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Codex New York

Typologies of the City

by Stanley Greenberg

Foreword by Karrie Jacobs

“Stanley Greenberg’s photos are an argument for seeing with determination, for seeking out what makes New York City unique, for understanding that we are surrounded by a work of boundless ingenuity, passion, messy vitality, and, sometimes, genius. *Codex New York* is a collection of photographs that states unequivocally that our job, as human beings, is to see what’s in front of us, and to consciously, willfully, observe.” —KARRIE JACOBS

As a native New Yorker with a lifelong curiosity about urban infrastructure, photographer Stanley Greenberg—author of the bestselling *Invisible New York*—observes physical characteristics of the city that most people miss. His ongoing explorations of the city yield an understanding of it as a huge catalog of features that repeat, vary, morph, and multiply—block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood. He embarked on an extraordinary research expedition, walking every block of Manhattan from the Battery (where there is today much more land than when the Dutch first arrived in the seventeenth century) to Inwood (which retains more of its original topography than any other part of Manhattan), photographing striking and subtle urban typologies and along the way creating a voluminous visual database.

Codex New York: Typologies of the City is the result of this remarkable urban exploration and documentation. Greenberg’s formidable array of architectural and infrastructural features—alleys, skybridges, parking sheds, architectural relics, little streets, water infrastructure, and more—combine to create an incomparable visual chronicle of the city. Organized into categories, these features prompt deeper understandings of the relationships between our surroundings and the way we use the city. *Codex New York* also serves as a temporal marker; many of the empty spaces Greenberg photographed have already been built on, obscuring the views of the ever-changing city that now exist only in images.

For audiences interested in contemporary cities, photography, urban history, planning, architecture, and infrastructure, *Codex New York* is an idiosyncratic field guide that prompts new understandings of what New York is made of.

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GRID/NON-GRID

When the city agreed to use John Randel, Jr.'s grid plan in 1811, much of Lower Manhattan had already been laid out and built up; streets either followed existing Indian paths or grew organically, largely guided by private estate boundaries and the locations of ports and warehouses. The new plan would cover the area from Houston Street to 150th Street, resulting in numerous junctures of the newer grid and the streets that existed before, occasionally leading to odd intersections, such as where West 4th and West 11th Streets cross. The plan also called for the elimination of Broadway, which of course never happened.

The area uptown beyond where the 1811 grid stops has its own character, with bigger and steeper hills, star streets, and outcroppings of rock not seen anywhere else on the island, except in a few parks (see Geology/Topography). Streets curve around hills and parks, huge supporting structures are required for buildings on hillsides; the landscape is more varied here and neighborhoods often adapted their layout around these features, instead of leveling the topography and imposing a strict rectilinear hierarchy.

- 1 First Avenue
- 2 Lower East Side
- 3 Manhattanville
- 4 West Village
- 5 East Village
- 6 East Village
- 7 Astor Place
- 8 West Village
- 9 West Village
- 10 Midtown
- 11 Downtown
- 12 Central Avenue
- 13 Central Avenue
- 14 Hudson Heights
- 15 Financial District
- 16 Lower East Side
- 17 Chinatown
- 18 West Village
- 19 West Village
- 20 West Village
- 21 Washington Heights
- 22 West Village
- 23 Washington Heights
- 24 Washington Heights
- 25 Tribeca

125



PHOTO: GUY AROCH



126

About the Authors

Stanley Greenberg is a Brooklyn-based photographer and author *Invisible New York: The Hidden Infrastructure of the City* (1998), *Waterworks: A Photographic Journey Through New York's Hidden Water System* (2003), *Architecture Under Construction* (2010), and *Time Machines* (2011). His photographs are held in prominent collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the New York Public Library, the Yale University Art Gallery, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, among others. Greenberg has received a Guggenheim Fellowship, as well as grants from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the New York State Council on the Arts. His work can be seen at www.stanleygreenberg.org

Karrie Jacobs is a professional observer of the man-made landscape. She writes regularly for *Architect* and *Curbed*. She's also faculty member at the School of Visual Arts' MA program in Design Research, Writing, and Criticism where she teaches students how to understand and interpret the design rich environment all around them. She was the founding editor-in-chief of *Dwell* and the founding executive editor of *Benetton's Colors*. She is the author of *The Perfect \$100,000 House* (2006) and co-author of *Angry Graphics* (1992).

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About the Monacelli Press

As a leading independent publisher of illustrated books for more than twenty years, The Monacelli Press has challenged the conventions of publishing to produce provocative, inspiring, and essential titles on architecture, visual art, design, landscape architecture, photography, and applied arts.

Since the publication of its inaugural title—*S,M,L,XL* by Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, a groundbreaking monograph that remains unsurpassed in its influence on design publishing—under the guidance of publisher Gianfranco Monacelli, the press has produced more than 500 books in collaboration with prominent figures in diverse practices, including Rafael Moneo, Henry N. Cobb, Piet Oudolf, Kate Orff, and Marian Bantjes, and scholars and critics, including Robert Storr, Paul Goldberg, Victoria Newhouse, and Jean-Louis Cohen.

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