

Selected excerpts from



NEW YORK CITY

Novelists, artists, architects, curators,
filmmakers, historians, and gourmets
reveal their favorite discoveries in this
ultimate insider's guide

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ROBERT KAHN
SERIES EDITOR

City Secrets New York City is an innovative guide to art, food, shopping, activities, architecture, and cultural and historic landmarks in all five boroughs. Over 300 savvy and sophisticated New Yorkers share their personal insights and favorite places, creating a delightful grand tour of the city. Contributors include novelists Michael Cunningham and Rick Moody, actors Laura Linney and Eric Stoltz, journalists Anna Quindlen and Kurt Anderson, poet laureate Mark Strand, neurologist Oliver Sacks, architects Richard Meier and Philip Johnson, MoMA director Glenn Lowry, artist Brice Marden, playwright John Guare, and cartoonist Stan Mack, as well as filmmakers, gourmets, urban archaeologists, historians, and many, many others.

The *City Secrets* series is the creation of New York City architect Robert Kahn, who, after spending a year as a fellow at the American Academy in Rome, found himself being asked by friends to recommend his favorite discoveries. From this came the idea of guidebooks based on personal recommendations of those who know a city best.

“In-the-know Big Apple-ites such as John Guare, Oliver Sacks, and Kate Spade share their city secrets . . .”
—*Vanity Fair*

“ . . . new, compact and sophisticated guidebook filled with eloquent musings.”—*Town & Country*

“The future of guidebooks.” —*Good Magazine*

Three Lives & Co.

154 West 10th Street at Waverly Place

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📖 Three Lives & Co. is one of the great small bookstores in the world. It is staffed by avid, eccentric readers, any one of whom, if asked, will recommend books on any subject. They are often books of which you have never heard; they are always revelations. Three Lives stocks a catholic selection of new books and a smattering of old ones, but trying to describe it in terms of its stock and even its remarkable staff is a little like trying to describe a face by offering the precise locations of the mouth, nose, and eyes. Three Lives is magical, utterly mysterious; it is enormously hospitable; it shines. I go there not only to buy books but sometimes simply to be reminded of why one writes books. I once asked the former owners if I could someday be buried there, under the floorboards in the southwest corner, but they told me they weren't zoned for that.

MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM

Writer

Ted Muehling

27 Howard Street between Broadway & Lafayette Street

☎ 212-431-3825 www.tedmuehling.com

📖 Although almost every fashionable woman I know owns at least one pair of beautiful earrings from Ted Muehling's elegant workshop on Howard Street, the origin of these treasures remains somehow mysterious. Maybe it's because ownership of a pair is like membership in an exclusive club. Or maybe because, like me, husbands refuse to tell their wives the location of the never-fail "get-out-of-jail-free" card. Whatever the reason, Ted Muehling has resisted the temptation to go

"wide," and the quality and design remain unsurpassed. Though mostly abstract, these earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and pins find their inspiration in organic forms such as berries, rice, shells, nuts, and eggs. The shop also carries beautiful ceramic pieces designed by Mr. Muehling and manufactured by the great Nymphenburg porcelain factory in Germany. Highly recommended as a source of simple beauty. . . .

ROBERT KAHN

Architect

Three Paintings

"Broadway Boogie Woogie"

1943, *Piet Mondrian*

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53rd Street between Fifth & Sixth Avenues

☎ 212-708-9480 www.moma.org

"Saint Francis in the Desert"

c. 1480, *Giovanni Bellini*

The Frick Collection

1 East 70th Street at Fifth Avenue

☎ 212-228-0700 www.frick.org

"Juan de Pareja"

1650, *Diego Velázquez*

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Second floor, Gallery 16, The Old Masters Gallery

Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street

☎ 212-535-7710 www.metmuseum.org

May I present a walk comprised of paintings, which, at points in my life, were destinations of sustenance and in which I identified various New York City aspects. Go straight to the mentioned paintings, and try not to be distracted by the other beauties calling for attention. Keep the enterprise clean.

At the Museum of Modern Art, go to Piet Mondrian's great "Broadway Boogie Woogie," painted in homage to his adopted city in reverence for its ongoing energies,

movements, sounds, rhythms, and intensities. Give the painting at least five minutes of concentration. Leave.

Go to the Frick Collection and straight to its Bellini, “Saint Francis in the Desert.” New York City is a teeming place (remember “Boogie Woogie”), but it is made up of millions of pure individuals. Here is Saint Francis, surrounded by beings, a golden light, his town, but he is alone in communion with an energy directed only to him (see the wind in the olive tree) in an otherwise still environment. He is alone, inspired, and fully conscious of his greater self.

It’s on up to the Met for a visit with Diego Velázquez’s total master of the illusion achieved through the workings of the eye, the hand, and the paint. Be reminded by Pareja, an obviously proud man of color, of our own city’s ethnic diversity and how much that adds to our power and beauty.

BRICE MARDEN
Painter

Number 7 Train through Queens

Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum

1985, *Shoji Sazao*
32-37 Vernon Boulevard, entrance is located on
Vernon Boulevard between 10th Street and 33rd Road
☎ 718-204-7088 www.noguchi.org

P.S. 1 Contemporary Arts Center

1997, *expanded as arts center by Frederick Fisher*
22-25 Jackson Avenue at 46th Avenue
☎ 718-784-2084 www.ps1.org

Louis Armstrong House Museum

1910, *Robert W. Johnson*
34-56 107th Street between 34th & 37th Avenues
☎ 718-478-8274 www.louisarmstronghouse.org

Shea Stadium

126th Street & Roosevelt Avenue
For ticket information ☎ 718-507-8499 www.mets.mlb.com

USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center

inside Flushing Meadows-Corona Park ☎ 718-760-6200

Get on the Number 7 train, which is a world unto itself. Ride in either the front or back car and look out the window as you cross the train yards and leave the city, heading through Queens where I grew up. Get off at Vernon Boulevard and walk over to the Noguchi Garden Museum, which is as far as you can get from the pace of Manhattan. Half of Noguchi’s ashes are buried here; the other half, in Japan. Wise man. His sculpture resonates to perfection in these gardens he designed. Also see P.S.1’s Contemporary Arts Center before you leave Long Island City. Get off at 74th Street and you’re in Bombay. Buy material for a sari, get a great meal, listen to the ragas crooning out of the shops. Get off at 82nd Street, which was my stop as a kid, and you’re in South America. The combination of the faux Tudor architecture and the Spanish signage tells you all you need to know about America, or at least about New York’s constant reinvention; it is vibrancy itself. Get off at Junction Boulevard and find the home of Louis Armstrong. At Willets Point, see the remnants of the 1963 World’s Fair and go either to Shea Stadium or Arthur Ashe Stadium, depending on the season, for the Mets or the tennis. Get off at the end of the line in Flushing and just walk around. You’ll find yourself in Asia. There are a few other ethnic groups I’m sure I’ve missed, traveling on the city’s own equivalent of the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

JOHN GUARE
Playwright

Manducatis

13-27 Jackson Avenue at 47th Avenue

☎ 718-729-4602 www.manducatis.com

☞ Go with a gang. Do not order from the menu, but ask Vincenzo and his wife, Ida, to bring you what's good. Roasted peppers with amazing mozzarella, then probably stewed eggplant bruschetta, fettucine with fresh tomatoes and shitake mushrooms, some veal in lemon sauce, salad, sensational bread . . . Very, very good value if you manage to avoid the temptations of a stunning wine list.

ROGER MICHELL
Director

Mermaid Parade

The first Saturday after the summer solstice

Surf Avenue, Coney Island

www.coneyislandusa.com

. . . Mermaids of every possible description. Following the best equal-opportunity tradition, there are beautiful adolescent mermaids and mermaids no longer in the bloom of youth; female and male mermaids; svelte mermaids and sizable mermaids, including in recent years several very pregnant mermaids. Scaly tails are constructed of everything from bubble wrap to shimmering CDs. Tops are pasties, coconut-shell bras, strategically placed Band-Aids. The music is raucous, from drum bands to the kind with tubas and trombones. The mel-low, good-natured and gloriously multicultural mood is especially evident at the hot dog stand on the boardwalk, where the mermaids mingle and take refreshment after the parade is over.

ANN BANKS
Journalist

The Hall of Fame for Great Americans and National Landmark Shrine

1900, McKim, Mead & White

University Avenue & Hall of Fame Terrace

☎ 718-289-5973 www.bcc.cuny.edu/halloffame

Hardly anybody but Regis Philbin knows that Sylvanus Thayer was the first superintendent of West Point. Among the busts of military geniuses, scientists, physicians, teachers, and leaders featured at the Hall of Fame for Great Americans are some of the most well-known names to all Americans. This Stanford White-designed colonnade, on a bluff overlooking the beautiful Palisades at the highest point of the Bronx, has been an inspiration to historians, educators, students, and world visitors over the last century. An award-winning national landmark and the country's original hall of fame, it's a quiet, noble, and important corner of New York and its history.

FERNANDO FERRER
Former Bronx Borough President

A Perfect Evening

The Peking Duck House

28 Mott Street between Pell Street & Chatham Square

☎ 212-227-1810 www.pekingduckhousenyc.com

City Hall

1812, Joseph François Mangin and John McComb Jr.

City Hall Park between Broadway & Park Row

Trinity Church

1846, Richard Upjohn

Broadway at Wall Street

☎ 212-602-0800 www.trinitywallstreet.org

George Washington Statue

1883, James Quincy Adams Ward, pedestal by Richard Morris Hunt

26 Wall Street, near Broad Street

Wall Street Bull

1989, *Arturo di Modica*
Broadway and Bowling Green

Staten Island Ferry

South Street at foot of Whitehall Street
☎ 718-815-2628 www.siferry.com

. . . The New York I know and love is less eventful and more unremarked, less monument and boulevard and more row house and alleyway. And here is how I used to spend a perfect evening with my husband before we had children.

☞ We would go to dinner at a place on Mott Street in Chinatown alley, the Peking Duck House, where you can eat Peking duck without ordering in advance. We would browse in the little shops that sell cheap Chinese dishes, sandals, and fans.

We would walk south past the courts and the municipal buildings and into the pocket park that stands in front of the prettiest city hall in America, a graceful, oddly diminutive building with a beautiful floating staircase inside.

We'd continue toward the end of the island, passing through the area that was called Five Points when Manhattan was young, a neighborhood that 250 years ago was a den of thieves, prostitutes, and street gangs, all of whom have now moved uptown. We would pass the spire of Trinity Church, the neo-gothic house of worship that was once the tallest point in the city, and cross over Wall Street, which is named after a wall the earliest immigrant New Yorkers, the Dutch, built to keep out the earliest New Yorkers, the Indians.

We would arrive at the giant statue of George Washington that commemorates his inauguration in New York and the giant statue of a bull that commemorates Wall Street's most recent incarnation.

And suddenly we would run out of land at the point of Manhattan, where the ferry terminal stands. So of course we would take the ferry to Staten Island . . .

ANNA QUINDLEN
Writer

Economy Candy

108 Rivington Street between Ludlow & Essex Streets
☎ 212-254-1531 www.economycandy.com

Started in the midst of the post-Depression era when candy still came in barrels, Economy Candy is a rickety little Lower East Side spot owned by Jerry Cohen, a grizzly New York City native with an auctioneer's voice and attitude to match. This vintage candy warehouse brims floor to ceiling (literally—a stepladder is required) with jawbreakers, licorice whips, chocolate-covered raisins, root beer barrels, Chiclets, Pixy Stix, kosher gourmet jellybeans, and other Willy Wonka-like delicacies. A favorite of Jerry Lewis, Red Buttons, and Tony Curtis, Economy Candy was described by *Gourmet* magazine as “the penny-candy store elevated to an art form.”

Other favorites include rock-candy swizzle sticks (red, blue, amber, yellow, pink, and green), Jordan almonds, Atomic Fireballs, candy necklaces, 18 kinds of halvah, chocolate-covered pretzels (milk, dark, and white), and Pez in every imaginable size and form. In fact, the only candy you won't find here is Chunky. “It's my favorite,” says Cohen. “I don't sell it because I'd eat it all day long.” At least the man shows some restraint.

DANY LEVY
Founder of www.dailycandy.com

INDEX OF CONTRIBUTORS

MARGOT ADLER is a New York correspondent for National Public Radio. Her reports can be heard regularly on *All Things Considered*, *Morning Edition*, and *Weekend Edition*. She is the author of *Drawing Down the Moon*.

MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM's novel, *The Hours*, won the Pulitzer Prize in Literature and the PEN Faulkner Award. His other novels include *A Home at the End of the World*; *Flesh and Blood*; and *Specimen Days*.

A native of Birmingham, Alabama, HUGH MARTIN started his career in New York as a vocal arranger. With Ralph Blanc, he wrote "Meet Me in St. Louis" for Judy Garland. Two songs from the score, "The Trolley Song" and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," have become classics.

AGNES GUND is president emerita of the Museum of Modern Art and chairman of its International Council. Gund joined the MoMA board in 1976 and served as its president from 1991 until 2002. She is currently chairman of the Mayor's Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission of the City of New York. Gund is the founder and a trustee of the Studio

in a School Association, a nonprofit organization she established in 1977 in response to budget cuts that virtually eliminated arts classes from New York City public schools.

THE HONORABLE JAMES J. BRUCIA is a Justice (retired) of the New York State Supreme Court.

Born in New York City, GLENN LOWRY is the director of the Museum of Modern Art. A strong advocate of contemporary art, he, along with Alanna Heiss, former director of the P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, conceived and initiated the merger of their two organizations, which was announced in February 1999. He has lectured and written extensively in support of contemporary art and artists and the role of museums in society, among other topics.

ROBERT MARX has served as the director of the theater program at the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts, and was executive director of Lincoln Center's New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. He is an essayist on theater and opera.

BIOGRAPHIES

ROBERT KAHN, creator and editor of the *City Secrets* series, is an architect in private practice. A recipient of the Prix de Rome from the American Academy in Rome, Kahn has received numerous awards from the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). His work has been featured in many publications, including *Architectural Digest*, *House & Garden*, *Metropolitan Home*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and the *New York Times*. He received a Masters in Architecture from Yale University. He lives in New York City and Shelter Island NY with his wife and daughter.

THE NEW YORK TIMES NEEDIEST CASES FUND, administered by The New York Times Company Foundation, raises millions of dollars to help thousands of individuals and families in distress. The assistance is rendered by seven New York City social service agencies. *The Times* pays the Fund's expenses, so all contributions go directly to provide services and cash assistance to the poor.

THE MUNICIPAL ART SOCIETY is a private non-profit membership organization whose mission is to promote a more livable city. Since 1893, the society has worked to enrich the culture, neighborhoods, and physical design of New York City. The Municipal Art Society advocates for excellence in urban planning, contemporary architecture, historic preservation, and public art.

A portion of the proceeds from the sales of this book will be donated to The New York Times Neediest Cases Fund and the Municipal Arts Foundation.