

**NEW SCHOOL DEDICATES THE VERA LIST COURTYARD**

(New York, NY -- November 2, 1997) -- The New School dedicated the Vera G. List Courtyard in honor of Vera List, a life trustee of the University. The renovated courtyard is located between the New School's J. M. Kaplan Building at 66 West 12th Street and the Eugene Lang Building at 65 West 11th Street and was designed by landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh in collaboration with sculptor Martin Puryear. As a small neighborhood park, the facility will be used by the residents of Greenwich Village as well as by the New School community. More than 30,000 students pass through the New School every year, and thousands more New Yorkers attend academic conferences and panel discussions, performances, community meetings, and other special events at the New School.

President Jonathan F. Fanton commented that "the Vera List Courtyard represents a very important moment in the history of the New School. Its planning required that the University reaffirm its deep commitment to freedom of expression, a defining characteristic of the New School since its founding in 1919, and a source of inspiration for such efforts as organizing the University in Exile in 1933 to rescue scholars, artists and intellectuals endangered by Nazism."

To carry out the initial planning to make the courtyard into a work of art, the New School sought and received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1990. However, the grant required that the University sign an anti-obscenity condition, based on the Helms Amendment. The New School challenged the constitutionality of that condition, contending that it violated both the First and Fifth amendments to the U. S. Constitution.

The New School hired first amendment lawyer Floyd Abrams to sue the NEA. As a result of the University's challenge, in February 1991 the NEA dropped the requirement that the New School and all other grantees sign the anti-obscenity condition. Following the agreement to drop that requirement, Mr. Abrams said that "the deletion by the NEA of the unconstitutional oath it required all grant recipients to sign is a major vindication of the First Amendment. The oath was irreconcilable with the Constitution; its demise is a welcome step."

Through a planning grant from the NEA, the University commissioned Mr. Van Valkenburgh and Mr. Puryear to develop a joint design. On the basis of their design, an entirely new ground plan for the courtyard was constructed. The connecting foyer of the J. M. Kaplan Building on 12th Street was extended into the courtyard by means of a large stair that also functions as informal seating. The lower level has been paved with bluestone, and a gently sloping walkway provides barrier-free access for wheelchair users and circles around a mound-like land form planted with a grove of small deciduous trees. An oval terrace on the mound serves as a dais for lectures, concerts and academic ceremonies. A dense perimeter landscape of bamboo frames the east side of the courtyard and creates a background for a curved, double-height sitting stair that also functions as an outdoor classroom and performance space.

The renovation cost \$2.6 million and was paid for through private contributions. Vera List has been a member of the University community for more than four decades as a student, trustee and life trustee, art patron, and benefactor. Mrs. List also endowed several student scholarships at the New School, a philosophy chair at the Graduate Faculty, and the Vera List Center for Art and Politics. She has promoted a wider appreciation of art by sponsoring creative competitions, by underwriting student admissions to museums, and by contributing more than 300 pieces of art and sculpture to the University's art collection.



Commenting on Mrs. List, President Fanton said that her "imagination, vision, dedication, and sheer enthusiasm are a bulwark against dullness and doubt, cynicism and sagging spirits. We think of you as an extraordinarily gifted gardener, one who nurtures and coaxes young artists, scholars, and institutions into bloom." Other speakers at the dedication of the courtyard were Agnes Gund, President of the Museum of Modern Art who was chair of the New School's Art Collection Committee during the initial planning of the new courtyard, Messrs. Puryear and Van Valkenburgh, and University trustee Eugene Lang who encouraged other trustees to contribute to the courtyard with his own leadership gift.

The design is a total collaboration between Puryear and Van Valkenburgh, but Mr. Puryear was responsible for the sculptural seating and the canopy that covers the skyway. Three of his large seating structures, one of wood, one of granite, and a third of steel mesh, are placed at key points in the design. [Mr. Puryear has decided to produce and sell a very limited edition of these specially-designed seating elements called multiples. The proceeds will go towards funding the courtyard.] Their form is reminiscent of the large circular sofas often found in museums that allow visitors to sit facing out in all directions. For the interior space adjacent to the courtyard, Mr. Puryear has created a large gently curving wooden bench that extends throughout the lower lobby and echoes the slope and curve of the interior walkway that incorporates the required hand rail for access by the disabled.

The team of Puryear and Van Valkenburgh was selected after extensive consultation with members of the University community and outside consultants. Mr. Puryear is the recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship and won the Grand Prize at the Sao Paulo Biennial in 1989.

Mr. Van Valkenburgh has won many awards and counts the expansion of the Walker Art Center Sculpture Garden, the Grand Avenue Plaza Park in Los Angeles, and a 66-acre park in Columbus, Ohio, among recent projects.

At Eugene Lang College, a division of the New School, a \$2.5 million renovation has also taken place. In October, new spaces opened at the Building located at 65 West 11th Street, designed by architect Rolf Ohlhausen. The spaces include a ground floor dining room, which looks onto the new Vera List Courtyard, a new coffee cafe, and on the lower level of the Building, a reading room, writing center and five new faculty offices. On the fourth floor of the Building, four new faculty offices, two seminar rooms and the College's new science laboratory were also completed.

Since its establishment in 1919, the New School has had a long history in the arts. Students seeking degrees in the arts account for 53% of the New School's total student enrollment, and more than 30,000 adults come to take courses and attend events in the arts each semester.

The divisions of the New School are Parsons School of Design, Mannes College of Music, Eugene Lang College, Robert J. Milano Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy, Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science, School of Dramatic Arts/Actors Studio, and The New School.

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