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COOPER HEWITT TIMELINE

1846

On August 10, the United States Congress passed legislation founding the Smithsonian Institution as an establishment dedicated to the “increase and diffusion of knowledge,” and President James K. Polk signed it into law that same day.

1853

Construction begins on the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art (known as the Cooper Union) on Sept. 17, founded by industrialist and inventor Peter Cooper. The schools still stands at 7 East 7th Street, New York City.

1859

Cooper Union opens as “a free institution for the instruction of the working classes of New York and its vicinity, in science and art.”

1897

Peter Cooper’s granddaughters Sarah and Eleanor Hewitt establish the Cooper Union Museum for the Arts of Decoration. The museum opens as a “practical working laboratory,” a visual library for use by students, designers, and the general public.

1898

At his wife Louise’s urging, industrial magnate Andrew Carnegie purchases land for his new family home “far north” of where his peers are living, allowing him to build a large private garden that is one of the only such spaces in Manhattan.

1901

The Carnegie Mansion Garden is designed by Guy Lowell, a Boston architect and landscape architect, and Richard Schermerhorn Jr., a Brooklyn native trained in civil engineering.

1902

The Carnegie Mansion, designed by Babb, Cook & Willard, is completed. Andrew, Louise, and five-year-old Margaret arrive at 2 East 91st Street for the first time on December 12. Two townhouses were built just as the Carnegie Mansion was being completed—Nos. 9 and 11 East 90th Street.

1919

In April, Margaret is married in the mansion.

On August 22, while Andrew and Louise were away for the summer in Massachusetts, Andrew dies of pneumonia.



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1920

Louise purchases the townhouse adjacent to the mansion and it becomes home to Margaret, her husband Roswell Miller, and their growing family.

1946

Louise dies on June 24, with her daughter by her bedside, leaving the mansion to the Carnegie Corporation.

1949

The Carnegie Corporation leases the mansion and 9 East 90th Street (known as the Miller House) to the New York School of Social Work (renamed the Columbia University School of Social Work in 1963).

1963

Cooper Union announces its intention to disband the museum. The committee to save the Cooper Union is formed, and its 260 members rally to keep the Cooper Union collection together and in New York City.

1966

Carnegie Mansion is named a National Historic Landmark.

1967

The American Association of Museums (now the American Alliance of Museums) endorses the Smithsonian's decision to acquire the Cooper Union Museum as part of the national collections.

1969

The Carnegie Corporation offers the Carnegie Mansion and the Miller House as a new home for the museum, now known as the Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, Smithsonian Institution. Lisa Taylor is appointed director of the museum and serves until 1987.

1976

After being renovated by Hardy Holzman & Pfeiffer Associates, the Carnegie Mansion opens on October 7 as Cooper-Hewitt, the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Design, with the exhibition "MAN TransFORMS."

1982

Cooper-Hewitt and Parsons School of Design start a master's degree program in the history of decorative arts. Classes held at Cooper-Hewitt are taught by curators and scholars, utilizing the museum collection and the National Design Library as teaching tools.



1988

Dianne Pilgrim appointed director of the museum and serves until 2000.

Polshek & Partners Architects make the museum building and the multilevel terrace garden fully wheelchair accessible.

The museum's name changes to Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum.

1989

Cooper-Hewitt acquires the house next door to the Miller House—11 East 90th Street (the Fox House).

1998

Polshek & Partners are hired for a renovation project that includes a redesign of the Drue Heinz Study Center for Drawings & Prints and the Luce Study room for American Art on the mansion's fourth floor, the joining of the Miller and Fox townhouses, and the creation of the Agnes Bourne Bridge Gallery, linking the mansion with the townhouses.

2000

The "National Design Triennial" exhibition series is created to regularly present key developments in American design.

The National Design Awards (NDA) are inaugurated as an initiative of the White House Millennium Council to promote design as a vital humanistic tool in shaping the world.

2001

Paul Thompson appointed director of the museum and serves until 2009.

2006

Plans to increase Cooper-Hewitt's exhibition space begin, along with the largest capital campaign in the museum's history. Beyer Blinder Belle Architects and Planners and Gluckman Mayner Architects are engaged to plan the renovation.

National Design Week launches, making great design accessible to the public.

2010

Bill Moggridge appointed director of the museum and serves until his death in 2012. The museum selects architects Diller Scofidio+Renfro (2005 NDA winner) and interactive designers Local Projects (2013 NDA winner) to help create the new Cooper-Hewitt.

2011

The mansion is closed to the public and renovation begins. The National Design Library moves from the mansion to the Miller and Fox townhouses. A collection storage,

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conservation, and research facility is created off campus. Design in the Classroom launches, introducing design thinking to New York City students K—12 students.

2012

The Cooper-Hewitt Design Center in Harlem opens to serve as a satellite education space during the renovation project.

The museum selects graphic design firm Pentagram to rethink the visual identity of the new Cooper-Hewitt.

2013

Caroline Baumann appointed director of the museum.

Cooper Hewitt launches national Design in the Classroom program.

Walter Hood Design Studio (2009 NDA winner) is hired to redesign the garden.

2014

Fifteenth anniversary of the National Design Awards.

The museum's name changes to Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

The renovated museum opens to the public on Dec. 12.

