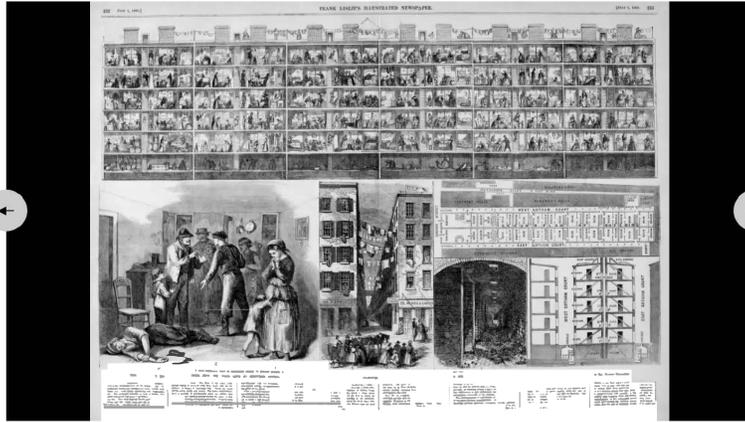


You know a lot less about New York than you think. These graphics prove it

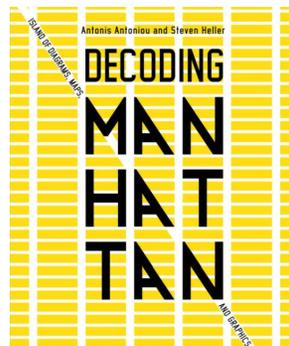
A new book breaks down one of the most built-up cities in the world.



1/12 Albert Berghaus, *The Tenement Houses of New York*, from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, July 1, 1865. [Image: courtesy Abrams Books]

BY LILLY SMITH 2 MINUTE READ

Manhattan's grid is iconic. But it's hardly the heart and soul of the city. A new book maps New York City in ways that no architect or urban planner could.



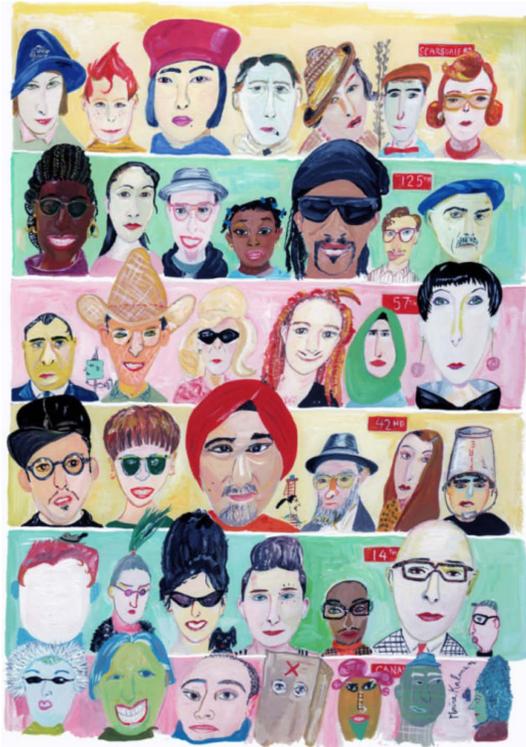
[Image: courtesy Abrams Books]

The book, *Decoding Manhattan* by architect Antonis Antoniou and designer and author Steven Heller, uses more than two centuries of diagrams, illustrations, and maps to demystify, illuminate, and yes, decode, the inner workings of the city that never sleeps. From an olfactory map of New York's Astor Place to a family tree-style diagram depicting New York's New Wave, the graphics in this book add rich layers to

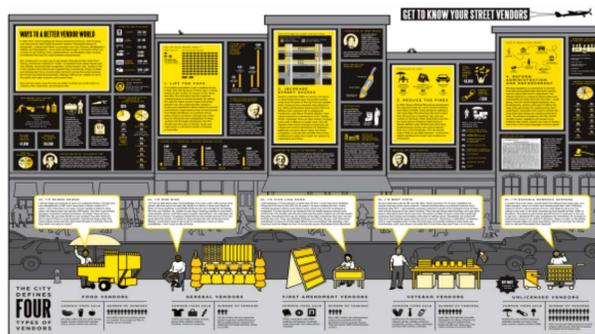
our understanding of Manhattan. In a city of skyscrapers and subways, the goings-on at street level really only capture the surface.

Antoniou and Heller sifted through more than 1,000 images before culling them down to the finals. A flip through the book, on sale today, offers a quick visual trip through the city, with each page offering a bird's-eye view of the people, places, and things that evolved with the city over centuries. And while there are some maps, the book isn't meant to be a directional guide. "I'm not interested in telling you what happened urbanistically, or [about] buildings, which I learned about a lot, and am interested in, but it's not at the heart of what happens in this book," says Antoniou. "It's about how people see it through their eyes; different mindsets, different disciplines, and how we can learn from that, too."

Take the map of slang in the city, called “Jonathon Green’s 100 years of New York Tawk,” which overlays an illustrated map of Manhattan with the slang words associated with particular neighborhoods. Or “Smell Mapping Astor Place,” which illustrates the various smells you might come across at the the Manhattan plaza. These capture the feeling of being on the city’s streets as viscerally as the smell of a bacon, egg, and cheese sandwich. One of Antoniou’s favorites diagrams is the “Crosstown Boogie Woogie” by Maira Kalman, which shows New Yorkers’ faces in horizontal stripes. “I can get lost in looking at people’s faces and who they are and what they’re thinking,” says Antoniou. It allows you to make a different story for each. In this city, there are at least eight million of them.



Maira Kalman, Crosstown Boogie Woogie. 1995. [Image: © Maira Kalman/courtesy Abrams Books]



Center for Urban Pedagogy, Vendor Power!: A Guide to Street Vending in New York City, 2009. Project team: Candy Chang (designer), Sean Basinski (Street Vendor Project), and John Mangin and Rosten Woo (CUP). [Image: courtesy Abrams Books]

The images here are fun, self-reflective, and highlight a culture that's always changing. "[A diagram] makes concrete ideas that you might have of something and fills in the blanks between what you see and what you don't see, and what you think might exist and what you can't testify to that existence," Heller says. "A photograph is nice, but a diagram gives you extra. It's weird, you know, photographs are supposed to be reality but diagrams seem more real because they go into every detail."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lilly Smith is an associate editor of Co.Design. She was previously the editor of Design Observer, and a contributing writer to AIGA Eye on Design. [More](#)