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Res Publica and the Macy's on 34th Street

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On my honor, I have neither given nor received any unacknowledged aid on this paper.

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Americans cleave to the things of this world as if assured that they will never die, and yet are in such a rush to snatch any that come within their reach, as if expecting to stop living before they have relished them. They clutch everything but hold nothing fast, and so lose grip as they hurry after some new delight.

An American will build a house in which to pass his old age and sell it before the roof is on; he will plant a garden and rent it just as the trees are coming into bearing; he will clear a field and leave others to reap the harvest; he will take up a profession and leave it, settle in one place and soon go off elsewhere with his changing desires. If his private business allows him a moment's relaxation, he will plunge at once into the whirlpool of politics.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*[1]

Especially between 1890 and 1940 a new culture (the Machine Age?) selected Manhattan as laboratory: a mythical island where the invention and testing of a metropolitan lifestyle and its attendant architecture could be pursued as a collective experiment in which the entire city became a factory of man-made experience, where the real and the natural ceased to exist.

Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*[2]

Recognizable from film, national broadcasting, and massive advertising campaigns, the Macy's Department Store found on 34th Street in Lower Middle Manhattan occupies a powerful place in American material and visual cultures and in the realities and imaginaries made possible by those cultures. With over 100 years of branding, mass production, and product consumption, it occupies a salient place in what could be called our national collective memory. As such, the Macy's on 34th Street has secured itself not only as a marker of time, dating back to the early twentieth century, but also as a distinct marker of Americanness and those "things" Americans value.[3]

This American byproduct of capitalism, retail, and marketing stands as a totem to the economic, social, political, and cultural realities and fantasies of our American history. Rather, it

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[1] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* trans. Henry Reeve (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Sever and Francis, 1898), 536.

[2] Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (The Monacelli Press, 1994), 9-10.

[3] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press, 2010), vii.;
and Cecilia Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt: How to See Things* (Columbia University Press, 2015), i.
"Things can be seen in a number of ways. Things, not only things in the material sense of objects but also 'things'–that is problems, concepts, and phenomena–can be scrutinized from a variety of positions and perspectives. The title of this book refers to an aesthetics after Hannah Arendt. She never wrote on aesthetics. But she engaged in problems of art and aesthetic theory–reflecting on sensibility, judgement, and works of art in a manner that is both radical and consistent . . . This includes a reflection on how here aesthetics may inform and alter our attitude toward philosophical questioning, for instance, on the political, agency, freedom, the law, prejudice, and so on."

infuses these realities and fantasies with a kind of concrete materialism that emphasizes its own "thingness." For the Macy's on 34th Street is at once a private thing, a piece of private property for private profit, and a public thing, a thing or space that exists primarily upon and for public consumption and public engagement. As a thing, it shares in and reflects certain economic, social, political, and cultural dialogues, and it contextualizes those dialogues in a kind of holding environment for greater human-to-human interaction.

In this holding environment, histories and things coalesce into a laboratory for analyzing consumer identities.[4] The consumer's race, ethnicity, gender, economic, social, and political backgrounds all come into play. Consequently, the Macy's on 34th Street and its particular history provide numerous spatiotemporal intersections through which to understand and address the concepts and constructs of American citizenship. This analysis, however, is most productive when considering the origins of the Macy's on 34th Street in light of those economic, social, and political events predating, contemporaneous to, and immediately following its construction in 1901 and opening in 1902.

Caught in the class antagonisms of big government versus big business, and of public versus private, formally and conceptually, the Macy's on 34th Street and the broader department store type of the early twentieth century provide an expansive backdrop through which to analyze the Progressive Era, Consolidation, and the Great Depression. Both broad and particular, these commercial architectures help articulate the dialectical differences between party politics, producers and consumers, laborers and employers, and they do so by merit of those associative ramifications of architecture which we so often think of having the capacity to interact with and

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[4] Bonnie Honig, *Public Things: Democracy in Disrepair* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 54.

redefine reality.[5] Yet the department store and its type do not really fall into the traditional purview of architectural history.

Oftentimes overlooked as amorphous, a condition of consumer cultures and the modernity of a metropolitan lifestyle, the department store is rarely a conditioner of things.[6] Particularly in the contexts of New York City, it has been typecast and dismissed on behalf of its commercial standings, overshadowed by the age of skyscrapers and the celebrity of distinguished architects. Innovative, not intuitive design has received the greatest amount of attention from architectural historians. Only until recently, the reality of this quotable “cult of the individual" of architecture has dominated and bound our historical thinking. Nevertheless, present-day historiographical discourse has shifted the course and study of architectural history.

Following in the footsteps of modern architectural historians Louisa Iarocci and A.K. Sandoval-Strausz, this essay is an effort to demonstrate just how architectural form can both define and represent our realities, and how imaginaries–those idealistic values oftentimes subordinated by those in privileged positions–can redefine those realities and their correlative forms.[7] To do this, I must ask how the Macy’s on 34th Street came to be. How does it fit into the broader landscape of New York City, and how does it fit into the department store type? Who was it made for, and how was it used? Did its use, whether physically or conceptually, ever

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[5] Honig, *Public Things*, 45.;
and Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 7.

[6] Richard Ingersoll and Spiro Kostof, *World Architecture: A Cross-Cultural History* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 664, 679,689, 698, 765, 768.;
and Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and John Montague Massengale, *New York, 1900: Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism, 1890-1915* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1992), 190-201.

[7] Louisa Iarocci, *The Urban Department Store in America, 1850-1930* (Ashgate Publishing, 2014).;
and A.K. Sandoval-Strausz, “Spaces of Commerce: A Historiographic Introduction to Certain Architectures of Capitalism,” *Winterthur Portfolio*, vol. 44, no. 2/3 (2011), 143-158.

change? And if so, what or who were the causes of that change? But before jumping into this case study of the Macy's on 34th Street, of the department store type and the surrounding city, I think it might be useful to first outline a political and visual philosophy through which to more thoroughly approach and dissect the topics intrinsic to that analysis. My focus here will be to provide a cohesive methodology through which to understand how the city, its architecture, and conflicting visual cultures–all things containing particular agencies unto themselves–provide the bases for public things and for a conditioned body politic.

Indeed, acknowledging the agency of things realigns our view of the traditional human subject in relation to political beginnings and endings alike. It is a way to disassemble and reassess the "cult of the individual" as the basis for human sovereignty and political and cultural activity. For from a thing-based perspective, we are able to reject the notion that cultural and political activities are willed into being by and dependent solely upon individuals capable of molding space to their likings and according to their strict intentions.[8] Instead, we see that a limited sovereignty capable of shaping political and cultural activity is grounded in the collective and contingent actions of world-building.[9] Through world-building, articulable forms of human sovereignty are captured and measured in terms of humans creating things and being conditioned by the self-generative properties of those things. This aspect of communal world-building thus

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[8] Karl Marx, "Zur Judenfrage," *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1, section 1.1 (Frankfurt am Main, 1927), 595-599, quoted in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project,* trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 669. "The rights of man appear as natural rights, because self-conscious activity is concentrated upon political action. Egoistic man is the passive, given result of the dissolved society, . . . a natural object. Political revolution's . . . attitude to civil society, to the world of need, to work, private interests, and private law, is that they are . . . its natural basis. Finally, man as a member of civil society counts for true man, for man as distinct from the citizen, because he is man in his sensuous . . . existence, while political man is only the abstract . . . man. . . . The abstraction of the political man is thus correctly described by Rousseau: 'he who dares to undertake the making of a people's institutions out to feel himself capable . . . of changing human nature, of transforming each individual, who is by himself a complete solitary whole, into part of a greater whole . . ."

[9] Linda M.G. Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 17.

forces us to recognize and thrive in the mundane, or the everyday, and to acknowledge that our lives are contingent upon the interconnected works and actions of others, and the intentional and unintentional consequences of those works and actions as they unfold in space. Clarifying this point lays the foundations for a politics of things and their plural contingencies.

This shift in perspective in turn articulates the protean nature of New York City's world-building projects–their intentional and unintentional uses–provides the framework for the history of the department store type, and helps us conceive of the Macy's on 34th Street as both a private and a public thing. From this perspective, we are able to emphasize the importance of things and, in particular, architecture in the development of political bodies. For to occupy space means to relate to others through markers of space, through the geographical and social coordinates of distance and proximity, sameness and difference.[10] To relinquish a complete focus on human agency allows us to better analyze the world around us, how it gathers and separates us. This is the *res publica,* or the politics of public things and, in this case, the politics of the city, a space where public and private matters collide to simultaneously activate and deactivate mankind's contingent political potentials. Accordingly, in the first section of this investigation, I will present a theoretical conception of the city; in the second section, I will detail a brief overview of New

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[10] Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt*, 7-8. "Public space is a continent construction; it rises and deflates and is based on other factors than identification and belonging. The arbitrary factor is crucial. In modernity, the arena of public affair is no longer restricted to a location like the *res publica*, or the public square . . . A public space may be restricted through legal limits, institutions, and so on, but never through a selection of participants. This is also what distinguishes a public space from a collective based on identification with gender, ethnicity, age, etc. If we are to take seriously the contingent aspect of public space, also assuming the urge to appear is an instance of all living beings, then its social setup becomes less interesting than its phenomenal constitution . . . When Arendt discusses public space in terms of human appearances, she is less interested in the ethnic, social, or gendered marks than in the way in which appearances speak to the senses. This does not mean that she finds social coordinates uninteresting for political purposes; on the contrary. From a phenomenological viewpoint . . . the analysis of appearances must be regarded in addition to, counter to, or as resonating with social coordinates. Beings appear through gestures, movements, voices, forms, shapes, and tonalities, speaking to the senses of spectators and auditors becomes something captures the eye or the ear. These aspects of appearances may underscore social identity, or they may undermine.";
and Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, 19.

York City and its history; in the third section, I will discuss the history of the department store type; and in a fourth and concluding section, I will tie up all of these disparate theoretical and historical ends in a history and analysis of the Macy's on 34th Street.

Methodology for Analysis and the Politics of Aesthetics

In abstract terms, cities occupy and define units of space and then enhance or cultivate space through aesthetic means.[11] Aesthetic enhancements may refer to the development of diverse architectures or may go so far as to determine the overall layout and functionality of a city according to some uniform aesthetic or cultural program. To the extent multi-sensory elements determine how we interact and engage with space, the appearance of a city matters. Cities can grow naturally over time or may restructure themselves according to newfound values. Cultures can develop around a diverse array of visual stimuli or insular traditions. Since there is no one way to describe a culture or cultural value and its contingencies, the manner in which buildings relate to one another in a city and the broader context of city-to-building functionality

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[11] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Blackwell, 1991), 12. " Our knowledge of the material world is based on terms of the broadest generality and the greatest scientific . . . abstraction. Even if the links between these concepts and the physical realities to which they correspond are not always clearly established, we do know that such links exist, and that the concepts or theories they imply–energy, space, time–can neither be conflated nor separated from one another. What common parlance refers to as 'matter', 'nature' or 'physical reality'–that reality within which even the crudest analysis must discern and separate different moments–has thus obviously achieved a certain unity. . . . When we evoke 'energy', we must immediately note that energy has to be deployed in space. When we evoke 'space', we must immediately indicate what occupies that space and how it does so: the deployment of energy in relation to 'points' and within a time frame. When we evoke 'time', we must immediately say what it is that moves or changes therein.";
Harry Frances Mallgrave, *The Architect's Brain: Neuroscience, Creativity, and Architecture* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 182-186.;
and Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt*, 3-4. "Her stress on appearances introduces sense-perception, embodiment, and appearance–in short, what we could call *aesthesis*–as aspects of the public sphere. Certainly, discourse in terms of speeches, opinions, exchanges of meaning, and so forth is an inalienable aspect of publicness. But so are sensible exteriors in the forms of forms, sounds, living bodies, movement, etc. Stories, music, and visual spectacles all contribute to the public sphere . . . An ontology of plurality does not simply imply a multitude of human individuals. We also deal with aesthetic objects. The concept of plurality may have an anthropological connotation, but it can never be defined as essentially human. It explains that our world is constituted by a multitude of appearances. This has consequences of how we are to view society and its makeup. The manifold forms of appearance that constitute our world bears witness to the inherently plural character of being. Consequently, ethics, politics, aesthetics, and social life need to be rethought . . . Plurality becomes an inalienable aspect of the way in which sensible appearances are conceived."

matters.[12]

Cities create an interdependence of architectures, whereby they can edit buildings and architectural objects with new visual contexts or preserve buildings and architectural objects in their "original" contexts. As they are composed by humans and compose themselves self-generatively, cities assume a charged climate of historical understanding, self-presentation, and reification. Collectively remembering and forgetting certain histories for myriad purposes, cities can monumentalize those places, such as the Macy's on 34th Street, that simultaneously define and categorize their larger spaces and composing subspaces.[13] Beyond the indeterminate content or illusory nature of this conceptual city, however, one must recognize in practice buildings do not exist in vacuums, and a human component also occupies space. Humans attach memories and knowledge to objects, and in turn condition a web of human-to-object interconnectivity.

Through intimate object-relations, humans make space less abstract and illusive. Man-made objects, or objects given some sort of agency within the human world, help stabilize the natural unpredictability of everyday life.[14] This illusion of control over objects and their agencies has helped produce our anthropocentric world. Yet, as we have made and consumed these object

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[12] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 9-25.;
Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 3-21;
and Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 29-52.

[13] Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Indiana University Press, 2000), 186. "Think of the kaleidoscopic array of items that can fill up just one hour's time as they succeed one another in a sometimes confusing alacrity, and compare this with the stability of any given place such as a house, a plaza, an office, etc. . . . It is the stabilizing persistence of place as a container of experiences that contributes so powerfully to its intrinsic memorability. An alert and alive memory connects spontaneously with place, finding in it features that favor and parallel its own activities. We might even say that memory is naturally place-oriented or at least place-supported. Moreover, it is itself a place wherein the past can revive and survive; it is a place for places, meeting them midway in its own preservative power, its 'reservative' role. Unlike site and time, memory does not thrive on the indifferently dispersed. It thrives, rather, on the persistent particularities of what is properly in place: held fast there and made one's own.";
and Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 16.

[14] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989), 7-17.

cultures, we have also adhered to and been conditioned by them, such that an object autonomy exists beyond our control.[15] As much as this object autonomy conditions and patterns a sense of security into our everyday lives, it also undermines that sense of security.

Objects are fickle. Objects can be appropriated, reclaimed, repossessed, and reassessed for a variety of reasons and potentially contradictory purposes. Fluctuations in human affairs and laws directly impact the world of objects and vice versa. So, those idealized systems of stability projected onto our material cultures oftentimes lack the fixity we so desire. Having bound ourselves to these material cultures then, we do feel the direct impact of their change. We feel a sense of vulnerability in the mutability of our material world. Hence we try to create even grander networks of interconnected systems so that we might reinforce our senses of security and fixity, and eliminate or better control those internal contradictions both native and foreign to our material cultures.[16]

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[15] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 9. "Men are conditioned beings because everything they come in contact with turns immediately into a condition of their existence. The world in which the *vita activa* spends itself consists of things produced by human activities; but the things that owe their existence exclusively to men nevertheless constantly condition their human makers . . . Whatever touches or enters into a sustained relationship with human life immediately assumes the character of a condition of human existence Whatever touches or enters into a sustained relationship with human life immediately assumes the character of a condition of human existence. This is why men, no matter what they do, are always conditioned beings. Whatever enters the human world of its own accord or is drawn into it by human effort becomes part of the human condition. The impact of the world's reality upon human existence is felt and received as a conditioning force. The objectivity of the world—its object- or thing-character—and the human condition supplement each other; because human existence is conditioned existence, it would be impossible without things, and things would be a heap of unrelated articles, a non-world, if they were not the conditioners of human existence.";
D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 89-90.;
and Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 26-27. "*(Social) space is a (social) product.* This proposition might appear to border on the tautologous, and hence the obvious. There is a good reason, however, to examine it carefully, to consider its implications and consequences before accepting it. Many people will find it hard to endorse the notion that space has taken on, within society as it actually is, a sort of reality of its own, a reality clearly distinct from, yet much like, those assumed in the same global process by commodities, money and capital. The more so in view of the further claim that the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power; yet that, as such, it escapes in part from those who would make use of it. The social and political (state) forces which engendered this space now seek, but fail, to master it completely; the very agency that has forced spatial reality towards a sort of uncontrollable autonomy now strives to run it into the ground, then shackle and enslave it."

[16] Ibid, 59-63.

Collectively, these interconnected systems achieve a temporary thing-stability. This thing-stability applies to both political and cultural norms. So, when humans create laws and design buildings, for instance, they use laws to dictate the design of those buildings, and those buildings are in turn meant to compose the people-friendly environments necessary to promote and foster future law-making communities full of "law-abiding citizens." These interconnected systems therefore create the foundational networks for a feedback loop that defines thing-stability. Yet this interconnected thing-stability has its drawbacks. Feedback loops have the potential for positive and negative net results alike. So, while in one instance, a positive feedback loop might encourage a system for creating law-abiding citizens; in another instance, a negative feedback loop might inhibit the growth of law-abiding citizens. To a more dramatic effect, one feedback loop might be held to be negative by one community and positive by another, relating those two communities' contingent conditions exclusively through unpredictable factional conflicts from there on out. Subsequently, this systemization of the human world only entrenches the illusions and consequences of control and division without providing any real, permanent stability between those conditions.[17] We depend upon and are bound by the structural effects of our own material and political realities. In turn, humans, laws, and objects undergo continual states of change or becoming via their own contingent and interconnected powers. This indistinct organization of power and contingency therefore demands a plural visuality and lays the foundations for cultural complexity.

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[17] Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton University Press, 2003), 27.;
and Honig, *Public Things*, 91. "From the perspective of shared space, as I shall argue, we see how public things *depend* on being agonistically taken and retaken by concerted action. They depend on civic care, concern, hope, and play as much as we depend on their permanence and vice versa. From the perspective of public things, we apprehend the adhesive and integrative powers of things and the dependence of all collecteds–not just for citizens and publics but also of crowds and commons–on things and their powers of enchantment."

Actions of self-creation, reciprocity, and adaptation collectively transform and complicate the nature and history of things and human-to-object interactions. Humans, laws, and objects all participate within and as artifacts of their own economic, social, political, and cultural circumstances. This co-creative capacity therefore necessitates a shift from the conceptual city to the city-in-practice, or the city as it exists in its human, material, and historical settings. Now, to provide an example of this city-in-practice and of the city immediately surrounding the Macy's on 34th Street, I have chosen to first examine the Herald, Greeley Square, and Fifth Avenue areas of Lower Middle Manhattan.[18]

Today, the Herald, Greeley Square, and Fifth Avenue areas compose a singular micro-environment of shops, malls, hotels, pedestrian walkways, roadways, and squares. Glazed storefronts, flashy advertisements, concrete traffic barriers, construction scaffolding, hotdog stands, and pop-up shops coalesce into a kind of visual clutter that overwhelms and bombards passersby (figs. 1-7). Noting the formal qualities of these buildings reveals a number of distinct aesthetic programs. Palladian palatial motifs, elements of the Beaux Arts, and Art Deco ornaments intermix with more recent reactionary and international Modern and Postmodern styles.[19] Yet only 120 years ago, these palatial and classicizing elements produced a unifying template for the aesthetic program of these once northern reaching areas of now Lower Middle Manhattan (figs. 8-9).

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[18] Mike Wallace, *Greater Gotham: A History of New York City from 1898 to 1919* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 163. "Many New Yorkers applauded the development tornado roaring up Broadway. But there were others in Gotham who found the proliferation of skyscrapers appalling . . .These New Yorkers dreamed of a horizontal, not a vertical, city, a metropolis of monumental (but low-rise) buildings of classic design, a cityscape of spacious open plazas linked together by grand leafy boulevards. They wanted *not* a scattershot . . . city but one that was orderly, civic-minded, planned, and beautiful." And the now the vestiges of this dream sit just below the surface of the modern city.

[19] Norval White and Elliot Willensky, *AIA Guide to New York City* (Three Rivers Press, 2000), 221-234.

Demonstrating an active growth pattern, this dense stratification of visual cultures indicates a direct and regular use of space: buildings are destroyed or rebuilt, renovated, and repurposed. And because humans define those spaces they inhabit, the production, maintenance, and the destruction of buildings signals a not insignificant set of decisions that range beyond mere material considerations. Economic, social, and political evaluations all construct building and city based self-identifications and solidarities.[20] These self-identifications inundate spaces with their own idiosyncratic vocabularies, and in turn, contingent solidarities preserve those vocabularies. Whatever remains and maintains both its form and content matters, as it reflexively indicates the movement of greater economic, social, and political mechanisms. This is what makes the Macy's on 34th Street so important. Its formal features, physical function, and use have remained relatively unchanged over the years. To better understand the aesthetic progressions leading up to the 1901 construction of the Macy's on 34th Street, however, one must first delve into the broad political and cultural contexts predating, contemporaneous to, and immediately following its conception and its launch.

A Brief History of New York City, 1890s-1920s: Consolidation and the Progressive Era

From a narrative of industry, late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Manhattan Island grew northward in rapid spurts of innovation and workforce immigration. Largely indebted to corporate funding, the commercial cultures and architectures of New York City aligned with the collective and convergent interests of an elite corporate class of businessmen,

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[20] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 198. "*We* have to start from where *we* are–that is part of the force Sellar's claim that we are under no obligations other than the 'we-intentions' of the communities with which we identify." Rorty's point helps emphasize the importance of the architectural self-identifications of New York City which provide the visual bases for solidarity amongst both the peoples of New York City and the nation. Think about the power of branding, film, and national broadcasting; think about the power of the tourist industry and places of interest; and consider the kinds of solidarities and connections produced by those visual and cultural experiences alone.

retailers, industrialists, law makers, financiers, and landowners including the likes of J.P. Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt II, William E. Dodge, and Abram Hewitt.[21] Indeed, as New York City grew, this corporate elite came to control vast properties and innovative industries, greatly impacting the city's economic, social, political, and spatial interests along the way.

Industry stimulated the economy, created new jobs, and attracted migrant and immigrant workers alike. This in turn diversified the populations of the city and greatly impacted the city's numerous political constituencies. Nevertheless, as these diverse peoples came to inhabit the relatively small geographic area of the city, Manhattan Island itself remained largely divided by the racial, ethnic, and social categories of this diversification.[22]

In fact, the structural effects of this division can still be seen today. Think Chinatown and Little Italy versus the Upper West Side. Wealth determines the use and excess or scarcity of space. Unlike today, however, this segregated vision of Manhattan Island did not inspire sightseeing and tourist attractions. Instead, the race, ethnic, and social issues of late nineteenth

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[21] Wallace, *Greater Gotham,* 6. The corporate class, "which might be styled as *trinitarian* . . ., simultaneously an imperial, corporate, and municipal entity . . . The corporate elite was by no means monolithic. Members had differing styles and clashing interests. But most shared what might me called a class *mentalité,* a conception of how the world worked (or should work). This turn-of-the-century zeitgeist–which stressed the superiority of consolidation over competition–provided those who chaired it with a tremendous and empowering sense of legitimacy, a conviction that they had the wind of history at their back, [and in this way the] corporate elite was cohesive as well as powerful and principled . . . they assumed that having been first on the scene made Gotham *their* city, by right of cultural primogeniture. They had received it from their predecessor class, New York's great nineteenth-century merchants and landowners, who had displayed a similar proprietorial sensibility, particularly when it came to keeping up with European capitals in producing urban embellishments like parks, museums, and Crystal Palaces . . . They would, accordingly, promote New York's physical, economic, cultural, and social development, to make it a metropolis that was beautiful, efficient, and a profitable field for investment. Applying the methods and ideology of consolidation, they would work to reshape its borders, rationalize its transport and life support systems, and remodel its cultural and political institutions. As they were then also presiding over an expansion of overseas investment, they would seek to make Gotham, the de facto seat of America's budding empire, into a truly imperial metropolis, whose monumental buildings and elegant boulevards would proclaim the grandeur and glory of the coming new age. ";
and Ibid, 55.

[22] Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (Free Press, 2003), 182-183. "In this diverse, industrializing nation, Americans had to put up with people different from themselves . . . But when and where they could, many Americans pulled back from people who seemed different. Frightened, wary, or . . . repelled by contact with others, people drew boundary lines around themselves. This impulse to separate was fundamental to American society."

and early twentieth-century Manhattan balanced upon the tenuous and limited use of habitable and shared space. As more diverse peoples migrated to the city, new and diverse problems arose, or such was the logic of the Republican party, a party tied to nativist dialogues and dedicated to the disparate whims of the corporate elite.[23]

Regardless of their anti-immigrant stance, the Republicans did, however, correctly observe a rise in public strife. The concentration and divisions of working peoples in the so-called "ethnic enclaves" of Manhattan eventually lead to problems of overpopulation within and without their collective boundaries.[24] As migrant and immigrant peoples struggled to find proper housing, various racial and ethnic groups came into direct contact with one another. This contact in turn led to both antagonistic and shared conflicts. As they competed for jobs and spread out across the city, crime rates skyrocketed, and the infrastructures in place for the city's water and sewer management strained against the growing and unattended to needs of the many. Disease rates in these enclaves rose to new levels that threatened the safety of poor, working-class peoples, and, by merit of self-reflexive and preservative thinking, caused the city's elite a

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[23] Edward R. Kantowicz, "Democratic Party," *Historical Dictionary of the Progressive Era, 1890-1920*, ed. John D. Buenker and Edward R. Kantowicz (Greenwood Press, 1988), 106-107. "[P]arty loyalty followed ethnocultural* lines. Pietist, evangelical Protestants, mainly of Anglo-Saxon origin, voted Republican, whereas Catholics and ritualistic Protestants, such as German Lutherans, voted Democratic. Pietist Republicans favored a morally activist government, which had abolished slavery and wanted to prohibit alcohol; immigrant Catholic Democrats wanted government to leave them alone and not disturb their foreign customs and habits.";
Keith Ian Polakoff, "Republican Party," *Historical Dictionary of the Progressive Era, 1890-1920*, 399-400.;
and Robert Asher, "Union Nativism and the Immigrant Response," *Labor History*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1982), 325. "Most investigations of nativistic responses to European immigration . . . have focused on middle class and elite spokesmen and organization. In his outstanding work of American nativism, John Higham has discussed the influence of job competition between foreign-born and native-born workers . . ." That is to say the corporate elite and the Republican party were not the sole originators of social and political nativism. To argue such would oversimplify the nature of political pluralities. Instead, emphasizing the Republican party's nativism here simply defines them in contradistinction to the Democratic party, and, more pointedly, helps us to understand their political interests as aligned with the interests of a corporate elite dedicated to the bread and butter issues of ending social ills with the tertiary effect of setting up an argument for demonstrating Republican influence over later Progressive Era politics.

[24] McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent*, 33. "All these differences of race, ethnicity, and religion produced suspicion, antagonism, and conflict among workers."

significant degree of agita.[25] The elite did not want to experience the potentially harmful by-products of the industrialization that made them rich. Consequently, they developed a program to increase the standards of living within Manhattan by reorganizing and expanding the scope and interests of the city with the added benefit of preserving their own established senses of security. Through this process of consolidation, they formed the Greater New York area we know today, and transformed New York City into the world's second-largest city at that time.[26]

The Consolidation of 1898 in turn gets its name from the fact it consolidated Manhattan Island, Staten Island, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens into one city under elite supervision. To achieve this, the founding consolidationists first united the commercial interests of the corporate elite, and then better organized the corporate class' involvement in politics. Through this united front, they combated the crooked politics of Tammany Hall–the Democratic political machine that championed immigrant political rights by means of bribery and extortion–and they remade Manhattan into a core for those material and immaterial things they valued the most: profit, efficiency, and cooperative economic action.[27] Through the collaborative and centralizing efforts of the five boroughs of New York City, the consolidationists solved a number of problems posed by overpopulation, and just so happened to do so in a way that affirmed their authority or

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[25] Edward T. O'Donnell, *Henry George and the Crisis of Inequality: Progress and Poverty in the Gilded Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 70-80.

[26] Wallace, *Greater Gotham*, 48. ". . . the creation of Greater New York had an extensive backstory, and its ramifications would ripple on through subsequent decades. The movement for municipal consolidation, moreover, was deeply intertwined with the movements for incorporation and expansion, as it was the same people who were reconstituting US relations with the world, and refashioning the national economy, who were chiefly responsible for creating the second-largest city on earth."

[27] Ibid, 52-53. "It seemed at first that an unstoppable array of forces was mobilized behind Consolidation, chiefly in 'imperial' Manhattan. These included merchants and industrialists who wanted a unified shipping and rail network; real estate owners who sought higher land values; insurance companies, savings banks, and estates trustees who envisioned new investment opportunities in the suburbs; businessmen and professionals who thought a larger city would transfer power from Tammany to the 'best men'; and reformed who believed it would provide cheap land for working-class housing, which, they were convinced, would put an end to crime, poverty, and socialism."

sovereignty over the city.

Benefiting the public from their economically controlled, top-down and private positions, the consolidationists put forth a multi-pronged, synchronous effort to solve the problems of overpopulation and whatever they deemed to be the social ills of working-class peoples. They transformed the Bronx from farmland estates into graded streets and tenement housing; introduced apartments and enclave divisions into the middle class suburbs of Brooklyn and Queens; built up Staten Island into a node of their industrial complex; and effectively redistributed the working populations of New York City around a healthy and profitable Manhattan.[28] Simultaneously, as they improved life support and sanitation systems within Manhattan and began the infrastructural work for creating those systems within the four remaining boroughs, they brought in new creature comforts to entertain and improve the lives of the masses as the standards of living increased and rates of disease dropped to record lows (fig. 10).[29] Additionally, the consolidationists electrified the city, improved access to shipping ports, built bridges between the five boroughs, helped approve the construction of the New York subway, and laid the foundations for the construction of Pennsylvania Station, with its attached post office, in Lower Middle Manhattan (figs. 11-15). Paramount to the profitability and efficiency of their commercial interests, they created a hub for national and international chains

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[28] Ibid, 277-308.

[29] Ibid, 218. "Before the twentieth century was two decades old, Greater New York had applied itself to unclogging and enhancing its circulatory systems. Ships, trains, commodities, power, water, food, and garbage now moved in and out of its borders in greater quantity and with greater velocity than ever before. This was chiefly thanks to a profusion of conduits: new aqueducts, improved canals, rail bridges, high-voltage conductors, conveyor belts, sewage pipes, electric elevators, station ramps, ship channels, revamped docks, immigrant processing stations, and tunnels in profusion–railroad tunnels, trolley tunnels, gas tunnels, cooling tunnels, heating tunnels, flushing tunnels, cow tunnels . . . But there remained one last flow to facilitate: the movement of people within and throughout the expanded city. New York's transit lines were limited and clogged. Serving a mushrooming population and making Consolidation a reality required the unsnarling of old pathways and the creation of brand-new ones, beginning with the basics: bridges, to improve inter-borough, inter-island connections."

of business, transportation, and communication.

Subsequently, they transformed Lower Middle Manhattan into the commercial headquarters of their joint operation. From there, they perpetuated the established systems of mass production and product consumption, and reified a system of manufactured dependency. Since they had improved the working state of the city and dramatically recast its state of affairs in favor of continued industrialization and increased job opportunities, they earned a celebrated position in the eyes of the working public.[30] So, while from one perspective, this new version of the city "worked," from another perspective, the consolidationists merely redistributed the struggles of residential segregation, overcrowding, economic disparity, and crooked politics.

In attempting to hide the unsightly conditions of these working-class peoples and of industrialization, the consolidationists cast them out into the city's previously agrarian and middle class urban peripheries. The consolidationists thus opted out of the conditions of a public strife they had, in part, created, and placed that public strife into the hands of the middle class.[31] So, instead of acknowledging and amending the roots of that public strife, they paid to sustain their systems of privilege so that they might reap the benefits of their trickle down, working-class beneficiaries, and create a commercial and consumer-based cushion to quell and silence middle class dissidence. By merit of these actions, however, the consolidationists politicized a middle class–albeit still largely Republican–public contingency that wanted more drastic reform, and, in particular, those Progressive Era reforms of the late and new millennia that attacked the

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[30] Robert D. McFadden, "Rockets' Red Glare Marked Birth of Merged City in 1898," *The New York Times* (January 1, 1973).

[31] Honig, *Public Things*, xii-xiii. "[W]e live in the moment of the workaround, the opt-out, the secret advantage, the sought-after 'edge.' We can see how public things become unsustainable when we focus on the increasingly differential operations of the infrastructure of security, in which we are all in it together and yet are funneled differentially into fast lines and slow [sic]."

corporate elite's bases of power and promoted greater social justice for the working classes.[32]

Starting first in the 1890s and then moving into the 1920s, Progressive Era reforms swept through New York City in cumulatively stronger waves of political fervor and public engagement. As party and class politics clashed, one arena stood out amongst the rest, the battle for public things. The fight for the control of the land then worked its way toward the commercial headquarters of the corporate elite, back towards Lower Middle Manhattan.

The Department Store as Understood by the Public and the Private

In order to legitimize their control of the land, the elite needed a system to consolidate their commercial interests with their aesthetic interests. They wanted a city that tied function to form, and so they adopted a relatively uniform visual tradition intent upon the continued generation of economic, social, political, and cultural capital. To monumentalize and consolidate an aesthetic system based upon these self-identifying needs, however, demanded a pluralizing visual vocabulary. The corporate elite in turn established a visual vocabulary predicated upon conquering past institutions of power and the sustained development of commerce in the persistent growth of industry. As previously noted in my methodology section, they combined classical architectural elements with innovations in electricity and transportation to assert a distinct visual vocabulary built upon discourses of both real and aesthetic power (fig. 8-9).

By adapting European palatial traditions to an American type, the Manhattan cityscape engaged with a broader cultural and aesthetic landscape, and, in doing so, produced a seamless memory experience: New York City is great because it appears great, or, in terms of the elite

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[32] Wallace, *Greater Gotham*, 506.;
and Maureen A. Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms, 1890s-1920s* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 169-170.

corporate class, New York City is great because someone paid for it to appear great.[33] This conflation of greatness and European-ness does not just stem from an open adoration of certain features of past authority, but also a general monetary appropriation of an increasingly homogenized and monumentalized idea of past authority.[34] Broadly tautological, this particular proposition nevertheless shifts our frame of reference from the incorporeal realities of conceptual politics to the tangible, interconnected realities of world-building. The elite appropriated symbols of past power to press their own contemporary, commercial, and naked self-interests. In a real sense, the adaptation of past markers of power legitimized this elite authority by emphasizing the divide between the corporate and lower classes, and reifying class solidarities through actions of self-creation and denial. In a kind of shock and awe boon, the elite's purposefully palatial buildings both undermined the social standings of the masses, as they quite literally diminished those masses by merit of their buildings' physical proportions, and exploited those social standings, as they drew those same masses into commercial exchange with their retail storefronts.[35]

Even today, producing a progressive lineage from this earlier commercial past, New York

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[33] Kenneth Turney Gibbs, *Business Architectural Imagery in America, 1870-1930* (UMI Research Press, 1976), 21. "For they are the inheritors of their midcentury predecessors to which "[the] terms 'commercial Renaissance' and 'mercantile palatial' [applied] . . . when banks, dry goods stores and office buildings alike were decked in resurrected styles of Italian palazzos.";
and Casey, *Remembering,* 218. "I commemorate, in short, by *remembering through* specific commemorative vehicles such as rituals or texts–or any other available *commemorabilia.* The "through" of commemorative remembering-through signifies such things as: through this very vehicle, within its dimensions, across its surface. For the past is made accessible . . . by its sheer ingrediency in *commemorabilium* itself. It is commemorated therein and not somewhere else, however distant in time or space the commemorated event or person may be from the present occasion of commemorating."

[34] Wallace, *Greater Gotham*, 164. From their view, "a beautiful city was a Baroque city. The heroes were the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century monarchs (or latter-day avatars like Baron Haussmann) who had demolished cramped medieval spaces and erected magnificent open stage sets. Now, with the opportunity afforded by Consolidation, they hoped to bur New York's historic fetters."

[35] Guy Debord, *The Spectacle of Society* (Black & Red, 2002).

retailers incorporate well-lit window displays into their storefronts to attract passersby.[36] A window display simultaneously conceals its contents behind reflective walls of light, dazzling the chance observer, and reveals its contents when the interior lighting of the display penetrates outward and competes with various exterior lighting conditions.[37] Glass mediates architectural space by both closing off and opening up that space to the outside world. Consequently, windows condense the divide between interior and exterior spaces, and yield a marketplace experience: window shopping (fig. 16).[38]

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[36] Wallace*, Greater Gotham*, 331. "Window displays flourished behind newly inexpensive plate glass. They offered scenes from current theatrical productions, thematic ensembles of furnished rooms, or outfits of clothing down to the last accessory . . . the development of new merchandising strategies was underwritten by the emergence of schools and institutes devoted to teaching such skills, from decorative architecture to commercial design and display."

[37] T.J. Litle, Jr., "Show Window Lighting by Gas," *Good Lighting and the Illuminating Engineer, Volume 2*, ed. E. Leavenworth Elliott (Illuminating Engineer Publishing Company, 1908), 784. "Window dressing has become an art; high salaried individuals are retained by all the leading concerns in the country, who make it their business to effectively display the goods to the public. The store window is also recognized as one of the most valuable advertising mediums . . . if it is to have any advertising value to the merchant [it] must stand out in bold relief to the passerby, and it requires powerful illumination to accomplish this end.";
Mallgrave, *The Architect's Brain*, 139-140.;
Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (Mortilal Banarsidass, 1996), 229. "Sight, it is said, can bring us only colours or lights, and with them forms which are the outlines of colours, and movements which are the patches of colour changing position . . . In reality, each colour, in its inmost depths, is nothing but the inner structure of the thing overtly revealed. The brilliance of gold palpably holds out to us its homogeneous composition, and the dull colour of wood it heterogeneous make-up. The senses intercommunicate by opening on to the structure of the thing."
and Merleuau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* 315. "But there is also passive vision, with no gaze specifically directed, as in the case of a dazzling light, which does not unfold an objective space before us, and in which the light ceases to be light and becomes something painful which invades our eye itself. And like the expiatory gaze of true vision, the 'knowing touch' projects us outside our body through movement."

[38] Ganesh Iyer and Dmitri Kuksov, "Competition in Consumer Shopping Experience," *Marketing Science,* vol. 31, no. 6 (2012), 914. "Retailers make substantial and ongoing investments in creating enhanced store shopping environments with the goal of drawing customers to the store and inducing them to purchase. However, it is also apparent from the examples above that consumers can enjoy the shopping experience and entertainment even if in the end they do not purchase the product. In other words, unlike in the case of product quality, consumers can enjoy the consumption utility derived from the shopping experience even if they do not purchase anything from the retailer. This public good like nature of shopping experience implies that consumers may free ride on a retailer's investments and enjoy the shopping environment without purchase — a behavior that is commonly referred to as 'window shopping' or browsing . . . Retailers can build store environments that provide significant shopping experience value observable to customers before they decide whether or not to incur the search costs. This may induce consumers to search because the shopping experience utility can compensate for the event that consumers do not obtain sufficient ex post purchase utility once they have arrived at the store. In addition, shopping experience may act as an instrument that helps the retailer compete for consumers from the rival. ";
and Honig, *Public Things*, 93. Referencing D.W. Winnicott, Bonnie Honig notes that "[shop window faces] cultivate habits of obedience."

Both in its early and contemporary uses, window shopping empirically capitalizes upon that shift in perception known as the "event boundary," or that moment when one physically shifts between thresholds of activity, such as moving from public transportation to pedestrian walkways, and, in doing so, promotes the brain to reset its cognitive impulses, inundating it with the fresh experiences of its new surroundings.[39] Seizing upon the consumer's imaginative capacities in this very way, window shopping entices consumer visitation. It interrupts the natural course of the consumer's path and promotes a visual consumption of both physically and intangibly advertised products. From this visual interaction, storefronts attract potential customers, and, in securing these customers, promote the retailer's wares for the commercial exchange of buying and selling.[40]

This commodification of visual cultures in turn creates the conditions necessary to anesthetize the senses.[41] The constant bombardment of advertisements dulls the visual and auditory senses, the product becomes, to put it plainly, all consuming, and the buildings these retail spaces inhabit become these holding environments for grandiose displays of elite power

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[39] Jeffrey M. Zacks and Khena M. Swallow, "Event Segmentation," *Current Directions in Psychological Science,* vol. 16, no. 2 (2007), 83. As the brain processes information, it segments and divides that information into narrative threads, so, for instance when you walk through a doorway, you might run into a new "event boundary," losing your train of thought in the process of crossing that boundary and alighting upon a new train of thought or narrative thread altogether. "Segmentation is a powerful perceptual operation. By reducing a continuous flux of activity to a modest number of discrete events, a perceiver can achieve terrific economy of representation for perception and later memory. Segmentation is not only economical; it also allows one to think about events as discrete parts that can combine in new ways. This sort of cognition is notoriously difficult with continuous, unsegmented representations. For this reason, people generally perceive space as consisting not of continuous gradations of color and texture but of spatially coherent objects. The same holds in time: Just as much as our everyday perceptual world is made up of discrete objects, it is made up of discrete events.";
Mallgrave, *The Architect's Brain,* 142.;
and Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project,* trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 226-227.

[40] Stern, Gilmartin, and Massengale, *New York, 1900*, 190.

[41] Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 85-90.

and subordination. The phantasmagoria of it all forms the bases for more predictable avenues of consumer behaviors and the reification of consumer identities as encapsulated by the capitalist realities of the corporate elite and storeowners alike.[42]

For the wealthy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the shopping experience affirmed and secured the reality of their privileged existences. For everyone else, the shopping experience offered either an escape from or a further realization of the realities of economic and social inequality. Just the same, the thing-stability of the department store rested upon the labor of peoples almost entirely excluded from the corporate elite's vision for Manhattan.

Correspondingly, to avoid the encroaching peoples and architectures of industrialization–a problem not entirely solved by Consolidation–the corporate elite established their commercial headquarters not in the already built-up area of the Ladies' Mile but in the Herald, Greeley Square, and Fifth Avenue areas of Lower Middle Manhattan, where the ongoing construction of Pennsylvania Station, with its attached post office, made it possible for them to construct a hub for national and international chains of commerce.[43] Simultaneously, with the reconstruction of Manhattan's grid system underway, so as to promote a storeowner migration to the north, the corporate elite connected the older area of the Ladies' Mile to this new area via Broadway, forging a physical and visual link between these two areas, and directing consumers northward.

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[42] Janet Ward Lungstrum, "The Display Window: Designs and Desires of Weimar Consumerism," *New German Critique*, No. 76 (1999), 115-116.;
and Iarocci, *The Urban Department Store in America*, 7.

[43] Andrew S. Dolkart, "The Fabric of New York City's Garment District: Architecture and Development in an Urban Cultural Landscape," *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2011), 18. "Having left the retail, shopping district south of 23rd Street and having invested in the construction of luxurious stores on Fifth Avenue north of 34th Street, retailers had no intention of moving again.";
and Stern, Gilmartin, and Massengale, *New York, 1900*, 191. ". . . Ladies [sic] Mile, a stretch of Broadway extending from Stewart's at Astor Place northward to Madison Square."

This corporate migration garnered the attention of middle class consumers, and therefore the attentions of an increasingly activated and progressive body politic. Exploring these tensions further and drawing in the more nuanced political dialogues of this era, however, necessitates a shift back to the Ladies' Mile and to the shifting gender norms of the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century.

From a feminist perspective, the historical shopping experience underwent a massive paradigm shift. After the Civil War, expectations of domesticity adjusted to meet changing needs. New expectations dictated women shop for their families. Inadvertently, however, shopping and, in particular, department store shopping created a precedent for the re-evaluation of traditional gender roles.[44] Enterprising women capitalized upon the altered state of the shopping experience to bridge the gap between the female world and the socioeconomic and sociopolitical worlds. In spite of the regular and misleading depiction of women as passive figures in exchanges of male dominated consumer cultures, women exploited the emerging presence of the department store to meet their own needs. By means of the department stores of the mid-to-late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women secured access to public life and modes of existence beyond the domestic realm.[45] Nonetheless, department stores were not exemplars of sexual progress.

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[44] Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 131. ". . . images of women's enclosure in the house, a house in which man arranges his possession to satisfy his desire to substitute for the lost security of the womb, presuppose a specifically modern, bourgeois conception of home. The subject that fills its existential lack by seeing itself in objects, by owning and possessing and accumulating property, is a a historically specific subject of modern capitalism. Economic and psychological processes collude in the twentieth particular to encourage the expression of a subject that fulfills its desire by commodity consumption. While this consumer subject is best realized in advanced industrial societies, its allure has spread around the globe. House and home occupy central places in this consumer consciousness as the core of personal property and a specific commodity-based identity. Radical critics of the allure of home rightly find this link of home and identity to be a source of quietism and privilege. The commodified concept of home ties identity to a withdrawal from the public world and to the amount and status of one's belongings."

[45] William R. Leach, "Transformations in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925," *The Journal of American History,* vol. 71, no. 2 (1984), 319. "The public life had been male, and individualism a male legacy that only a few women dared claim as their own."

Much as they do today, department stores objectified, quantified, and exploited the female shopper to increase consumer visitation.[46] In this exploitation of the female shopper, however, department stores created distinctly female–albeit male designed–retail spaces. These retail spaces fostered "safe" spaces for women to travel and shop without chaperones or, more pointedly, male supervision.[47]

Built in the 1860s, the Ladies' Mile devised a public space in New York City in which women could bound back and forth between the private spaces of luxury stores sans an attending and ever-present male gaze. The area was not only a haven for women, but also a refuge from the congestion of the surrounding city and most working-class peoples.[48] That said, to produce these functionally "safe" spaces, retailers hired working-class women to staff their department stores.[49] Women occupied various workplace positions, such as trading, traveling, and marketing.[50]

For the first time in their lives, American working-class women adopted their own, independent public identities, and garnered the blue-collar adjacent status of pink-collar workers.

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[46] Wallace, *Greater Gotham,* 331.

[47] Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 270.

[48] Wallace, *Greater Gotham*, 335. "The department stores had long been ambivalent about the working class–even as shoppers–and the ambivalence was mutual.The bazaars' atmosphere intimidated working people, who in any event had little time to browse and socialize, but they *were* attracted to sales. To separate "shawl trade" from "carriage trade," the stores moved their bargains to the basements (rather as Irish churches had relegated Italians to the lower depths). Now, however, those who actually produced the goods were crashing the consumption party."

[49] Wallace, *Greater Gotham*, 332;
and Susan Porter Benson, "The Cinderella of Occupations: Managing the Work of Department Store Saleswomen, 1900- 1940," *The Business History Review,* vol. 55, no. 1 (1981), 5. "The shopgirl was no accident; she was the direct result of management policies toward the salesforce. In the process of building, organizing, decorating, and systematizing the store, executives had given scant attention to the critical area of selling- the interaction across the counter. Believing on the one hand that selling as it had been practiced by men was an inborn knack, a talent, a fine art, and convinced on the other hand that attractive goods presented in a luxurious environment would practically sell themselves, managers in the great era of department store expansion between 1880 and 1900 had easily convinced themselves that they needed only to staff the counters with neatly dressed, polite women who would sell mechanically and inoffensively." In turn, this gross underestimation of women provided women with the opportunity to take advantage of their commercial surroundings. Women learned and underpinned the entire public market.

[50] Leach, "Transformations in a Culture of Consumption," 332.

Free of the confines of factory-based labor, these women found themselves in an in-between position within and outside of the traditional auspices of control of the corporate elite. These women assumed appearances that aligned with upper and middle class expectations for the shopping experience, operating within and, to some extent, manipulating the visual vocabulary of the department store. In turn, working-class women came into regular contact with upper and middle class women. This contact necessarily inspired social, political, and economic dialogues that closed some of the gaps between classes, and resulted in a robust and outwardly classless women's rights movement under a collective title of sameness.[51]

Beyond its formal yet humble beginnings in the late 1840s, by the 1910s the suffrage movement rose to new heights, and by merit of the scope of this interval of time, women brought their newfound or learned skills to the table. Tapping into the visual vocabularies the corporate elite used in their own retail based world-building programs, and, as we shall see, working with Macy's, women used department store type advertising and traveling campaigns to increase the suffrage movement's public visibility: the national, and even international, scale and use of posters, billboards, publications, parades and pageants all mimicked those previously created for and hosted by department stores (figs. 17-18).[52] Suffragists even set up offices in shop spaces, mimicking the department store type and claiming window spaces for their own sociopolitical products, which, by 1920, with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, helped guarantee

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[51] R. S. Neale, "Working-Class Women and Women's Suffrage." *Labour History*, no. 12 (1967), 16-34. Inwardly, "working-class women … remained inert, exploited and apolitical.";
Wallace, *Greater Gotham*, 796-797.;
and Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, 8-10.

[52] Jessica Sewell, "Sidewalks and Store Windows as Political Landscapes," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture,* vol. 9, Constructing Image, Identity, and Place (2003), 91-93.;
and Leach, "Transformations in a Culture of Consumption," 338.

women the right to vote. In turn, the department store and its image, both products of real and aesthetic appropriations of power, became a generative breeding ground for the real and aesthetic politics of women, and to an extent, today's shopping experience echoes this often forgotten sociopolitical past: women are lampooned for spending too much time and money shopping, occupying social spaces outside of the contemporary purviews of men. And, yes, while women have moved on to different public forums to advocate gender equality, men have undermined the social valencies of these retail spaces, continually introducing new and more flagrant ways to objectify women. So, in that sense the elite completed their aesthetic hegemony. They replaced democracy's participation with mass consumption, an "inclusive" workforce, and a mass empowerment typified by consumer sovereignty and share holder democracy.[53] In a sense contemporary to the early twentieth century, however, the corporate elite struggled to win a major victory in the application of their aesthetic hegemony, and even then it did not go to plan.

By the early 1900s, the Ladies' Mile had succumbed to the congestion of industry, and the symptoms of class struggle came to a head.[54] Having condemned the use of tenement factory workshops in the production of ready-to-wear clothing–fearing these spaces bred transferrable diseases–the elite created their own worst nightmare: new and better factories sprung up around the Ladies' Mile (fig. 19-20). Taking their cue from these unwanted motions of industrialization

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[53] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Princeton University Press, 2004), 588. "Capitalism has transformed itself, from a system of activities analyzable through economic categories to one that has adopted political characteristics and the qualities of a new constitutional blend devoid of democratic substance."

[54] Dolkart, "The Fabric of New York City's Garment District," 17.;
and Ralph M. Hower, *The History of Macy's of New York, 1858-1919: Chapters in the Evolution of the Department Store* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 316. "Macy's had always been a 'popular' store in the sense of catering to the middle class, and they believed that it should so continue, but the lower classes were beginning to predominate in 14th Street traffic. The baby-carriage trade was driving out the carriage trade, and Macy's would have to grade downwards or move north as its regular patrons were tending to do."

then, the elite migrated north where they set up an even more robust haven for commercial exchange in and around the Herald, Greeley Square, and Fifth avenue areas. From there, they proposed zoning laws to combat the installation of the Garment District we know today, first promoting the garment district move to Queens, only to compromise on and later regret the creation of zoning laws in Manhattan itself.[55] The Garment District landed just north of Pennsylvania station on Seventh Avenue. This in turn became a later battle ground for labor union and Progressive Era reforms, in which workers vied for better working conditions, progressives fought to ameliorate the causes of class struggles, and the corporate elite lost the ground necessary to maintain their illusions of absolute control over the north.[56] Lower Middle Manhattan became a shared space extended to the plural political uses of not only upper class but middle and lower class peoples empowered through various contingent and conflicting world-building activities.

Consequently, in seeking to legitimize their control of the land, the elite created a system that not only consolidated their commercial interests with their aesthetic interests but also telegraphed their intentions to the people of New York City–in ways both expected and unexpected. While the creation of Ladies' Mile and the Herald, Greeley Square, and Fifth Avenue areas generated expected commercial exchanges and made elite authority tangible, it also, unexpectedly, activated the suffrage movement and produced the world-building contingencies necessary for women to enter the public world of politics. And spiraling off of Suffragette and middle class involvement with social justice reforms, working class peoples

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[55] Dolkart, "The Fabric of New York City's Garment District," 19-21.;
and Wallace, *Greater Gotham*, 335-338.

[56] Ibid, 337 and 506.

found their political potentials in the collective world-building bodies of labor unions.[57] Beyond these broad sweeping movements and faceless categories, however, we still need to address the economic, social, political, and cultural realities of late nineteenth and early twentieth century New York City in a *particular* sense, or a sense relating to specific peoples linked to specific places. To get a fuller picture of how these broad theoretical and historical themes played out in this particular sense then, we will now turn to a history and analysis of the Macy's on 34th Street.

The History and Significance of the Macy's Department Store and 34th Street

Cashing in on the general market upswing following the economic panic of 1857 and opening in 1858, Rowland Hussey Macy established the first R.H. Macy's & Co. as a dry goods store on 14th Street and Sixth Avenue.[58] Within a few years of opening the store, R.H. Macy built up the Macy's on 14th Street into a competitive retail space replete with an ever-expanding catalogue and livery stables for housing horses and carriages for making deliveries within what we think of today as the Greater New York area.[59] Participating within and beholden to its own economic, social, political, and cultural circumstances, the Macy's on 14th Street simultaneously promoted and benefitted from the creation of the Ladies' Mile, and, proportional to the development of this area, grew into a world class department store–even in spite the panic of 1873.[60]

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[57] Iarocci, *The Urban Department Store in America*, 170.

[58] Margaret Case Harriman, *And the Price is Right* (The World Publishing Company, 1958)*,* 24.

[59] Harriman, *And the Price is Right,* 30. "Along with his store Rowland Macy enlarged and varied his merchandise to include men's wear, household goods, ready-to-wear dresses, 'mechanical' corsets, and linen bosoms. Between 1860 and 1872 he installed 'French and German fancy goods,' drugs, toilet goods, parasols, china and glassware, silver, sporting goods, luggage, toys, musical velocipedes, barometers, gardening sets, bathing costumes, fresh flower and potted plants, a picnic department selling potted meats and jam and other ingredients of an outing *and*–an eye-opening invention at the time–a soda fountain."

[60] Hower, *The History of Macy's of New York, 1858-1919*, 67-97 and 108-110.

In 1877, not long after his death, R.H. Macy's partners, Abiel La Forge and Robert Macy Valentine, decided to rename the store La Forge & Valentine's, and soon bought up all of Macy's heirs' shares so that they could move forward with their plans. Just before the name change went into effect, however, both partners died and were succeeded by Charles B. Webster and Jerome B. Wheeler. Together, these two men brought R.H. Macy's & Co. into the future–both literally and figuratively. They retained its original name, electrified the retail space, and made room for the additions of a Bell telephone and a Western Union office within the department store.[61] Nonetheless, not long after making these additions, Webster dissolved his partnership with Wheeler, and substituted that partnership for one with Isidor and Nathan Straus. Together, these three men faced down and overcame the panic of 1893.[62] And in 1896, when Webster retired, he left the Straus brothers in sole charge of the department store.

After they became the exclusive owning partners of R.H. Macy's & Co., the Strauses expanded Macy's merchandise catalogue to rival those of their big store competitors. This, however, brought up a commercial and spatial problem for the brothers. The Strauses found that the Macy's on 14th Street was too small to hold the contents of their expanded inventories.[63] Beyond building two annexes around the Macy's on 14th Street, the Straus brothers began looking for a location to relocate their business.[64] Following the trends of the corporate elite, they founded the Macy's on 34th Street, a place made increasingly accessible by cross-town

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[61] Harriman, *And the Price is Right,* 33.

[62] Ibid, 37. "[Macy's] advertised in 1894: 'We never deal in old or bankrupt stocks. We sell new and desirable goods only.'"

[63] Ibid, 36-55.

[64] Hower, *The History of Macy's of New York, 1858-1919*, 314-315. "The move uptown involved considerable risk and a heavy capital investment, for the Macy firm had decided to construct its own quarters, a building of vast proportions. Naturally such a far-reaching decision had not been made hastily."

trolleys, an elevated railway, Pennsylvania Station, and a planned route for the subway.[65] Bringing people into commercial exchange with their storefront and competing with other big name department stores, then, the Macy's on 34th Street needed to simultaneously inspire shopping through intuitive and established design principles and curb competitor appeal by prevailing upon the public's imagination.

Composed of smooth-faced rustication, dentil molding, Neo-Palladian motifs, barrel-vaulted archways, fluted pilasters, Beaux Arts bay windows, window displays, awnings, and a no longer extant arcade, the eleven-story Macy's on 34th Street's architectural elements aligned with and tapped into the corporate elite's aesthetic programs and the boarder aesthetics of the New York City department store type (figs. 21-22).[66] Comprising a total of 2.1 million-square-feet, the major department store–sans a small niche on the corner of 34th and Broadway occupied by the Siegel-Cooper holdout building–spans Broadway and Seventh Avenue up to 35th Street.[67] So, by merit of its physical proportions alone, the Macy's on 34th Street dominated the quickly growing landscape of the Herald, Greeley Square, and Fifth Avenue areas, and drew

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[65] Ibid, 315-317.

[66] Stern, Gilmartin, and Massengale, *New York, 1900*, 193.

[67] Christopher Gray, "Streetscapes/The Macy's Notch; How a Thorn Got In the Lion's Paw," *The New York Times* (November 21, 1993). In 1901, Henry Siegel of the Siegel-Cooper Company, a national department store founded in 1897, bought a small, 1,154-square-foot plot of land on the corner of 34th and Broadway. He did so to encourage negotiations with his direct competitors, Isidor and Nathan Straus, the two buy-in co-owners of the then titled "R.H. Macy & Co.": Siegel tried to use this small plot of land to extort a deal for the old Macy's storefront then found on 14th Street and Sixth Avenue. In the end, negotiations failed. And while it did not particularly expand the company's presence in New York City, Siegel-Cooper's purchase did have larger consequences for their competitor, whose larger acquisition of that land meant to encompass the entire west side of Broadway as it extends from 34th to 35th Street. In turn, comprising 2.1 million-square-feet, in 1902, the Macy's on 34th Street grew around Siegel's plot of land. A year later, Siegel built his holdout building, and "MACY'S architects, DeLemos & Cordes, built around the holdout, creating a ground-floor arcade directly behind it and providing a shortcut connecting Broadway and 34th Street.";
and Jeffrey A. Trachtenberg, *The Rain on Macy's Parade* (Random House, 1996), 12. "The very size of the company's 2.1-million-square-foot Herald Square flagship made it a shaper of popular culture, and favorite of New Yorkers and tourists alike.

the masses into commercial exchange with its retail storefront. Here, people came into contact with nearly 360 degrees of shop window displays that, as we established in the section on the department store type, seized upon both their imaginative and economic capacities. Likewise, the size and shape of the store–the largest department store in New York City at that time–made it into a commercial spectacle that outclassed the efforts of its competitors, such as Lord & Taylor, B. Altman, and the Siegel-Cooper Company.[68]

Between 1902 and 1907, Macy's experienced a commercial boom only to then run into the panic of 1907. Following this economic crisis, however, Macy's sales remained depressed, and competition from the nearby Saks & Co. and Gimbels certainly did not help, and problems were only aggravated by the start of the First World War.[69] These events forced Macy's to change tack, and they established a special advisory council to manage stocks and prepare for future troubles.[70] By the 1920s, Macy's revamped its business platform entirely.[71] Macy's began to dedicate itself to broader world-building activities, such as signing petitions to keep the Garment District from encroaching upon their now permanent storefront and headquarters and cashing in on the suffrage movement's Fifth Avenue street parade's and advertising.[72] In turn, these cyclical

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[68] Hower, *The History of Macy's of New York, 1858-1919*, 327. "Between 1902 and 1907, . . . Macy's sales rose rapidly, from 10.76 million dollars to 16.78 million . . .";
and Young, *On Female Body Experience*, 132. "The project of maintaining good 'property values,' and not simply a comfortable living space, produces or exacerbates racial and class exclusion, which condemns a majority to inferior housing while a few reap windfall benefits. To the extent that housing status is also associated with lot size and building size, attachment to house [sic] as status also maldistributed land and living space, giving too much to some people and wrongly crowding others." Insofar as this argument applies to houses as private spaces, it also applies numerous private spaces, including the department store."

[69] Ibid, 327-329 and 374.

[70] Ibid, 380-381.

[71] Ibid, 399. "The rise of Macy's volume of sales is a good index of the firm's performance in the 1920's. In spirt of the sharp business recession in 1920-1921 and the precipitous price decline which accompanied it, Macy's sales increased rapidly from $35,800,000 in 1919 to $98,500,000 in 1929 and just under $99,000,000 in 1930."

[72] Wallace, *Greater Gotham*, 336 and 798.

processes of world-building became self-generative and reveal the highly contingent natures of those economic, social, and political worlds as they are cemented in the aesthetic realm of the cultural.

Macy's was drawn into the sociopolitical forays of suffragism, labor unions, and a set of politics not wholly their own–insofar as they were a private commercial entity. If it is possible to draw any parallels to the plural movements mentioned in my section on the history of New York City, the Macy's on 14th Street engaged in and sometimes profited from the broader campaigns of Consolidation, defined by the establishment and subsequent abandonment of Ladies' Mile, the electrification of the city, and increased chains of communication; the Progressive Era, defined by the suffrage movement and labor unions; and the quake of the Great Depression, defined by the preceding tremors or economic panics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Regardless of how aware they were of their involvement, Macy, La Forge, Valentine, Webster, Wheeler, and the Strauses all helped shape and produce the New York City we know today via their contingent engagement with the collective world-building practices of the corporate elite, the Suffragettes, and the middle and lower classes. This is not to say that they were part of a monolithic world-building entity, for to make such a claim would be to transpose the properties of the sovereign individual across multiple collective entities. Rather, this is to say that the works and actions of the Macy's firm rested largely upon the contingent works and actions of others determined to shape the public and private through their own actions of world-building. Thus, it was not through individual corporate sovereignty alone the Macy's on 34th succeeded. In this way, Macy's succeeded as a public thing, something both visually and physically shared by those

public, political bodies and imaginaries capable–together in their agonistic political pluralities–of reshaping their environment.

Appendix: Illustrations

Figure 1: Advertisement for Macy's Department Store and the Sunglass Hut

Figure 2: Glass storefront found opposite Greeley Square

Figure 3: Glass storefront found on the southwest corner of 34th and Broadway

Figure 4: Scaffolding on Sixth Avenue to the right of Herald Square

Figure 5: Hotdog stand outside the Sunglass Hut

Figure 6: Advertisements and traffic barriers along Broadway and left of Herald Square

Figure 7: People pouring out of the subway stop found on the southwest corner of 34th and Broadway

Photo embargoed due to copyright

Figure 8: Macy's, ca. 1908

Figure 9: Early 1900s, facing Herald Square along Broadway's northward progression

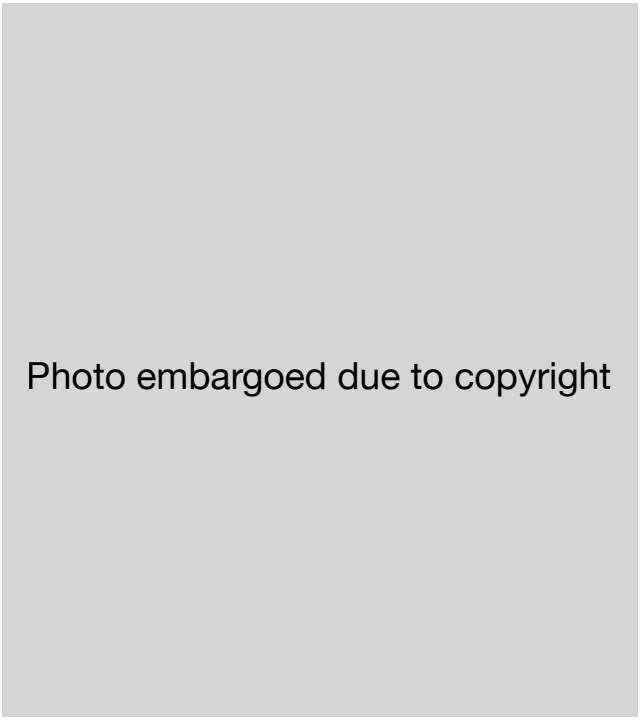

Figure 10: Map of proposed sanitation systems, 1914

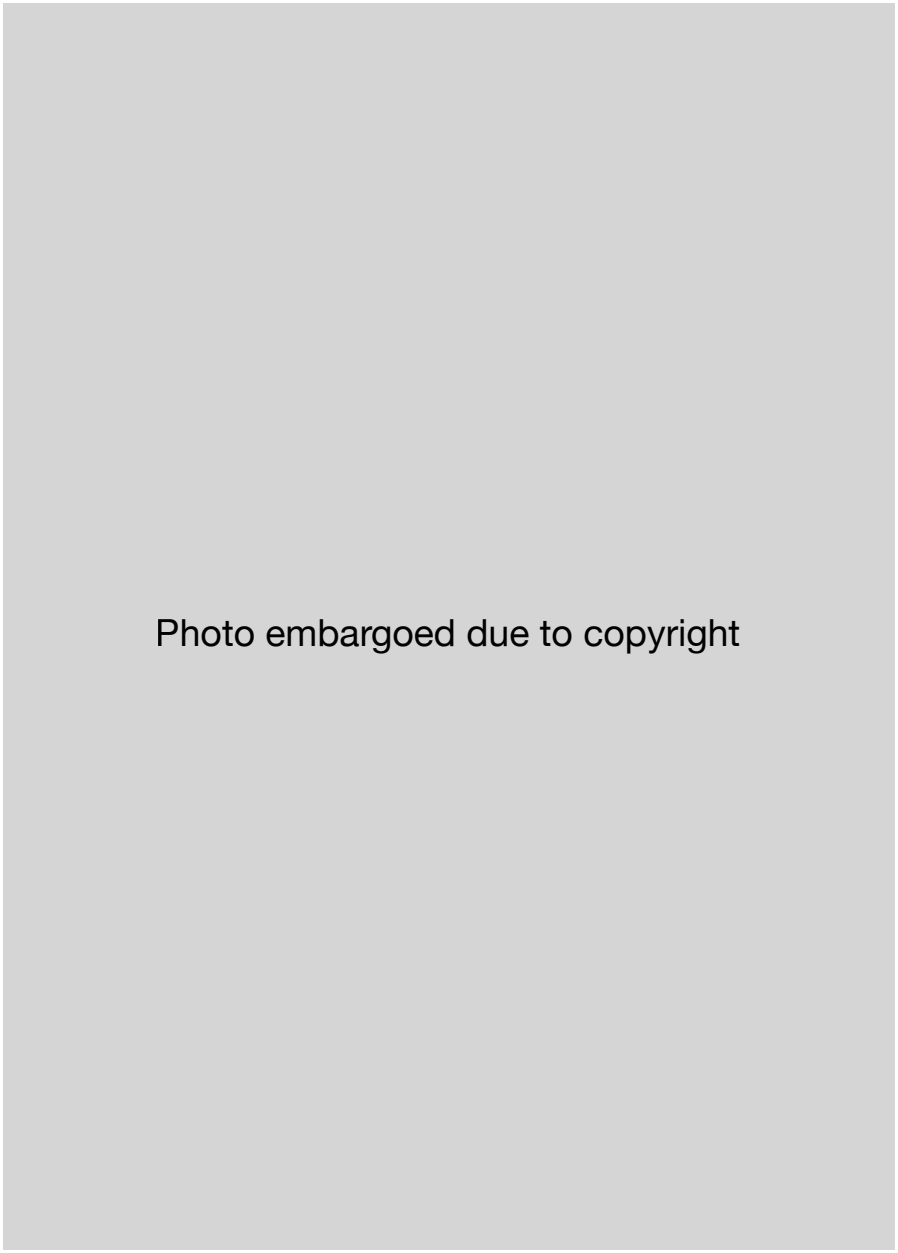

Figure 11: Advertisement promoting tunneling projects to and from Pennsylvania Station, ca. 1910

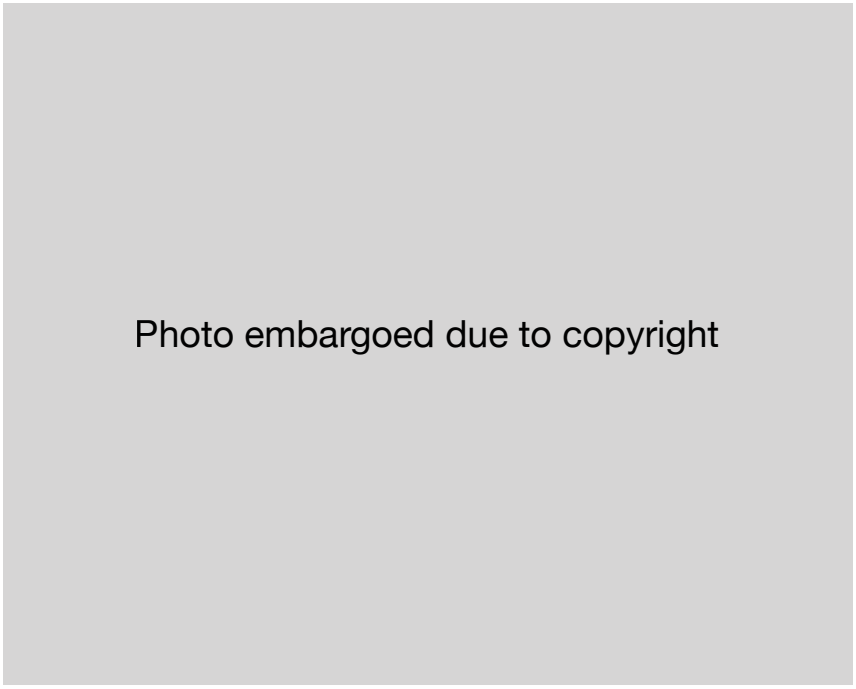

Figure 12: Interior shot of Hudson River Tunnel, ca. 1908

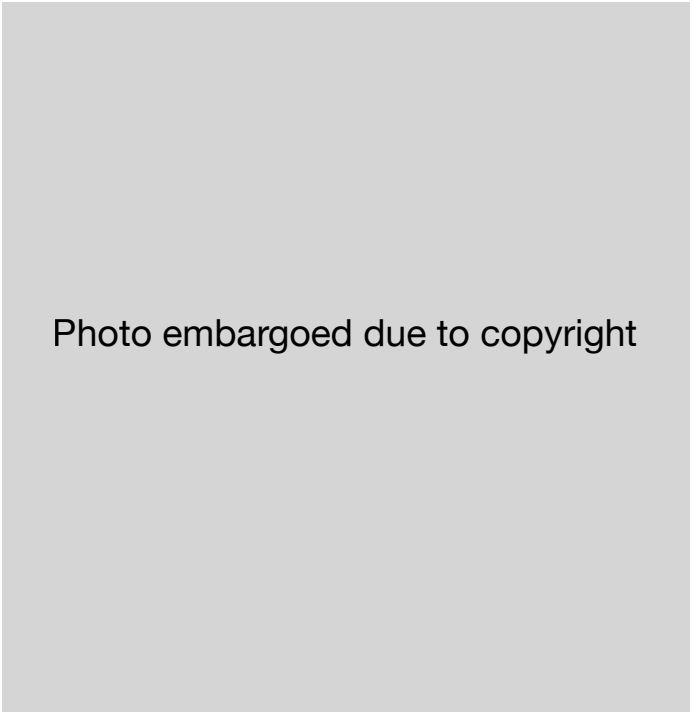

Figure 13: Illustration of Pennsylvania Station, 1910

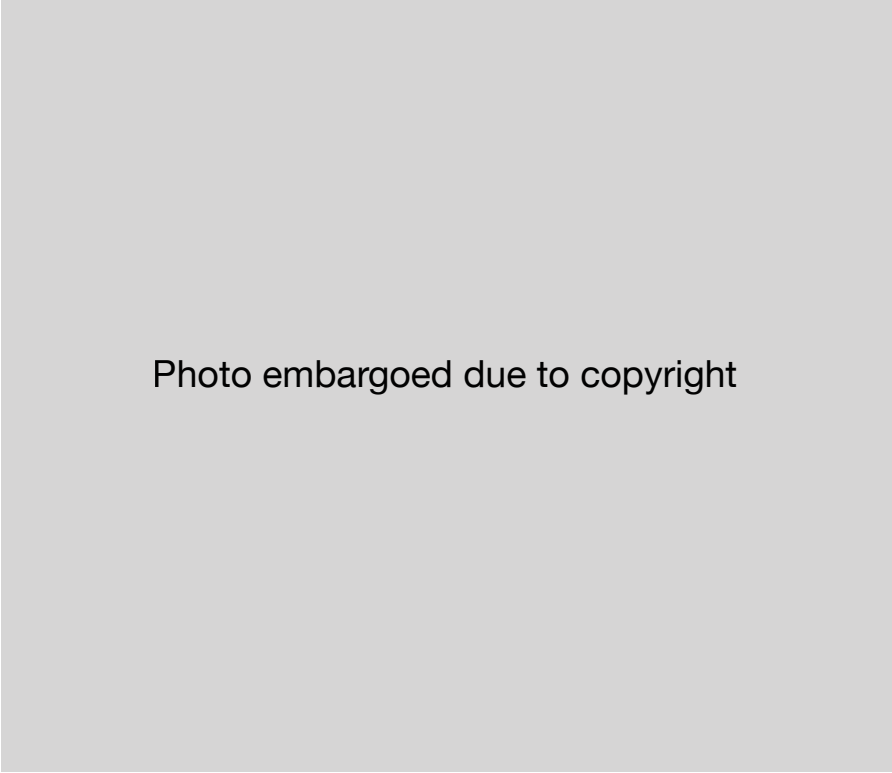

Figure 14: An example of the electrification of the city

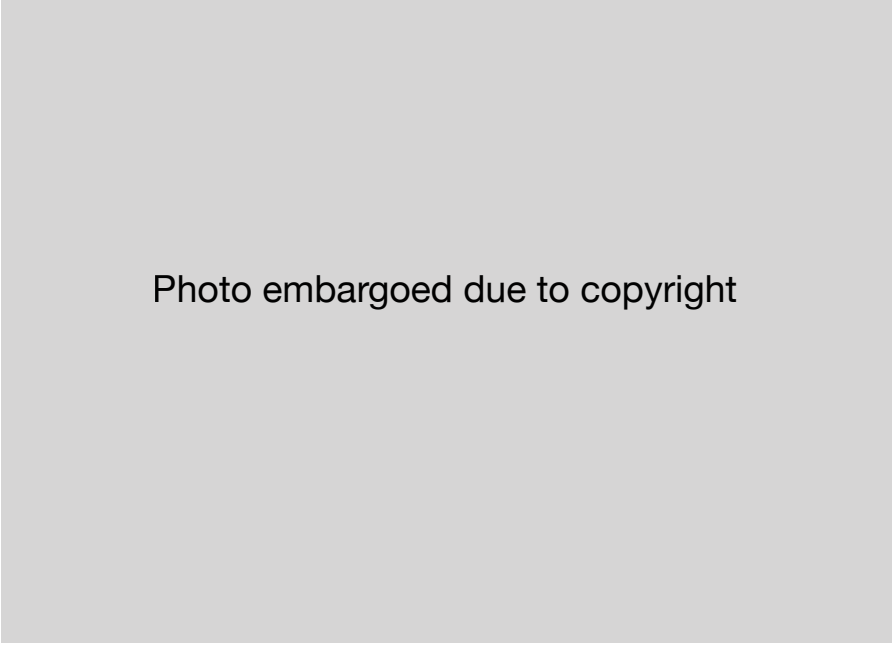

Figure 15: Improved docks and piers on the Hudson, 1912

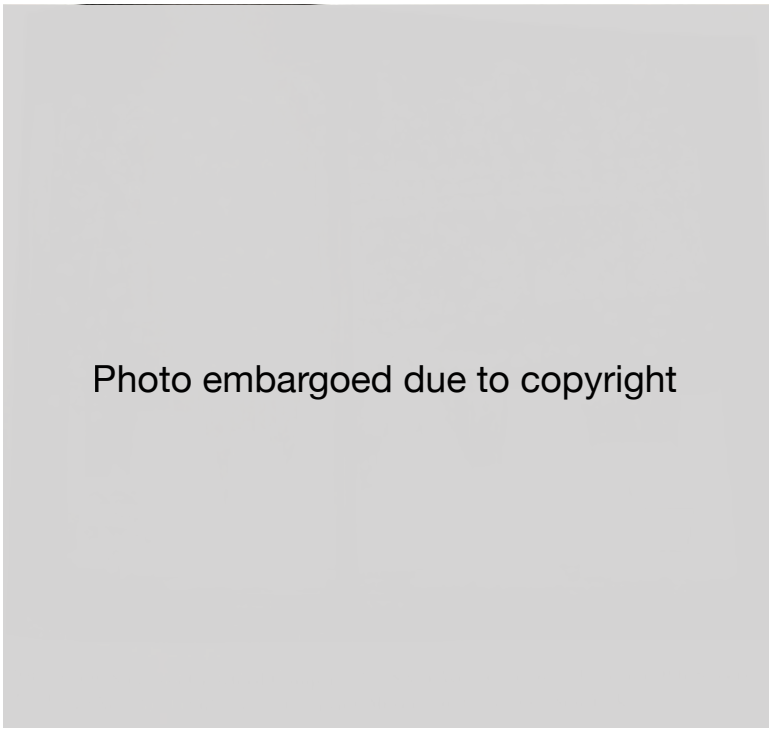

Figure 16: Shop Window, Simpson Crawford Company, Sixth Avenue, 1905

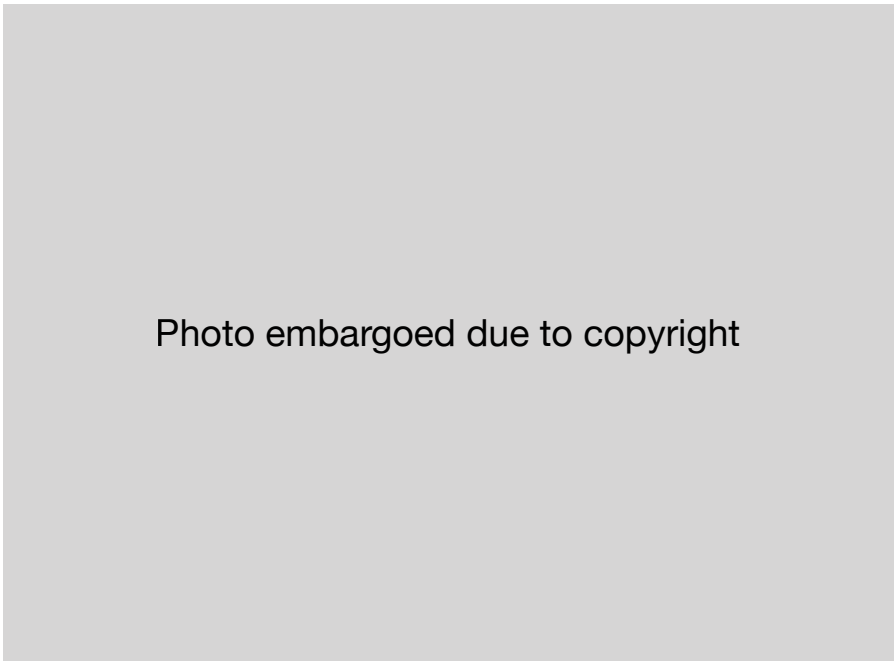

Figure 17: Women's Suffrage Parade, 1913

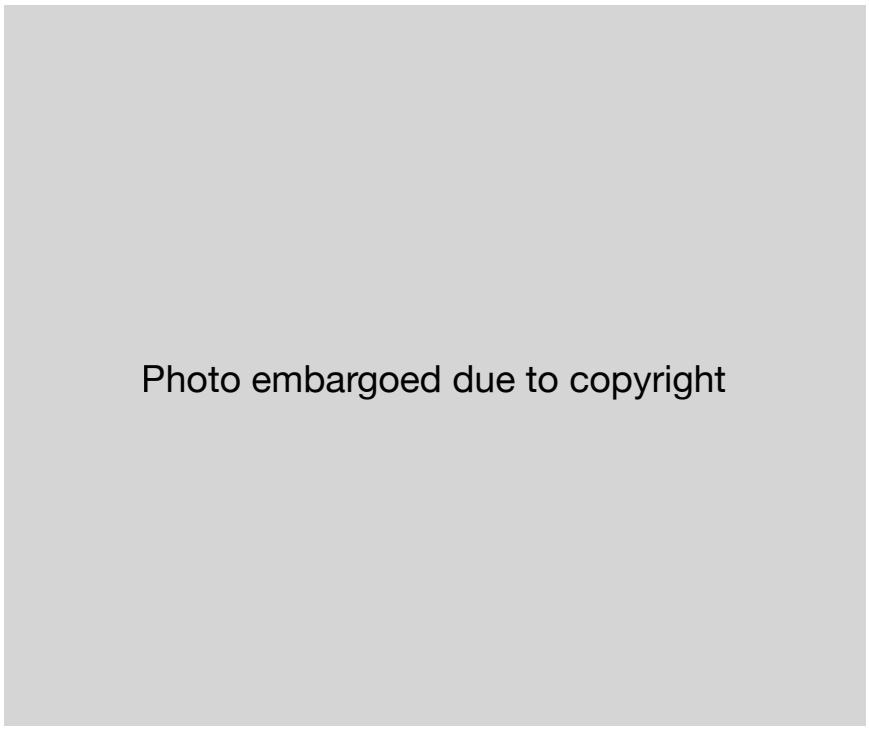

Figure 18: Example of suffragette visibility and advertising, January 27, 1910

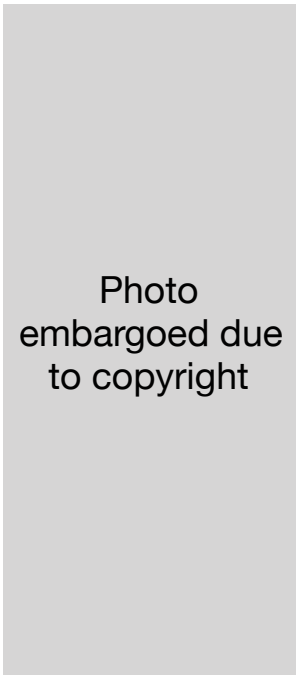

Figure 19: Example of the disease hysteria, ca. 1913

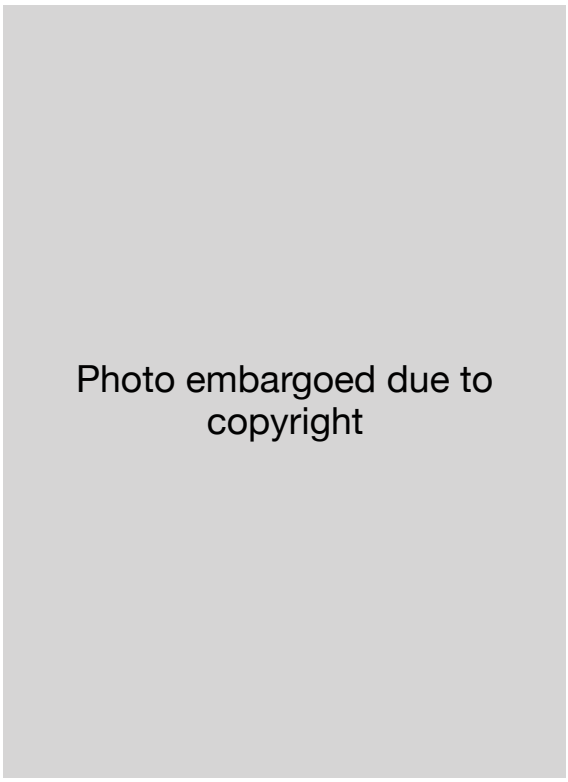

Figure 20: Distribution maps of garment factories and plants around Ladies' Mile, 1900 and 1912

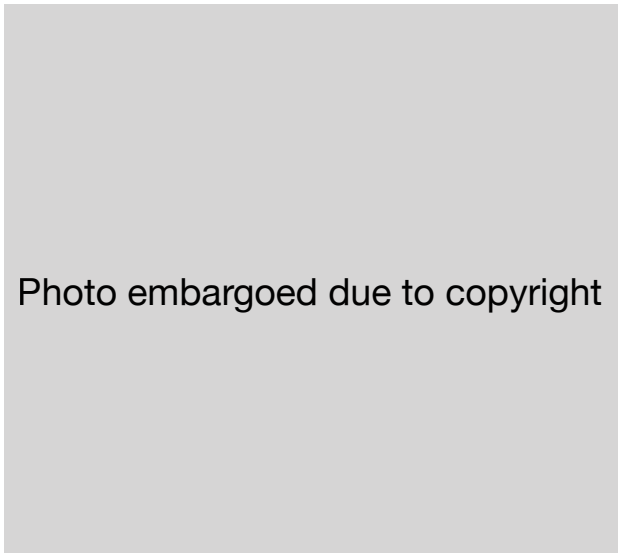

Figure 21: The Macy's On 34th Street, ca. 1908

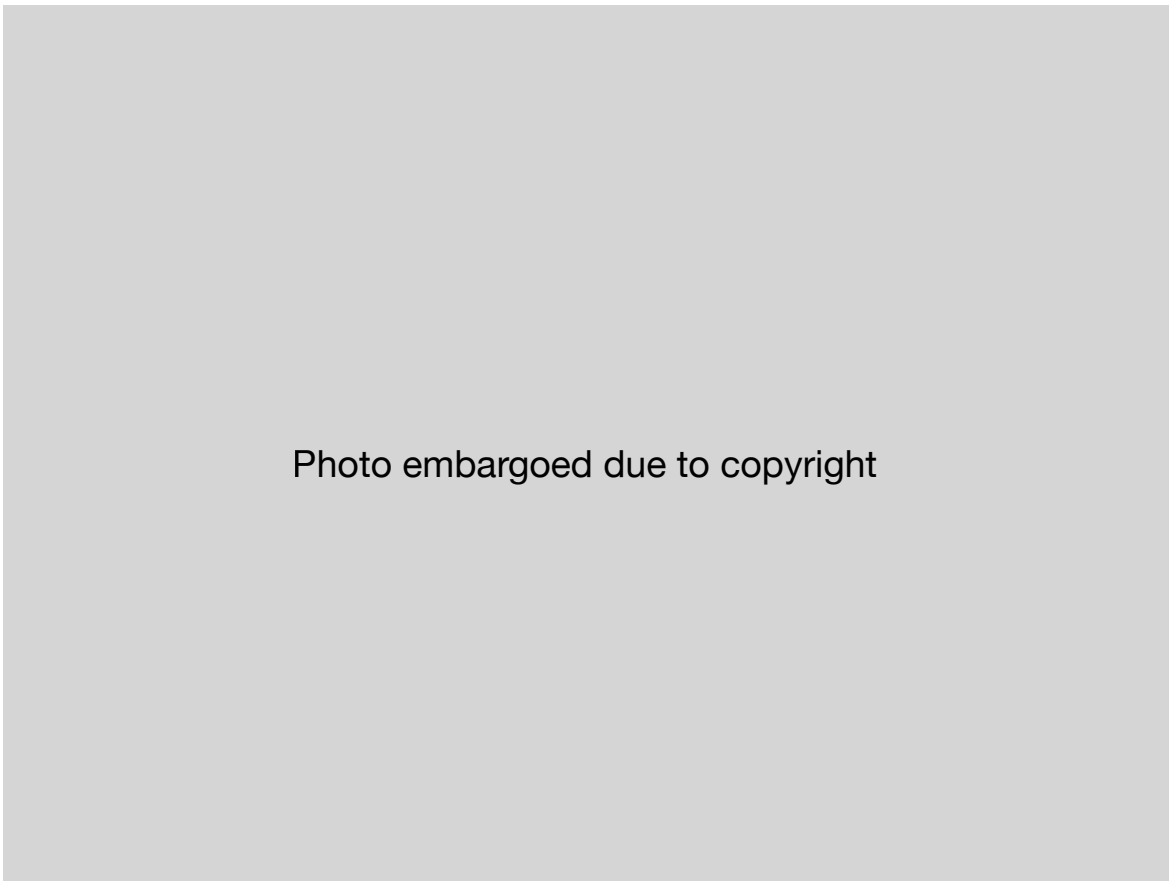

Figure 22: The Macy's on 34th Street, as seen along Broadway from 34th to 35th Street, ca. 1905

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Figures 1-7 taken by me.

Figure 9: (https://www.ecrater.com/p/25179322/herald-square-in-york-city-circa-1904).

Figure 21: (https://www.shorpy.com/node/10231?size=_original).

Figure 22: (https://www.shorpy.com/node/17318?size=_original).