

# Poet of the Body: New York's Walt Whitman

A talk by New York University  
Professor Karen Karbiener

You are invited to experience Walt Whitman's New York through word and image as we explore the ways in which the city aroused America's most representative voice and examine evidence of Whitman's enduring influence on his "proud and passionate city-- mettlesome, mad, extravagant city!"



DATE: JULY 26, 2023 TIME: 3-4:30 PM

LOCATION: BUNGAKUKAN/ ROOM L-28

KOBE COLLEGE 4-1 OKADAYAMA NISHINOMIYA 662-8505 HYOGO JAPAN

external visitors please register by email at: [kceigospeaker@gmail.com](mailto:kceigospeaker@gmail.com)

# Poet of the Body: New York's Walt Whitman

## Abstract

How did a carpenter's son, grammar school dropout, and hack writer become America's poet? This presentation highlights New York's role in the extraordinary transformation of Walter Whitman Jr. to "Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son." Whitman and New York came of age together. By the time he left New York for the Civil War front in 1862, he had composed most of his best poetry and a sprawling seaport town transformed itself into a world class metropolis. As New York had inspired his art, Whitman celebrated his city. Readers of *Leaves of Grass* are reminded that "the book arose out of my life in Brooklyn and New York... absorbing a million people... with an intimacy, and eagerness, and abandon, probably never equaled." You are invited to experience Walt Whitman's New York through word and image as we explore the ways in which the city aroused America's most representative voice and examine evidence of Whitman's enduring influence on his "proud and passionate city-- mettlesome, mad, extravagant city!"

## Bio

Karen Karbiener is a scholar, writer, curator, and cultural activist and has been teaching at New York University since 2003. Winner of the Kluge Fellowship at the Library of Congress and a Fulbright recipient, she has published widely on Whitman, including an edition of *Leaves of Grass*, two audiobooks on the poet's life and influence, a book introducing Whitman's poetry to children, and a collaboration with illustrator Brian Selznick on an experiential edition of *Live Oak, with Moss*, Whitman's secret same-sex love poems. She was the co-curator with Susan Tane of *Poet of the Body: New York's Walt Whitman* (Grolier Club, NY; 2019) and is the author of a book based on the exhibition (University of Chicago Press, 2022).

Karbiener is the president and founding member of the Walt Whitman Initiative, a non-profit organization serving as a center for cultural activism and poetry-related events (including New York's annual Song of Myself marathon, in its 20th year in 2023). She is currently completing a Whitman biography.