



Office of the District Executive

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Chief Judge Margo K. Brodie is pleased to announce the opening of *Themes For A Courthouse In Brooklyn*, a photography installation by Barbara Mensch, at the Charles P. Sifton Gallery in the Brooklyn Federal Courthouse at 225 Cadman Plaza East, Brooklyn, New York, 11201 on October 30, 2024.

As Barbara Mensch explained: “Recently, I was asked to do an exhibition in the U.S. Eastern District Courthouse in downtown Brooklyn. The architect of the building, the famed Cesar Pelli, noted “It is a noble structure that conveys the majesty and openness of the American judicial system, its design timeless.”

The Gallery, located on the first floor, was dedicated to United States District Judge Charles P. Sifton for his commitment to the arts. Since its inception, the gallery space has presented work reflecting diverse visual practices. Artists as unique as *New Yorker* magazine and *Esquire* cartoon editor Bob Mankoff, and mobster turned professional photographer, Donato Di Camillo, have presented their work.

In my view, the function of the courthouse has posed a specific challenge. How could I mount an installation in a building whose main purpose is to naturalize new citizens, seek justice in discrimination cases of all kinds, prosecute dangerous criminals, and litigate many other aspects of the law?

Wall 1 – The Brooklyn Bridge

To highlight the experience of the many who enter the courthouse as immigrants and leave the building as naturalized U.S. citizens, I am presenting excerpts from my book “In the Shadow of Genius- The Brooklyn Bridge and its Creators.” The prints on view are selected from a larger body of work which concentrates on the principal creators of the Brooklyn Bridge: John A. Roebling, the bridge’s designer, his son Washington, tasked to complete the construction of the bridge after his father’s untimely death, and his wife, Emily Roebling who, during the Gilded Age, fought to keep the bridge in the Roebling name.

The installation sheds light on their “back stories”: with a focus on the German immigrant John Augustus Roebling whose unprecedented drive, ambition, and unyielding faith in his work catapulted him to fame as America’s preeminent engineer and bridge builder. Accompanying the photographs is a “follow along” pamphlet detailing stories that correspond to the images selected from the book.

Wall 2 – The Waterfront

My long-term project and book, “South Street,” (republished in 2009) was created during a time of political and economic disruption to the Fulton Fish Market. The seafood market, the largest of its kind in North America, was located on the East River waterfront in Lower Manhattan. In the 1980’s the Fulton Market community was threatened with eviction from their traditional place of operation. In its place, a plan to construct a commercial mall would be implemented. During a long and protracted legal battle with government and corporate interests, in combination with criminal investigations into La Cosa Nostra embedded in the market’s operations, (led by Rudolph Giuliani, former federal prosecutor; and mayor of New York City), the Fulton Market was finally dislodged to the Bronx in 2005.

Wall 3 – Gentrification

Based on my recently published book “A Falling-Off Place: The Transformation of Lower Manhattan,” I raise a question for all citizens to ponder. If gentrification is inevitable, then what do we replace our lost communities with?”

The exhibition opens on October 30, 2024, at 5:30 PM at the Charles P. Sifton Gallery, Theodore Roosevelt United States Courthouse, 225 Cadman Plaza East, Brooklyn, New York, 11201.

The Gallery is dedicated to United States District Judge Charles P. Sifton in recognition of his commitment to the public’s free access to the arts and in memory of the many excellent art exhibits and performances the Judge arranged for the Court family. Since its dedication in 2010, curators have included Judge Sifton, Judge Raymond J. Dearie, and current curator Judge Robert M. Levy. The exhibit space is located on the first floor. It is open to the public on weekdays from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM.

For a list of past gallery exhibitions, visit: <https://www.nyed.uscourts.gov/charles-p-sifton-gallery>
