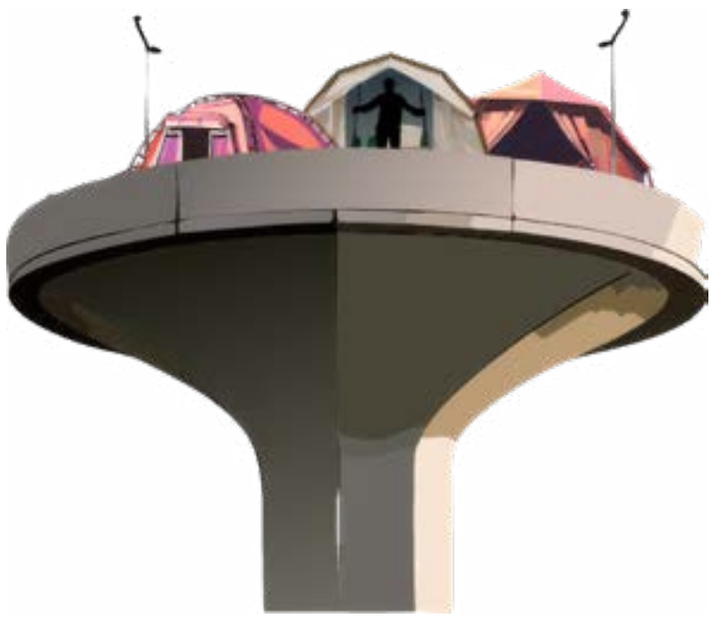


Little Island with Trees (2)

Little Island with Tent (5)

Little Island with Tent (6)

Little Island with Pyre



Little Island with Tents (3)

Little Island with Tent (7)

Little Island with Tent (8)

Mansions

Mansion (1)

Mansion (2)

Mansion (3)

Mansion (4)

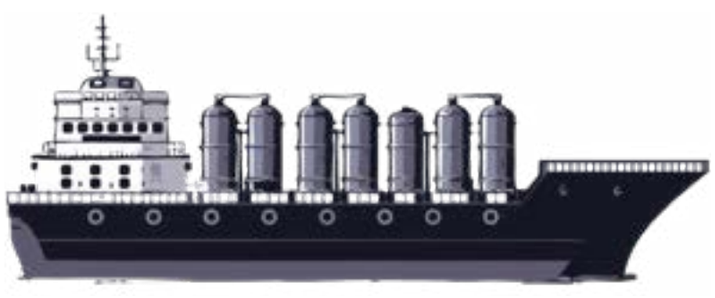
Mansion (5)

Mansion (6)

Oil Tankers

Oil Tanker (1)

Oil Tanker (2)



Oil Tanker (3)

Oil Tanker (4)

Airplane Advertisements

Airplane with Banner (1)

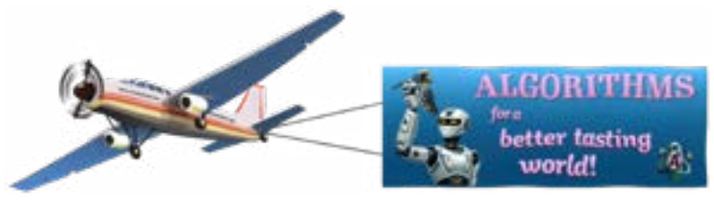
Airplane with Banner (2)

Airplane with Banner (3)

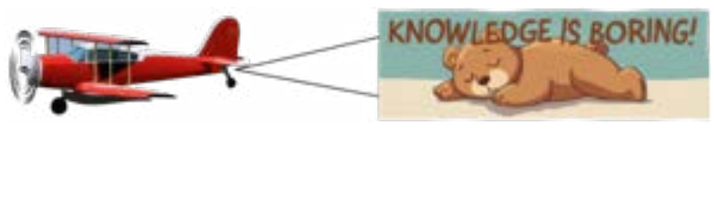
Airplane with Banner (4)

Airplane with Banner (5)

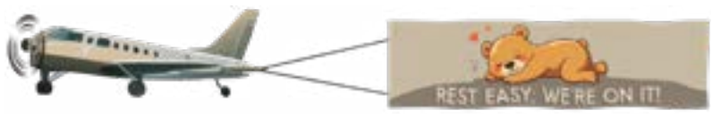
Airplane with Banner (6)



Airplane with Banner (7)



Airplane with Banner (8)



Airplane with Banner (9)

Airplane with Banner (10)

Airplane with Banner (11)

Airplane with Banner (12)

Airplane with Banner (13)

Airplane with Banner (14)

Airplane with Banner (15)

Airplane with Banner (16)

Airplane with Banner (17)

Airplane with Banner (18)

Airplane with Banner (19)

Airplane with Banner (20)

Pods

Future Pod featuring Kristen Lovell

Kristen Lovell is a trans rights activist, filmmaker, and former sex worker.

Future Pod featuring Egyptt LaBeija

Egyptt LaBeija is the Overall Godmother of the House of LaBeija, with a thirty-five-year reign in ballroom and drag performance.

Future Pod featuring Ceyenne Doroshow

Ceyenne Doroshow is a trans activist and the founder of G.L.I.T.S. (Gays & Lesbians Living in a Transgender Society).

Future Pod

Underwater Pod with Jogger (1)

Underwater Pod with Jogger (2)

Prison Hulks

Prison Hulk (1)

Hulks—decommissioned vessels—were first introduced in England in 1776 as a temporary measure to ease overcrowding in prisons. While they are no longer used as such, the term has resurfaced in discussions about modern asylum seeker accommodation vessels. In a carceral and delugial future, they might again provide such “accommodation.”

Prison Hulk (2)

Prison Hulk (3)

Rockets

Rocket Ship (1)

Rocket Ship (2)

Rocket Ship (3)

Seaweed Rafts

Seaweed Raft (1)

Harvesting the renewable resource of seaweed has myriad

applications. As the Hudson is a brackish estuary, adaptable species like Gracilaria (a type of red seaweed) that can tolerate variable salinity could be farmed. Seaweed supports diverse applications, from improving marine ecosystems and sequestering carbon to enhancing agriculture, food production, medicine, and sustainable design.

Seaweed Raft (2)

Seaweed Raft (3)

Seaweed Raft (4)

Solar Punk Boats

Solarpunk Boat (1)

Solarpunk is a movement that imagines a sustainable future built on renewable energy, nature, and community. The “solar” reflects hope for a brighter, eco-friendly future, while the “punk” emphasizes

DIY culture, repair, and rebellion against mainstream systems, with a push for social change. A repair boat, waving a retro 1970s ecology flag.

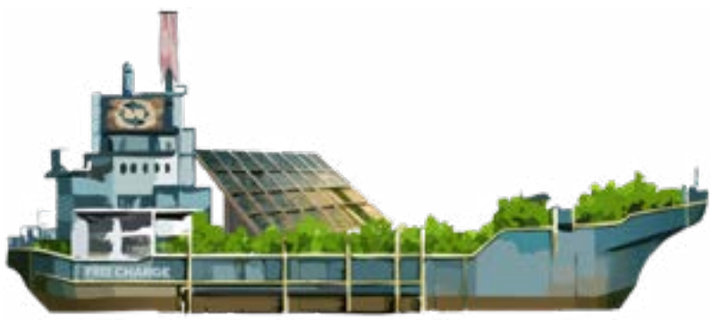
Solarpunk Boat (2)
A boat bearing the symbol of friendship.

Solarpunk Boat (3)
Boat with wind turbine.

Solarpunk Boat (4)
A “Free Store” boat.

Solarpunk Boat (5)
Boat with wind turbines.

Solarpunk Boat (6)



Solarpunk Workboat (1)

A workboat with solar-powered free charging stations.

Solarpunk Workboat (2)

A barge supporting an apple orchard.

Solarpunk Workboat (3)

Solarpunk Workboat (4)

Solarpunk Workboat (5)

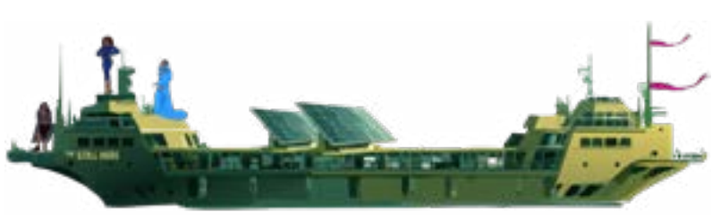
Solarpunk Workboat (6)

Solarpunk Workboat (7)

A floating farm.

Solarpunk Workboat (8)

A floating farm.



The “We Are Still Here” Boat

The phrase “We Are Still Here” asserts resilience, survival, and visibility in the face of ongoing violence, and erasure. Trans activists Kristen Lovell, Egyptt Labeija, and Ceyenne Doroshow stand tall on this ship, as icons not of the past, but future.

Solarpunk Workboat (9)

A floating farm.

Solarpunk Workboat (10)

A barge supporting an olive grove.

Taxis

Taxi (1)

Taxi (2)

Taxi (3)

Taxi (4)

Taxi (5)

Tent Raft (1)

Tent Raft (2)

Tent Raft (3)

Tent Raft (4)

Tent Raft (5)

Tent Raft (6)

Tent Raft (7)

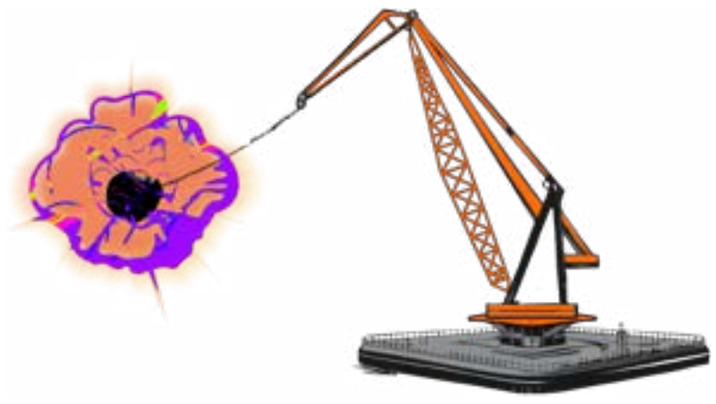
Trash

Trash Boat

Trash Heap (1)

Trash Heap (2)

The Wrecking Ball



Wrecking Ball (2)

General Sky Creatures

Bald Eagle Fishing
In 1997, the first eagles in 100 years were born along the Hudson River.

Bald Eagle Flying

Goose Plane

Canada / Brant Goose (1)
Canadian Geese collided with a US Airways plane in 2009, causing it to land in the Hudson River. Their famous V formation helps the flock communicate and conserve energy as they reduce wind resistance. In the summer, all their wing feathers shed at once, causing them to ground for five weeks.

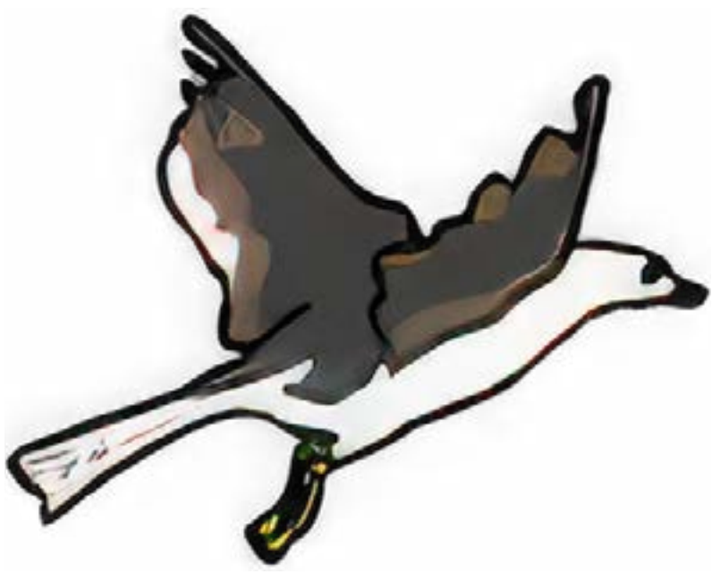
Canada / Brant Goose (2)

Canada / Brant Goose (3)

Red-tailed / Red-shouldered Hawks
Their call is uniquely hoarse and majestically piercing, so much so that Hollywood often uses it to represent Bald Eagles (whose call is a much softer squeal). They have no predators and have

become more common in New York City in the last thirty years.

Rock Dove
Brought from Europe by colonizers in the 1600s, pigeons have become the most ubiquitous bird in cities globally. Their incredible ability to coordinate using the earth's magnetic field has been harnessed by humans for millennia to communicate via carrier pigeons.



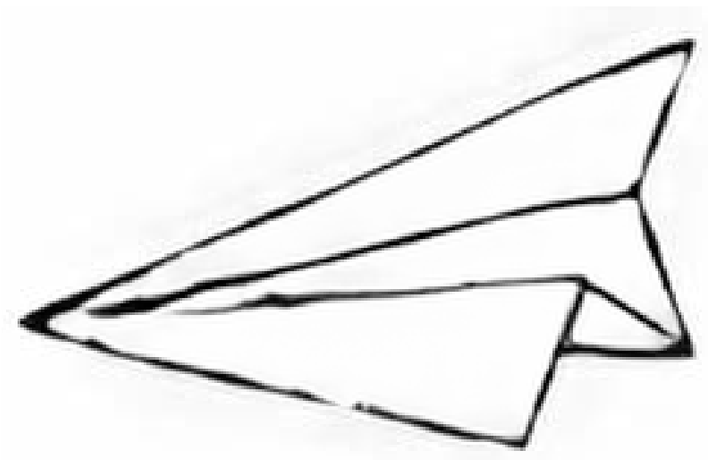
Seagull
Red-billed gull colonies usually include small percentages of female couples whose eggs are fertilized by another male. They produce "superclutches" of five to seven eggs each.

Monarch Butterfly (1)
Monarchs partake in an epic multigenerational migration annually that takes around four generations. The first is a 3,000-mile voyage in the spring from the Northeast to Mexico. They only fly during the day and rest/roost at night, sometimes in clusters of

thousands on branches to stay warm. The second and third generations lay eggs, and the fourth makes the return trip in the fall.

Monarch Butterfly (2)

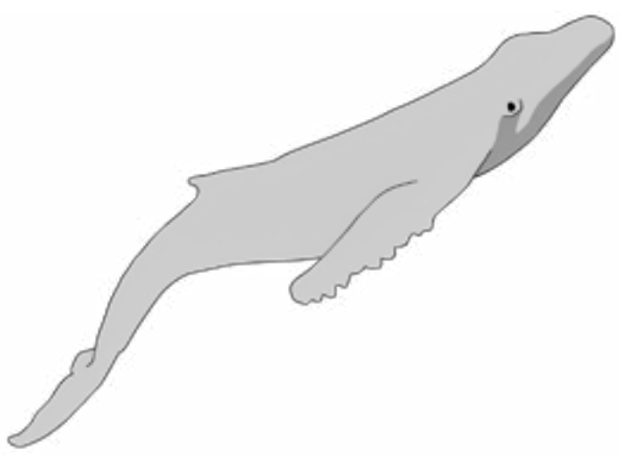
Monarch Butterfly (3)



Paper Airplane

Hudson River Marine Life

Fish and Mammals of the Hudson

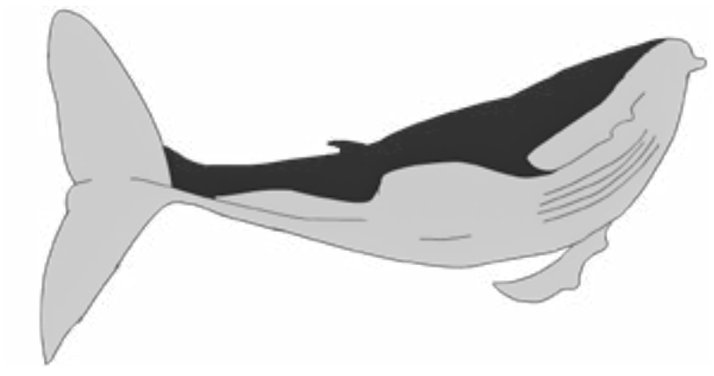


Humpback Whale (1)

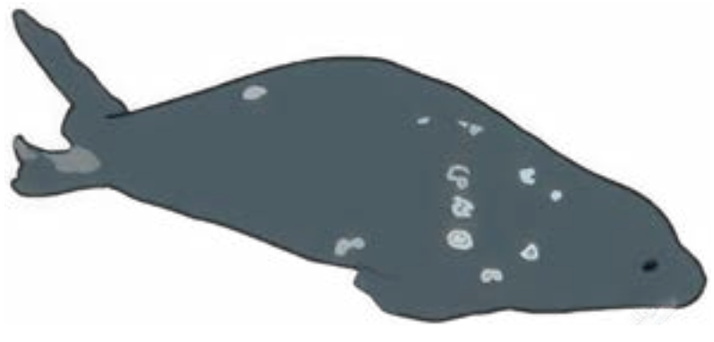
Popular in whale-watching communities for their spectacular jumps and dives, humpback whales undertake the longest migratory journeys of any animal, traveling up to 5,000 miles from colder feeding areas to warmer breeding and calving seas. Their distinctive hump gives them their name. Humpback sightings in the Hudson have been increasing, with 257 recorded in 2022. This is largely attributed to cleaner

water and rising Menhaden populations. As the Earth warms, both species have started favoring locations closer to shore. As whale presence in the Hudson increases, so have beaching incidents from vessel strikes, largely driven by surging cargo shipping traffic. Link

Humpback Whale (2)

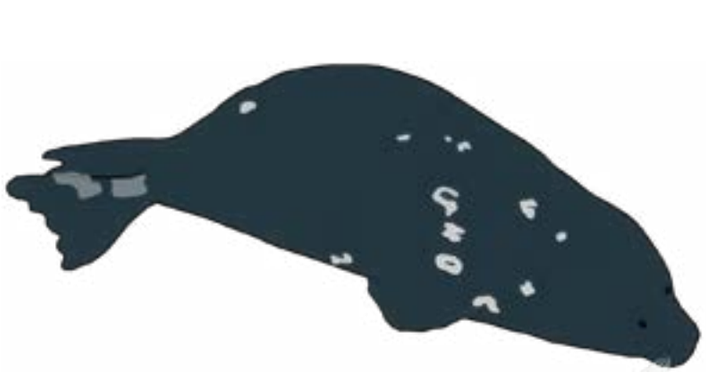


Humpback Whale (3)

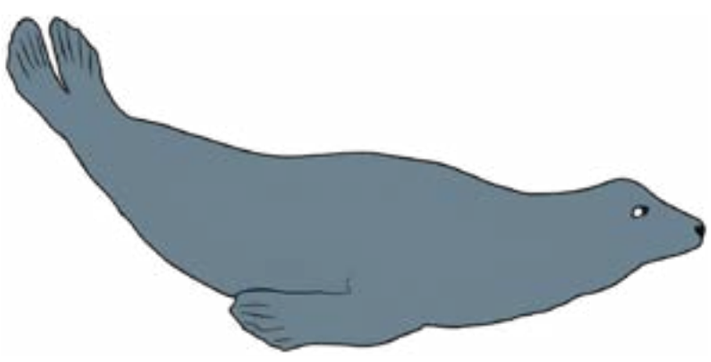


Harbor Seal (1)
One of the most common marine mammals on the East and West coasts of the United States, harbor seals were once hunted by state-sanctioned bounty hunters due to their competition with fishermen. This practice ended in the 1970s when they were granted protected status. Seals can swim at birth, and by the end of their first month, they may embark on 100-mile journeys from their birthplace, though

they are generally considered non-migratory. They are often seen hauling out (resting) in a banana-shaped posture on rocks and beaches. In 2019, Harbor Seal No. 246 gained fame for his repeated return to the Hudson River in Saugerties—a behavior that has puzzled researchers, as the location is far from the typical habitats that meet a seal's needs. Link

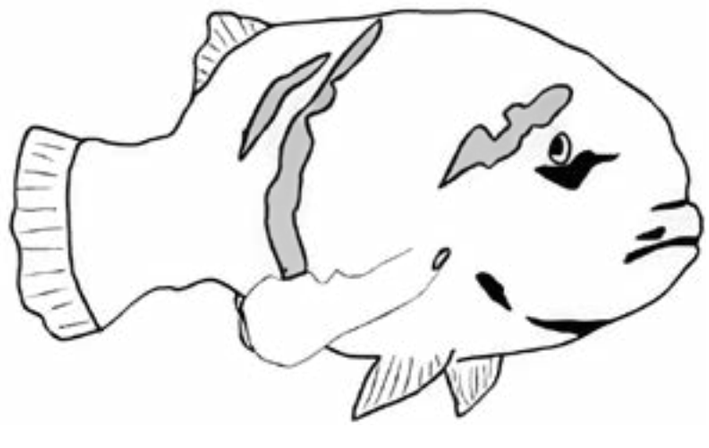


Harbor Seal (2)



Harbor Seal (3)

Harbor Seal (4)



Tautog or Blackfish
Blackfish, or Tautog (Narragansett), are fish whose dark color camouflages them against other surrounding dark surfaces. They rest on their side against structures. Their large blunt teeth can crush the shells of marine animals like

crabs, barnacles, clams, and even lobsters.

Feather Blenny
Only three to four inches in length, this fish gets its name from the cirri “feathers” on its head, which helps it sense movement. Very territorial, it is known to attack fish much larger than itself. Link

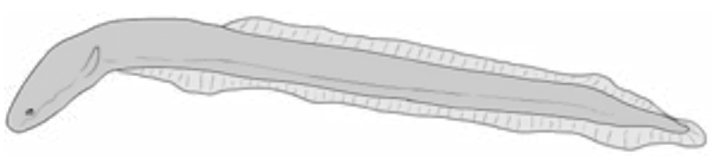
Blue Crab
Its Latin name, callinectes sapidus, translates to “beautiful savory swimmer.” Blue Crabs are known to be cannibalistic. Link

American Eel (1)
The American Eel starts its life in the Sargasso Sea by Bermuda, hundreds of miles away from the Hudson. Once they migrate to the many estuaries of North America, including the Hudson, they darken in color and live along the river bottom for up to twenty years. In their migrations, they can even travel by land between bodies of water. Their thick slippery coating protects them from bacteria and predators and makes them

especially difficult, if not impossible, to grasp. Link

American Eel (2)

American Eel (3)

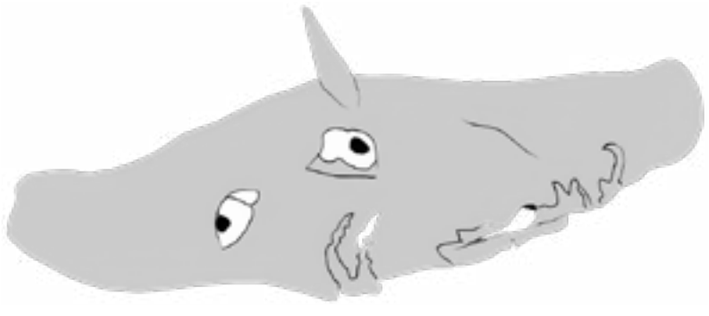


American Eel (4)

American Eel (5)

American Eel (6)

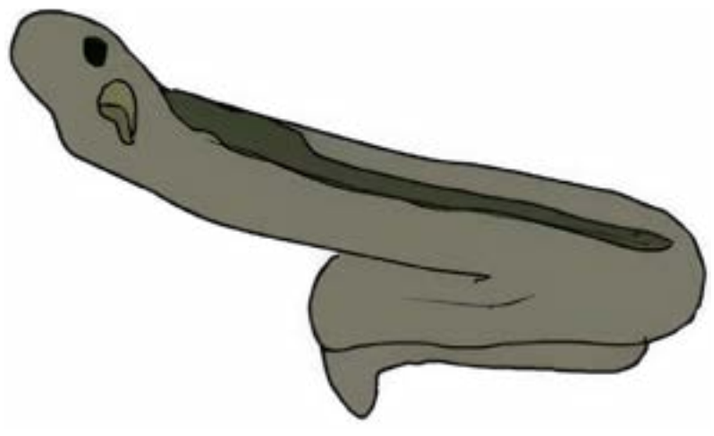
Summer Flounder (1)
The Summer Flounder is a popular game fish and a big predator. Swimming along and above the bottom and praying on smaller fish with its many sharp teeth, this fish is also nicknamed “chameleon of the sea” for its ability to quickly change color. Larger ones are nicknamed “doormats.” Link



Summer Flounder (2)

American Eel (glass eel) (1)
See *American Eel*. This small transparent animal is the eel’s juvenile form. As Glass Eels

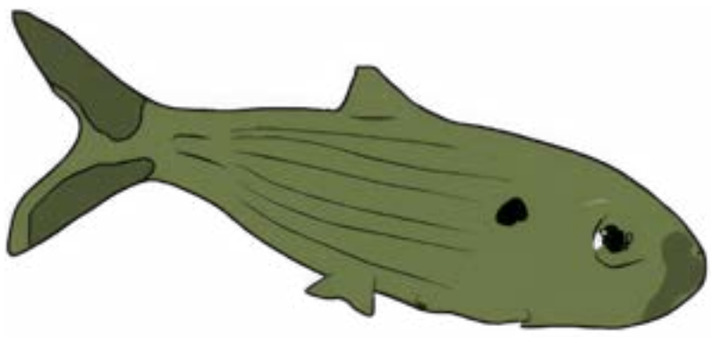
mature they become four-inch “elvers,” then larger “yellow eels.”



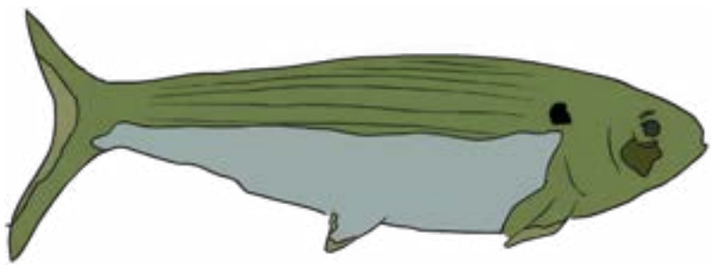
American Eel (glass eel) (2)

Atlantic Menhaden (herring) (1)
One of the most popular fish of the sea, Menhaden (nicknamed mossbunker and pogy), enters the Hudson in the summer after spawning offshore. It has been harvested for fish oil and animal feed. Link

Atlantic Menhaden (herring) (2)



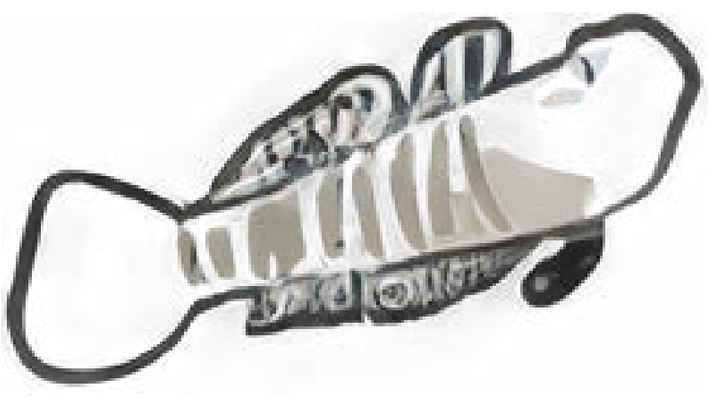
Atlantic Menhaden (herring) (3)



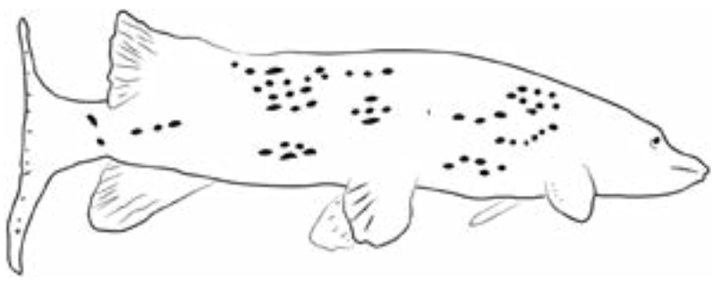
Atlantic Menhaden (herring) (4)

Horseshoe Crab
Horseshoe crabs have existed for 450 million years, making them one of the oldest living species on Earth. Their blue blood has remarkable clotting properties,

coagulating at injury sites to protect their bodies. This unique blood is harvested and used in testing all vaccines. Every May, horseshoe crabs arrive on Delaware's beaches to lay their eggs. The endangered Red Knots, migrating from South America to the Arctic, depend on this event to refuel along their journey.



Naked Goby
One of the smallest fish in the Hudson. They prefer shallow weedy parts, snacking on smaller animals. Sucker disk pelvis helps them cling to debris. Link



Northern Pike

Northern Pipefish
Their long slender bodies camouflage them from prey by mimicking seagrass. They belong to the same family as Seahorses, Syngnathidae, which means "fused jaw." Same as seahorses, the males carry and fertilize the females' eggs in their stomach pouch. Link

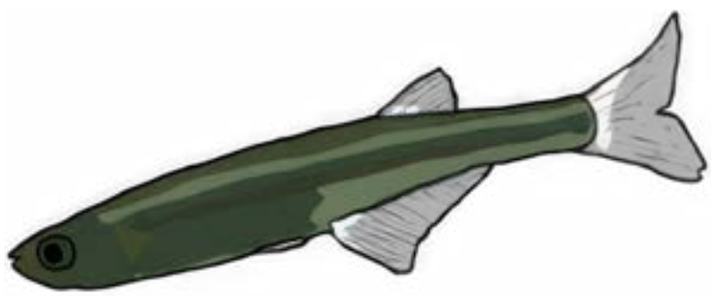
Lined Seahorse (1)
Males fertilize and carry the females' eggs in a pouch in their stomach until they are ready to hatch. The unique quadrilateral shapes on their skeletons mark a rare instance of square biological structures in animals. Link

Lined Seahorse (2)

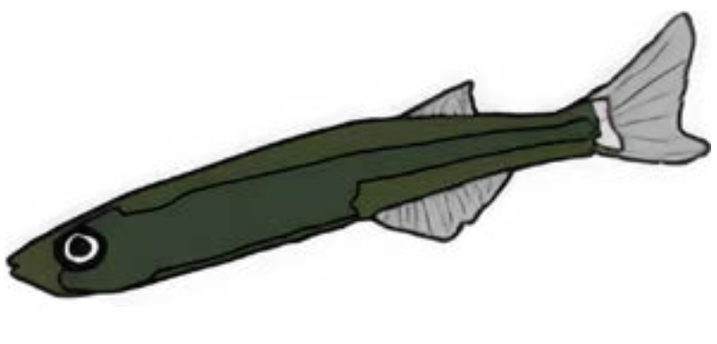
Lined Seahorse (3)

Atlantic Silverside (1)
These small silvery fish travel in large schools and become stressed when alone ("obligated schoolers"). This safety in numbers helps protect them from predators. They mature in a year and only live two. They are a favorite prey for larger fishes.

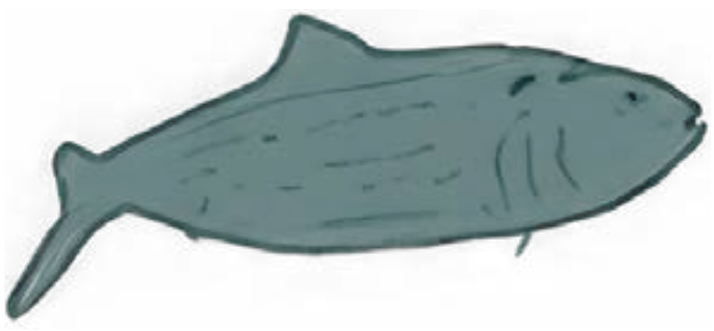
Atlantic Silverside (2)



Atlantic Silverside (3)

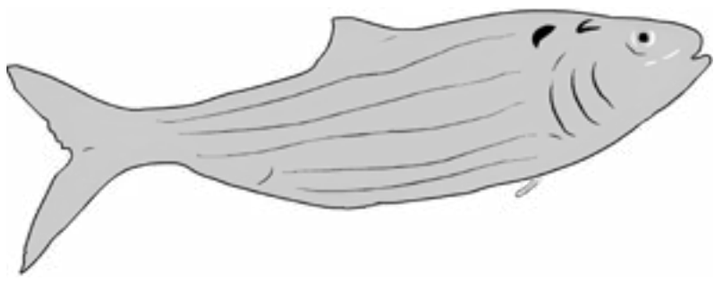


Atlantic Silverside (4)

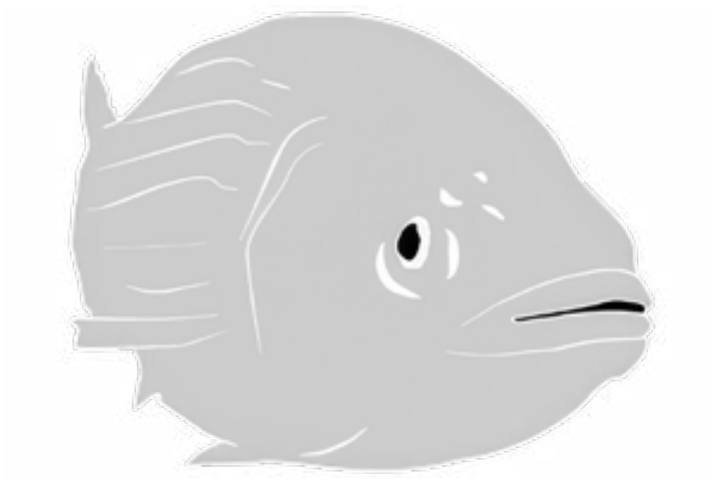


Striped Bass (1)

Striped Bass are aggressive and fast and eat virtually any fish smaller than them. Their stripes disrupt their silhouette, camouflaging them from their prey. Striped Bass use the Lower Hudson Estuary as a nursery. The protection of their nursing habitat was an instrumental factor in canceling the Westway Project—a 1970s proposal to relocate a section of the West Side Highway underground into a tunnel, which involved creating 220 acres of land in the Hudson River by burying landfill—and the river's subsequent protection.



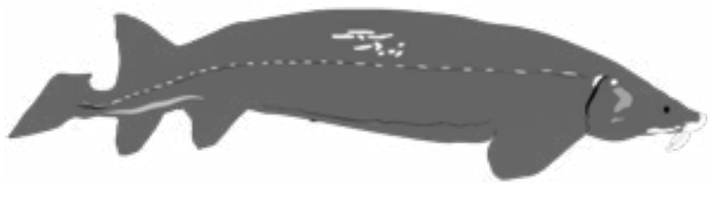
Striped Bass (2)



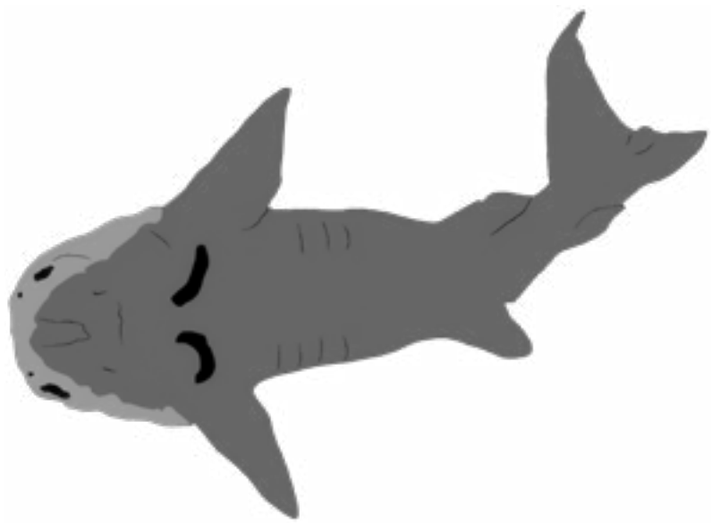
Striped Bass (3)

Atlantic Sturgeon (1)

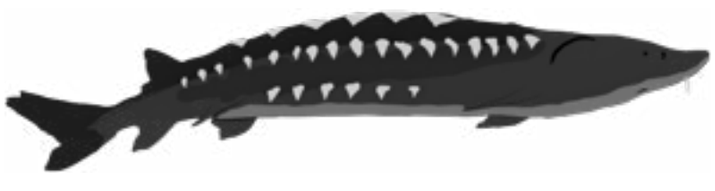
Largest fish found in the Hudson, sometimes reaching more than eight feet in length. In the 1800s, Sturgeon meat was sold as “Albany Beef.” Link



Atlantic Sturgeon (2)



Atlantic Sturgeon (3)

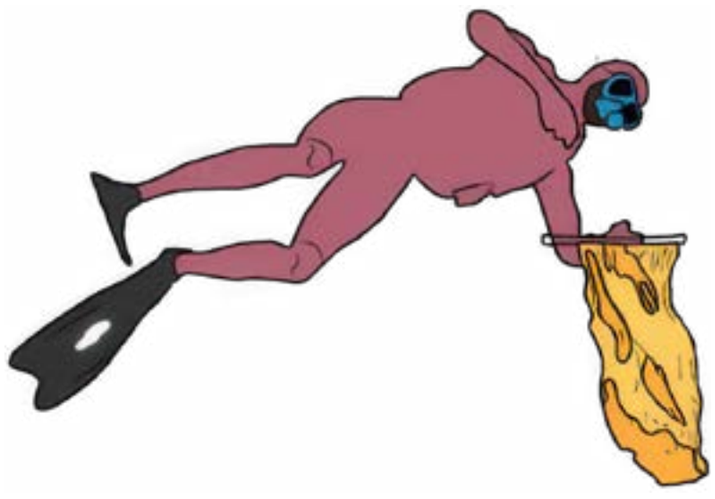


Atlantic Sturgeon (4)

Atlantic Tomcod

Known for their unique adaptive resistance to PCB toxins. Popular among fishers for their availability in the colder months, however, climate change has reduced their population in the Hudson. Link

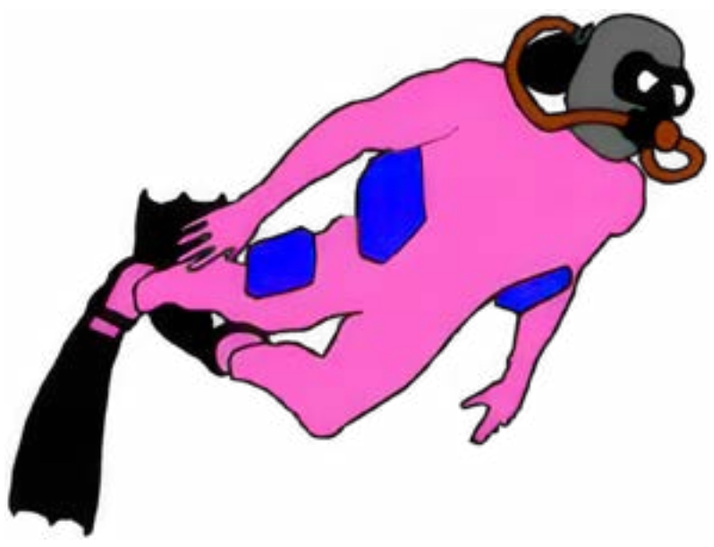
Scuba Diver (1)



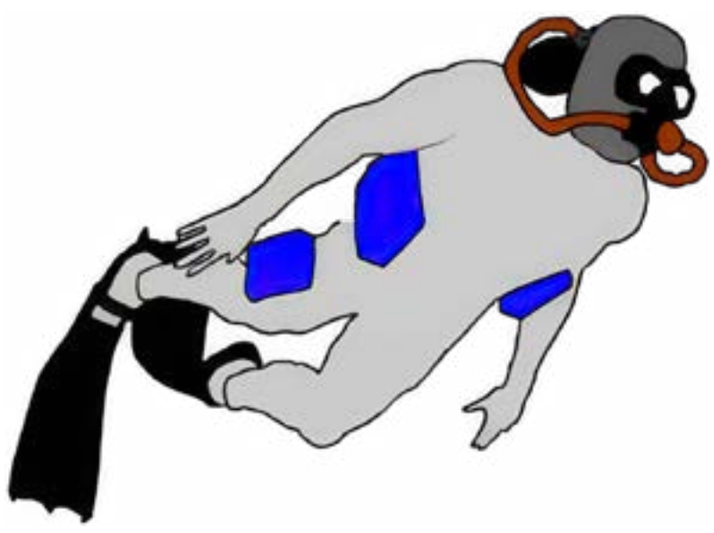
Scuba Diver (2)

Scuba Diver (3)

Scuba Diver (4)



Scuba Diver (5)



Scuba Diver (6)

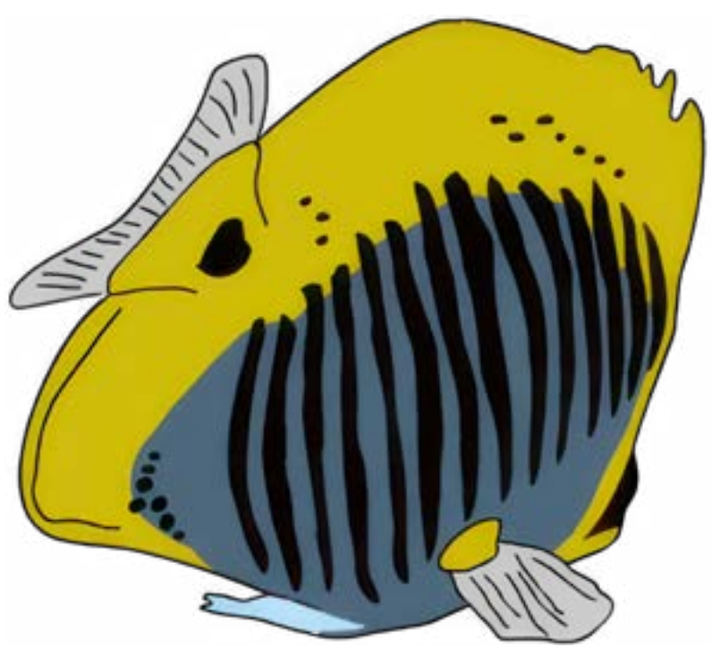
Scuba Diver (7)

Scuba Diver (8)

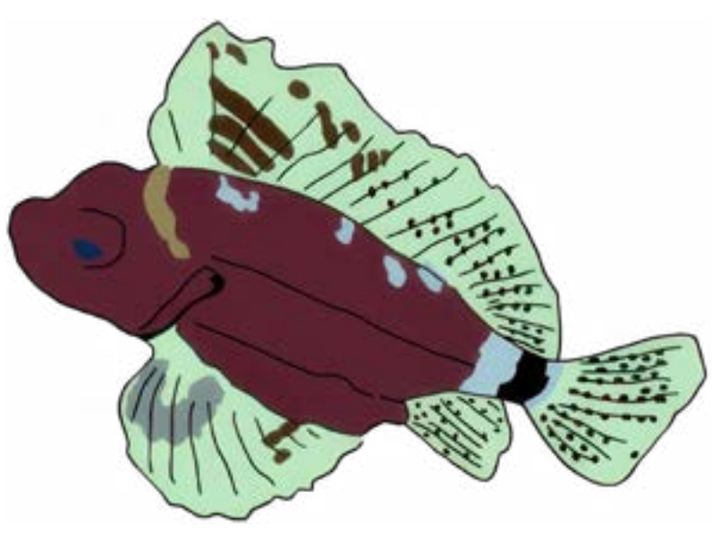
Tropical Strays

Spotfin Butterflyfish (1)

Known as a “tropical stray” species, first seen in the Hudson River in 2024. Presently appear at “peak heat” in August and September.



Spotfin Butterflyfish (2)



Spotted Scorpionfish (1)

The first spotted scorpionfish in the Hudson was recorded on August 14, 2024, by the Hudson River Park’s River Project staff. This venomous fish is said to taste like chicken. It typically inhabits warmer waters from Brazil to Bermuda. Its relative, the lionfish, is also

becoming more widespread and is considered invasive, as it has almost no natural predators and can quickly establish itself, taking over new ecosystems.

Spotted Scorpionfish (2)

Hudson River Marine Traffic

The River is a Circle visualizes all marine traffic moving up and down the river as it passes the Whitney. It accesses live marine traffic transmissions by using an open-source programming interface. Each of the marine “actors” is signified by an animated transmitter attached to its surface. Can you guess what it is from its characterization? Can you spot the real boat on the river?

Cargo Ship (1)

A cargo ship is a large vessel designed to carry goods and materials across oceans, seas, and other waterways. These ships are equipped with large holds or containers to transport a variety of goods, from raw materials and industrial products to consumer goods, and include container ships, bulk carriers, and reefer ships.

Cruise Ship (1)

Destroyer

A destroyer is a type of fast, maneuverable, and heavily armed warship designed for a variety of roles, including escort, anti-aircraft defense, anti-submarine warfare, and offensive operations.

Fishing boat (1)

Fishing boat (2)

Pleasure Craft (1)

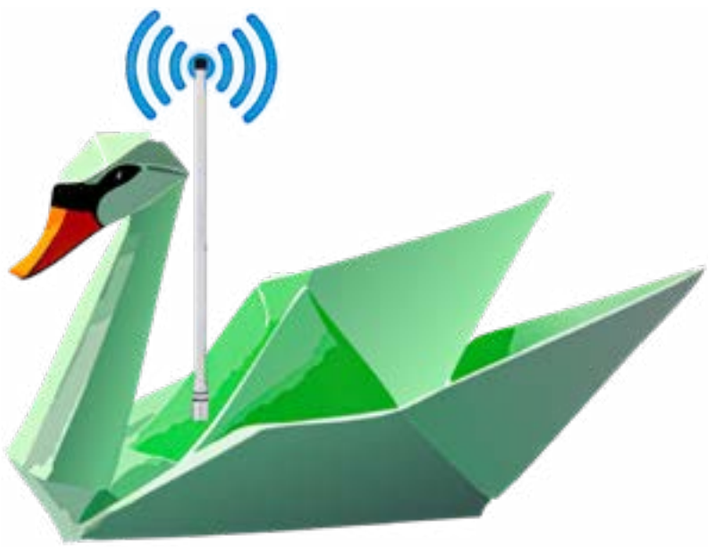
In marine data and regulations, the term “pleasure craft” (or “recreational vessel”) refers to boats or ships primarily used for personal leisure or sport rather than commercial purposes. These vessels cannot be used to carry passengers or cargo for hire, and include runabouts, bowriders, center console boats, personal watercraft, inflatable boats, rigid inflatable boats, bass boats, pontoon boats, small sailboats, daysailers, canoes, kayaks, skiffs, and jon boats.

Pleasure Craft (2)

Pleasure Craft (3)

Pleasure Craft (4)

Pleasure Craft (5)



Pleasure Craft (6)

Pleasure Craft (7)

Police Boat (1)

New York City Police Department boats are compact, high-powered vessels used by the NYPD Harbor

Unit to patrol the city's waterways. Designed for speed, agility, and durability, these boats help enforce maritime law, respond to emergencies, conduct search-and-rescue operations, and support port security.

Police Boat (2)

Search and Rescue Boat
A New York City search boat is a specialized vessel used by emergency services—such as the NYPD, FDNY, or Coast Guard—for locating people or objects in the water. These boats are built for quick response and are equipped with advanced technology such as sonar, GPS, thermal imaging cameras, and powerful spotlights. They're used in a variety of missions, including search and rescue, recovery operations, and disaster response. Agile and rugged, these boats can operate in rivers, bays, and coastal areas, often in

challenging weather or low-visibility conditions.

Sludge Vessel
A sludge vessel is a type of ship specifically built to transport partially treated human waste between sewage treatment plants. In New York City, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) manages a fleet of these sludge boats—some with the capacity to transport as much as one million gallons.

Tanker Large
A tanker is a large ship designed to transport liquid cargo in bulk. These vessels are built with multiple tanks (or compartments) to safely carry massive volumes of liquids across oceans, seas, or coastal waters.

Tanker Small

Tour Boat (1)

Tour Boat (2)

Tugboat (1)

A tugboat is a powerful, small to medium-sized vessel designed to tow or push larger ships, barges, or oil rigs, often in harbors, canals, or through narrow or congested waterways. Tugboats are essential for helping with navigation, docking, undocking, and maneuvering vessels that are too large or unwieldy to move on their own.

Tugboat (2)

Water Taxi (1)

Water Taxi (2)

Water Taxi (3)

Yacht (1)

Yacht (2)

Credits and Attributions

Credits

The River is a Circle, 2025
Marina Zurkow, with James Schmitz

Animation: Ewan Creed
Research: David Guzman
Architectural installation: Blake Goble
Mural painting: Frey Stahler and Josiah McCloud
Courtesy bitforms gallery

Conversations (interviews):
Greg Pierotti
Dr. Marcia Schofield
Sunk Shore (Clarinda Mac Low and Carolyn Hall)
Hudson River Park Trust (Carrie Roble,
Toland Kister, Siddhartha Hayes, and
Rachel Swanson)
Russell Shorto, historian and author of
The Island at the Center of the World (2005)

Joe Baker, Executive Director, The Lenape Center
Abigail Simon, artist
Lucien Samaha, artist
Kristen Lovell, director of *The Stroll* (2023)
Jean Foos, artist
Una Chaudhuri, Dean for the Humanities,
NYU College of Arts and Science

The Earth Eaters, 2025
Marina Zurkow, with James Schmitz

Sound design: Sarah Rothberg
Courtesy bitforms gallery

Additional Thanks:
Valerie Amend, bitforms gallery, Heather Davis, Krista Davis, Ceyenne Doroshow, Waqia Abdul-Kareem, Egyptt LaBeija, Processing Foundation, Steven Sacks, Derrick Schultz, Gary Wasserman, Alison Wong, and Matt Wolf

---

Attributions

The River is a Circle, 2025
The artwork includes
direct references to the works of:
R. Turner Wilcox, author of
The Mode In Hats and Headdress (1945)
David Wojnarowicz
Gordon Matta-Clark
Keith Haring
David Hammons

Lucas Platt and Juan Suárez Botas, directors of *One Foot on a Banana Peel, and One Foot in the Grave: Secrets from the Dolly Madison Room* (1994)

Leslie D. Farrell, Chana Gazit, Dante James, and Gail Pellett, directors of *Slavery and the Making of America* (2005)

Texts and resources:

Shorto, Russell. *The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony that Shaped America*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2005 (Link)

Subberwal, Priya. "The Shape of Time: Lessons from a Queer Garden." *Orion Magazine*, March 2025 (Link)

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center (The Center), LGBT Community Center National History Archive (https://gaycenter.org/culture/archives)

Official Site of the Delaware Tribe of Indians (https://delawaretribe.org)

Robert Titus, the Catskill Geologist (https://thecatskillgeologist.com/author/titusr)

The Earth Eaters, 2025

Text and image references:

Georgius Agricola, *De Re Metallica* (1556) (Link)

Conrad Gessner, *Historia Animalium* (1551–1558) (Link)

Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528)

Michael Wolgemut et al., *The Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493) (Link)

Sounds:
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LAYERS 023 - Industrial drone-67.flac by Jovica -- https://freesound.org/s/123410/ -- License: Attribution 4.0

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