

2026 Conference New York City Guide



The Society for Arts Leadership Educators

2026 SALE CONFERENCE GUIDE TO NYC

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1. Welcome!

1.2 Welcome Letter

Welcome to New York City and to the 2026 SALE Conference at Pace University. We are delighted that you have chosen to spend these days in Lower Manhattan with colleagues who care deeply about arts leadership, education, and the future of our cultural institutions.

This guide was created with arts people in mind: faculty, practitioners, students, and researchers who see cities not only as destinations, but as living laboratories for cultural practice. From our base at 1 Pace Plaza—steps from the Brooklyn Bridge, the historic Seaport, and the Financial District—you have unmatched access to the layers of history, architecture, and artistic life that define New York City. Our aim is to help you make the most of your limited free time between sessions and in the evenings, without needing to become a transit expert or an amateur travel planner overnight.

Inside, you will find walkable routes around Lower Manhattan; suggestions for short excursions to Harlem, Brooklyn, and the Bronx; tips for free and low-cost cultural experiences; and a curated list of historically significant restaurants and gathering spots. Many of the recommendations have been chosen not just because they are “must-see” attractions, but because they raise questions about access, equity, community engagement, and the ways arts organizations live within their neighborhoods.

We know that most of you juggle teaching, administration, creative work, and community commitments, often on limited budgets and tight schedules. For that reason, this booklet emphasizes experiences that are close to campus, reasonably priced (or free), and compatible with the conference timetable. You will also find reflection prompts and micro-assignments that

invite you to treat the city as an extension of the conference—another site for observing leadership, audience behavior, and institutional choices in real time.

However you choose to use this guide—whether for a quiet walk before the morning sessions, a late-night debrief over deli food, or a post-conference day of museum hopping—we hope it helps you see New York City through the eyes of an arts leader. Thank you for being part of the Society for Arts Leadership Educators community, and for bringing your curiosity, expertise, and imagination to Pace University this year.

Warmly,

SALE

1.3 How to Use This Guide

This booklet is designed to be practical, browsable, and easy to use on the move. You do not need to read it straight through. Instead, think of it as a menu of options you can dip into based on how much time and energy you have between conference sessions.

Throughout the guide you will see small visual markers indicating what kind of experience each item offers. “Walkable” highlights places you can reach easily from 1 Pace Plaza or the conference hotel. “Short Subway Ride” points to destinations that are realistic in an evening or half-day. “Budget/Free” signals experiences that are low-cost or no-cost, with any savings tips noted in the text.

Sections are organized to match the rhythms of the conference. If you have only a brief window between sessions, the Lower Manhattan walking tours and “micro-walks” near campus will be the most helpful. If you have a free evening, the neighborhood excursions and food sections suggest ways to pair a cultural experience with a meal or a drink. If you have extra days before or after the conference, the longer excursions and museum recommendations will help you build a more ambitious itinerary.

Because this is a conference for arts leaders and educators, many entries include questions or prompts that invite you to look at venues through a professional lens. You will see these in sidebars and in the reflection pages later in the booklet. Feel free to use them on your own, with students who may be traveling with you, or in informal conversations with colleagues.

Finally, this guide is meant to be a companion, not an obligation. Use it to find one meaningful walk, one new neighborhood, or one unexpected conversation over dinner. Mark it up, fold pages, and add your own notes and discoveries. By the end of the conference, we hope it feels less like a brochure you picked up and more like a record of your time in New York

City.

1.4 Conference Snapshot

Single-page overview of the conference schedule (Thursday afternoon, Friday, Saturday) with small visual markers for likely free-time windows and suggested sections to consult.

2. Orientation: Campus, Hotel, Transit, and Local Context

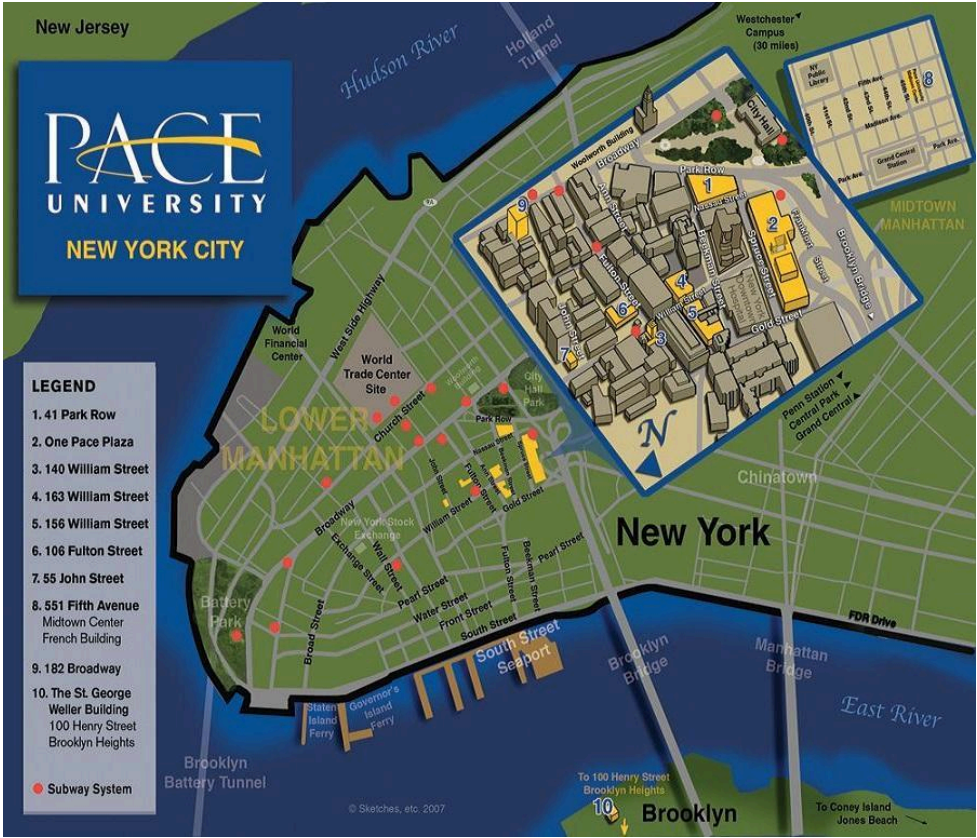
2.1 Where You Are: 1 Pace Plaza & the Conference Hotel

The SALE 2026 conference is anchored at 1 Pace Plaza, Pace University's downtown campus building at the edge of City Hall Park and the Brooklyn Bridge. From the front doors, you are within a few minutes' walk of the Financial District, the Seaport, the Brooklyn Bridge pedestrian entrance, and multiple subway lines. It is a dense, highly walkable area where historic streets, government buildings, and contemporary towers sit almost on top of one another.

The official conference hotel, the Moxy in Lower Manhattan, is just a short walk from campus. It sits in the same general cluster of streets and transit hubs, surrounded by a mix of offices, residences, cafés, and bars. During the day the neighborhood hums with commuters, students, and tourists; in the evenings it becomes noticeably quieter and easier to navigate, with most activity concentrated around the waterfront, Stone Street, and the hotel bar and lounge.

For the purposes of this guide, think of 1 Pace Plaza and the Moxy as your home base. The walking tours in the next section either begin at one of these two points or pass very close by, and most “walkable” food and coffee options are plotted within a ten- to fifteen-minute radius. When you see a place listed as an easy walk, you can assume that it lives within this compact triangle of campus, hotel, and nearby transit hubs like Fulton Center and the World Trade Center area.

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2.2 Transit Basics for Visitors

New York’s transit system can look intimidating at first glance, but from 1 Pace Plaza and the conference hotel you are actually in one of the best-connected parts of the city. Most of the places highlighted in this guide are reachable on a single subway ride with no more than one transfer. Once you understand a few basics—how to pay, which nearby stations to use, and roughly how long trips take—you can get almost anywhere you want to go.

For payment, the simplest option is to use OMNY, the contactless system that lets you tap a credit or debit card, phone, or wearable at the turnstile. There is no need to buy a separate transit card, and if you consistently use the same form of payment the system automatically caps what you pay over the course of the week. If you prefer, you can still purchase a separate fare card from machines in many stations, but for most visitors tapping in and out with OMNY is faster and more intuitive.

There are several key stations within a short walk of Pace and the Moxy. Fulton Center is your main hub, connecting numerous lines that run uptown, to Brooklyn, and across town; it is also one of the easiest stations to navigate and has elevators and clear signage. Brooklyn Bridge–City Hall and the neighboring City Hall/Chambers Street stops bring you directly into and out of the Lexington Avenue line and several downtown routes, which you will use often for journeys to uptown museums and Harlem.

Trains run frequently, but evenings, weekends, and late nights can bring service changes and longer waits. Plan on at least 20–30 minutes to reach most midtown or Brooklyn destinations, and 35–45 minutes for further uptown or outer-borough trips, not counting any time you spend walking to and from stations. When in doubt, allow more time than you think you need, especially if you are coordinating with other attendees.

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Finally, use the same common sense on the subway that you would in any large city. Keep bags closed, be mindful of your surroundings, and avoid standing too close to the platform edge. If a car feels uncomfortably empty or tense, simply step back and wait for the next train—another one will be along soon.



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2.2a Sidewalks and Street Etiquette

New York's sidewalks are not just pathways; they are one of the city's main transportation systems. For many residents, walking is their "car," and the norms you'll feel around you come from that fact. You are sharing space with people who are commuting, making deliveries, rushing between jobs, and grabbing ten precious minutes between obligations. Learning the basic choreography makes life easier for you and kinder for them.

A few loose rules of the road: if you're strolling or chatting, keep right and avoid spreading your group across the full width of the sidewalk. Think of it as the difference between a two-lane road and a single-lane country lane: someone is almost always trying to pass. If you need to stop—to check your phone, reorient to a map, take a photo, or talk through a session you just heard—step to the side, near a building wall or out of the main flow. It feels small, but it's one of the clearest gestures of urban courtesy.

Street corners and subway entrances are pressure points. People are accelerating to make a light or decelerating to navigate a crossing. Try not to cluster right at the top of stairs or in front of turnstiles—move a few steps away before you pause. Likewise, when crossing the street, follow the crowd's line rather than inventing a new diagonal mid-block; this is less about rule-following than about keeping pedestrians and drivers able to anticipate one another's actions.

Walking in groups is where things get interesting. A trio or quartet is usually fine, but a large group walking side by side creates what New Yorkers read as a sidewalk blockade. If you're with students or colleagues, it can help to break into smaller pods and agree on a destination rather than a rigid formation. This is not only more gracious to everyone around you; it models the kind of adaptive, situational awareness many of us teach in rehearsal rooms and classrooms.

If you feel someone close behind you or hear a quiet “excuse me,” it is rarely personal. It usually means they’re trying to catch a train, a shift, or a childcare pickup. Stepping slightly to one side to let them pass is often the safest, simplest move. Likewise, if you find yourself stuck behind a slow-moving crowd and feeling impatient, remember that some of those walkers may be managing mobility challenges, fatigue, or sensory overload. New York sidewalks contain whole biographies moving at different speeds.

You don’t need to walk like a New Yorker to be welcome here. But treating the sidewalk as shared, purposeful space—rather than as an extension of a hotel lobby—will make your days smoother and may even sharpen your eye for spatial dynamics in your own institutions. The same questions apply: who sets the pace, who has room, and whose needs are quietly squeezed to the margins?

3. Walking Tours in FiDi (Financial District) & Lower Manhattan

3.1 Introduction to FiDi for Arts People

The Financial District, often called FiDi, is the oldest continuously developed neighborhood in New York City and one of the most layered in terms of history, architecture, and cultural significance. For arts leaders and educators, it offers a living case study in how cities change, how institutions respond to that change, and how public space functions—or fails to function—as a site of cultural life.

FiDi's story begins in the colonial period, when this was the waterfront and commercial heart of New Amsterdam. That colonial and Revolutionary heritage is still visible in street patterns, in the names of old institutions, and in a few surviving buildings. By the nineteenth century, the neighborhood became the financial center of the nation, and the twentieth century saw the rise of the iconic skyscrapers and banks that dominate the skyline. Most recently, in the aftermath of September 11th, the neighborhood underwent a massive transformation: new residential buildings, new cultural institutions, and a radically reimagined World Trade Center memorial and plaza.

What makes FiDi particularly interesting for arts people is how openly you can read these layers on the ground. You can walk from a seventeenth-century churchyard to a twenty-first-century memorial plaza and pass through multiple eras of American capitalism and civic life in less than an hour. You will see how different eras thought about public space—from the intimate, enclosed graveyards of the colonial period to the grand plazas of the mid-century corporate towers to the carefully curated, highly programmed memorial spaces of today. You will also see how

neighborhoods accommodate both institutional power (government, finance, monuments) and everyday life (people working, eating, moving through, relaxing).

All three of the walking tours in Section 3 begin in or very near FiDi and are designed to be walked in 1.5 to 2.5 hours, depending on how long you linger at particular spots. You do not need to do all three; one or two will give you a strong sense of the neighborhood and its significance. The tours are designed so that you can stop and start—do the first half before a morning session and the second half in the evening, for example—or combine elements from different tours based on what interests you most.

3.2 Walking Tour 1: Revolutionary & Early American History

This tour takes you through Lower Manhattan's oldest, most historically layered neighborhoods, tracing the city from its colonial roots through the American Revolution and into the early republic. The full walk takes about two hours at a leisurely pace, but you can easily break it into shorter segments—do the northern part (City Hall and Trinity area) before a morning panel, and the southern part (Seaport and Battery) in the evening. The walk is entirely flat, mostly on well-maintained streets, and passes through some of the quietest green spaces in downtown Manhattan.

Start: City Hall Park

Begin at City Hall Park, directly across the street from 1 Pace Plaza, the geographic and historic heart of this walk. The park sits on land that has been used for civic and communal purposes since the city's founding: as a commons for grazing livestock, as a military barracks during the Revolution, and as a gathering place for some of the most important moments in American history. In 1765, New Yorkers protested the Stamp Act here; in 1776, Continental Army soldiers gathered to hear the Declaration of Independence read aloud by George Washington himself, with over 150 British warships visible in the harbor behind them. The park's centerpiece is City Hall itself (completed in 1812), a handsome Neoclassical building that remains the seat of city government. Walk around the building's exterior to admire the Italian marble and the sense of civic monumentality it was designed to convey.

Look for the replica Liberty Pole near Broadway and Park Row—a reminder of the symbolic power of public space in a revolutionary moment. This is worth a few minutes of quiet reflection: what does public space communicate, and who gets to decide?

Stop 2: Trinity Church and St. Paul's Chapel

From City Hall Park, walk south on Broadway toward the lower part of the park, and you will see Trinity Church (1846) across the street to the west. This is actually the third Trinity Church on this site—the first was burned during the Great Fire of 1776 while the revolutionary war was still being fought. Trinity is an active Episcopal parish and an important cultural institution; the grounds contain historic graves and offer a moment of surprising quiet in a busy neighborhood.

Just to the north of Trinity, practically in its shadow, stands St. Paul's Chapel (completed 1766), one of the most historically significant and emotionally resonant buildings in Lower Manhattan. St. Paul's was built as an outreach chapel for Trinity's growing congregation—a "chapel of ease" for parishioners who did not want to walk several blocks south. It is the oldest surviving church building in Manhattan. George Washington attended services here after his inauguration. But it is best known for its role after September 11, 2001. When the Twin Towers collapsed just a few hundred yards to the west, St. Paul's Chapel miraculously survived—not a pane of glass was broken—and its churchyard and interior became a refuge and respite center for thousands of rescue workers, volunteers, and traumatized city residents over the following months. The chapel's yard contains historical graves and a portion of the famous "Bell of Hope," a gift from the City of London that is rung each September 11 at 8:46 AM, the exact moment the first plane struck the north tower.

Spend time here if you can. Enter the chapel if it is open; the interior is serene and feels almost untouched by time. Consider: what does it mean for a place of worship to become a refuge? How do communities process collective trauma in shared spaces?

Stop 3: Broadway and the Street Grid

As you move through this area, pay attention to the street pattern. Lower Manhattan's streets are famously irregular and confusing by American grid standards, and they follow the original colonial street layout, shaped by property lines, natural waterways, and centuries of incremental development. This irregularity is one reason the neighborhood feels so old and layered compared to the orderly grid to the north. Walk along Fulton Street, Pearl Street, and Broadway and notice how the buildings, street widths, and blocks vary by era. Some blocks are narrow and human-scaled (colonial era); others are wider and built around large institutional or financial buildings.

Stop 4: Fraunces Tavern

Head south and east toward the intersection of Pearl and Broad streets, where you will find Fraunces Tavern. This building, built as a mansion in 1719, was converted into a tavern by Samuel Fraunces in 1763. On December 4, 1783, nine days after the last British troops left New York City, General George Washington came here to say goodbye to his officers of the Continental Army. He invited about thirty officers to the Long Room on the second floor, and according to Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge's account, Washington was "suffused in tears" as he embraced each officer and said: "I now take leave of you. I most devoutly wish that your latter days may be as prosperous and happy as your former ones have been glorious and honorable."

Today, Fraunces Tavern operates as both a functioning restaurant (where you can have lunch or drinks) and a museum with exhibits on Colonial and Revolutionary history. The museum is worth a visit if you have time; it houses artifacts from the Revolutionary period and a collection of paintings depicting key moments in early American history. Even if you just eat or drink here and do not visit the museum, you are standing in one of the most historically charged spaces in the country.

Stop 5: Bowling Green and The Charging Bull

Just to the south of Fraunces Tavern, at the southern tip of Broadway, you will encounter Bowling Green, the small park that was the center of colonial social life and the site of a famous act of revolutionary fervor: in 1776, after hearing news of the Declaration of Independence, a crowd of New Yorkers came here and tore down a gilded lead statue of King George III and melted it down. Today, Bowling Green is home to the "Charging Bull" sculpture (1989), a bronze symbol of aggressive capitalist optimism. The contrast between the colonial commons, the revolutionary act, and the contemporary symbol of Wall Street finance is worth sitting with—what stories does this place tell, and what does it reveal about how Americans think about power and symbol?

Stop 6: Battery Park and the Waterfront

Continue south and east to Battery Park, a public waterfront space at the southern tip of Manhattan. From here you can see the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island in the distance. Battery Park also offers benches, trees, and a moment to breathe and think about the scale of the harbor, the importance of the waterfront to early Manhattan's economy, and the way the city has—or hasn't—reclaimed its waterfront as public space in recent decades.

You can also board the Staten Island Ferry from Battery Park; it is a free ride (or a small round-trip fee if you want to actually visit Staten Island) and gives you unobstructed views of the harbor, the Statue of Liberty, and the Brooklyn Bridge, all for the price of a 25-minute ride. It is one of the most underrated free experiences in New York City.

Reflection Questions for This Walk

As you walk this route, consider these questions in conversation with colleagues or in your own notes:

- How does this neighborhood's commitment to preserving Revolutionary history shape its contemporary identity? Who benefits from these narratives?
- Trinity Church and St. Paul's Chapel survived major city-shaping events (the Great Fire, 9/11). What role did they play in their communities during and after these events, and what does that suggest about the role of cultural/spiritual institutions in times of crisis?
- The Charging Bull sits near the site where a statue of the king was melted down. What does this juxtaposition suggest about how symbols of power change over time?
- City Hall Park has been used as a commons, a military barracks, a prison, and a gathering place. What does the history of use reveal about contested visions of public space?

3.3 Walking Tour 2: Architecture, Memorials, and Public Space

This tour focuses on the World Trade Center complex and its surrounding neighborhood, emphasizing how cities use design, architecture, and public space to process collective trauma, create meaning, and imagine futures. The walk explores contemporary memorial practice, landscape architecture, and the question of how to rebuild and reimagine a site of catastrophic loss. The full tour takes about 2 to 2.5 hours and covers roughly 1.5 miles; it is also largely flat and very walkable.

Start: 1 Pace Plaza / Fulton Center

Begin at your campus base. From here, walk west toward the World Trade Center complex. You will pass through the Fulton Center area, which is itself worth noting: this 2014 redesign of a historic subway hub created a striking glass-and-steel addition to one of the city's major transit centers, with a soaring atrium and a sense of light and openness that contrasts sharply with the older subway below. The project raises questions about how public infrastructure is reimaged in contemporary New York: what is preserved, what is replaced, and who uses these spaces?

Stop 1: The Oculus and the Reflecting Pools

As you approach the World Trade Center complex, the first major structure you will encounter is the Oculus, designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava and completed in 2016. The building is the transportation hub for the complex and houses a shopping center, but its most striking feature is its exterior: a white, rib-like structure that Calatrava has said was inspired by a white dove in flight—a symbol of peace and hope. The symmetry and the sense of upward movement are intentional; the building is meant to evoke rebirth and renewal.

To the south of the Oculus, you will see the two reflecting pools that mark the footprints where the Twin Towers stood. Each pool is an acre in size and descends about 30 feet below street level. The names of all 2,983 people killed in the September 11 attacks (including the 1993 bombing of the building) are inscribed in bronze around the perimeter of each pool. Spend time here. Walk the names. Notice the water flowing inward and downward toward the center, suggesting a kind of void or absence. The memorial, designed by Michael Arad and Peter Walker, is deliberately restrained; it does not prescribe how visitors should feel, but rather creates a space for individual contemplation and reflection.

Consider: What is the purpose of a memorial? Who decides what should be remembered? How does the design of public space guide or influence how people behave and feel?

Stop 2: The 9/11 Memorial & Museum

Just south of the reflecting pools, you will find the entrance to the 9/11 Memorial & Museum (www.911memorial.org). The museum descends into the bedrock below the memorial plaza, and its exhibitions address the history of September 11 through artifacts, personal testimonies, and historical documentation. There is an admission fee (though various discounts and free hours may be available), and the museum typically takes 1–2 hours to visit fully. If you have limited time and cannot enter the museum, the reflecting pools themselves constitute a powerful memorial experience, and you can spend 20–30 minutes above ground reflecting and observing.

Stop 3: One World Trade Center and One World Observatory

North of the memorial, you will see One World Trade Center, completed in 2014 and now the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere at 1,776 feet (the height chosen deliberately to invoke the year of American

independence). The building is a working office building with commercial space, but its most accessible feature for visitors is One World Observatory (www.oneworldobservatory.com), located on the 100th through 102nd floors. The observatory offers unobstructed 360-degree views of New York City, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania—on a clear day, you can see up to 50 miles. Tickets are available for purchase online or at the entrance, and various discount options are often available for groups or advance bookings. The experience typically takes 1–1.5 hours and includes an interactive "Sky Portal" that provides historical and geographic context for what you are viewing. Many arts leaders find this experience valuable not just for the views, but for the perspective it offers on the scale and layering of the city itself—a powerful way to think about geography, community, and how cities organize themselves across space.

The base of One World Trade Center also includes a public plaza with benches and views of the memorial and the harbor. If you choose not to visit the observatory, spend a few minutes here observing the architecture and the people using the space.

Stop 4: Hudson River Waterfront and Public Art

The area immediately west and south of the World Trade Center complex has been extensively developed as public waterfront in recent years, with plazas, parks, and access to the Hudson River. Walk toward the waterfront and notice the mix of public and semi-public space. You will see Battery Park City, a mixed-use residential and commercial development built on landfill from the World Trade Center excavation. The waterfront walkway offers benches, trees, and views of New Jersey and the Hudson River.

If you have time, visit the Irish Hunger Memorial, a 0.3-acre public park designed by artist Brian Tolle and opened in 2002. It is located at the intersection of Vesey and North End streets. The memorial is a small,

contemplative space built around a small tower of Irish stone and a replica of a ruined Irish cottage—a reference to the Irish immigrants who built much of nineteenth-century New York. It sits alongside the September 11 memorial complex, creating an interesting juxtaposition of collective memory and multiple histories. The memorial asks: which histories do we choose to honor and remember in public space?

Stop 5: Brookfield Place, Winter Garden Atrium, and the Perelman Performing Arts Center

Just to the south, across the West Side Highway from the waterfront, you will find Brookfield Place, a mixed-use complex that includes office space, shops, and restaurants. Inside is the Winter Garden Atrium, a public space with a soaring glass roof designed by architect David Childs and completed in 1988. The atrium was damaged during the September 11 attacks and was meticulously restored. It is a striking piece of civic architecture—a demonstration of how contemporary commercial developments can include significant public space. Walk through if you want a moment indoors; grab coffee or a snack and observe how people use the space.

Also within this complex (and connected by indoor corridors) is the Perelman Performing Arts Center, a new \$550 million cultural venue that opened in 2023. Designed by renowned architect Frank Gehry, the Perelman is a striking piece of contemporary architecture and houses multiple theaters of varying sizes and a range of performance disciplines—dance, theater, music, and experimental work. The complex includes public plazas, galleries, and performance spaces that you can visit for free, as well as ticketed performances. Stop by to see what is being presented during your visit, or simply walk through the public spaces and observe how a contemporary performing arts center integrates with its urban environment. This is particularly valuable for arts leaders and educators, as it represents one of the most significant recent investments in

performing arts infrastructure in the United States, and raises important questions about cultural policy, urban development, and who has access to arts venues.

Stop 6: O'Hara's Pub and Scrapbook

After your exploration of the Perelman and the surrounding plazas, consider stepping into O'Hara's Pub, a historic Irish bar located at 120 Fulton Street (practically at the corner of the World Trade Center complex). O'Hara's has operated on or near this location since the 1970s and is one of the oldest continuously operating establishments in Lower Manhattan. The bar itself is a time capsule of old New York—wood-paneled, intimate, and filled with the energy of local workers and visitors.

What makes O'Hara's particularly significant are its amazing public art display of patches from first responders worldwide, and its scrapbook, which documents the bar's experience on and after September 11. Ask the bartender to see it—this is an active tradition, and staff are accustomed to this request. The scrapbook contains photographs, newspaper clippings, and handwritten notes from rescue workers, volunteers, and community members who came to the bar in the weeks and months following the attacks. Many rescue workers (FDNY, NYPD, construction crews) used O'Hara's as an informal gathering place, and the bar became an unofficial memorial and meeting point. The scrapbook is a powerful document of grassroots community response to trauma—not an official memorial or institutional response, but a record of how ordinary people gathered together to process what had happened. It is also a reminder that Lower Manhattan has layers of informal, community-based history that exist alongside the official memorials and tourist attractions.

Grab a drink or a bite to eat, look through the scrapbook if you have the time and inclination, and reflect on how communities create their own

informal spaces and rituals of memory and gathering.

Stop 7: The Seaport and Historic District

Continue east from O'Hara's toward South Street Seaport, one of the oldest neighborhoods in New York City. The original seaport district was the commercial heart of colonial and early American New York; ships docked here, cargo was loaded and unloaded, and fortunes were made. Much of the seaport district was replaced by highway and commercial development in the mid-twentieth century, but in recent decades the remaining historic buildings have been carefully restored and the area has become a mixed neighborhood of galleries, restaurants, and shops. The cobblestone streets, restored eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings, and views of the harbor create a sense of stepping back into the nineteenth century, even as contemporary commerce surrounds you.

Pay attention to how this neighborhood has been "restored" and "heritage-ified"—what is preserved, what is erased, and what role tourism and commercial development play in shaping how communities relate to their own history?

Reflection Questions for This Walk

As you walk this route, consider these questions:

- How does the design of the 9/11 Memorial reflect specific choices about how to commemorate loss and trauma? What effect does the design have on your own experience as a visitor?
- One World Observatory offers a particular perspective on the city. What does elevation and distance do to how we understand urban geography and community? How might this relate to leadership and perspective?

- Santiago Calatrava's Oculus is meant to symbolize rebirth and peace. Does the building communicate those meanings to you? What role should symbolism play in architecture designed for public use?
- The Perelman Performing Arts Center is a major investment in cultural infrastructure. What does its presence in Lower Manhattan suggest about cultural policy and urban development priorities? Who has access to these spaces?
- Battery Park City and Brookfield Place represent relatively recent models of urban development. How do they balance commercial development with public access and civic life? Who benefits from these spaces, and who might feel excluded?
- O'Hara's scrapbook represents an informal, community-based response to collective trauma, distinct from official memorials. What can arts leaders and cultural institutions learn from how communities organically create spaces and rituals of gathering and memory?
- The Seaport has been extensively developed and restored. Who decides what constitutes "authentic" heritage, and what gets lost in the process of heritage restoration?

3.4 Walking Tour 3: Waterfront, Seaport, and the Brooklyn Bridge

This tour is designed as a visually rich, relatively gentle walk that is especially well-suited to late afternoon and evening. It emphasizes waterfront views, historic port buildings, and the experience of crossing the Brooklyn Bridge on foot. The full walk takes about 2 to 2.5 hours at a relaxed pace, with plenty of opportunities to stop for photos, a drink, or a meal.

Start: 1 Pace Plaza – Toward the Seaport

From 1 Pace Plaza, walk east toward the East River and the South Street Seaport area. As you leave campus, notice how quickly the streets narrow and the scale shifts from large civic buildings to smaller, older structures. Within a few blocks you are out of the world of courts and office towers and into one of Manhattan's most historic commercial waterfronts.

Stop 1: Historic Seaport Streets and Piers

As you reach the Seaport, spend some time on the cobblestone streets around Fulton Street, Front Street, and Water Street. Many of the brick warehouses and mercantile buildings here date back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when this was one of the busiest ports in the world. Today, the buildings house restaurants, shops, and galleries; the upper floors are a mix of offices and residential units. Walk slowly and notice the brickwork, the iron shutters, and the way the narrow streets frame views of the river and the Brooklyn Bridge.

Make your way onto Pier 17 or one of the nearby piers for open views of the East River. From here you can see the Brooklyn Bridge, Manhattan Bridge, and the Brooklyn waterfront. This is an excellent place for photos

and for simply taking in the scale of the harbor and the infrastructure required to move people and goods into and out of the city.

Stop 2: Waterfront Promenade and Public Space

From the piers, follow the waterfront promenade north, paralleling the FDR Drive. The walkway has been improved over the past decade, with seating, plantings, and viewpoints that invite you to linger. This is a chance to experience the East River as a public resource rather than as a barrier or a backdrop. Consider how much of this waterfront is truly accessible and how much remains dominated by infrastructure.

If you prefer a shorter walk, you can loop back toward campus from here; otherwise, continue north until you are nearly under the Brooklyn Bridge.

Stop 3: Approaching the Brooklyn Bridge

The pedestrian entrance to the Brooklyn Bridge is best accessed from the area near City Hall, but from the Seaport you will see the stone towers and suspension cables looming above you as you walk north and west. Make your way back toward City Hall Park (using Pearl Street or Water Street, then cutting inland), and follow signs for the pedestrian walkway of the bridge.

Before you begin the crossing, pause at the entrance and look back toward the Seaport and the Financial District. You can see the contrast between the historic waterfront and the modern skyline, and you may also notice how the bridge itself has become both an essential piece of infrastructure and a symbolic icon of the city.

Stop 4: Walking the Brooklyn Bridge

The walk across the Brooklyn Bridge from Manhattan to Brooklyn takes

about 25–35 minutes at a relaxed pace, depending on how often you stop for photos. The wooden-plank pedestrian and bike path rises gently from the Manhattan entrance, passes between the two stone towers, and then slopes downward toward Brooklyn. As you walk, you will see Lower Manhattan receding behind you, the East River below you, and the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges alongside you.

This is one of the most photographed and visited walks in New York, so expect crowds, especially around sunset. Stay to one side of the path, be mindful of runners, and give yourself permission to stop often and simply look. The bridge, completed in 1883, was an engineering marvel of its time and remains an example of how infrastructure can become a cultural symbol in its own right.

Once you reach the Brooklyn side, you can either descend into the DUMBO (Down Under Manhattan Bridge Overpass) neighborhood—a lively area with galleries, cafés, and parks along the waterfront—or turn around and walk back to Manhattan. If you are short on time, consider walking halfway across the bridge and then returning; you will still get the experience of the views and the structure.

Stop 5: Brooklyn Bridge Park (Optional Extension)

If you choose to continue into Brooklyn, follow the signs down from the bridge toward Brooklyn Bridge Park, a series of piers and green spaces along the Brooklyn waterfront. From here, the views back toward the Manhattan skyline are spectacular—especially in the golden hour before sunset and after dark when the buildings are illuminated. This is a wonderful place to sit on a bench, reflect on your day, and think about the scale of the city and your place within it.

Brooklyn Bridge Park also often hosts public art, performances, and temporary installations. If your timing is right, you may encounter a

concert, film screening, or art event; check local listings if you plan ahead.

Stop 6: Returning to Pace / Evening Options

To return to Pace from Brooklyn, you have several options:

- Walk back across the Brooklyn Bridge the way you came, which gives you a new perspective as you re-enter Manhattan with the skyline ahead of you.
- Take the subway (for example, from the High Street–Brooklyn Bridge, York Street, or Clark Street stations) back to the Fulton Center area.
- If you have more time, wander through DUMBO or Brooklyn Heights before heading back; both neighborhoods are rich in architecture, small businesses, and viewpoints.

Once you are back in Lower Manhattan, you can end your walk with a meal or drink in the Seaport, on Stone Street, or near the World Trade Center, depending on the kind of atmosphere you are seeking.

Reflection Questions for This Walk

As you walk this route, consider:

- How has the Seaport area balanced preservation, tourism, and commercial development? What feels authentic, and what feels curated for visitors?
- What does it mean for a piece of infrastructure like the Brooklyn Bridge to become an icon, a tourist attraction, and a practical

crossing all at once?

- How does access to the waterfront shape who uses it, and for what purposes? Where do you see equity and inclusion in these spaces, and where do you see barriers?
- As you move between Manhattan and Brooklyn, how does your sense of the city change? What does the physical act of crossing a bridge suggest about transition, connection, and perspective in your own leadership practice?

3.5 Optional Micro-Walks from Pace

Not every break in the conference schedule is long enough for a full walking tour. These micro-walks are designed for 20–30 minute windows when you need air, a change of scene, or a quick dose of history and architecture without worrying about transit or timing. All of them begin at 1 Pace Plaza or the Moxy and keep you within a very short radius of the campus.

Micro-Walk 1: City Hall Park Loop (10–20 minutes)

From 1 Pace Plaza, walk north along Park Row into City Hall Park. Do a simple loop around the perimeter paths, circling City Hall itself. Look up at the mix of architectural styles framing the park—the Beaux-Arts municipal buildings, the nineteenth-century newspaper towers along Park Row, and the glassy towers further downtown. This is an ideal reset between sessions: trees, benches, and people-watching within sight of campus.

Micro-Walk 2: Brooklyn Bridge Entrance Stroll (20–30 minutes)

Head north and west from Pace toward the Brooklyn Bridge pedestrian entrance. You do not need to cross the bridge; simply walk up the ramp until you have a clear view of the stone towers, cables, and the East River, then turn back. This short walk offers a powerful sense of scale and a clear reminder that you are on the edge of two boroughs at once. It is especially satisfying in the early morning or at sunset.

Micro-Walk 3: Trinity Churchyard and Broadway (20–30 minutes)

Walk south on Broadway to Trinity Church, then slip into the churchyard. In just a few minutes you move from the noise of downtown traffic into a surprisingly tranquil green space filled with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gravestones and monuments. Spend a few minutes in the yard, then return via Broadway, taking note of how the street grid, building heights, and shopfronts shift block by block.

Micro-Walk 4: Fulton Center and Oculus Pass-Through (20–30 minutes)

From Pace or the Moxy, walk to Fulton Center and pass through its glass-roofed atrium, then continue underground or at street level toward the Oculus. This route gives you a compressed experience of contemporary transportation architecture: you move from the historic streets near campus into a bright, engineered, almost stage-like environment. Pause briefly in each atrium to observe how people move, gather, and pause in these semi-public spaces.

Micro-Walk 5: Seaport Glimpse (25–30 minutes)

If you have just under half an hour, head east from Pace toward the Seaport, aiming for one of the closer cobblestone blocks or a pier lookout rather than the full waterfront. Even a quick out-and-back to glimpse the East River, the rigging of historic ships, or the line of old warehouses against the water can reset your sense of place. This micro-walk works particularly well in daylight, when the contrast between the Financial District's verticality and the horizontal expanse of the river is most apparent.

4. Beyond FiDi: Neighborhood Excursions for Arts Leaders

4.1 How to Use This Section

The neighborhoods in this part of the guide are meant to expand your sense of New York beyond Lower Manhattan. Each profile highlights places where arts, culture, food, and everyday life intersect in ways that are especially relevant to arts leaders and educators. Rather than trying to list everything, these entries focus on a few “anchor” institutions and streets that can structure a half-day or evening.

Each neighborhood write-up includes a brief overview of why it matters, a handful of signature experiences, and a realistic sense of how much time you should allow. You will also find simple transit guidance—typically one or two subway routes from the Fulton Center or Brooklyn Bridge–City Hall stations—so that planning your trip does not require a deep dive into maps before you go.

Think of these neighborhoods as thematic labs. Harlem, for example, offers a dense concentration of Black cultural institutions, performance spaces, and community organizations. Museum Mile shows how major legacy institutions cluster and collaborate along one corridor. Brooklyn Museum and its surroundings offer a living example of how a large museum can function as a community hub. The Bronx excursions combine food, public space, and large-scale cultural venues.

You do not need to “collect” neighborhoods to have a meaningful experience. Choose the one or two that resonate with your interests, your research, or your teaching. You might use Harlem to think about community-centered arts practice, Museum Mile to consider the politics of

collections and canon, or Brooklyn to reflect on what genuine community engagement looks like in a large institution. Use these sections as starting points, not scripts; leave room for serendipity and for following your own curiosity once you arrive.

4.2 Harlem

Harlem is one of the most important neighborhoods in the world for understanding Black art, culture, and political thought. For arts leaders, it is a living archive of the Harlem Renaissance and a contemporary hub of music, visual art, theater, and community-based practice. The neighborhood's cultural life is anchored in institutions like the Apollo Theater and the Studio Museum in Harlem, but it is also carried by churches, small venues, restaurants, and informal gatherings on stoops and sidewalks.

A classic Harlem itinerary might include a visit to the Apollo Theater, where you can tour the historic venue or attend a performance (currently closed for renovation); a stop at the newly built Studio Museum in Harlem); a walk along 125th Street; and a meal at a local restaurant featuring soul food or contemporary Black cuisine. Sunday mornings and evenings can add another layer, with church services featuring gospel music and community gatherings spilling into the streets afterward.

From the Fulton Center area, Harlem is a straightforward subway ride: typically an uptown A, C, 2, or 3 train to 125th Street, depending on your exact destination. Plan on 30–40 minutes of travel time each way and at least 2–3 hours on the ground. Harlem works well as an evening outing (dinner and a show) or as a weekend half-day if you want to visit multiple sites and walk the neighborhood more extensively.

4.3 Museum Mile & Central Park

Museum Mile, along Fifth Avenue on the Upper East Side, is one of the densest stretches of major cultural institutions in the world. For arts leaders, it offers a concentrated view of how legacy museums define and defend their missions, build collections, and negotiate questions of access, interpretation, and audience. Within a few blocks you can move from encyclopedic collections of global art to highly focused institutions with specific historical or design mandates.

A typical Museum Mile visit might anchor around the Metropolitan Museum of Art, with its encyclopedic collection and extensive education and public programs, paired with the Guggenheim's distinctive architecture and rotating exhibitions. Depending on your time and interests, you might also stop at the Museum of the City of New York, The Frick Collection, El Museo del Barrio, or the Cooper Hewitt, each of which offers a distinct lens on design, urban history, or specific communities. Even a brief walk along Fifth Avenue between these institutions, with Central Park on one side and the museums on the other, can be illuminating; the park itself offers a contrasting model of public space and programming.

From Lower Manhattan, Museum Mile is a direct but longer subway ride: for example, a 4, 5, or 6 train from Brooklyn Bridge–City Hall or Fulton Street to the Upper East Side, followed by a short walk west to Fifth Avenue. Allow 30–40 minutes in transit each way and plan at least 2–3 hours for a single museum visit, or 4–5 hours if you hope to see more than one institution and spend some time walking in Central Park. This area is especially well-suited to a before-or-after-conference day or a long afternoon.

4.4 Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum & Cultural Corridor

Brooklyn offers a different scale and texture of cultural life than Manhattan, and the Brooklyn Museum sits at the heart of one of its richest cultural corridors. For arts leaders, the museum is a case study in how a large institution can position itself as a community anchor—through socially engaged exhibitions, partnerships with local organizations, and programs that foreground contemporary issues alongside historic collections. Its permanent collection ranges from ancient art to cutting-edge contemporary work, with a notable focus on feminist and Black artists.

A strong half-day in this area might begin at the Brooklyn Museum, continue with a stroll through the Brooklyn Botanic Garden (adjacent to the museum), and then spill into Prospect Park for a walk or quiet time on the lawns. Nearby neighborhoods like Prospect Heights, Crown Heights, and Park Slope offer blocks of restaurants, cafés, and bars where you can debrief over food and drink. On certain evenings, the museum hosts extended hours and events that draw a diverse, local audience—these are particularly instructive for observing audience development and community-building in action.

From the Fulton Center or Brooklyn Bridge–City Hall area, the museum is an easy subway trip: for example, taking the 2 or 3 train to Eastern Parkway–Brooklyn Museum. Travel time is typically 25–35 minutes each way. Plan on at least 3–4 hours total if you want to visit the museum and either the Botanic Garden or a nearby neighborhood spot. This excursion works well as a long afternoon into evening or as a weekend outing before or after conference days.

4.5 Walking Tour: Chinatown and “Postcard” Little Italy

This walk explores two adjacent downtown neighborhoods: Chinatown, one of the most vibrant immigrant communities in the city, and the much smaller, heavily touristed version of Little Italy that remains nearby. It is an opportunity to think about authenticity, tourism, displacement, and how neighborhoods are packaged for visitors. The route works well in 2–3 hours and pairs especially nicely with a meal.

Start: Canal Street – Gateway to Chinatown

From Lower Manhattan, head north to Canal Street, which has long been a commercial spine for Chinatown. As you walk east or west along Canal, notice the density of signs in Chinese and English, the mix of jewelry shops, produce stands, herbal medicine stores, and souvenir stalls. It is noisy, crowded, and visually overloaded—a stark contrast to the more controlled environments around the Financial District and World Trade Center.

Stop 1: Side Streets of Chinatown

Turn off Canal onto smaller streets such as Mott, Mulberry (south of Canal), Bayard, or Doyers. Here you will find a tighter weave of daily life: bakeries with trays of buns and pastries, tiny restaurants, grocers with fresh greens and fruit, and community institutions like association buildings and small temples. Walk slowly and pay attention to smells, sounds, and signage. Chinatown is a working neighborhood, not a stage set; people are shopping for dinner, children are coming home from school, elders are gathering to talk. This is a useful reminder that “cultural experience” is not always curated for outsiders.

Stop 2: Columbus Park

Make your way to Columbus Park, a central gathering spot for Chinatown

residents. On most days you will see people playing cards or mahjong, practicing tai chi, and socializing on benches. Musicians sometimes gather here as well. Spend a few minutes observing how the park is used and who seems to feel at home there. Consider what it means for a public park to function as a living room, performance space, and social hub for an immigrant community.

Stop 3: Crossing Into “Little Italy”

From Columbus Park or Mott Street, walk north and west toward Mulberry Street above Canal, where the core of the present-day Little Italy is located. Historically, this area was a dense Italian immigrant enclave—the mobsters were located at Little Italy in the Bronx—but over the last several decades, the Italian population has largely moved elsewhere, and Chinatown has expanded. What remains is a highly condensed strip of relatively new Italian restaurants, gelato stands, and souvenir shops that cater primarily to tourists.

As you cross Canal, pay attention to how quickly the visual language changes. In a few blocks, Chinese characters give way to red-white-green flags, checkered tablecloths, and menus designed to be read by visitors. The food can be enjoyable, but the neighborhood now functions more as a branded experience than as a day-to-day ethnic enclave. This is what many people mean when they call it a “faux” or postcard Little Italy—authentic in its history, but heavily curated in its current form.

Stop 4: Mulberry Street Promenade

Walk the length of Mulberry’s Little Italy segment, noting the host stands, outdoor seating, decorative lights, and constant invitations to dine. Ask yourself who this environment is built for and what stories it tells about Italian-American identity. Compare the feeling here to the working-neighborhood energy of Arthur Avenue in the Bronx, where Italian food culture is deeply embedded in daily life rather than

concentrated in a tourist strip.

If you choose to eat here, pick a restaurant that looks appealing and use the experience as a case study in “heritage as product”—how do menu design, décor, and staff performance construct an idea of “Italian New York” for visitors?

Stop 5: Edges and Overlaps

On your way back toward Canal and downtown, wander streets where Chinatown and Little Italy overlap: Hester, Grand, and the cross streets between Mulberry and Mott. Here the boundaries blur: Chinese grocers sit next to old-school Italian bakeries or cheese shops; signage in multiple languages competes for space. This is a tangible reminder that neighborhoods are not fixed categories but dynamic, overlapping systems shaped by migration, real estate, and cultural storytelling.

Return to Lower Manhattan

To return to Pace or the Moxy, you can walk straight down Lafayette, Centre, or Bowery back toward City Hall and the Brooklyn Bridge area, or hop on a nearby subway (for example, from Canal Street stations on the N/Q/R/W, J/Z, or 6 lines) and ride one or two stops downtown.

Reflection Questions for This Walk

- How do Chinatown and present-day Little Italy each balance the needs of residents with the expectations of visitors? Where do you see tension between authenticity and performance?
- In what ways does Chinatown feel like a living, evolving neighborhood rather than a fixed cultural “display”? How does that affect how you think about cultural preservation?
- The Little Italy strip trades heavily on imagery and nostalgia. What

responsibilities do cultural organizations have when they present or package heritage in similar ways?

- How might you use observations from this walk in your teaching or leadership practice—especially around themes of gentrification, tourism, and community voice?

4.6 Bronx: Little Italy & Cultural/Natural Destinations

The Bronx offers a combination that is hard to find elsewhere in the city: a remarkably intact Little Italy centered on Arthur Avenue, and some of New York's most significant cultural and natural institutions, including the Bronx Zoo and the New York Botanical Garden. For arts leaders, this area is a reminder that cultural life is not confined to Manhattan and that food, public space, and large-scale institutions can work together to shape a borough's identity.

Arthur Avenue is a working neighborhood as well as a culinary destination. You will find family-run bakeries, butchers, cheese shops, and restaurants that have served local residents for generations. A meal here—preceded or followed by a wander through the indoor market and side streets—offers a vivid sense of how cultural heritage is sustained through everyday commerce and community relationships, not just through formal institutions.

Just a short distance away, the Bronx Zoo and the New York Botanical Garden sit along the Bronx River and form a vast green and cultural corridor. Both are large, all-day destinations if you want to explore deeply; even a shorter visit, though, can be instructive in understanding how major institutions handle interpretation, conservation messaging, and visitor flow across large sites.

From downtown, this area requires a longer subway or rail trip: for example, taking the D train to Fordham Road, or a Metro-North train from Grand Central to Fordham, followed by a short walk or bus ride. Allow 40–50 minutes in transit each way and plan a minimum of 4–5 hours if you hope to combine a major venue (zoo or garden) with a meal on Arthur Avenue. This works best as a pre- or post-conference day or a dedicated

weekend excursion.

5. Free and Low-Cost Arts, Tickets, and Access Strategies

5.1 Doing NYC on an Arts Budget

New York’s cultural abundance can be overwhelming, especially when time and budgets are finite. For many visiting arts leaders, educators, and students, the city’s price tags can seem at odds with the realities of nonprofit work or academic life. Yet this is also a city built on access—public parks, outdoor art, pay-what-you-wish museums, community performances, and subway connections that cost less than a cup of coffee. With a bit of strategy and a clear sense of priorities, you can experience a deeply textured version of New York that doesn’t require a large expense account.

Start by thinking in “anchors” rather than checklists. Choose one or two central activities that align with your professional or personal curiosities—a performance space you’ve always wanted to see, a particular museum collection, a historically resonant site—and let the surrounding area become your laboratory. An afternoon anchored at the Museum of the Moving Image can easily unfold into a neighborhood exploration in Astoria, while a morning at the Whitney might turn into a walk along the Hudson River Park and a free sunset performance nearby. This mindset keeps costs—and mental load—manageable.

Timing is your strongest ally. Nearly every major museum and cultural site has either free hours or pay-what-you-wish periods, often in the late afternoon or early evening. Outdoor festivals, public concerts, and open rehearsals cluster in spring, aligning beautifully with the March conference dates. Beyond the obvious tourist landmarks, many institutions extend professional courtesies to educators and students: bring your school ID,

business card, or conference badge and ask. Discounts might not be listed, but they're often available.

Pairing neighborhoods can stretch both your time and your budget. Group activities by geography rather than category—Harlem's institutions and small restaurants in one half-day, Brooklyn's museum and park corridor in another. You'll cut down on transit costs while seeing how arts ecosystems interact with their communities. Consider using the city's public spaces—the High Line, Prospect Park, Battery Park, Lincoln Center Plaza—as your living rooms for quiet reflection, inexpensive lunches, or impromptu meet-ups. These are among the most artful “rooms” in the city, and they cost nothing.

If meals are your budget pressure point, lean into local delis, food halls, and small ethnic eateries rather than restaurants. New York hospitality often lives in counter service and shared benches, not tablecloths. A fresh bagel and coffee grabbed en route to a cultural site can be more satisfying than a formal brunch, and several sections of this guide (see 6.2 and 6.3) highlight where to find these local anchors near Pace and beyond.

The following subsections will point you toward:

- **5.2:** Museum and cultural venue free and discount options
- **5.3:** Theatre, music, and performance experiences on a budget
- **5.4:** Free public and outdoor arts experiences
- **5.5:** Digital tools and deal-finding resources

Each offers practical entryways into the city's artistic life at minimal cost, but all share a larger principle: cost-conscious travel isn't about doing

less—it's about noticing more.

Reflective prompt:

When resources are limited, what guides your choice of experiences—professional growth, community connection, aesthetic inspiration, or simple curiosity? How might that same discernment model sustainable arts engagement for your students or organizations?

5.2 Museums and Cultural Venues: Free/Discount Options

New York's museums are among the most resourceful institutions on earth when it comes to access. For all the grand marble staircases and suggested admission signs, nearly every major museum in the city offers some form of entry that aligns with the budgets of students, artists, and educators. The key is to know when and how to show up.

Several institutions still operate on **pay-what-you-wish** or **suggested admission** policies—an essential distinction. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, for example, admits New York State residents and tri-state students for any amount they choose to contribute. Many smaller museums follow suit for educators or those with institutional IDs. Even when admissions are fixed, free or discounted hours are common across the city: Friday evenings at the Museum of Modern Art, the first Thursday at the Brooklyn Museum, or Sunday afternoons at the Jewish Museum. These windows can get busy, but they also create excellent opportunities to experience the museum as a collective public space—a glimpse of audiences reclaiming art as civic life.

For arts leaders, it may be worth scanning not only the well-known names but also the **community-specific or mission-driven venues** where tickets are always modest. The Museum of the Chinese in America, the International Center of Photography, or El Museo del Barrio operate with missions that foreground cultural memory and inclusion—values central to many of our own classrooms and organizations. Their admission models often reflect those ethics, balancing sustainability and openness.

Educators should carry institutional identification or conference credentials. Many museums extend **educator discounts** (sometimes unpublicized) for those working in arts or academic institutions. Student

IDs yield even broader access, including seasonal free-pass partnerships through programs like College Art Association, UNiDAYS, or museum “reciprocal” memberships. A single membership at one institution can unlock dozens of others through national networks—an investment worth sharing among colleagues.

Pairing museum visits geographically avoids paying twice in subway fare and gives structure to your time. A morning at the Whitney can flow easily into a free walk along the High Line’s outdoor installations. The Brooklyn Museum’s free admission hours align beautifully with sunset in Prospect Park. Even within FiDi, the 9/11 Memorial plazas, the Perelman Performing Arts Center’s transparent façade, and the free-entry African Burial Ground National Monument form an open-air triptych of reflection without ticketing at all.

If your stamina allows, consider **one major museum per day** and balance it with smaller or outdoor encounters. The city’s “high” institutions often unveil their most human dimensions when visited in the same day as a community gallery or street market. Seek contrast rather than coverage—it’s the difference between collecting sites and cultivating perspective.

Reflective prompt:

How do museums signal value—through ticket price, architecture, programming, or the diversity of their publics? What might “pay-what-you-wish” mean if extended metaphorically to your own institution’s audience relationships?

5.3 Theatre, Music, and Performance on a Budget

For many visitors, the phrase “New York performance” immediately conjures Broadway prices that rival a monthly utility bill. Yet the city’s performance ecology is far broader—and friendlier to arts salaries and graduate stipends—than the Times Square marquees suggest. If you approach performance here the way you might approach programming at your own institution—balancing prestige, experimental work, and community partners—you can see a surprising amount without overspending.

Begin by loosening the grip of “must-see Broadway” thinking. A single full-price ticket can easily exceed a day’s per diem. Instead, consider Broadway a special case and build your performance time around Off-Broadway, Off-Off Broadway, and neighborhood venues, many of which are the R&D labs for the commercial and nonprofit sectors. These spaces often offer rush tickets, under-30 or educator rates, and modestly priced previews. They are also where you will see working conditions, artistic risk, and audience development strategies up close—often more instructive for arts leaders than a polished commercial juggernaut.

If you do want a Broadway experience, lean on the city’s discount infrastructure. Same-day and next-day discount booths, app-based lotteries, and digital rush tickets can drop prices dramatically, especially for single seats or pairs. These mechanisms are laboratories in themselves: dynamic pricing, scarcity, and gamified access colliding in real time. For students and early-career professionals, they can make a previously unreachable show suddenly viable. For mid-career leaders, they pose a useful question: what are we willing to experiment with to fill the house while preserving dignity and clarity for audiences?

Beyond Broadway, New York is dense with low-cost and free performance.

University venues, emerging artist festivals, reading series, and neighborhood theaters often operate on sliding scale or suggested donation. Churches and community centers host choral concerts, jazz nights, and small classical ensembles; public libraries offer author talks, solo performances, and small-scale music. In warmer months, city parks and plazas become outdoor stages for dance, theater, and music, often underwritten by sponsors and foundations. Even in March, you may find indoor “pop-up” series, lobby concerts, or pay-what-you-can events as institutions court local audiences at shoulder-season times.

Music is particularly abundant at lower price points. Consider small jazz clubs with modest covers, experimental music spaces in Brooklyn or the Lower East Side, and student or faculty recitals at conservatories. Many of these venues function as laboratories of scene-building: artists testing audience loyalty, venues experimenting with curation and cover charge, communities negotiating who feels invited into the room. A twenty-dollar ticket and one drink can yield a far richer case study than a top-tier concert hall box.

Time-wise, remember your conference schedule: evenings are your most realistic performance windows. A practical approach is to pick one or two nights in advance where you will pursue a ticketed event, and leave the other nights open for serendipity—an open mic discovered en route to dinner, a neighborhood bar with live music, or a last-minute rush ticket if your energy allows. That balance protects both your wallet and your bandwidth.

As you choose, think less in terms of “seeing the best show” and more in terms of **observing an ecosystem**. Who is in the lobby? How is pricing communicated? What languages are spoken from the stage? Where do marketing materials appear, and who seems to be responding? These questions travel easily back to your classrooms and boardrooms.

Micro-assignment (optional):

Pick one performance experience—commercial, nonprofit, or community-based—and jot brief notes on three things:

1. How the ticketing or pricing structure shaped the audience you saw.
2. What cues in the environment signaled who was welcome (or not).
3. One practice you might adapt (or resist) in your own organization's approach to access and affordability.

5.3b A Cheaper Way to Broadway Shows

You can add one more layer to your performance strategy by considering a small investment in a membership-based discount program. One of the most established examples in New York is the Theatre Development Fund (TDF), a nonprofit that manages the well-known same-day ticket booths but also operates a membership program. For a modest annual fee and a one-time donation, eligible members (including many educators, students, nonprofit staff, and union members) gain online access to discounted tickets for a wide range of productions—including many Broadway shows, as well as Off-Broadway, dance, music, and other live events. Availability is never guaranteed, but for someone who sees even a handful of performances a year, the savings can quickly outpace the initial contribution.

For arts leaders, TDF and similar programs are interesting not just as bargains, but as models of how an intermediary organization can help reconcile the tension between artists' need for revenue and audiences' need for affordability. They aggregate demand, smooth out risk, and often bring in spectators who might never purchase a full-price ticket. Participating in such a program during the conference can be a practical way to see more

work, and also a prompt to imagine what parallel structures might look like in your own community or campus context.

5.4 Free Public Experiences

If New York has a single defining cultural resource, it is not a museum or a theatre; it is the city itself. Long before you pay for a ticket, you are already inside a vast, continuously unfolding performance of architecture, language, commerce, protest, and everyday ritual. For visitors working with limited budgets—or simply limited capacity for structured activities—free public experiences can become the spine of your time here rather than a consolation prize.

You are already well-positioned at Pace to treat Lower Manhattan as an open-air gallery. Earlier sections introduced FiDi's memorials, plazas, and waterfronts; taken together, they create a sequence of encounters that cost nothing but attention: the 9/11 Memorial's voids, the Irish Hunger Memorial's tilted landscape, the Seaport's evolving shoreline, the approaches to the Brooklyn Bridge at dusk. Each of these spaces functions as a kind of civic text, inviting you to read how grief, finance, tourism, and community life are negotiated in stone, glass, and sightlines.

Free public experiences extend far beyond FiDi. The city's parks and promenades—Central Park, Riverside Park, Prospect Park, the High Line, Hudson River Park, Brooklyn Bridge Park—offer daily performances in the widest sense of the word: pickup soccer games, wedding photo shoots, buskers, rehearsing dancers, chess players, family gatherings, and quiet solos of people reading or napping on benches. As arts leaders, you might pay special attention to how these spaces choreograph coexistence: where sound is welcome or contained, which activities get prime vistas, and how signage and design shape behavior without a ticketing system.

On almost any given day, the city's public institutions also host free or low-friction events. Public libraries schedule readings, lectures, and small performances; universities open recitals and artist talks; cultural centers

host community festivals and film screenings. Many of these are advertised with little fanfare—posters on doors, small flyers, a chalkboard on the sidewalk. Building in even one hour of “unscheduled wandering,” especially around campuses and branch libraries, can uncover a conversation or performance that never makes a tourist list but reflects the lived cultural priorities of residents.

Street art and informal creative expression form another layer of the city’s free cultural infrastructure. Murals in Harlem and Bushwick, wheat-paste posters in the East Village, impromptu music in subway stations, and fashion as performance on virtually any corner—all of these contribute to a sense of the city as a distributed, participatory arts environment. The subway in particular, with its buskers, dancers, and instrumentalists, can be approached not just as transit but as a curated (if uneven) series of micro-performances. Watching who stops, who hurries past, who contributes, and who records on phones offers a quick snapshot of audience engagement in a truly public, non-ticketed setting.

Free experiences are also opportunities to rest, think, and synthesize. A bench in City Hall Park, a spot by the East River, or a quiet corner of a neighborhood playground can be the setting for debriefing a museum visit or a conference session with colleagues. In a profession that often equates value with programmed time, deliberately treating unstructured, no-cost hours as part of your conference learning can be a subtle act of resistance—and a model you might carry back to your own institutional rhythms.

Reflection prompts (choose one):

- During one free public experience—a park, a plaza, a library—notice who appears to “own” the space. What clues tell you that? How might those cues be different in your own venues?

- After a day of ticketed events, spend 30 minutes in a free space and note how your body and attention feel different. What might this suggest about balancing intensity and openness in your organization's programming calendar?

5.5 Digital Tools for Deals (Optional)

For many visitors, the hardest part of “doing New York on a budget” is not a lack of options but an overload of information. Digital tools can help you locate discounts and free events, but they can also quickly turn a reflective visit into a scavenger hunt. The aim in this section is not to send you chasing every promotion, but to offer a small, curated toolkit you can use with intention.

Think of digital deal-finding as an extension of your arts-leadership practice: you are navigating systems of access, scarcity, and communication. Ticket-discount platforms, for example, aggregate last-minute inventory for Broadway, Off-Broadway, and other performances, often using lotteries, rush tickets, or same-day markdowns. Used thoughtfully, these tools can turn an otherwise out-of-reach show into a reasonable splurge while providing a living case study in dynamic pricing and audience segmentation. Used compulsively, they can erode the very spaciousness you came to the city to experience.

Many museums and cultural venues list free hours, pay-what-you-wish windows, and educator or student discounts directly on their websites or apps. A quick check a day or two ahead can help you align those opportunities with your conference schedule so you are not paying full price at 2 p.m. for a museum that becomes free at 4. In some cases, signing up for an institution’s email list, SMS alerts, or membership program unlocks targeted discounts or timed-entry slots; for arts leaders, this is also a chance to experience first-hand how colleagues in other organizations design digital communication and cultivate loyalty.

Citywide event calendars—maintained by municipal agencies, parks departments, tourism boards, and large cultural organizations—often filter listings by cost, neighborhood, and art form. These can be useful when you

have an open evening or an extra hour in a new area and want a low-friction option nearby. Library systems, universities, and community centers sometimes maintain their own event pages, often with performances, talks, or screenings that are free but lightly publicized. A brief search by neighborhood or institution name can reveal opportunities that would never appear in commercial listings.

Messaging apps and social media can also function as informal deal-finders. Many venues and artists announce rush tickets, cancellations, or “friends and community” offers on their social channels, sometimes only hours before showtime. Following a small number of organizations whose missions resonate with your own—rather than attempting to track the entire city—can create a manageable, meaningful stream of possibilities. Within your conference cohort, simple group chats or shared documents can aggregate what people discover in real time, turning individual finds into collective benefit.

The risk with digital tools is that they encourage a sense of scarcity and urgency—“now or never,” “limited inventory,” “only two tickets left.” As professionals who work in and around these systems, we know how often such language is as much marketing as reality. Before saying yes to another app, notification, or queue, it may be worth pausing to ask whether the pursuit aligns with your actual goals for this visit: rest, inspiration, professional curiosity, or connection with colleagues. A slightly more expensive ticket that you choose calmly may provide more value than a discounted one that requires constant refreshing and anxiety.

Reflection prompt (optional):

How do the digital tools you use to find deals shape your experience of art—do they foster access and curiosity, or do they pull you toward urgency and fear of missing out? What might that suggest about the digital systems you design or endorse in your own organization?

6. Food & Drink: Essential and Historic NYC Dining

6.1 How to Think About Food in FiDi

Food in Lower Manhattan is less about a single “scene” and more about overlapping worlds sharing the same few blocks. Office towers, the courts, Pace students, construction crews, tourists, and long-time residents all eat here, often at the same counters. As a result, FiDi is full of pragmatic options: grab-and-go lunches, coffee shops that double as workspaces, happy-hour bars, and a handful of places that feel like neighborhood institutions in a district that keeps reinventing itself. For arts people, it can be an instructive place to watch how hospitality, price, and space shape who lingers and who passes through.

From an arts-leadership perspective, it helps to approach FiDi food with the same clarity you might bring to programming a season: define your constraints, then curate. Your constraints here are time, money, and bandwidth. Conference days are dense, with limited windows between sessions, so the most realistic pattern is a quick breakfast, a functional lunch, and one or two evenings where you make a deliberate choice to sit down somewhere that feels resonant. Rather than searching for “the best restaurant,” you might think in terms of: “Where can I convene a small group without stress?” or “Where can I get something nourishing and affordable within a ten-minute walk?”

Budget-wise, FiDi is capable of both extremes. There are high-end steakhouses and cocktail bars that cater to the financial sector, and there are also deli counters, food halls, and small spots where a modest budget goes surprisingly far. The trick is to recognize the signals: white tablecloths and expansive foyers usually mean expense-account pricing; hand-lettered sandwich boards, crowded counters, and office workers in line point to

everyday affordability. As with many New York neighborhoods, some of the most reliable options are tucked into side streets, basements, or unassuming storefronts.

For many attendees, the most meaningful meals will be the ones that support conversation rather than interrupt it. You may want one night of a destination dinner, but you are just as likely to remember the corner table at a casual spot where you and a colleague suddenly mapped out a new syllabus or project. Look for places that offer: reasonably clear pricing, the possibility of splitting plates or ordering a few small things to share, and enough noise that you can talk freely without shouting. In FiDi, that may mean a slightly off-peak time—eating dinner on the early side, or ducking into a place once the after-work crowd thins.

FiDi's food environment is also an interesting mirror for equity conversations. Who is serving, who is being served, and who owns the space? How does tipping culture land with you and your students? Do you notice differences between how tourists are approached versus office regulars? These micro-interactions can be as revealing as any keynote about labor, value, and dignity. Choosing to eat at worker-forward businesses, immigrant-owned spots, or places that visibly welcome a range of patrons can be a small but intentional act aligned with the values many arts organizations articulate but struggle to operationalize.

Finally, remember that you do not need to solve “New York food” in three days. Think of this conference as one encounter in an ongoing relationship with the city. Let FiDi serve as your introductory chapter: a place to calibrate your expectations, observe how different publics move through shared spaces, and experiment with how you and your colleagues like to eat together during a busy professional gathering. Later sections in this guide will point you toward walkable options near Pace and the Moxy, as well as classic “only in New York” institutions you may want to fold into a

museum or theatre outing.

Reflection prompt (optional):

When you choose a place to eat during the conference, what criteria are you actually using—cost, speed, atmosphere, who seems to belong there? How do those same criteria show up, consciously or not, in how you design food and social experiences for your own audiences, students, or staff?

6.2 Walkable Food Near Pace & Moxy

Within a ten-minute radius of Pace and the Moxy, you can cover most of your conference food needs without touching the subway. This compact area—stretching roughly from Seaport to the World Trade Center, and from the Brooklyn Bridge down toward Bowling Green—offers a dense mix of grab-and-go counters, coffee shops, food halls, and a handful of sit-down spots that work well for small groups. The key is to think in terms of function: “quick solo breakfast,” “thirty-minute lunch between sessions,” or “unhurried debrief over dinner and a drink.”

For mornings, the neighborhood is built for commuters, which works in your favor. You will find multiple options for strong coffee, bagels, pastries, and breakfast sandwiches within a short walk. Many of these are the kind of places where office workers order the same thing every day: efficient, moderately priced, and accustomed to people who are half-reading email while they wait. As a conference attendee, you can lean on these rhythms—grabbing something on your way from hotel to campus, or taking ten minutes to sit by a window and watch the city wake up before you step into sessions.

Lunchtime in FiDi is a daily migration. Lines form quickly at salad bars, soup counters, sandwich places, and hot tables, but they move with surprising speed. Food halls and multi-vendor spaces are especially useful for groups: they allow people with different dietary needs and budgets to choose their own meals and then converge at shared seating. This is where you can observe how space, design, and pricing structure a kind of informal food commons: office workers rushing in and out, tourists studying maps, delivery workers waiting on orders, students meeting between classes. If you are intentional about timing—sliding slightly before or after the noon rush—you can turn a twenty-minute errand into a compact field observation.

For evenings, the immediate area offers several layers: casual bars with substantial food, mid-range restaurants that suit small groups, and a few places designed for slightly more polished dinners if you want one “occasion” meal within walking distance. Waterfront-adjacent areas, especially near Seaport or along the Hudson, often feel more leisurely than the streets tucked under office towers. These can be useful for end-of-day conversations when you want to decompress from the conference and watch the light change over the river or skyline. At the same time, a simple corner spot near the hotel may be the right choice when you are tired and want proximity more than ambience.

From an arts-leadership lens, walkable FiDi food is an easy place to look at how different publics are invited—or not—into the same ecosystem. You will notice price gradients as you move from street carts and delis up to full-service restaurants; you will also see how interior design, music, and signage signal what kind of customer is imagined. Are students visible? Are service workers eating at the same tables as financial professionals? How does tipping work at the counter versus the table? These seemingly small details can fuel conversations about access, class, and hospitality that parallel the themes of your sessions.

As you explore, it can help to identify two or three “comfort places” near Pace and the Moxy: a coffee shop where you feel at ease, a lunch spot that can handle a short line without stress, and an evening option that feels like a good default for an informal meet-up. Returning to the same place once or twice over the conference can reduce decision fatigue and create a tiny sense of being a local, however briefly. You will start to recognize staff, overhear fragments of regulars’ conversations, and sense how this neighborhood operates beyond your conference bubble.

Optional prompt for a meal nearby:

Choose one walkable food spot during the conference and pay attention to

who is there besides your group. If you imagined this place as a venue in your own town, who would feel welcome? Who might stay away? How might you alter the space, pricing, or communication to widen that circle?

6.3 Quintessential NYC Institutions

At some point in a New York visit, even the most reflective arts educator may want to lean into the familiar shorthand: the slice shop, the bagel place, the diner, the old-school bar. These institutions are not just about food; they are about continuity. They hold stories of immigration, labor, neighborhood change, and cultural self-mythology in their menus and decor. For arts leaders, they offer a chance to sit inside a living archive of the city's identity work—and to notice who is included in that story.

The classic New York **slice shop** is a useful starting point. It is fast, inexpensive, and democratic: students, office workers, construction crews, late-night theatre people, and tourists all cycle through. Standing at a counter with a paper plate and a folded slice can be a small act of situating yourself inside the everyday life of the city. From a professional lens, you might notice how these spaces handle turnover, informality, and hospitality: the choreography of orders and reheats, the unspoken rules about lingering, the way regulars and first-timers are greeted differently—or not at all.

Bagel shops and delis offer a parallel storyline, often with deeper roots in particular immigrant histories. A good bagel line in the morning can feel oddly like a pre-show queue: a temporary community assembled around a shared ritual. Prices are usually manageable, and customization is the norm—an interesting counterpoint to the fixed packages we often offer audiences. Watching how staff handle substitutions, dietary tweaks, and language barriers can be a subtle lesson in flexibility and dignity at scale.

Then there are the **New York diners and coffee shops**—some chrome and neon, others more subdued—that function as social infrastructure. These are the places where people linger over bottomless coffee, where intergenerational groups gather, where the menu seems to contain every possible craving. In a profession obsessed with “third spaces” and

community hubs, a diner is a working model: open for long hours, tolerant of solo patrons and large groups, priced to encourage return visits. It can be fruitful to ask yourself what your own institution might look like if it tried, metaphorically, to operate more like a diner than a fine-dining restaurant.

Certain “only in New York” food experiences—Jewish delis, old-school Italian bakeries, historic bars, Chinatown dim sum parlors—also deserve consideration, not as trophies but as case studies. Many of these places are managing their own tensions: heritage and tourism, authenticity and adaptation, rising costs and loyal local customers. When you choose to visit one, you are entering into that negotiation. Notice how history is presented (or not): on the walls, on the menu, in the staff’s stories. Are you being invited into a living tradition or a carefully curated set piece? Either can be instructive, especially for those of us who steward institutional narratives back home.

Because conference time is short, it may help to select just one or two such institutions to anchor your visit—a bagel place one morning, a diner or classic bar one evening, a Chinatown bakery on your way to or from another activity. Fold them into an existing outing rather than building a whole itinerary around them. Think of these stops less as “checking the box” of New York food and more as moments to sit inside a specific strand of the city’s cultural history, coffee cup or paper plate in hand.

Reflection prompt (optional):

In one quintessential spot you visit, ask yourself: what story about New York is this place telling, and who benefits from that story? How might those narrative choices mirror or differ from the way your own organization presents its history to the public?

6.4 Late-Night and Post-Session Spots

Conference days can be long and dense. By the time the last session ends, you may find that what you need most is not another formal activity, but a gentle landing: somewhere to debrief, to laugh a little, or simply to sit beside other humans without needing to perform. Late-night and post-session spots in Lower Manhattan are less about spectacle and more about gradations of energy—from quiet corners where you can process the day to noisier rooms that help you shake it off.

In the immediate orbit of Pace and the Moxy, much of the nightlife is shaped by office hours. Happy-hour bars fill up right after work and quiet down earlier than in other parts of the city, especially on weeknights. This can actually work in your favor: by the time you leave an afternoon session or evening gathering, you may find spaces that have room for small groups to sit together without shouting over after-work crowds. Look for places with clear, moderately priced drink lists, some snack or light food options, and enough ambient noise to give conversation privacy without making it strenuous.

Not every post-session destination needs to involve alcohol. Coffee shops that stay open into the evening, dessert places, and casual food halls can function just as well for decompression. A late pastry and tea, or a simple bowl of something warm, often supports more grounded conversation than a third drink. For colleagues who do not drink—or are simply trying to stay rested—choosing these kinds of spaces can be a deliberate act of inclusion. It also mirrors a larger question in arts leadership: how often do we assume that meaningful networking must be tethered to a bar?

The waterfronts and bridges near FiDi also offer their own kind of night life. A slow walk along the Seaport, a pause by the East River, or a late stroll partway onto the Brooklyn Bridge can be as restorative as any

lounge, especially after hours indoors. Nighttime changes the way architecture, memorials, and public art feel; lighting design becomes a primary storyteller. If you are with a small group, these walks can invite quieter, more reflective conversation. If you are alone, they can offer a rare pocket of solitude in a city that rarely stops moving.

Elsewhere in the city—Greenwich Village, the Lower East Side, Brooklyn neighborhoods—late-night options expand into music venues, comedy rooms, and bars that host readings, storytelling, or open mics. If you venture that far after a conference day, it may be wise to frame it as your one “late night” and give yourself space the next morning. An hour listening to a small jazz group, a poetry series in the back of a bar, or a low-key comedy show can be a reminder of why many of us entered this field in the first place: to be surprised by other people’s imaginations in real time.

As you choose post-session spaces, you might pay attention to how they structure welcome and boundary. Are there clear signals about how long you can stay? Are staff rushed or present? Is there room for someone to join your table mid-conversation, or would that feel out of place? These are the same questions we ask about lobbies, classrooms, and rehearsal rooms—but here you get to experience them as a guest.

Optional prompt for one late evening:

After one conference day, choose a modest post-session setting—a quiet café, a bar, a short nighttime walk—and notice how the space helps you transition out of “conference mode.” What elements of that transition (lighting, sound, pace, posture, conversation) might you want to replicate for your own audiences or students after an intense shared experience?

6.5 Dietary Needs and Group Logistics

Conference life often heightens everything that is already complicated about eating: irregular schedules, varied dietary needs, fluctuating energy, and the social pressure of group meals. New York’s abundance can make this easier in some ways—there is almost always an option for everyone within a few blocks—but it can also create friction when a group is trying to “decide together” at the end of a long day. A little advance thought can turn meals into points of care rather than stress.

Dietary needs come in many forms: allergies, religious practices, health conditions, ethical choices, or simply knowing what helps you stay focused. In Lower Manhattan, most counters and restaurants are accustomed to requests for vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, halal, kosher-style, or dairy-free options, but clarity varies. It can help to scan menus online before heading out, especially if you are coordinating for others. When in doubt, asking a direct question—“Is this prepared with...?” or “Can this be made without...?”—is not just practical; it is a small rehearsal of advocacy that many of our students and colleagues practice daily.

Group meals are often framed as networking opportunities, but they also reveal power dynamics and inclusion practices in real time. Who gets to choose the place? Whose needs shape the timing? Does the group default to a type of restaurant that makes some people uncomfortable financially or culturally? In a district like FiDi, where a single block might hold both an expensive steakhouse and a modest counter-service spot, it is easy for good intentions to result in someone quietly absorbing cost or discomfort. As arts leaders, we can treat meal planning as part of our ethical practice: naming price expectations upfront, inviting people to opt in or out without explanation, and suggesting alternatives that allow different budgets and needs to coexist.

Logistically, smaller groups tend to fare better. Parties of three or four can usually walk into a casual spot without reservations, adapt on the fly, and hear one another without shouting. Larger groups may want to meet first in a central, flexible location (a food hall, for example) and then cluster organically rather than insisting on one long table for ten. This approach mirrors principles many of us already use in classrooms and rehearsals: creating multiple smaller spaces for connection rather than forcing a single configuration that works poorly for everyone.

Time management is another quiet factor in wellbeing. A “quick bite” can easily become a two-hour event if the group is indecisive or the venue overwhelmed. During a conference, you might experiment with naming the intention of each meal: “thirty-minute refuel,” “slow debrief,” or “we’re here until they close.” This not only helps you choose an appropriate spot but also signals to others what kind of energy is expected. Someone who needs to retreat, sleep, or answer emails can then bow out without appearing antisocial.

Accessibility intersects with food more than we often acknowledge. For some attendees, standing in long lines, navigating narrow staircases, or sitting on backless stools is a real barrier. In choosing places, it can help to notice: is there a ramp or only steps? Are there quieter corners? Is there space between tables for mobility aids? These observations are not merely logistical; they are part of the same inclusion lens you bring to performance spaces and classrooms. Naming these considerations explicitly in your group can normalize them for students and colleagues who may hesitate to speak up.

Finally, remember that it is acceptable—sometimes wise—to eat alone. Solo meals can offer rare moments to process ideas, jot notes, or simply rest your attention. In a field that often equates extroversion with engagement, choosing one or two meals to spend quietly with your own

thoughts can be an act of sustainability. You may find that the conversations you do have, over more intentional shared meals, are richer for it.

Optional reflection questions:

- Think of one meal you host or organize in your professional life. If you treated it with the same care you bring to programming an inclusive event, what might you change about cost, location, or structure?
- During SALE, notice one moment when a food choice visibly includes or excludes someone. What does that teach you about the unspoken assumptions baked into your own organization's social rituals?

7. Professional Lens: Arts Leadership Reflections & Micro-Assignments

7.1 Reflection Prompts

One of the advantages of gathering in New York, and particularly in Lower Manhattan, is that the city insists on being part of the conference whether we invite it or not. Streets, subways, museums, informal performances, and even coffee lines all offer material for thinking about arts leadership in ways that syllabi alone rarely can. The prompts below are designed to be portable—something you can hold lightly as you move through the city, then return to in a notebook, on your phone, or in conversation with colleagues. Use what serves you; leave the rest.

1. Audiences and Belonging

As you move through venues—museums, theatres, parks, memorials—take a moment to look away from the “main attraction” and toward the people around you.

- Who is present, and who seems absent?
- What signals (language, price, security, architecture, staff behavior) might be shaping who feels invited into this space?
- How do these signals resemble or differ from those at your own organization or campus?

2. Space, Power, and Memory

Lower Manhattan is dense with contested histories: colonial, financial, immigrant, activist.

- Notice one site where history is being narrated (a plaque, a guided tour, an exhibit, a memorial). Whose story is centered? Whose is missing or minimized?
- How does the design of the space (scale, materials, circulation, sound) reinforce or complicate that narrative?
- If your institution were to tell its own story in public space, what might it borrow—or deliberately avoid—from what you see here?

3. Labor and Hospitality

In restaurants, hotels, Ubers, box offices, and galleries, you are constantly encountering people whose work makes your visit possible.

- Choose one interaction with a worker and reflect: what forms of respect or disregard were present on both sides of the exchange?
- How visible is labor in the spaces you're visiting, and when is it hidden?
- What parallels do you see with how labor is acknowledged, compensated, or obscured in your own organization?

4. Money, Value, and Access

You will likely pay for some experiences, receive others for free, and encounter still others in public space.

- Think about one moment that felt “worth it” financially and one that did not. What made the difference—content, context, company, or something else?

- How did pricing (including discounts, free hours, or “suggested” donations) shape your own behavior or sense of obligation?
- What does this suggest about how you set value and access structures for your own programs?

5. Leadership in Motion

New York offers many models of leadership in action that are not labeled as such: a community organizer at a vigil, a teaching artist wrangling a group, a barista managing a rush, a stage manager shepherding an audience.

- Notice one person who seems to be quietly holding a space together. What are they actually doing—verbally, physically, emotionally?
- Which of those behaviors feel familiar to your own leadership practice, and which might you want to experiment with?

6. Your Own Presence

Finally, turn the lens inward. Conferences can make us perform a sharpened version of ourselves—competent, busy, always “on.” The city can either amplify that or disrupt it.

- When do you feel most like yourself during SALE: in sessions, on walks, at meals, alone in your room, somewhere else?
- What conditions (time of day, type of space, company) support your best thinking and listening?

- How might you design those conditions more intentionally for the people you lead or teach?

You might carry one of these prompts in mind for a day, or choose a different prompt for each subway ride or micro-walk. The aim is not to produce a perfect set of reflections, but to let the city do what it does best for arts leaders: unsettle assumptions, sharpen perception, and offer unexpected material for the work waiting at home.

7.2 Observation Exercises in the City

These exercises are meant to be simple enough to weave into your existing plans, but pointed enough to surface questions about leadership, equity, and cultural practice. You can treat them as solo explorations, invite students or colleagues to join, or use them as informal prompts for conversation over meals. No special materials are required beyond something to jot notes on, if that helps you think.

Exercise 1: The Threshold Scan

Choose one arts or cultural space you are already planning to visit—a museum, theatre, gallery, library branch, memorial plaza, or performance venue. Position yourself near the entrance (inside or just outside) for ten minutes.

- Watch how people cross the threshold. Do they hesitate, look for cues, stride in, ask questions?
- Note the visible guides: signage, staff, security, ticket desks, stanchions, ramps, audio tours, donation boxes. Which of these make entry feel easier, and which introduce friction or anxiety?
- Afterward, sketch a quick “threshold map” of your own institution. Where do people hesitate there, and what signals do they encounter first?

Exercise 2: Listening for Languages

During one subway ride, park visit, or walk through a busy area, tune your attention to language—spoken, printed, and visual.

- How many spoken languages can you identify around you in a

five-minute window?

- Look at posted information: what languages appear on signs, maps, menus, or labels? Who is implicitly expected to understand the environment without translation?
- Consider your own organization: whose languages are visible, whose are assumed, and whose are absent? If you added one new language or communication mode, what might it be and why?

Exercise 3: The Ticket Line as a System

At any ticketed venue—a museum, show, observation deck, or special exhibit—spend a few minutes observing how the line or queue operates (even if you’ve already purchased your own ticket).

- How many different “paths” into the event exist (walk-up, timed entry, VIP, members, groups, free passes, rush tickets)?
- What is communicated clearly, and what seems to be insider knowledge?
- Imagine a student or community member from your home context arriving here alone. How would they fare? What might you borrow—or avoid—from this system in your own box office or registration processes?

Exercise 4: Public Space as Programming

Pick one public space—a park bench, a plaza near a memorial, a corner of a food hall—and sit there for fifteen minutes as if you are “attending” it like a performance.

- Who uses the space and how: resting, playing, working, selling, protesting, performing?
- What are the informal rules you can infer (noise levels, eye contact, dogs, children, food, phones)?
- If you were to write a short “program note” for this space, what themes would you highlight? How do they echo or challenge the way you currently program common areas in your own institution?

Exercise 5: Shadowing a Line of Work

Choose one type of worker you see repeatedly during your visit—subway staff, cleaners, security guards, ushers, baristas, bike delivery riders, museum guards. Over the course of a day, notice how this role appears in different contexts.

- What tools, uniforms, or behaviors identify the role?
- Where is this labor visible, and where is it hidden?
- In your own organization, who plays an equivalent role in holding daily life together? How might their visibility, pay, or voice be different if you treated their work as central rather than peripheral?

Exercise 6: Budgeting Attention

For one half-day, treat your attention as if it were your primary currency.

- Before you set out, decide on “attention categories” (for example: people, architecture, sound, marketing, or nonhuman life like trees, water, dogs).

- As you move through the city, note where your attention is drawn voluntarily and where it is captured by design (advertising, notifications, alarms, bright signage).
- At the end of the window, ask: if my leadership practice reflected how I just spent my attention, what would that say about my priorities? What might I want to redistribute?

These exercises are intentionally modest. The goal is not to generate perfect field notes, but to practice a kind of leadership-adjacent noticing—one that treats the city as both a partner and a provocation in your ongoing work with artists, students, and communities.

7.3 Conversation Starters for Attendees

Conferences often promise “networking,” but many of the richest exchanges begin not with formal introductions, but with a shared moment in a lobby, on a sidewalk, or over a quick lunch. In New York—and especially at SALE, where most people are juggling teaching loads, artistic projects, and institutional responsibilities—conversation time is precious. The prompts below are designed to move quickly past small talk and into the kinds of questions that might actually shape your practice, while still feeling light enough for a walk between sessions or a line for coffee. Use them, adapt them, or let them simply suggest the kinds of openings that tend to yield something real.

City as Case Study

- “What’s one thing you’ve seen in the city so far that you wish your students or board could see with you?”
- “If your organization treated your neighborhood like New York treats its public spaces, what might change?”

Teaching and Mentoring

- “Is there a moment with a student this year that shifted how you think about arts leadership?”
- “What’s one assignment or exercise that has actually surprised you in the last couple of years—either because it worked better than you expected, or because it fell flat?”

Equity, Community, and Governance

- “Where do you see your institution genuinely sharing power, and where does it still cling to old habits?”
- “In your context, who do you think of as the ‘public’ you serve—and has this visit changed that picture at all?”

Artistic Practice and Burnout

- “What kind of art have you needed lately—as a person, not as an administrator or teacher?”
- “Is there something you’ve quietly stopped doing in your work because you couldn’t sustain it? Do you miss it?”

Money and Value

- “Has anything about pricing—tickets, food, transit—here made you think differently about what you charge (or don’t charge) at home?”
- “If a funder gave you one no-strings-attached grant to make your work more sustainable, where would you spend it first?”

Leadership and Identity

- “When do you feel most like a leader in your work, and when do you feel most like a beginner?”
- “Is there a leadership practice you’ve inherited that you’re trying to unlearn?”

Imagining Alternatives

- “If you could design one small pilot program tomorrow that embodied your values perfectly, what would it look like and who would it be for?”
- “What’s one practice you’ve seen elsewhere—this week or in your past—that you would like to ‘steal’ for your own context?”

You might keep one or two of these in your back pocket for hallway pauses, elevator rides, or the start of a meal. Often the most fruitful conversations begin when someone is willing to ask a slightly deeper question than “How’s your semester going?”—and is equally willing to let the answer be provisional, messy, or unfinished.

8. Networking, Meet-Ups, and Community-Building

8.1 Suggested Informal Meet-Ups

Formal conference schedules can only do so much to foster the kinds of sustained, candid conversations arts leaders need. The rest tends to happen in the margins—in lines for coffee, on short walks, at tables that start with two people and slowly expand. Because SALE is concentrated in and around Pace and the Moxy, you have a rare opportunity: a compact, walkable neighborhood that can reliably host these informal gatherings without complicated logistics. Think of the suggestions below as “soft invitations” you can adapt on the fly.

Morning Coffee Circles (Pre-Session)

Many attendees will be grabbing coffee near campus or the hotel before morning sessions. You might designate an informal “window” (for example, 8:00–8:30 am) at a walkable coffee spot on one or two conference days. The structure can be simple: whoever shows up joins a loose standing circle or shared table, with no obligation to stay the whole time. A light prompt—“What are you hoping to notice in the city today?” or “What are you bringing with you from this past semester?”—can help keep the conversation from reverting to pure logistics. This kind of low-stakes, come-and-go space is especially helpful for newer scholars, grad students, or practitioners who may not yet know many people by name.

Micro-Walks Between Sessions

Earlier in the guide, you’ll find short “micro-walks” radiating out from Pace. These routes are perfect for ten- to twenty-minute decompression walks between sessions. One approach is to name a specific micro-walk and time on a shared board or group chat—“City Hall Park loop, 3:15–3:35; meet by the main entrance”—and invite others to join. The host

doesn't need to give a tour; the walk itself is the container. The conversation can revolve around a simple shared question ("What did you just hear that you want to argue with or build on?"), or it can simply be a chance to move your body and talk about anything but work.

Brown-Bag or Grab-and-Go Lunch Huddles

Rather than trying to secure a reservation for a large group, you might encourage loosely organized lunch "huddles" in and around campus: groups of three to five who pick up food from nearby counters or food halls and then claim a patch of seating—indoors, in a lobby, or outside if the weather cooperates. These lunches work best when the invitation is framed with both topic and tone, for example: "Informal brown-bag about capstone course design," or "Nonlinear career paths chat—bring your questions and your snacks." Keeping them short (30–45 minutes) allows people to participate without sacrificing downtime.

Post-Session Decompress Spots

After the final session block of the day, energy levels will vary widely. Some attendees will be ready for a longer evening; others will want something gentle and nearby. Suggesting one or two "decompress spots" each night—a quiet-ish bar, a café, or a seating area near the water—gives people a default destination without creating pressure to attend. The framing matters: "Low-key debrief, drop in as you are, no RSVP" keeps the emphasis on ease rather than obligation. This is often where cross-institutional relationships deepen, because people arrive as much as themselves as their professional roles.

Topical "Office Hours" in Public Spaces

You might also experiment with the idea of topical "office hours" in public or semi-public spaces near Pace. A faculty member, practitioner, or grad student could claim a table at a café or in a campus lounge for a set hour, posted as something like: "Grant-writing frustrations and experiments,"

“Leading from the middle,” or “Teaching arts leadership with limited institutional support.” Anyone interested can drop by, listen, or join in. The setting signals informality, but the focus honors the seriousness of the work.

Affinity and Care-Focused Meet-Ups

Finally, consider space for affinity-based or care-focused gatherings: meet-ups for BIPOC arts leaders, LGBTQ+ attendees, early-career faculty, first-time conference-goers, or those working in particularly under-resourced contexts. Even a brief check-in—“We’ll be at X spot from 5:15–5:45”—can offer a sense of grounding and recognition in what can otherwise feel like an overwhelming environment. These spaces work best when expectations are clear: no program, just mutual visibility and whatever conversation emerges.

However you choose to gather, the throughline is intentional informality: settings and structures that lower the stakes enough for people to be honest, curious, and occasionally vulnerable, while still respecting the limited energy everyone brings to a packed three days.

8.2 “Host a Walk / Join a Walk” Page

One of the simplest ways to turn a conference from a schedule into a community is to walk together. In a compact neighborhood like FiDi, walks can be informal, low-cost, and flexible—no microphones, no room reservations, just a time, a place, and a shared intention. This page is meant as an invitation and a framework: a way for attendees to self-organize short walks that fit around sessions and energy levels.

You might think of each walk as a tiny, moving seminar. The “host” is less a tour guide and more a convener: someone who chooses a route (or even just a destination), names a loose theme, and commits to showing up on time. The “joiners” bring curiosity, good shoes, and whatever level of conversation they feel up to that day. Some walks might stay close to campus—a loop around City Hall Park, a stroll to the Seaport, a quick pass through the World Trade Center plazas; others might venture slightly farther before or after conference hours.

To make this easy to use, you could imagine a simple structure—whether on a bulletin board, a shared document, or a messaging channel—where people can post and find walks. For example:

- **Title / Theme:** “Morning Reset: Brooklyn Bridge Views”
- **Host:** Name, institution (optional)
- **When:** Thursday, 7:30–8:15 am
- **Where to meet:** Pace main entrance
- **Rough route:** Across the bridge to the first viewing area, then back

- **Pace / Accessibility notes:** Moderate pace, some incline, crowds possible; not ideal for those avoiding stairs; quiet reflection welcome

Other walks might sound like:

- “Lunch Loop: City Hall Park and Surrounding Streets”
- “Evening Lights: Seaport and East River Waterfront”
- “Architecture and Memorials Micro-Walk”
- “Grad Student Walk: Surviving and Shaping Institutions”

Each listing can briefly note the intended tone: quiet reflective walk, chatty networking, topic-focused discussion, or “mix of both.” This helps people choose what suits their bandwidth. It also allows for different access needs: some walks can prioritize minimal stairs, shorter distances, or proximity to seating and restrooms. Naming those considerations upfront mirrors the kind of access-conscious planning many of us advocate in our own organizations.

Hosting a walk does not require being a New York expert. In fact, some of the most valuable walks may be led by people who are also discovering the neighborhood for the first time and simply want company while they look, listen, and think. A host might begin by saying, “I don’t know this area well either—I’m curious what we’ll notice,” which can shift the dynamic from instruction to shared inquiry. That stance can be especially liberating for students or early-career colleagues who may feel pressure to present themselves as already fully formed leaders.

For those joining, the “walk” frame can relieve some of the social pressure that comes with more static networking spaces. Walking side by side, looking outward as much as at each other, often makes it easier for quieter voices to enter the conversation. Short silences feel natural rather than awkward. People can peel off partway through if needed. The city becomes a third participant in the conversation, offering topics in the form of architecture, street life, and small surprises—a mural, a busker, a window display—that you encounter along the way.

If you choose to use this structure at SALE, consider leaving room for serendipity. Not every walk needs to be posted a day in advance; some can be announced an hour before, sparked by weather, mood, or a session that raised more questions than it could answer. Over three days, a handful of these small, hosted walks can knit together people who might never find each other in formal sessions, and send everyone home with at least one memory of having literally walked through ideas with peers.

Optional prompt for hosts:

Before your walk, ask yourself: what do I want people to carry away—an image, a question, a sense of being less alone in their work? Afterward, jot a few notes about what actually happened. The gap between intention and experience can be a quiet lesson in leadership all on its own.

8.3 Quiet and Reflective Places

A city like New York can be exhilarating and productive for arts leaders—and also overstimulating. Between sessions, transit, social events, and the ongoing performance of professional self, it is easy to arrive back at your hotel each night with a head full of ideas and no space to sort them. Building in small pockets of quiet is not indulgent; it is part of how you metabolize what you are seeing and hearing. Lower Manhattan, for all its density, offers more of these small refuges than you might expect.

On campus, Pace itself can serve as a refuge if you treat it that way. Hallways, smaller lounges, and tucked-away seating areas can become temporary reflection spaces between sessions. When you need a deeper reset, the university's own designated quiet rooms—the prayer and meditation spaces and wellness-oriented rooms—are specifically intended for stillness and private reflection. These spaces, while primarily designed for students, model an institutional commitment to mental and spiritual wellbeing that echoes many of the values discussed at SALE. Paying attention to how they are framed and used may spark ideas for parallel spaces in your own organizations.

Just outside Pace, **City Hall Park** can feel surprisingly contemplative at certain times of day, especially in the early morning or late afternoon. Finding a bench under the trees or along a quieter path offers a chance to step away from screens and badges, to watch dogs, pigeons, and passersby instead of slideshows and email. A short walk toward the waterfront—either the Seaport area on the East River side or the paths edging the Hudson near Battery Park and Brookfield Place—can also provide elongated sightlines and the grounding effect of water. Even ten minutes spent watching boats or the interplay of light on glass towers can help reset your nervous system.

When the weather is uncooperative, indoor refuges become more important. Museum lobbies, less-trafficked galleries, and reading rooms can function as quiet chambers within the city’s louder architecture. The New York Public Library system, for example, includes branch libraries and larger research spaces whose reading rooms are explicitly structured for quiet study and thought. Spending half an hour in such a space—not necessarily working, just sitting with a notebook—can be a restorative counterpart to the more kinetic aspects of the conference. These rooms can also prompt questions about who has historically been permitted into such spaces, and how your own institutions might broaden their equivalent “reading rooms” at home.

Sacred and spiritual spaces—churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship—also offer a particular kind of quiet, even for visitors who do not share the faith tradition. Many historic churches in Lower Manhattan keep their doors open during the day, welcoming people who step inside to look, sit, or breathe for a few minutes. Here, the acoustics, light, and architecture conspire to lower the volume of the city almost instantly. Entering respectfully, observing posted guidelines, and spending a moment in stillness can remind you of the role that contemplation and ritual play in community life, including in secular arts contexts.

Quiet is not only about decibel levels. You may notice that certain cafés, hotel lobbies, or corners of food halls create a sense of psychological quiet even when background noise is present. This often has to do with lighting, seating density, and the absence of urgent demands on your attention. Choosing a seat that lets you face a window, wall, or open space rather than constant foot traffic can make a short break feel more like a retreat. In these moments, the city becomes a backdrop rather than a requirement, and you can review notes, sketch an idea, or simply let your mind wander.

It can be helpful to identify, early in the conference, one or two personal

“landing spots” where you know you can go for ten minutes of relative stillness: a particular bench in City Hall Park, a corner table in a nearby café, a quiet hallway on campus, a seat by the river. You do not have to tell anyone else about them. Simply knowing they exist can make the days feel less compressed. For those traveling with students or colleagues, naming quiet as a legitimate part of the conference experience—rather than something you squeeze in guiltily—models a more humane rhythm of professional life.

Optional reflection prompt:

At some point during SALE, spend ten uninterrupted minutes in a quiet or quieter place—no email, no social media, no note-taking unless it feels necessary. Afterwards, ask yourself: what surfaced when the noise dropped? If your organization honored that kind of pause for staff, students, or artists, what might become possible that currently feels out of reach?

9. Practicalities, Safety, Accessibility, and Wellbeing

9.1 Essential Contacts and Services

Even in a city as busy as New York, the basic safety infrastructure is straightforward. A few key numbers and reference points, saved in your phone before you arrive, can make the rest of your trip feel calmer and more focused on the work at hand.

For any life-threatening emergency in New York City—medical, fire, or police—call **911**. This is the same as in most of the United States and should be your default when someone is in immediate danger or needs urgent medical attention. For non-emergencies related to city services—noise complaints, questions about public services, concerns about someone who might need assistance but is not in active crisis—you can contact **311**, the city’s information and service line, available 24 hours a day by phone or online. Many New Yorkers use 311 to report issues, ask questions about regulations, or get directed to appropriate agencies.

Within Pace University, the Office of Safety and Security is your primary on-campus resource. On the New York City campus, security is staffed 24 hours a day and can be reached at **(212) 346-1800** for any safety concern, from lost items and building access issues to more serious incidents on or immediately around campus. Pace also maintains an emergency alert system and the PaceSafe app, which can provide real-time updates and an additional channel for reaching safety personnel. As a conference attendee, you are welcome to treat campus security as your first point of contact for anything that doesn’t quite rise to the level of 911 but still feels urgent in or near university spaces.

At the conference hotel, Moxy NYC Downtown, the front desk functions as your hub for building-specific issues. The hotel's main number is **(212) 257-8886**, and staff can assist with concerns ranging from room access and billing questions to helping you contact medical services or transportation. Hotel staff are accustomed to out-of-town guests and can advise you on local pharmacies, urgent care locations, and late-night options if you are feeling unwell or need basic supplies.

For transportation-related questions or problems—service changes, lost items, or non-emergency concerns on subways and buses—you can call **511**, the regional transit information number that connects to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). While station agents and conductors are often your first line of assistance on the system itself, 511 can help you navigate service alerts or plan alternate routes if something unexpected disrupts your travel.

If you—or someone you encounter—needs mental health or emotional support, New York City offers confidential, around-the-clock resources. **NYC Well** provides free mental health support via phone, text, and online chat; they can connect you to counselors, crisis intervention, and referrals. For many arts professionals, the combination of travel, performance pressure, and institutional stress can surface more than just physical fatigue. Having these numbers handy can make it easier to reach out if you or a colleague needs to talk to someone beyond the conference community.

Finally, remember that you are not navigating the city alone. Pace's staff, fellow attendees, hotel personnel, and even many everyday New Yorkers are accustomed to helping visitors orient themselves. A simple, direct question—"Is there a safe way to walk to...?" "Where is the nearest pharmacy?" "Who should I talk to about...?"—often opens doors. Taking a few minutes at the start of the conference to program essential numbers into your phone and to note the locations of campus security, the nearest

subway entrances, and a nearby pharmacy or urgent care can turn a vague sense of “urban risk” into a more grounded awareness, leaving more of your attention free for the artistic and intellectual work you came here to do.

9.2 Safety and Street-Savvy Tips

New York rewards attention more than fear. Lower Manhattan, especially around Pace and the Moxy, is heavily trafficked by workers, residents, tourists, and students, and it functions as a busy downtown rather than a perpetual crisis zone. At the same time, it is still an urban environment, and the same habits that keep you and your students safe in any large city apply here. The goal is not to make you anxious, but to help you move through the city feeling alert, confident, and available for the experiences you came to have.

A simple rule of thumb is to **keep your situational awareness one step ahead of your phone**. When you are walking, especially near intersections, subway entrances, or crowded sidewalks, look up and around regularly. Notice where you are, who is nearby, and how the street feels. If you need to consult a map, step out of the main flow—onto a stoop, near a storefront, or inside a lobby—rather than stopping abruptly mid-sidewalk. This small habit reduces your vulnerability to pickpocketing, collisions, and that disoriented feeling that can escalate minor confusion into real stress.

Bag and pocket management also matters. Choose one or two secure places for your phone, wallet, and keys—ideally inside pockets or zippered compartments—and be consistent. Crossbody bags worn in front, or backpacks that can be shifted to the front in crowded settings, are more secure than open totes or loosely slung purses. On subways and in busy tourist areas (Times Square, World Trade Center, Seaport, certain Midtown corridors), keep a light touch on bags and be cautious about leaving items on chairs or banquettes, even for a moment. Most incidents are opportunistic rather than targeted; making yourself a slightly more difficult opportunity is usually enough.

Sidebar: Are New Yorkers Really Rude?

The short answer: often no—just on a different tempo. What visitors sometimes experience as “rude” is usually a mix of urgency, density, and a communication style that prioritizes clarity over cushioning. When you have 30 minutes to get from one borough to another, pick up a kid, and respond to three messages, your margin for ambiguity shrinks. “Excuse me!” in that context is not an indictment; it’s a time-management tool.

You may notice that many New Yorkers don’t make much small talk with strangers, don’t hold eye contact on the subway, and don’t soften directives with long preambles. But watch what happens when something actually goes wrong: a stroller getting stuck, someone tripping on a curb, a tourist clearly lost, a rider feeling faint. People who were stone-faced moments earlier will often jump in with directions, a steadying hand, a seat, or a call for help. The public surface can be brusque; the underlying ethic is often “don’t waste my time, but I will show up in a crisis.”

As arts leaders, this tension may feel familiar. Many of us juggle overfull calendars, limited resources, and the need to communicate quickly. We often wrestle with the difference between being nice and being clear. New York simply enacts that difference in a visible, condensed way. A director calling a firm “hold,” a production manager giving direct feedback, or a teaching artist managing a tight transition may sound “rude” out of context, but within the shared understanding of the work, that directness can read as care for the collective.

If you find yourself bristling at an interaction—a clipped response from a barista, a subway announcement barked more than spoken—it may be worth asking: was this actually unkind, or simply unadorned? Conversely, if you catch yourself apologizing excessively or over-explaining in situations that call for simple clarity, New York might offer a temporary laboratory to experiment with a different balance.

The stereotype of the “rude New Yorker” can also mask real issues of bias and expectation. Who is allowed to be direct without being labeled rude? Whose accent, race, or class changes how their urgency is perceived? Paying attention to when your own comfort is jostled in the city can surface assumptions that play out in your institutions: who is granted the benefit of the doubt, and who is not.

In the meantime, a practical strategy: meet directness with groundedness. A calm “thank you,” “I’ve got it,” or “no, thank you” usually does the trick. You do not have to mirror anyone else’s pace. But understanding the rhythm underneath the brusqueness may help you move through the city—and your own leadership contexts—with a little more curiosity and a little less static.

New York Can Be Perfectly Safe (especially Manhattan)

At night, the same streets you used during the day remain your best routes. Favor well-lit, busier corridors over side streets when possible, especially if you are alone. If a block feels unusually isolated, it is fine to turn back or cross to a more active street; you do not owe the city relentless bravery. Walking with one or two colleagues can make late strolls—to the Seaport, across the bridge, or back from a show—feel both safer and more pleasant. For longer distances after dark, many attendees choose a rideshare or yellow cab, particularly when returning from neighborhoods outside Lower Manhattan.

Subways are generally safe and efficient, especially during the hours you are most likely to use them for conference-related activities. Basic street sense applies: stand back from the platform edge, avoid walking between cars, stay aware of your bag, and move away from anyone whose behavior feels aggressively disruptive. If a car feels uncomfortable, step off and switch to the next one; trains run frequently enough that this is usually a

minor delay. Late at night, you may feel more comfortable in cars with more passengers rather than nearly empty ones.

Panhandling, street solicitation, and visible homelessness are part of the city's reality, including in FiDi. People will ask for money, signatures, or your attention in various ways. You are not obligated to engage; a brief "No, thank you" or no response, combined with continuing to walk, is an accepted norm. If you choose to give, do so in a way that feels safe and sustainable to you. As arts leaders who often work closely with questions of poverty, displacement, and care, you may feel these encounters acutely. It can help to remember that your primary responsibilities at the conference are to yourself, your traveling companions, and your own capacity to return to your communities ready to keep doing the work.

If something does feel off—being followed, an argument escalating nearby, a street that suddenly empties—trust your instincts. Change direction, step into a business, hotel, or campus building, and regroup there. Ask staff for help if you need it; New Yorkers are often more willing to assist than their stereotypes suggest, especially when someone is direct about what they need ("Can you call a cab for me?" "Is there a safer way to walk to...?").

Finally, consider how you model safety practices for students or colleagues traveling with you. Saying aloud, "Let's move over here to check the map," or "Let's keep bags in front on this train," normalizes these behaviors without dramatizing risk. In doing so, you reinforce a version of safety that is grounded, communal, and attentive—much like the leadership many of us hope to practice inside rehearsal rooms, classrooms, and board meetings.

9.3 Accessibility Considerations

Accessibility in New York is uneven but steadily improving, and Lower Manhattan is no exception. As arts leaders, many of you are already attuned to questions of mobility, sensory experience, and inclusion; being here offers a chance to notice how a dense, historic city succeeds and falls short—and to reflect on parallels in your own institutions. The aim of this section is not to provide an exhaustive technical guide, but to name patterns and practical strategies so that you and your colleagues can move through the city with more confidence and care.

Mobility is the most immediately visible layer. Sidewalks in FiDi are generally paved and ramped at intersections, but curb cuts can be narrow, crowded, or partially blocked by construction, vendors, or delivery equipment. Some streets are cobblestoned or irregular, especially near the Seaport and older blocks, which can be challenging for wheelchairs, scooters, canes, or rolling bags. Elevators and ramps are present at many major destinations—Pace, museums, transit hubs, the World Trade Center complex—but they are not always intuitively located, and occasional outages or detours do occur. For conference-related movement, it can help to build in a little extra time, especially when someone in your group uses mobility aids or prefers to avoid stairs and steep inclines.

Transit offers both remarkable reach and real barriers. Some subway stations are equipped with elevators and accessible turnstiles, while others remain stubbornly stair-dependent. Buses are generally more accessible, with kneeling features and ramps, but they can be slower in heavy traffic. For some trips, particularly at night or across longer distances, taxis and rideshares provide a more predictable option. As you plan outings, a quick check of station accessibility and walking distances can mean the difference between a manageable excursion and an exhausting one. This is especially important if you are bringing students or colleagues who may

hesitate to name their limits.

Sensory environments in New York can be intense. Noise—from traffic, construction, sirens, music, and crowds—is a constant, especially around major intersections and transit hubs. Lighting can be harsh and bright in some places, dim and disorienting in others, with rapidly changing visual stimuli in commercial corridors. For attendees who are neurodivergent, have sensory processing differences, migraines, or anxiety, this can accumulate quickly. Building intentional quiet pockets into your day—library reading rooms, quieter corners of parks, less-trafficked museum galleries, campus lounges—can help regulate overload. Noise-cancelling headphones, earplugs, sunglasses, and simple breathing breaks are not indulgences; they are practical tools.

Communication access is another critical dimension. Many venues now incorporate captioning, assistive listening devices, multi-language materials, and clear signage, but implementation varies widely. If you or someone in your group uses ASL, CART, or specific assistive technologies, advance contact with venues is often necessary. For more informal settings—restaurants, public talks, small performances—seating choices can matter: closer proximity to speakers, better sightlines to lips or screens, and reduced competing noise can all make participation more equitable. As you notice where communication access is taken seriously and where it is treated as an afterthought, you may find yourself mentally revisiting your own organization's practices.

Invisible disabilities and chronic conditions deserve sustained attention as well. Long days of walking, standing, and networking can be taxing for those managing pain, fatigue, or conditions that are not outwardly apparent. The culture of overextension in conferences—rushing from session to session, layering on late-night events, skipping meals—can unintentionally exclude or harm colleagues who cannot or should not operate at that pace.

Modeling different choices—leaving earlier, building in rest, normalizing sitting when others stand—can open space for others to do the same without apology.

If you are attending with students or a group, it may be useful to have an explicit conversation about access early on: inviting people to share needs privately, encouraging the use of mobility aids without stigma, clarifying that opting out of an outing is acceptable, and making sure at least some planned activities are reachable without extensive stairs or long walks. You might also designate one or two “low-exertion” options in the guide as defaults for those who want to participate without overtaxing themselves.

Ultimately, accessibility in New York is a shared project. The city, its institutions, and its residents each have a role—but so do visiting professionals who choose how to move, plan, and advocate. As you navigate Lower Manhattan, you might treat each accessible entrance, elevator, captioned performance, or quiet corner as both a resource and a prompt: what would it look like to bring this level of attention and imagination back to your own classrooms, rehearsal halls, and boardrooms?

9.4 Weather and Clothing Notes

Late March in New York is a season in between: not fully winter, not reliably spring. Over the course of the conference, you are likely to encounter a mix of cool mornings, milder afternoons, and evenings that can feel sharper near the water than the temperature suggests. Rain is always a possibility, and wind in Lower Manhattan—channeled between tall buildings or sweeping off the rivers—can make an otherwise moderate day feel unexpectedly raw. Planning for variability rather than a single “set” of conditions will make it easier to say yes to walks, micro-excursions, and spontaneous conversations outdoors.

Layers are your best strategy. A base layer that feels comfortable inside conference rooms, a light or medium-weight sweater or fleece, and a wind- or water-resistant outer layer give you options as you move between indoor and outdoor environments. Scarves, hats, and gloves might seem excessive on paper, but they take up little space and can make a real difference on an evening walk across the bridge or along the waterfront. Inside buildings and transit, temperatures can swing to the other extreme—warm subway cars, heated lobbies, crowded museum galleries—so the ability to shed a layer quickly matters just as much.

Footwear deserves special consideration. You will likely walk more than you expect, even on days you think of as “conference-heavy.” Comfortable, broken-in shoes with decent support are more important than style; this is true for your students and colleagues as well. Sidewalks, subway stairs, cobblestones, and the occasional puddle or damp patch all conspire against delicate shoes. If you plan to attend any receptions or performances that tempt you toward more formal footwear, consider whether you can carry those shoes and change on-site rather than wearing them for long walks. Your body—and your focus—will benefit.

Weather also intersects with how you use time and space. A sunny, brisk day may invite outdoor reflection between sessions, while rain or cold might push more gatherings into cafés, lobbies, or quiet corners of campus. It can help to have both an “inside” and “outside” version of your loose plans: a park bench or river walk on good-weather days, a library or campus lounge as a fallback when the sky changes its mind. For group outings, naming a rain plan early can prevent the kind of last-minute decision fatigue that erodes energy and excludes those less comfortable navigating in inclement conditions.

For those particularly sensitive to temperature changes—because of health conditions, medications, or simple preference—packing small, portable comforts can make a disproportionate difference: a thin pair of gloves, a compact umbrella, a spare pair of dry socks, a travel-sized hand lotion or lip balm to counteract wind and indoor heating. These items are easy to share with students or colleagues who may have packed optimistically and then discovered that New York in March has its own ideas.

Finally, consider how your weather and clothing choices model sustainability and care. Choosing to walk when conditions allow, rather than defaulting to cars; dressing in ways that let you comfortably use public space; signaling to students that practical shoes and warm layers are valued over performative professionalism—all of these small decisions echo the broader themes of the conference. You are not just dressing for the weather; you are dressing for the kind of leadership and presence you want to inhabit while you are here.

9.5 Wellbeing in a High-Stimulation City

SALE asks a lot of you before you even walk into the first session. You are traveling, adjusting to a new environment, meeting colleagues, holding responsibilities at home remotely, and layering all of that onto the ordinary pressures of teaching, leading, and making work. New York amplifies both the excitement and the strain: it offers constant stimuli, endless options, and few built-in cues to slow down. Thinking proactively about your wellbeing is not separate from your work as an arts leader here; it is part of it.

Energy is your most limited resource during the conference. Instead of assuming you will simply “fit in” rest around the edges, it may help to treat rest as one of your scheduled activities, even if you do not write it on the program. This can be as simple as deciding in advance that you will not attend every session block, or that you will guard one meal a day as unstructured time. You might also choose one evening to return to the hotel early, or one morning to arrive on campus later, and treat that decision not as failure but as a strategic choice to sustain your attention for the moments that matter most.

Your nervous system will be processing more than you realize: noise, density, visual input, and the micro-calculations of navigating transit and streets. Small, regular resets help more than occasional dramatic ones. A five-minute pause on a bench, a slow walk around the block between sessions, a brief breathing exercise before opening your laptop at night—all can interrupt the tendency to carry one intense experience straight into the next. If it helps, you might pick a simple ritual for the conference—stepping outside after each session, drinking a full glass of water before each meal, stretching for two minutes before bed—and treat it as a non-negotiable.

Social bandwidth is its own form of wellbeing. Conferences can create a

quiet pressure to be “on” all the time: to network, to attend every reception, to say yes to every dinner invitation. In practice, a handful of real conversations will likely matter more than a blur of polite ones. It is entirely acceptable to decline a social event, leave a gathering early, or choose a solo walk over another hour of small talk. Naming your limits—“I’d love to join for an hour,” “I need a quiet evening tonight”—can also normalize others doing the same. For those traveling with students, modeling this kind of boundary-setting can be as valuable as any formal session on self-care.

Physical needs are easy to minimize until they insist otherwise: sleep, food, movement, medication routines. The city and the conference will both present opportunities to ignore those needs in the name of “making the most” of your time. A more sustainable approach might be to decide, in advance, what your non-negotiables are: a certain minimum amount of sleep, specific foods you know keep you steady, time to take a walk without talking, or a window each day when you check in with family or with yourself. Treating these as structural supports rather than afterthoughts can reduce the background anxiety that often accompanies travel.

Emotional wellbeing may also surface in unexpected ways. New York’s memorials, inequities, and intensities can stir grief, anger, inspiration, or a vague sense of dislocation. Session content may touch directly on injustices you live with in your own institutions. Allowing yourself to feel those responses—rather than immediately turning them into talking points or strategic plans—is part of the work. You might find it helpful to keep a private record of what moves you during the conference, separate from professional notes: sentences, images, interactions that land in a more personal register. These can become anchors later, when you are back in institutional routines.

Finally, remember that wellbeing is a collective project as much as an

individual one. Checking in on colleagues, inviting quieter attendees into small-group plans, noticing who seems overwhelmed, and making room for different paces all contribute to the health of the gathering. You do not need to fix anyone's experience. Often, a simple question—"How are you holding up today?"—and a willingness to hear the unpolished answer is enough. In a field where overextension is often normalized, practicing a different rhythm together, even for three days, is itself a form of arts leadership.

10. Resources, Index, and Notes

10.1 Useful Links for Arts People

This section is meant as a small, focused toolkit rather than a comprehensive directory. It highlights a handful of organizations and portals that many arts leaders, educators, and graduate students find themselves returning to long after a single conference. You might think of these links as potential “anchor tabs” in your browser—places to check when you are hunting for funding, teaching resources, policy updates, or simply a sense of being part of a larger field.

New York–Based Arts Service Organizations

New York’s arts ecosystem is supported by a dense network of service organizations that provide grants, professional development, advocacy, and convenings. A few you may want to bookmark:

- New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA): A central hub for opportunities, including grants, jobs, and professional resources for artists and cultural workers across disciplines.
- New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA): The city’s cultural agency, administering funding, policy initiatives, and borough-wide partnerships that often serve as models for municipal cultural policy elsewhere.
- Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC): A key local partner in the very neighborhood you are visiting, offering residencies, regrant programs, and resources for artists and small organizations.
- Borough arts councils (Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and

Manhattan intermediaries): Essential for understanding how public funds are distributed at a community level, and useful comparators for similar structures in other regions.

Arts Education and Teaching Artist Resources

For those working at the intersection of education and practice, several organizations maintain robust resource libraries, webinars, and networks:

- NYC Arts in Education Roundtable: Programming, advocacy, and community specifically for arts educators and teaching artists, with resources that translate beyond city borders.
- College Art Association, Dance/NYC, and discipline-specific networks: Policy updates, pedagogy tools, and field-wide conversations that can feed directly into arts leadership curricula.

Funding, Policy, and Advocacy Portals

If you are thinking about funding streams and policy frameworks, there are a few key entry points:

- NYFA, again, for open calls and fellowships.
- NYC's DCLA and the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) for guidelines, priorities, and language that signal how public funders are framing equity, access, and community engagement.
- National organizations such as Americans for the Arts, OPERA America, or APAP for toolkits, case studies, and advocacy materials that connect local organizing to national narratives.

Professional Networks and Conferences

SALE is one node in a larger web of convenings. Other gatherings—APAP|NYC, discipline-specific festivals and symposia, regional arts leadership meetings—often publish session descriptions, recordings, or resource lists online, even for those who cannot attend. These materials can be useful for course design, board education, or your own professional development.

Local Knowledge, Global Questions

Finally, remember that many of the most helpful “resources” in New York are not formal organizations but practices and models you can translate home: how a small borough arts council structures a grant program; how a library frames its community programming; how a memorial integrates public space, education, and ritual. As you collect links, you might keep a parallel list of observed practices—short descriptions of what you saw and why it resonated. Together, the digital and the lived resources can support the slower work of reshaping institutions and classrooms long after SALE 2026 ends.

10.2 Index of Places and Themes

This guide has moved through the city less like a checklist and more like a series of overlapping “labs”—neighborhoods, institutions, streets, and views that illuminate particular questions about arts leadership. An index of that terrain can help you stitch the pieces together, or quickly relocate a place or idea when you are planning a short outing between sessions. Rather than aiming for exhaustive coverage, the index below clusters sites and topics you have already encountered in earlier sections, organized in ways that mirror how you might actually think while on the ground.

By Geography (Selected Highlights)

- **Lower Manhattan / FiDi anchors:** Pace University; Moxy NYC Downtown; City Hall Park; Brooklyn Bridge and approaches; Seaport; World Trade Center complex (Oculus, 9/11 Memorial & Museum, One World Observatory, Perelman Performing Arts Center); Brookfield Place; Battery Park; Bowling Green; Fraunces Tavern; Trinity Church; St. Paul’s Chapel; Irish Hunger Memorial; African Burial Ground National Monument.
- **Harlem and Upper Manhattan:** Apollo Theater; Studio Museum in Harlem (if open); 125th Street corridor; nearby churches and soul food institutions; neighborhood streets as living archive.
- **Museum Mile & Central Park:** The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Guggenheim; Museum of the City of New York; El Museo del Barrio; Cooper Hewitt; Central Park as pairing and decompression space.
- **Brooklyn cultural corridor:** Brooklyn Museum; Brooklyn Botanic Garden; Prospect Park; nearby cafés and debrief spots; the broader

“Brooklyn cultural district” as a model of coordinated investment.

- **Bronx destinations:** Arthur Avenue / Little Italy; Bronx Zoo; New York Botanical Garden; surrounding residential streets and small businesses.
- **Chinatown / “Postcard” Little Italy:** Chinatown side streets; Columbus Park; Mulberry Street; small groceries, bakeries, and street-level entrepreneurship as context for curated heritage.

By Type of Experience

- **Walking tours and micro-walks:** Revolutionary and early American history walk; architecture, memorials, and public space walk; waterfront and Brooklyn Bridge evening route; micro-walks radiating from Pace (City Hall loop, Seaport glimpses, Fulton Center/Oculus pass-through).
- **Museums and cultural venues (free/low-cost emphasis):** Major museums with free hours or suggested admission; community-specific institutions (e.g., MOCA, El Museo del Barrio); civic memorials and open-air installations (9/11 Memorial, Irish Hunger Memorial, African Burial Ground).
- **Performance and live arts:** Broadway and Off-Broadway ecosystems; small theatres and experimental venues; conservatory concerts; university performances; jazz clubs and informal music spaces; outdoor performance in parks and plazas.
- **Food and social spaces:** Walkable FiDi food near Pace and Moxy (delis, food halls, modest restaurants); quintessential institutions

(slice shops, bagel and deli culture, diners, Chinatown bakeries); late-night and post-session spots (quiet cafés, bars, waterfront walks).

By Thematic Lens

- **Access and affordability:** Free or pay-what-you-wish hours; educator and student discounts; TDF and other discount models; free public experiences (parks, libraries, street art, informal performance); digital tools for deals; everyday food options that respect limited budgets.
- **Equity, community, and belonging:** Neighborhood profiles (Harlem, Brooklyn, Bronx); Chinatown and Little Italy as sites of authenticity and curation; public memorials as contested spaces; who appears to “own” parks, plazas, waterfronts, and lobbies; food and hospitality venues as informal gatekeepers.
- **Governance, policy, and infrastructure:** Transit basics (OMNY, key stations, typical travel times); city agencies and cultural funding structures (DCLA, borough arts councils, NYSCA); security and emergency frameworks (911, 311, Pace security); accessibility practices in transit, buildings, and public space.
- **Leadership and labor:** Case studies embedded in service work (hotel staff, cleaners, security, ushers, food service workers); leadership in motion (stage management, baristas managing rushes, community organizers); backstage infrastructure of museums and performance venues; conversations about burnout, pacing, and sustainable practice.

By Practice-Oriented Tools

- **Reflections and micro-assignments:** Time-block thinking (“If you have...”); reflection prompts tied to walking tours, museums, performance, and free public experiences; leadership- and equity-focused questions for meals, budgeting, and digital tools.
- **Observation exercises:** Threshold scans; listening for languages; ticket line as system; public space as programming; shadowing a line of work; budgeting attention.
- **Community-building structures:** Informal meet-up suggestions; “Host a Walk / Join a Walk” framework; quiet and reflective places; affinity and care-focused gatherings; conversation starters that move beyond small talk.

You can use this index in whatever way suits you: as a planning aid while you skim the guide the night before, as a quick reminder of where a particular reflection or route appears, or as a scaffolding for course assignments and institutional conversations once you are home. In a sense, it is less a map of New York than a map of the questions this particular visit has invited you to ask.

10.3 “Top 10 If...” Lists

These lists are not prescriptions so much as conversation starters with yourself. Think of them as small, themed menus you can use when decision fatigue sets in, or as prompts for how you might reframe your own city or campus back home. You will not do everything here—and you are not meant to.

Top 10 If... You Want to Stay Mostly in FiDi

1. Take one of the earlier walking tours (Revolutionary History, Architecture & Memorials, or Waterfront & Bridge) as a loose scaffold for your day.
2. Spend unhurried time at the 9/11 Memorial plazas, then step into the Perelman’s public spaces and simply look at how the building meets the street.
3. Do a micro-walk across or under the Brooklyn Bridge at dusk, and notice how the city’s story changes with the light.
4. Build in a quiet bench moment in City Hall Park—no phone, no agenda.
5. Visit Trinity or St. Paul’s, sit for ten minutes, and think about how your institution tells its own story in space.
6. Have at least one lunch in a nearby food hall, watching who these spaces are “for.”
7. Choose one FiDi spot to return to more than once (a café, a slice shop, a particular corner) and treat it as your temporary

neighborhood.

8. Take a short “threshold scan” at the Oculus or another major entrance, noting who hesitates and why.
9. End one evening with a slow walk along the Seaport or Battery Park, treating it as a decompression performance.
10. Let one micro-walk become a micro-seminar: invite a colleague and walk in silence for five minutes, then talk about what you each noticed.

Top 10 If... You’re Traveling with Students

1. Assign one of the observation exercises (ticket lines, public space as programming, shadowing a line of work) and debrief over a simple meal.
2. Use Museum Mile or the Brooklyn cultural corridor as a lab for talking about public vs. private funding.
3. Visit Chinatown and “postcard” Little Italy and ask students what feels curated vs. lived.
4. Choose a discount performance (student rush, Off-Broadway ticket, TDF access) and treat the pricing structure as part of the lesson.
5. Have students map their own “budget day” in New York, justifying each choice as if they were programming a festival.
6. Visit one quintessential food institution (slice shop, bagel place,

diner) and talk about hospitality and class.

7. Schedule a brief affinity or care-focused check-in for your group; model opting out as acceptable.
8. Ask each student to identify one access barrier they noticed in the city and one practice that felt genuinely inclusive.
9. Choose a memorial site and invite short, written program notes as if programming a response piece back home.
10. End the trip by having everyone name one practice they want to “steal” for their own leadership—and one they want to resist.

Top 10 If... You’re Here on a Tight Budget

1. Anchor each day with one planned free or pay-what-you-wish experience (museum, memorial, public space).
2. Use food halls, delis, and counter-service spots as your default; treat destination meals as exceptions, not obligations.
3. Lean on educator or student IDs wherever possible; ask about discounts even if they’re not posted.
4. Choose one of the walking tours as your “big” activity instead of a ticketed attraction.
5. Visit a branch library or reading room as a zero-cost, high-value thinking space.

6. Say yes to one discount performance via rush, lottery, or membership, and let the rest of your performance encounters be small and local.
7. Use digital tools selectively—one or two you actually check—rather than chasing every deal.
8. Make parks, waterfronts, and plazas your primary “third spaces” instead of bars or pricey cafés.
9. Share big-ticket experiences (observatories, special exhibits) with a colleague and debrief thoroughly; let conversation double the value.
10. Give yourself permission to skip anything that feels like it’s about obligation rather than curiosity.

Top 10 If... You Need This to Be Gentle

1. Choose one session block per day to sit out, and treat that time as intentional integration, not absence.
2. Identify two or three quiet or quieter places early—on campus, near the hotel, by the water—and return to them.
3. Replace one social hour with a solo walk or a simple meal alone.
4. Keep your geographic radius small; let FiDi be enough rather than chasing multiple boroughs.
5. Say “I’m going to leave after an hour” before you arrive at an event, and honor that boundary.

6. Pack for comfort first—shoes, layers, small comforts—so you’re not negotiating with your body all day.
7. Attend one performance or visit one museum without taking notes or photos; just be there.
8. Use one conversation starter that lets you talk about something real, then give yourself permission to drift back to lighter topics.
9. Notice when you feel most like yourself during the trip and try to recreate those conditions at least once more.
10. Let at least one thing go completely: a session, an outing, a “must-see.” See what expands when you do.

Top 10 If... You’re Thinking About Institutional Change

1. At every venue, ask: who is this for, and how do I know?
2. Pay close attention to where accessibility feels baked in vs. bolted on.
3. Study one grantmaking or public funding structure (DCLA, a borough arts council, LMCC) and imagine its closest analog in your context.
4. Treat one meal as an experiment in equitable group logistics—transparent pricing, opt-outs, shared decision-making.
5. Watch how small organizations in Harlem, Brooklyn, or the Bronx

articulate mission and community compared to large flagships.

6. Look closely at staff roles you rarely consider—guards, cleaners, box office workers—and imagine what it would mean to center them at home.
7. Notice every time you encounter “pay what you wish” and ask what the underlying trust mechanism is.
8. Take one idea from the reflection or observation exercises and turn it into a staff or board practice back home.
9. Allow yourself one candid conversation about power—where you hold it, where you don’t, and what you might shift.
10. Before you leave, write down three small, concrete changes you could make within six months, and one bolder idea that might take five years.

You may find that your real “top 10” emerges only after the conference, when the city has receded a bit and the patterns become clearer. These lists are a starting point—a way to translate three dense days in New York into a set of questions and experiments that can keep unfolding long after you’ve left Pace and FiDi behind.

10.4 Blank Notes Pages

These pages are intentionally empty. They are here as a counterweight to the impulse—common among arts leaders and educators—to fill every moment and every margin with content. As you move through the conference and the city, you may find that the most important material you encounter is not in any official session or curated site, but in the stray observations, offhand comments, and private recognitions that don't fit neatly into someone else's structure.

You might use these pages to capture:

- Fragments of conversations that linger.
- Images or moments in the city that feel oddly charged.
- Program ideas or course revisions that surface while you're walking or waiting in line.
- Questions you're not yet ready to ask out loud.
- Contradictions you notice between your stated values and your daily practice.

Some people think best in lists, others in sketches, mind maps, or near-complete sentences. There is no required format here. You might devote one page to a single theme—"Access," "Space," "Students," "Money," "What I'm Avoiding"—and return to it throughout the conference. You might let each page be a snapshot of a single day, written without editing. You might leave whole pages blank, and only later realize that the absence of notes during a particular block of time was itself

meaningful.

If you teach, you may see these pages as prototypes for similar spaces in your syllabi: places where students are explicitly invited to think alongside, rather than simply absorb. If you lead an organization, you might imagine what the equivalent of “blank notes pages” could be in your institutional life: unprogrammed nights in your calendar, open conversations without a predetermined outcome, structures that hold space without filling it in advance.

You are not obligated to reread what you write here, and you certainly do not need to share it. The act of writing—of pausing long enough to translate an internal tangle into marks on paper—may be the point. When SALE is over and New York has receded into memory, these unfinished, unsorted notes may prove to be the most accurate record of what the conference and the city actually stirred in you.

