New York City and beyond – by Elly – August 2016

Just before the fall semester started, I decide to go to New York for a three-day trip to see friends (and a city) I hadn’t seen since 2004. Seeing the friends was wonderful; I am still smiling about it! The landmarks are also still very impressive. On my flight in, I had a very clear view of Ellis Island, Statue of Liberty, and the entire Island of Manhattan before landing at La Guardia.

From my hotel at night: Empire State on the right and Chrysler in the middle.

And a related view during the day.

New York is a boom town: so much new construction of high rise apartments and congestion as a result. Much of the areas that used to be affordable (aka 'low-income housing') but have been replaced by or converted into higher-end condos. My first trip to New York was in 1980 so much has changed. It is sad to see so much of the great neighborhoods, like the lower East Side and China Town, under attack; see e.g. here. The picture below on the left shows some old holdouts and some silly high rises and the one on the right pictures from the cast iron district in SoHo.
On the West side, 35th street or so

Some new buildings
The new Whitney Museum is a beautiful building with lots of space and places to get outside and look out over the Hudson and NYC. My only complaint is that it isn’t chock-a-block with art. There is lots of white space where they could have more paintings (and other art). They have a wonderful archive online (http://collection.whitney.org/artists/by-letter/A) and that made me all the sorrier not to have seen more Alice Neel (of which they have 11), Alex Katz (69 works), Chuck Close, Beauford Delaney, Cy Twombly, Larry Rivers, Susan Rothenberg, etc. I never understand Basquiat but always love his colors and sense of symmetry and the below was on display.
The new transportation hub at the World Trade Center, the Oculus, opened in May this year (after 15 years and costing close to $4 billion); it looks like a bird and is huge inside. It feels like entering a modern cathedral until you notice the high-end stores.

The National Museum of the American Indian is no longer newly housed in the Customs House at Battery Park but has been there since 1994. It had an exhibition of Plains Indians’ Ledger Drawing, both old and new, called *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains*. The picture on the left is by a Lakota warrior from a century ago and the one on the right is contemporary by a Blackfeet. I love this art.
The art of drawing on hides and (later) ledger paper goes back to the 18th century when battles and other historic events were recorded by the Plains people. The art was revived in the 1970s and, as you can see by the art on the right, it is again using old ledger books as background.

Some other areas where I just wandered – the temperature and humidity were perfect for August – were the Lower East Side, Stuyvesant Town, the UN area, and Times Square. When I first came to NY in the 1980s, it was a heaven for book lovers, the first (and original) Barnes & Noble and The Strand, among many others. The Strand is still there, “with 18 miles of books”, and I only bought one book there to read on the way back.

**Delaware River Gap**
The last day I visited a Dutch friend in New Jersey, in Warren County close to the southern part of the Delaware River Gap. We had lots to catch up on and just talked and saw the countryside. The woods, narrow, winding roads, and old houses reminded me of the years I had spent in Putnam Valley, close to Peekskill. The area around the Gap as well as the areas going up the Hudson had been very Dutch, Dutch-speaking up to the 1800s. I learned a new term, i.e. ‘mothballing’ a house, as in the picture.
with view:

Dream fixer-upper’s view

Another beauty!  And the nasty poison-ivy!

The Delaware
Some NYC Street art to finish:

Gansevoort Street

Both around Gansevoort Street

The end!