


WENDY LUBOVICH

111  
MUSEUMS  
IN NEW YORK  
  
THAT YOU  
MUST NOT  
MISS

Photographs by Ed Lefkowitz

emons:

# 1 — 101 Spring Street

*Order as art in life and work*

Iconic sculptor Donald Judd (1928–1994) preferred symmetry. Perhaps the best way to understand his repeating, rectilinear works is to visit his home and work space at 101 Spring Street. The artist worked and lived with his wife and two children in the five-story, 19th-century, cast-iron building in SoHo in the 1970s. Maintained by the Judd Foundation, this historic studio takes you on a journey into the creative world. It is a visual time capsule of 1970s New York.

Take a guided tour, and you'll see all the floors are laid out just as Judd left them. The light here is exceptional, with plentiful windows looking out on the cobblestone streets. Each level had a function, but it's the second-floor kitchen that is the most revealing, with its exact arrangement of open shelves of glasses, stacked plates and platters, knives, cutting boards, and even a rotary phone with its original number on the dial. It's the way Judd purposely placed these everyday objects that is so intriguing – an unwavering ordering of space. Just like his art.

Even though Judd is considered a pioneer of minimalism, he didn't like the term. The movement's idea was to take human emotion out of art and emphasize the object itself. Judd often used machine-made materials like steel to create his sculptures – not just the objects, but the space around them too. In the fifth-floor bedroom, Judd installed a platform bed on the ground. It offers uninterrupted views of the art all around, where works by friends of the sculptor, like John Chamberlain and Claes Oldenburg, are just as Judd placed them. The focal point is the 1970 Dan Flavin red and white fluorescent sculpture, which commands attention. Running the length of the room, the work's flickering light frames the night sky. It magically floats in the room and grounds it all at once. Perfectly placed by the artist, this work in this space is pure Judd.

**Address** 101 Spring Street, New York, NY 10012, +1 (212)219-2747, [www.juddfoundation.org](http://www.juddfoundation.org), [info@juddfoundation.org](mailto:info@juddfoundation.org) | **Getting there** Subway to Spring Street (C, E, 6), Prince Street (N, R), Broadway/Lafayette Street (M) | **Hours** See website to arrange a guided visit | **Tip** Some of the city's best films and documentaries are shown at the nearby Film Forum, a beloved art-house mainstay since 1970, with foreign films, independents, and American classics (209 West Houston Street, New York, NY 10014, [www.filmforum.org](http://www.filmforum.org)).



## 2\_\_ 9/11 Tribute Museum

*Stories of survival and recovery*

In the years following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, onlookers flooded into lower Manhattan to see Ground Zero. But what they found were police barricades and other confused bystanders. They needed information. So in 2006, the 9/11 Families Association stepped in to fill the void. They established the 9/11 Tribute Museum to tell the story of that day through exhibits and walking tours led by volunteers, who share their first-hand experiences. “Most museums collect artifacts. We like to say we collect people,” says Director of Programs, Kristine Pottinger.

The volunteers are family members, survivors, rescue and recovery workers, civilian volunteers, and local residents. Their stories help the rest of us understand. You begin your visit with rare videos of the day of the attack and recovery efforts afterwards. Carefully chosen objects highlight the human voice. The badly damaged firefighter’s turnout gear belonged to Firefighter Jonathan Ielpi, son of Tribute co-founder Lee Ielpi. A smashed briefcase found in the rubble represents its owner Jim Geiger, who was evacuated from the North Tower’s 51st floor. He remembers FBI agents saying, “Get as far away from the building and as fast as you can!”

The personal stories told live here make this museum truly unique. Volunteers sit on a stool in the story area and tell their truth. Listen to a son who lost his firefighter father in the attacks and worked on rebuilding the World Trade Center site. A survivor from the south tower honors the man who saved her at the cost of his own life. Or a woman whose husband died in the attack. In his honor, she now helps pay medical costs for children. These are the lives after 9/11.

Finally, we see a gallery showing all the companies, foundations, and non-profit organizations that have sprung up as a result of 9/11. They represent the ultimate spirit of service and resilience.



Retired Firefighter Lee Ielpi searches for his son Firefighter Jonathan Ielpi

"I met a lot of dads that were looking for their sons. Again, like we said, the fire service, it's a tradition that's passed down to your kids. There were a lot of sons that showed up to look for their dads. Nephews looking for uncles. About eight of us got together, dads, and stayed together. We were nicknamed the 'Band of Dads.' We would meet up in the morning, have a plan for the day. You realized that the devastation was so extensive."

**Lee Ielpi**  
FIREFIGHTER, RESCUE 2 FONY (RETIRED)  
FATHER OF FONY FIREFIGHTER JONATHAN IELPI



**Address** 92 Greenwich Street, New York, NY 10006, +1 (866)737-1184, [www.911tributemuseum.org](http://www.911tributemuseum.org), [info@911tributemuseum.org](mailto:info@911tributemuseum.org) | **Getting there** Subway to Wall Street (4, 5), Rector Street (1, N, R, W) | **Hours** Mon–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun 10am–5pm | **Tip** Pay tribute to another survivor of the 9/11 attacks, a massive, 25-foot-tall, cast-bronze sculpture by German artist Fritz Koenig, called *The Sphere*. It was recovered from the rubble, damaged but mostly intact, and remains a symbol of strength (Liberty Park, 165 Liberty Street, New York, NY 10281).

### 3—Alice Austen House

*A picture perfect cottage*

If Alice Austen (1866–1952) were alive today, you can imagine that she would have a big social media following. Photography was her passion, and she was constantly taking pictures of family and friends in her upper-crust Staten Island milieu. Summer costume parties, groups of bustle-wearing women posing for the camera. Victorian life unplugged.

To visit her waterside cottage in Staten Island is to immerse yourself in the life of one of America's earliest and most prolific female photographers, who captured 8,000 images. Floor-to-ceiling windows open out over New York Harbor, with lovely boats passing by. Named "Clear Comfort," the house is where Alice lived with her life partner Gertrude Tate. Standing in the 1690 cottage today, with its low ceilings and patterned wallpaper, you feel the presence of her life and artistry. And also her independent spirit. Alice was a rebel, packing her heavy camera equipment onto her bicycle to pedal to the ferry. She took street photos of immigrants on the Lower East Side. A girl selling newspapers, an organ grinder and his wife, she took candid portraits showing humanity amidst the struggle. She was a photojournalist 40 years before the term was even coined.

Step out onto the sun porch, and you can leaf through albums of her work. It feels as if you are discovering a lost cache of images. In fact, it's lucky her glass negatives survived at all. While Alice enjoyed an affluent life, she lost everything in the 1929 stock market crash. She was so destitute that she was declared a pauper. Forced to sell this idyllic cottage and all her possessions in 1945, she called the Staten Island Historical Society to take her negatives. And there they sat until a researcher discovered them in 1950. They were published in a book, and in *Life Magazine*. Just before Alice died, she attended an exhibition of her work. It was sweet recognition indeed.

**Address** 2 Hylan Boulevard, Staten Island, NY 10305, +1 (718)816-4506, [www.aliceausten.org](http://www.aliceausten.org) | **Getting there** Staten Island Ferry, then S 51 bus (Bus Ramp B) to Hylan Boulevard and Bay Street | **Hours** Tue–Fri 1–5pm, Sat & Sun 11am–5pm | **Tip** Visit the little known Garibaldi-Meucci Museum to learn about an Italian refugee touted to be the true inventor of the telephone (420 Tompkins Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10305, [www.garibaldimeuccimuseum.org](http://www.garibaldimeuccimuseum.org)).



## 56 Mossman Lock Collection

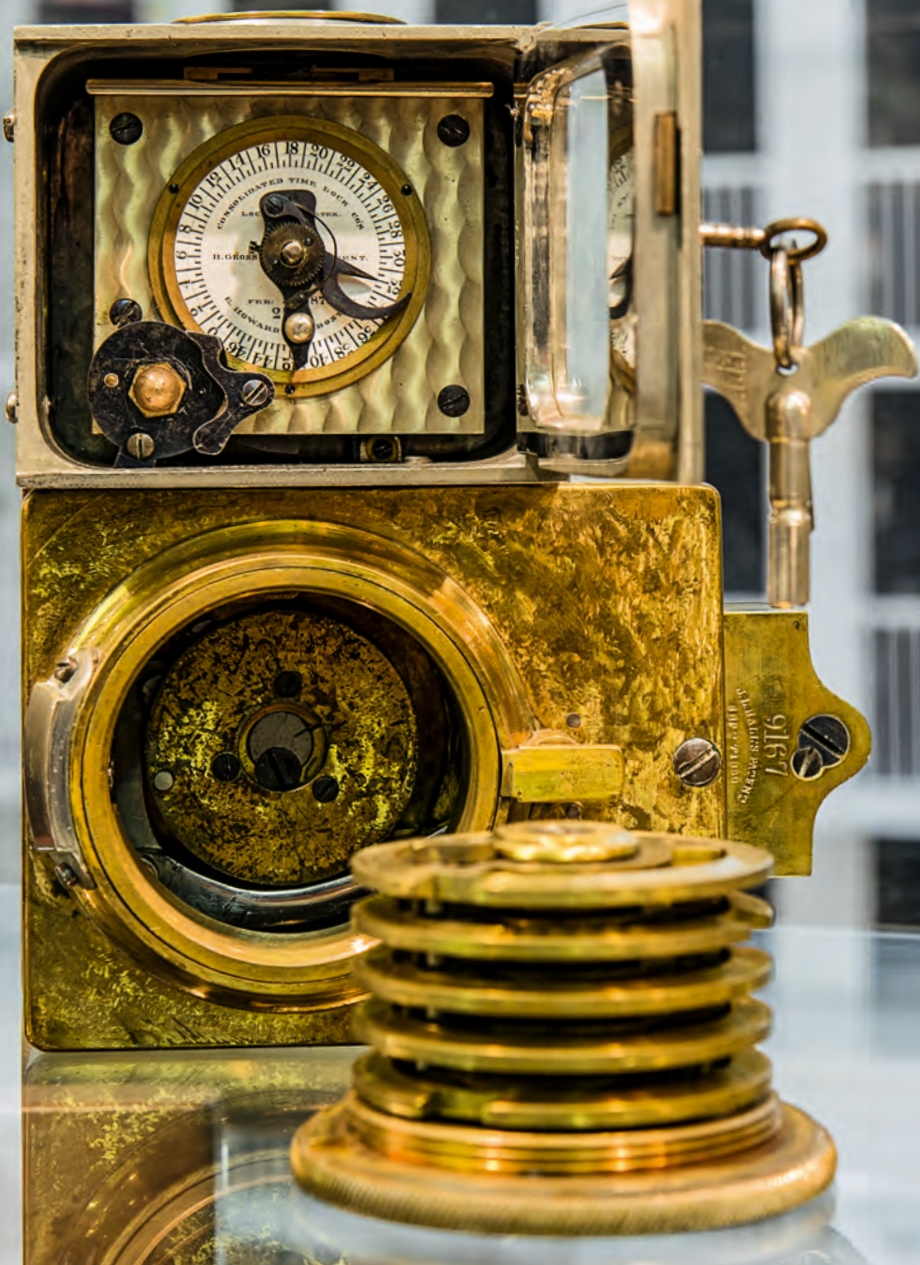
*A key to the unexpected*

The John M. Mossman Lock Collection is a surprisingly obscure and delightfully quirky discovery. The moment you find it, you'll start worrying that it might one day go away. A museum of locks? Yes, and here's why. It is hosted in an historic building of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen of the City of New York. With its Tiffany front window, marble floors, and soaring curved staircase, this landmark space makes you feel as though you are stepping into a secret club. Go straight ahead for a quick peek into the General Society Library, a hidden city gem. Soaring three stories high, a glorious skylight crowns the reading room, with its polished brass lamps and worn wooden desks. You may very well have this exquisite room to yourself.

The lock museum itself is housed right above you on the second floor. There aren't crowds waiting to get in. More likely, someone will have to escort you up the stairs and turn on the lights. Next, you are handed a vintage book that will be your guide, detailing more than 370 locks, keys, and tools inside the glass cases around the room. You are on your own to explore.

One by one, the specimens, lit with tiny pools of light, are a wonder up close. Nearly every lock here has protected millions in cash or securities, so it's no surprise to see that great attention was paid to their delicate patterns and engravings. Even the insides of the locks, hardly ever seen, are embellished with great care and skill. And like a fine timepiece, some locks have elaborate mechanisms that only open at a certain hour, day, or year. That's precision. Dating from 4000 B.C. onward, this is the personal collection of 19th-century lock maker John Mossman, who was lock-obsessed to be sure. One of the finest assortments in the world, the collection includes many locks that were made for specific vaults. This museum is a unique city treasure, waiting to be unlocked.





**Address** 20 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036, +1 (212)840-1840, [www.generalsociety.org](http://www.generalsociety.org) | **Getting there** Subway to 42nd Street-Bryant Park (B, D, F, M), 5th Avenue (7), Grand Central (4, 5, 6, 7) | **Hours** Mon–Fri 11am–5pm | **Tip** Across the street is the over-the-top, nautically embellished exterior of the New York Yacht Club, a private club and a Beaux Arts beauty (37 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036, [www.nyyc.org](http://www.nyyc.org)).

## 104 Tenement Museum

*How new Americans lived*

Only in New York City could a run-down tenement be turned into one of the most beloved museums in the city. That's the story of the Lower East Side's Tenement Museum, where tales of the American immigrant are brought to life in vivid detail. Multiple family tenement buildings were the first American homes for thousands of immigrants. Through guided visits, the museum teaches history through the lives of actual families who lived here and their heart-breaking struggles to survive. Step into the narrow entryway, and a time capsule awaits you – with peeling paint, rippled floors, and burlap-clad walls. The space is purposely left raw to show the toll these buildings endured over time. Upstairs, we see how families lived, starting with the German-Jewish Gumpertz family in the 325-square-foot apartment.

The six members of the Gumpertz family lived in these three dark rooms. During cold nights, they slept beside the stove. There was no running water. The entire building shared an uncomfortable outdoor toilet. In the economic Panic of 1873, the father disappeared, leaving Mrs. Gumpertz alone with their four small children. In the tiny front room, we see a sewing machine, which Mrs. Gumpertz eventually used to earn money as a dressmaker.

Another story comes to life in the 1928 apartment of the Italian Baldizzi family, who lived there through the Great Depression. We can picture family gatherings in this small apartment with a coal stove and a cheery red floral tablecloth. Through recorded voice, we actually hear Josephine Baldizzi Esposito recall her life here as a little girl. Now a grandmother in Brooklyn, she shares the simple Saturday treat of scrambled eggs served with ketchup while listening to Italian opera. Her colorful voice makes the tiny kitchen come alive, a poignant connection to the immigrant story that stays with you long after the visit is over.

**Address** 103 Orchard Street, New York, NY 10002, +1 (877)975-3786, [www.tenement.org](http://www.tenement.org), [lestm@tenement.org](mailto:lestm@tenement.org) | **Getting there** Subway to Grand Street (B, D), Delancey Street (F), Essex Street (J, M, Z) | **Hours** Guided tours only; see website for tour topics and times | **Tip** Visit the Essex Street Market, one of the city's most historic institutions. Mayor LaGuardia built it in the 1940s to get throngs of pushcarts off the streets and make way for cars. Today it is filled with food vendors selling produce, proteins, and baked goods of all kinds (120 Essex Street, New York, NY 10002, [www.essexstreetmarket.com](http://www.essexstreetmarket.com)).



# 105\_\_ Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site

*A boy with a mission*

With his reputation as a robust adventurer, America's 26th president, Theodore Roosevelt was actually a sickly child. You can tour the family's striking brownstone, which has lush wallpapers and twinkling chandeliers. Born here in 1858, Roosevelt had a childhood that was one of affluence, but within that elegant house, young Roosevelt suffered from asthma attacks that kept him out of school. 'Teedie,' as he was called, considered the family library gloomy, but he found comfort in adventure books. You can see the gas lamps he read by, along with his special childhood red reading chair.

The townhouse itself boasts stained-glass doors, carved tables, and porcelain plates, an incongruous setting for young Roosevelt's obsession with animals. He kept live snakes in the kitchen and trays of dead mice in the ice box. The smell of arsenic would waft throughout the opulent rooms, as the boy practiced taxidermy. But his body was failing. Just off the nursery is a covered porch where Roosevelt began exercising to build his strength. Imagine the young boy dreaming of a big life.

His life turned out very big, and many personal artifacts are on view here, including campaign buttons, uniforms, and diaries. The most arresting display is a white shirt hanging in a vitrine. In 1912, Roosevelt was getting ready to give a speech in Milwaukee, when he was shot by an assailant. The bullet lodged in his chest, just short of his lung. But most of the force was absorbed by a metal glasses case in his pocket, along with a folded, 50-page speech. He gave the talk anyway and was treated only afterwards. The glasses case and the speech are in this museum, along with the white shirt with the bullet hole. This historic house offers fascinating insights into this charismatic man.



On the evening of October 18, 1902, Roosevelt was camping in Milwaukee. As he sat in the open car which was to carry him to speaking engagements, a man in the second-class aisle... Roosevelt was severely wounded, sustained quickly enough to save his area from being blown up by the explosion. The bullet which struck him... Roosevelt was severely wounded, sustained quickly enough to save his area from being blown up by the explosion. The bullet which struck him... Roosevelt was severely wounded, sustained quickly enough to save his area from being blown up by the explosion. The bullet which struck him...

**Address** 28 East 20th Street, New York, NY 10003, +1 (212)260-1616, [www.nps.gov/thrb](http://www.nps.gov/thrb) | **Getting there** Subway to Union Square/14th Street (4,5, L, N, Q), 23rd Street (6), 23rd Street (R) | **Hours** Tue–Sat 9am–5pm | **Tip** For more old-world elegance, take a stroll around the nearby Gramercy Park and peek through the locked gates. Only lucky neighborhood residents have keys to get into this private oasis (Lexington Avenue at 21st Street, New York, NY 10010).



*The author*

**Wendy Lubovich** is a museum buff extraordinaire. As a private guide in New York City, she takes clients from around the world to museums big and small. With a Fine and Decorative Arts degree from Christie's Education in London, she understands the nuance of the art world. And as an experienced journalist, she's developed a keen sense of curiosity. Her passion is to connect people and museums in a creative and conversational way, inspiring a sense of wonder and fun.



*The photographer*

**Ed Lefkowitz** is a commercial, corporate, and editorial photographer. A native New Englander who eventually moved to Brooklyn with his wife Cynthia, he enjoys exploring New York City life in all its storied quirkiness. Never without a camera, he chronicles the cognitive dissonances that color life in the boroughs with his alt website [TheQuirkySide.com](http://TheQuirkySide.com). As photo editor of *Edible Queens* magazine, he fancies himself a *savoir* and may have been the first to introduce the American term 'foodie' to the French.