Artist Open Call: Hudson Square Centennial Mural
Large-scale painted and printed mural on a 1920s loft building on Varick Street, celebrating 100 years of Hudson Square's loft district



Overview
The Hudson Square Business Improvement District (HSBID), in partnership with StorageMart (Manhattan Mini Storage), the owner of 131 Varick Street, is seeking an artist team to create a large-scale, colorful mural celebrating 100 years of Hudson Square's loft district. Spanning a 176-foot-wide facade at one of the neighborhood's busiest corners, it will be the most ambitious Hudson Square Canvas commission to date. Installation is planned for May 2027.

The mural will have three components:

- Ground-floor mural (floors 1–2): painted on the walls and printed on vinyl in the window surfaces across the building's first two floors. This is the heart of the artwork and is expected to remain the longest.
- Upper-window pops: printed vinyl in up to 25 selected upper-floor windows, expected to come down after approximately one year.
- Upper pier accents: painted graphic accents on selected piers, the tall vertical strips of facade that run between the columns of windows.

Since much of the artwork will be printed, this is partly a graphic design commission. We are looking for a team that pairs a lead artist or studio able to produce print-ready artwork with the capacity to paint at scale from lifts, whether through the lead artist, assistants, or a painting crew.

Budget
The selected team will receive an all-inclusive budget of $45,000, covering design, print-ready files, painting labor, assistants or crew, paints and supplies, lift operation and safety training, and overhead. HSBID will separately provide the lifts, partial sidewalk closure permits, and vinyl printing and

installation, and will reimburse the reasonable cost of required project insurance. Payment will be made in installments tied to project milestones.

Finalists
Up to three finalist teams will each receive a $1,000 honorarium to develop a draft concept sketch. For the team selected, the honorarium counts toward its $45,000 budget.

Applications are due Monday, December 7, 2026 at 5:00 pm ET. For details on how to apply, see below.

Vision
We envision a mural that becomes a recognizable part of Hudson Square: bold, memorable, and iconic. It should make people pause and look up, with immediate impact from across the street and more to discover when walking alongside it.

To spark ideas, we're sharing a concept we call Windows in Time. For a century, the windows of Hudson Square's loft buildings have framed working lives as complex as our own, from the printers of the 1920s to the people making media, design, and technology here today. The mural could offer glimpses across those eras, connected in one composition, and capture the feeling of being one person among the parallel lives and generations of stories that fill a dense, constantly changing city.

This concept is meant as inspiration, not a required theme, title, or visual approach. We welcome original interpretations that celebrate the neighborhood's history and creative present, including directions we haven't imagined.

About the Centennial
Surrounded by SoHo, Tribeca, and the West Village, Hudson Square has become one of Manhattan's most dynamic creative and tech neighborhoods: primarily commercial, with a growing residential community and thousands of daily visitors. The neighborhood is defined by its industrial loft buildings, particularly along Varick Street, one of its central corridors. Beginning around 1913, the city widened Varick to 100 feet and built a new subway beneath it. New York's first zoning code, adopted in 1916, shaped the buildings that followed, giving the street its consistent wall of lofts. Those buildings were completed, on average, in 1927, the same year the Holland Tunnel opened along Varick Street. Many reflect the Art Deco influence that gives the district much of its character: vertical piers extending the full height of their facades, wedding-cake setbacks at the top, and patterned brickwork with ornamental details. This mural celebrates 100 years of Hudson Square's loft district.

Our working tagline is "*Once filled with printing presses; still making what the world reads, hears, watches, and shares*." The companies inside these buildings have changed over the century, but the work has not: Hudson Square is where New York makes, shapes, and moves information.

- 1920s–1960s: Printing became the neighborhood's defining industry. Its lofts had heavy floors that could carry presses and large windows that brought daylight to close, detailed work. Printers, typesetters, engravers, lithographers, and paper and ink merchants filled the neighborhood, which often ran around the clock.
- 1970s–1980s: As printing left Manhattan, the neighborhood grew quieter, until new creative tenants began to arrive, led by Saatchi & Saatchi's move to 375 Hudson Street in 1987.
- 1990s–2000s: Advertising, media, and design firms followed, making the neighborhood a center of the city's communications industry.

- Today: Hudson Square is home to Disney's New York headquarters, including ABC and ESPN; technology companies such as Google, Anthropic, and Squarespace; New York Public Radio and Audacy's stations, including WFAN and 1010 WINS; global agencies such as Edelman, Publicis, and Wieden+Kennedy; and fashion and lifestyle brands such as Supreme and Warby Parker, alongside health and civic organizations. It's why we call Hudson Square "*NYC's Creative & Tech Hub.*"

They came for many of the same reasons earlier industries did: big, flexible floors, large windows providing an abundance of natural light, a central location, and each other.

As of now, this mural is the centerpiece of Hudson Square's centennial celebration. Additional activities may be planned.

About Hudson Square BID and Hudson Square Canvas
Since its founding in 2009, HSBID, a non-profit organization, has worked to make Hudson Square a vibrant, people-centered neighborhood, with a focus on streetscapes and public art. Hudson Square Canvas, HSBID's public art program, commissions original, site-responsive artworks that create an inviting pedestrian environment and reinforce the neighborhood's identity as a creative district. To date, HSBID has commissioned 20 public art projects, comprising more than 50 individual installations, by both emerging and established artists.

Site Description
The mural site is the Varick Street facade of 131 Varick Street, a 12-story loft building spanning the full west blockfront of Varick between Spring and Dominick Streets. It sits at Spring and Varick, one of Hudson Square's busiest pedestrian intersections, with more than 25,000 people passing through each day, near destinations such as the Color Factory and the television studios at Disney's New York headquarters, where shows are taped before live audiences. The mural is designed first and foremost for people on foot, though its location on the Holland Tunnel approach also puts it in view of many drivers and passengers.

The building was completed in the mid-1920s as the headquarters of the American News Company, for decades the country's dominant distributor of magazines and newspapers. Today, most of it is self-storage operated by Manhattan Mini Storage, now part of StorageMart, with small creative offices on the upper floors. Its facade shows the vertical emphasis of its era: piers run the full height of the building and rise above the roofline in pointed pinnacles, the top floors step back in wedding-cake setbacks, and a row of tall arched openings spans the first two floors. Because the storage floors need little daylight, many of the building's windows are sealed with translucent panels (Kalwall). These blank panels, once windows onto busy working floors, now offer a natural canvas for Windows in Time.

The building's first two floors currently feature a Hudson Square Canvas mural, which will be replaced as part of this project.

Mural Extent & Surfaces
The facade is about 176 feet long, and floors 1–2 together are about 25 feet high. The ground-floor mural is designed to last five years or more, but how long each component actually remains is at the building owner's discretion. The facade diagram in the Appendix shows each mural surface and the approximate extent of the upper pier accents.

Component	Treatment	Approx. Size	Expected Duration
Ground-floor mural (floors 1–2): window surfaces	Printed vinyl	18'10" high × 110'6" wide in total (about 2,080 SF)	Longest-lasting, five years or more
Ground-floor mural (floors 1–2): walls	Hand-painted	About 2,300 SF, excluding doors and windows	Longest-lasting, five years or more
Upper-window "pops"	Printed vinyl	Up to 25 panels at about 32 SF each (about 800 SF)	About one year
Upper pier accents	Hand-painted	About 1,000 SF, spread across the facade	Possibly long-term, as a separate owner decision

Design intent by component:

- **Ground-floor mural**: one cohesive artwork across all designated walls and window surfaces, designed for the experience at walking pace, and able to stand on its own as a complete artwork.
- **Upper-window pops**: scattered, deliberate moments that draw the eye upward. The untreated windows between them are part of the rhythm.
- **Upper pier accents**: colorful graphic marks, such as bands, stripes, or geometric accents, on selected piers at varying heights. They carry the mural up the facade and tie the pops together, while leaving most of the facade untouched.
- **Building owner signage**: the existing Manhattan Mini Storage signs on the ground floor will remain, and we see them as part of the composition. The mural should complement them and help them stand out, giving the building a strong, distinctive presence without added logos.

Not part of the canvas: the existing billboard on the upper facade, and any windows or piers it covers.

The extent of the upper-window pops and upper pier accents may change based on feasibility and budget, and will be finalized during design development. The selected team must be willing to adapt the design to the final extent.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to visit the site, and view it from both the sidewalk and across Varick Street, before applying. It is also recommended to observe other Hudson Square Canvas works in the neighborhood, using the Hudson Square Canvas map, to ensure this mural offers a complementary style.

Mural Creation Process & Roles

The following reflects our current plan and may be refined as the project develops. Detailed terms will be set out in the artist agreement.

HSBID will:

- Rent a scissor lift for work on floors 1–2, and an articulating boom lift for the upper floors. The boom lift will be shared between the artist team and HSBID's vinyl installer during scheduled work periods.
- Provide an overnight storage location for the lifts near the site.

- Schedule painting and vinyl installation in close coordination with the artist team and building owner, to keep the lifts on site for as short a window as possible.
- Secure the partial sidewalk closure permits needed for installation.
- Contract and pay the vinyl fabricator for printing and installing the vinyl.
- Lead marketing and promotion of the mural, including a celebration of its completion.

The artist team will:

- Operate the lifts during its work periods with trained, authorized personnel, including daily equipment inspections, moving the lifts to and from overnight storage, and securing them when not in use.
- Ensure everyone working from the lifts is trained in safe lift operation, and provide appropriate fall protection and on-site supervision of its crew.
- Be responsible for damage to the lifts resulting from its operations or misuse.
- Carry commercial general liability and workers' compensation insurance (plus New York State disability and paid family leave coverage, if it has employees), with HSBID and the building owner named as additional insureds. HSBID will share specific requirements with finalists and will reimburse the reasonable cost of obtaining coverage for this project, as set out in the artist agreement.
- Indemnify HSBID, the building owner, and the City of New York, as set out in the artist agreement.

Scope of Work

The selected team will be responsible for:

- Developing a detailed work plan and budget for HSBID approval.
- Developing the artwork design through up to three (3) rounds of review and feedback, culminating in final approval from HSBID and the building owner.
- Preparing print-ready artwork files and coordinating with HSBID's vinyl fabricator on translating the design to printed vinyl, including reviewing color proofs.
- Procuring all painting materials, including paints, primers, protective coatings, and supplies (the team should assume a primer and anti-graffiti coating will be needed).
- Preparing surfaces and executing the painted portions of the approved design on schedule, in a manner that conforms to the approved concept and any applicable City requirements.
- Coordinating closely with HSBID throughout design development and installation, including scheduling lift use around the vinyl installation.
- Participating in promotion of the completed mural, including its celebration, in coordination with HSBID.

Rights

HSBID and the building owner will have the right to use images of the completed artwork in marketing and promotional materials, with credit to the artist team. Ownership of the design remains with the artist team. Because the artwork will be installed on a privately owned building, the selected team will be asked to waive rights under the federal Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA) and related state law, so the building owner and HSBID may maintain, repair, modify, or remove the artwork as needed.

Artwork Criteria

- Visual impact: bold, colorful, and memorable; designed to be seen from multiple angles and distances by people passing by, with more to discover up close.

- Architecture as part of the composition: the building's arches, piers, window grid, and edges shape the artwork. We encourage playing with the windows through framing, depth, illusion, and unexpected interruptions.
- History embedded in the design: specific enough to reward people who know the neighborhood, with immediate appeal for someone seeing it for the first time. The artwork should feel celebratory and forward-looking, not nostalgic.
- Abstract and figurative work: Hudson Square Canvas murals have typically leaned abstract; however, given the centennial theme, this project also invites figurative elements, such as people, work, and moments from the neighborhood's history, where they strengthen the vision and will stay engaging for years to come.
- Color: the palette should draw on the HSBID and StorageMart brand palettes, which will be shared with finalists. Together, they allow for a palette that celebrates the classic colors of the Art Deco era while integrating bolder, modern colors that carry the story into the present. However the team combines them, the result should be colorful and cohesive.
- Cohesion: painted and printed portions read as one artwork, with the ground-floor mural able to stand on its own once upper floor components are removed.
- Building owner signage: the design complements the Manhattan Mini Storage signs and helps them stand out.
- No advertising: no added logos, brand marks, or text that reads as an advertisement.
- Durability: the ground-floor mural should remain in excellent condition for at least one year and last five or more years with minimal annual touch-ups (for which the artist team or another contractor may be engaged separately). Vinyl graphics should be designed so that individual panels can be reprinted and replaced if damaged.

Target Audiences

- Hudson Square's young, creative workforce.
- Neighborhood residents, including families, and the many high school students who attend school here.
- Visitors to neighborhood destinations, such as the Color Factory and live television tapings.
- New Yorkers citywide, for whom the centennial is a chance to discover Hudson Square as an authentic neighborhood with a long history.

The project aims to celebrate the neighborhood's history, inspire its creative community, and build neighborhood pride.

Project Schedule

- Thursday, November 5, 2026: open call released
- Friday, November 20: deadline for questions
- Wednesday, November 25: answers to questions posted at: https://hudsonsquarebid.org/neighborhood/news/artist-open-call-hudson-square-centennial-mural/
- Monday, December 7, 5:00 pm ET: applications due
- By Friday, December 18: up to three finalist teams notified
- Wednesday, January 13, 2027: finalist concept sketches due
- January 14-20: virtual interviews following concept review, as needed
- Late January: artist team selected, pending HSBID Board approval
- February-March: design development, review, and approval

- March-April: vinyl fabrication and mobilization
- May: installation
- June: mural celebration

Tentative schedule; subject to change. Changes will be posted on the webpage about this mural project.

Application Requirements
Preference will be given to New York City-based artist teams. **Interested teams should submit a single, combined PDF that includes:**

- Contact information for the lead artist: name, address, phone number, and email address.
- Team members and their roles, including who will create the print-ready artwork and who will paint.
- Artist statement or other description of your work (up to 250 words).
- Resume or CV for the lead artist and key team members.
- List of previous public art works, including title, year, location, medium, brief description, and dimensions. Please highlight large-scale facade work, work designed for print or fabrication, and work executed from lifts.
- Brief description of your approach to the centennial theme and the site (up to 500 words).
- Brief description of your approach to execution, including crew, lift experience or certification, anticipated painting schedule, and how you would work within the $45,000 budget (up to 300 words).
- Up to ten (10) images of relevant past work, embedded in the PDF, each with title, year, location, medium, and dimensions.
- Names and contact information for 2–3 references.
- Optional: links to an online portfolio, website, video, or social media.

Please note: we are not requesting a developed artwork design at this stage.

How to apply:

1. Name your combined PDF [LastName_FirstName_CentennialMural.pdf], keep it under 10 MB, and put the lead artist's contact information on the first page.
2. Upload it using the submission link at https://form.typeform.com/to/EboSFj89 **by Monday, December 7, 2026 at 5:00 pm ET.** HSBID will confirm receipt by email within two business days. If you have trouble uploading, or do not receive a confirmation, email PublicArt@HudsonSquareBID.org with "Centennial Mural Open Call" in the subject line.

Questions may be emailed to PublicArt@HudsonSquareBID.org, with "Centennial Mural Open Call" in the subject line, **by Friday, November 20, 2026**. Answers to all questions received by that date will be posted by Wednesday, November 25 at https://hudsonsquarebid.org/neighborhood/news/artist-open-call-hudson-square-centennial-mural/.

Selection Process and Criteria
The artist team will be selected by HSBID staff in consultation with the HSBID Board and the building owner. The final design is subject to approval by the building owner.

1. **Shortlist**. HSBID will review applications and select up to three finalist teams.
2. **Finalist concepts**. Each finalist team will receive a $1,000 honorarium to develop a draft concept sketch, showing the design on a photo of the facade, with a brief description of the concept and

palette approach. Following review of the concepts, finalists may be invited to a brief virtual interview. For the team selected, the honorarium counts toward its $45,000 budget. Finalists retain ownership of their concepts, and HSBID will not use a concept from a team that is not selected without a separate agreement.

3. **Selection**. HSBID will select one team based on its application, concept sketch, interview (if held), and references.
4. **Design development**. The selected team will refine the design through up to three rounds of review, culminating in final approval from HSBID and the building owner. If the design does not receive final approval, the team will be compensated for design work completed to that point, and HSBID may work with the team, under a separate agreement, to adapt the design for another site or format.

Applications and finalist concepts will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Artistic merit: a high standard of design quality, originality, and proficiency in large-scale public work.
- Response to the brief: how well the team's past work and proposed approach address the Artwork Criteria above, including the building's architecture, the centennial story, and color.
- Relevant experience: across the team, both graphic design for print or fabrication and large-scale painting, ideally including work executed at height from lifts.
- Feasibility: a realistic approach to completing the work within the budget, the lift schedule, and the timeline.

HSBID reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to: (1) reject any or all submittals when, in its opinion, it is determined to be in the public interest to do so, (2) cancel, revise, or extend this Artist Open Call, and (3) request additional information deemed necessary. HSBID assumes no responsibility or liability for costs incurred by respondents prior to the issuance of a contract.

Appendix

- Facade Diagram: Proposed Mural Surfaces
- Site Photographs
- Hudson Square Historical Inspiration: Centennial-Era Architecture and the Work Inside the Buildings
- Examples of Past Hudson Square Canvas Murals

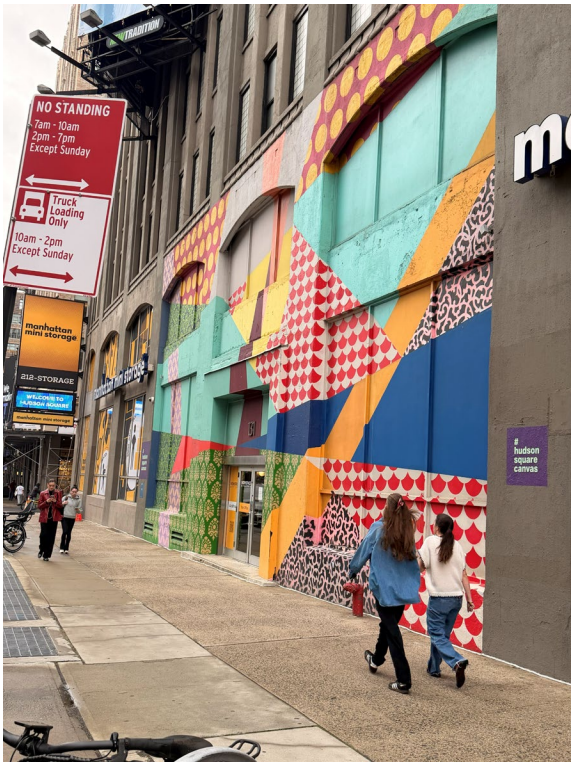
Facade Diagram: Proposed Mural Surfaces



Canvas
[Selection of windows and pier sections can be altered based on the artwork]

Site Photographs





Hudson Square Historical Inspiration: Centennial-Era Architecture and the Work Inside the Buildings



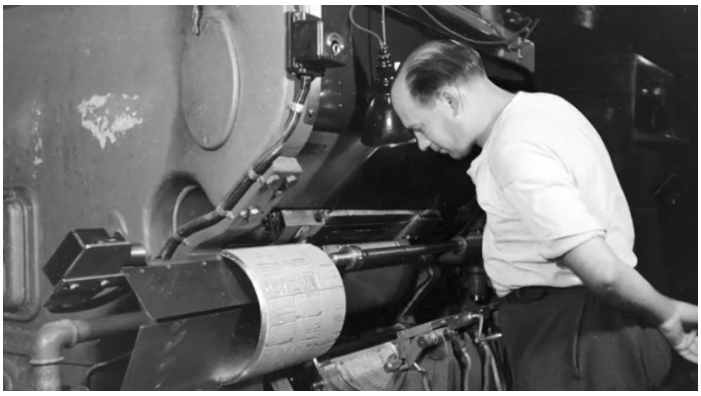


Left: Art Deco crown of 345 Hudson Street
Right: Holland Tunnel ventilation building on Spring Street
Image credits: Hudson Square Properties, New York Public Library





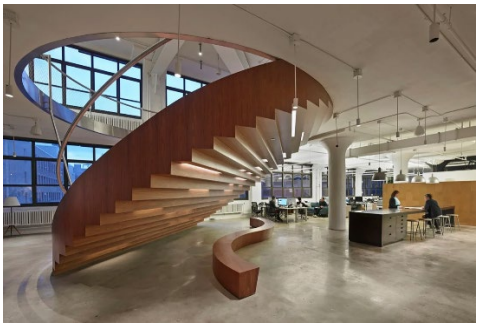
Left: Decorative stone and metal details framing the entrance at 75 Varick Street
Right: Industrial-era brick ornamentation above Film Forum's marquee at 200 Varick Street
Image credits: Hudson Square Properties, GFP Real Estate



Printing press operator at work
Photographer unknown



WPA Federal Art Project Headquarters at 345 Hudson Street, circa 1939
Image credit: Smithsonian Archives





Wieden+Kennedy's offices at 150 Varick Street, an industrial loft building turned creative workspace
Image credits: Bruce Damonte, Raymond Adams

Examples of Past Hudson Square Canvas Murals

