

# Newest view of Newark is 3-D: Museum commissions black-and-white film for centennial celebration

By [Kathleen O'Brien/The Star-Ledger](#)

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Newark Museum



In the short film "New Work: Newark in 3D," the filmmakers chose a street view of Newark as seen in this still behind Gutzon Borglum's 1911 statue of Abraham Lincoln at the foot of the Essex County Court House, near Springfield Avenue and Market Street.

The waterfront at dawn, seen from mid-river. A 360-degree panorama from the Watchung Mountains to the Manhattan skyline. The juxtaposition of a red-brick cathedral spire against the starkness of a '60s skyscraper. These unconventional views of Newark make the city the star of a black-and-white, 3-D film being shown this fall at the Newark Museum.

The museum has purchased 15,000 polka-dot 3-D glasses awaiting visitors — the better to see "New Work: Newark in 3D," a six-minute celebration of the museum's hometown. Commissioned by the museum for its centennial, the film focuses on city landmarks that have been

around at least 100 years. It is on view at the museum beginning today through Jan. 10.

Shot by the Newark filmmaking couple Jerome Bongiorno and Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno, it captures the city's vitality and architectural diversity. Many of the shots are from angles inaccessible to the general public.

The couple used as their inspiration the 1920 film "Manhatta," famous in filmmaking circles for its sunrise to sundown chronicling of the burgeoning Manhattan skyline. Filmed from the air and from the water, it focused on architecture and industry.

The Newark Museum owns a print of that film, and Tibaldo-Bongiorno said she'd often viewed it there.

"Manhatta" included crowd scenes shot from above, the people rendered almost antlike in their rush to get to where they were going. "New Work," by contrast, includes street-level filming of people. An outdoor festival in the Ironbound immerses the viewer in the happy crowd, while a homey scene of schoolchildren jump-roping double Dutch-style brings a smile. And the filmmakers got access to unconventional views: a lazy trip down the Passaic River in a Newark Fire Department boat, the close-up of a jet landing at Newark Liberty International Airport. In a post Sept. 11 era, security concerns made it a special challenge to get authorization to film at such sites.

The twist is that "New Work" is in 3-D — a filmmaking technique usually associated with gimmicky summer horror films. Its use in an art film is rare.

For an image to appear to be in three dimensions, it must be photographed with two cameras set some distance apart.

The premise of 3-D filming is to take advantage of the brain's ability to meld the slightly different images received from both eyes. When viewing a close-up object — for example, your finger about six inches from your nose — images in the background will appear to be double. Focus your eyes on that background, however, and your finger will now split into two images.

A 3-D filmmaker sets his cameras some distance apart to mimic the viewpoints of each eye. One shot is taken in red, the other in blue. The joined image shows red and blue, slightly askew. This is where 3-D glasses come in: each lens filters out one of the colors, leaving one image for one eye, the other for the second eye.

"You unconsciously move your eyes to get the images to converge. And when you do that, it's a signal to your brain that an object is far away," said Bongiorno.

The resulting images give an exceptional sense of immediacy or provide a view not able to be seen with the naked eye. A shot of Mount Pleasant Cemetery, for example, gives the impression you could walk forward five

steps and stride among the tombstones. A longer shot of a downtown skyscraper's art deco cornice, with the hills of Jersey City and the skyline of Manhattan in the background, keeps all those points of view in focus. "What you see in 'New Work,' you can't see with your own eyes," said Bongiorno. One or the other image — either the near one or the far one — would be out of focus.

One of the challenges was to determine the optimal distance between the two cameras. Place them too close together, with the gap comparable to the 2 1/2 inches between pupils, and the 3-D effect is negligible. But place them too far apart, and the brain has to work too hard to reconcile the images.

"Then people say, 'There's something wrong with this,' and they won't watch it," Bongiorno said. He ended up choosing gaps ranging from 3 inches up to 16 feet.

"Manhatta" featured the words of poet Walt Whitman. The soundtrack of "New Work" has Jon Curley narrating three poems he wrote for it. Curley, a poet and professor of humanities at New Jersey Institute of Technology, heard from the Bongornos that they were looking for Newark-based poetry.

His reaction was to take to the streets. "I guess I'm what you'd call a reckless poet. I walked everywhere — north, south, east and west, every neighborhood. I got inspiration everywhere, and no problems whatsoever," he said.

He ended up penning lines as celebratory as Whitman's: "Memory, that eternal rhetoric of hope, Sounds itself outside itself, & spreads likes so many nocturnal particles of joy, In the zigzag glare of the city lights." Filling in the background is music from the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart choir, JAMMAN Productions and Newark Arts High School; and the Newark Boys Chorus School.

The film will be shown in a continuous loop, projected on a floor-to-ceiling screen that accentuates the reach-out-and-touch experience of 3-D viewing.

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### ***New Work: Newark in 3D***

***Where:*** Newark Museum, 49 Washington St., Newark

***When:*** Shown in a continuous loop through Jan. 10. Museum hours are noon-5 p.m. Wednesday-Sunday

***How much:*** Suggested admission is \$10 (\$6 for children, students and seniors). Call (973) 596-6550 or visit [newarkmuseum.org](http://newarkmuseum.org).