



## NEW SCHOOL DEDICATES THE VERA LIST COURTYARD

(New York, NY -- Embargoed until November 2, 1997) -- The New School dedicated the Vera List Courtyard in honor of Vera List, a life trustee of the University. The renovated courtyard is located between the New School's Alvin Johnson and J.M. Kaplan Buildings 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 for 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.

The renovation of the 4,500 square foot courtyard cost \$2.6 million and was paid for through private contributions. Mrs. List is a major contributor to the University. An influential member of the University community for more than four decades as a student, trustee and life trustee, art patron, and benefactor. Mrs. List also endows several student scholarships at the New School, a philosophy chair at the New School's Graduate Faculty, and the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at the New School. She has promoted a wider and deeper 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.

"Everyone associated with the courtyard project," President Jonathan F. Fanton commented, "takes pride in the aesthetically unique, extraordinarily versatile design which provides space for a range of activities, both public and private. Landscaping and the use of other design elements will combine to make this an oasis in a dynamic urban campus."

Through a planning grant from the National Endowment for the Arts\*, the University commissioned Mr. Valkenburgh and Mr. Puryear. In the Puryear and Van Valkenburgh design, an entirely new ground plan for the courtyard was constructed. The connecting foyer of the New School 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 design is a total collaboration between Mr. Puryear and Mr. Van Valkenburgh, but Mr. Puryear was responsible for the sculptural seating and for the canopy that covers a visually problematic 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 project.] 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.

After extensive consultations with members of the University community and consultants, the team of Puryear and Van Valkenburgh was selected. Mr. Puryear is the recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship and won the Grand Prize at the Sao Paolo 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.

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 of 6,000 students, and over 30,000 adults come to take courses and attend events in the arts.

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

\* In 1990, the New School sought injunctive relief from a condition of prior restraint concerning obscenity imposed by the National Endowment for the Arts for acceptance of the grant. The New School contended that this particular condition violated the University's First and Fifth Amendment Rights. It restricted more speech than the Supreme Court's obscenity standard would possibly permit and defined obscenity in a manner inconsistent with binding Supreme Court rulings. Jonathan F. Fanton, President of the New School said then that the condition was "akin to a loyalty oath" and posed a "disturbing threat to freedom of expression." In 1991, the New School reached an agreement with the National Endowment for the Arts in its lawsuit that removed the obscenity condition. The New School has had a deep commitment to freedom of expression since the institution's founding in 1919. That commitment was reaffirmed when the New School organized the University in Exile, an effort to rescue scholars, artists and intellectuals endangered by Nazism. The University was prepared to act in the case of a threat to free speech.

For information about the Puryear multiples, contact David McKee Gallery, 745 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10151. Telephone: 212/688-5951. Fax: 212/752-5638

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