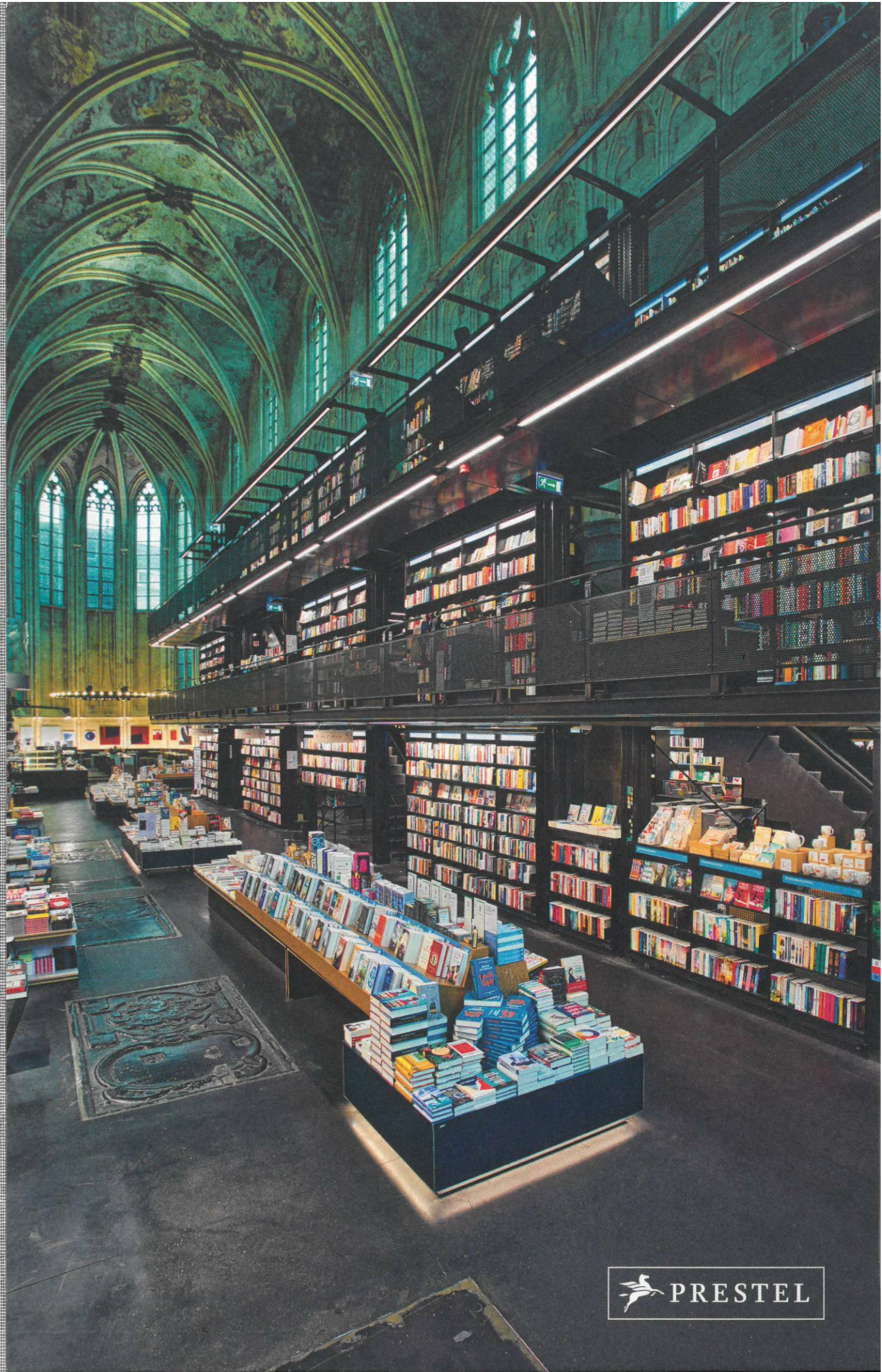


BOOKSTORES

Horst A. Friedrichs Stuart Husband



HORST A. FRIEDRICHS
STUART HUSBAND



Bookstores

A Celebration of Independent Booksellers

WITH A FOREWORD BY
NORA KRUG

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Paper Towns

NORA KRUG

Imagine the sense of excitement a traveller must have felt some 450 years ago when entering Christophe Plantin's print shop in Antwerp, viewing the books he had on offer. Imagine leafing through the pages of *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (the first true modern atlas, 1570), and *Dictionarium Tetraglotton* (a dictionary in Greek, Latin, French and Flemish, 1562), and *La Institutione di una Fanciulla Nata Nobilmente* (a manual on the education of young girls, 1555), or closely examining his illustrated bibles, travel stories and song books, sold there and distributed at the Frankfurt Book Fair (the first of which took place in 1454), to places as far away as China, India and the Spanish colonies, expanding the minds of our reading ancestors. Plantin himself strongly believed in the educational and humanist value of literature. Suspecting him of printing materials of heretic and anti-Spanish content, the Spanish ordered the raiding of his workshop in 1561, but Plantin had the foresight to sell all of his radical books in advance of the raid - only to buy them back once normalcy returned. In 1576, Spanish mercenaries looted and torched Antwerp, but by paying them an enormous ransom, Plantin was able to save his books.

Readers today don't have to travel for weeks by boat or horse-drawn coach to purchase a book. Production modes and distribution methods have changed, but the same excitement greets the contemporary reader when entering a bookstore that reflects the idiosyncratic perspective of its owner. Entering an independent bookstore feels like setting foot in a strange town. You find yourself promenading paper boulevards, passing lively town squares, then turning corners and wandering down secret alleyways, perhaps hoping to lose yourself in a quiet dead end - to take refuge from the world outside, or even from yourself. The books on the shelves are like the people you'd encounter along the way, the covers are their faces, the sentences their thoughts. You pick them off their shelves, weigh them in your hands, you open them up and begin a conversation. Some speak easily, some with hesitation. Some have manners, others don't. Some you couldn't agree with more, others contradict your every word. Some are reassuring and comforting, others confuse and frighten you. All of them sharpen your senses, and when you leave the store (hopefully with a purchased book in your bag), you find that you are richer: in images and words, in thoughts and feelings.

Books are more than just cultural artefacts. They are manifestations of who we are. They are proof that we exist, and they make a commitment to remembering that we have lived once we are gone. They give us the illusion that not everything is ephemeral, that there has to be a reason for why we are here, that our struggles aren't futile. Because books show us who we are, they satisfy our desire to culturally belong. And by telling us who we might become, they allow us to question all we take for granted, test our ethical conscience, gain distance to the world in order to challenge our relationship with it, and question our commitment to it.

Books are therefore under threat when the edges of democracy begin to crumble. Totalitarian regimes control printing, publishing and distribution, stifling the possibility for critical thinking, which can, in turn, breed intolerance and acts of violence. In democratic societies, too, the political power of books can make them vulnerable. Book burnings aren't only a thing of the past: in the fall of 2019, students at a university in the United States burned a novel on campus by an author who had visited the college to engage in a dialogue about diversity and white privilege. Books defend our human dignity, and therefore we have to protect them – just as Christophe Plantin did four and a half centuries ago.

Independent bookstores are free from state-mandated, or even just mainstream taste. They provide access to books that make us think and challenge our conventional viewpoints, which is precisely why they are important. They underline the necessity of diverse opinions, they give voice to authors otherwise left unheard, they provide a sense of community and a platform for radical ideas. They are sites and sanctuaries for democratic thinking.

After a period of decline, there has been an increase in independent bookstores in some countries. But their survival continues to be challenged. If people used to have to travel by horse-drawn coach for days on end just to purchase a book, then we can support the well-being of our local bookstore by, among other ways, walking to the shop to pick one up, instead of going online. And perhaps, while we wait in line, we can give the resident cat a good scratch behind its ear.





SHAKESPEARE AND COMPANY – PARIS

bookshop









JOHN SANDOE BOOKS - LONDON

The Strand

NANCY BASS WYDEN

If our name is synonymous with that of New York City, I think that being in business for almost a century has something to do with it. It's always been my family's mission to put good books in the hands of readers. My grandfather started The Strand in the 1920s with \$600 and his own book collection. He slept on a cot in the basement when times got really tough. He bought the eleven-storey building we're in now to safeguard the business. It's just been given city landmark status, which I'm appealing against – it drives up the costs of everything, which we don't need – but I'm happy to regard The Strand as a landmark in its own right.

My earliest memory of the place? I'd come in here with my mom and my brother, and they'd kind of turn me loose. I remember seeing what seemed like an ocean of books, and imbibing the fabulous chocolatey, musky smell they gave off. I'd run to the kid's section, sweep my fingers along the spines, and be told I could choose any book that was there. I remember my delight in feeling like I was the queen of the stacks. And seeing my dad and granddad working here too, they felt like giants. I guess books were my candy.

You know, the death of bookstores has probably been prophesied ever since bookstores began. We started on Book Row, where you had six blocks containing forty-eight bookstores in competition. One was even called The Cheapest Bookstore in The World. So it was a struggle to survive back then; then paperbacks were supposed to put us out of business, then the movies, then TV, then the big box stores, then the internet, then e-books. We've always been under assault by something, but it just keeps you on your toes. People still love the space of a bookstore as a place to dream, to "Get Lost in the Stacks", as our slogan has it, where getting lost is a positive thing. You see customers stop as they come in, take a deep breath, prepare to decompress a little from the city, maybe go back in time a little bit. And we try to hire employees that love

books – you have to pass a literary test before you're taken on, which, believe me, is not easy – and who want to share their enthusiasms. Almost everyone's a literary major. Ben McFall, our head of fiction who's been here since the 1970s, was called the "Oracle of The Strand" by the *New York Times*. People are always coming to him for suggestions on what to read next.

David Bowie, who was a regular here, said, "You always find the book you didn't know you wanted at The Strand." We have eighteen miles of books – from the bargain carts outside, which are like our gateway drug, to the rare book room like an old, magical attic upstairs – and we also have access to amazing estates in and around New York, who think of us as the best repository for their collections, as well as creating home libraries for people. I did a library for Moby and he said it felt like Christmas because I picked out things he'd never encountered but really appreciated. What do I love doing most here? The sort of extracurricular stuff. I started the event program, and we now hold 400 signings and talks a year; we run a kids' story time where we get people costumed up as the book's characters to narrate; we have our own leather bookmarks, a candle line, a tea line, bags and socks, anything that's really just fun to try.

My favourite section? I love rare books, but my favourite to read is memoirs and biographies. Right now I'm in the middle of the Truman Capote biography by Gerald Clarke. Oh my gosh, it's brilliant. I'm still passionate about books and reading. I love it when customers tell me this is their most cherished place in New York City, or to hear from authors like Gary Shteyngart that we inspired them to become writers. Patti Smith and Mary Gaitskill both worked here. In fact, Patti Smith's sister also worked here and met her husband here, and they're still married. I think there are more than a few Strand babies running around out there, getting lost in the stacks, just like I did.

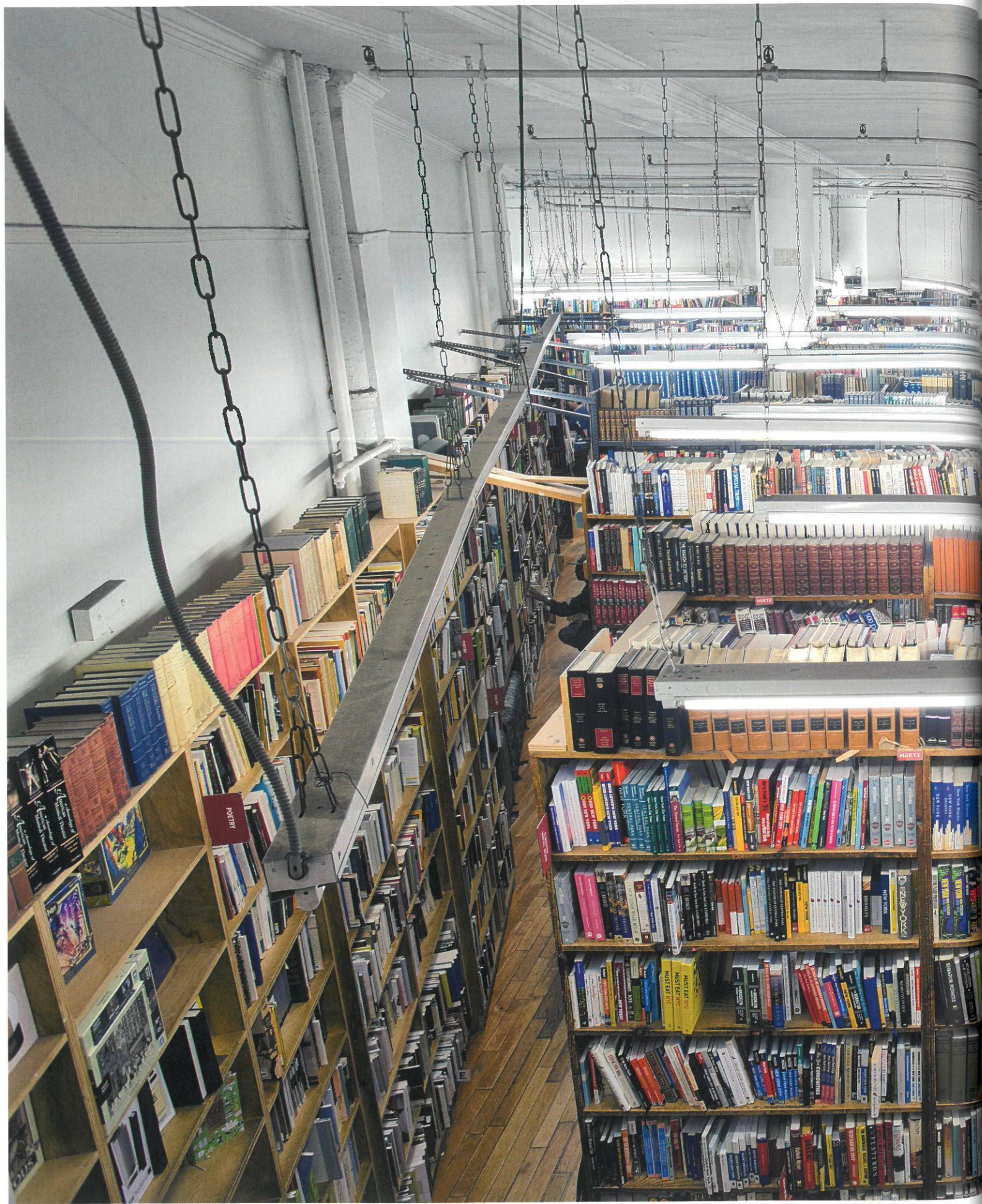


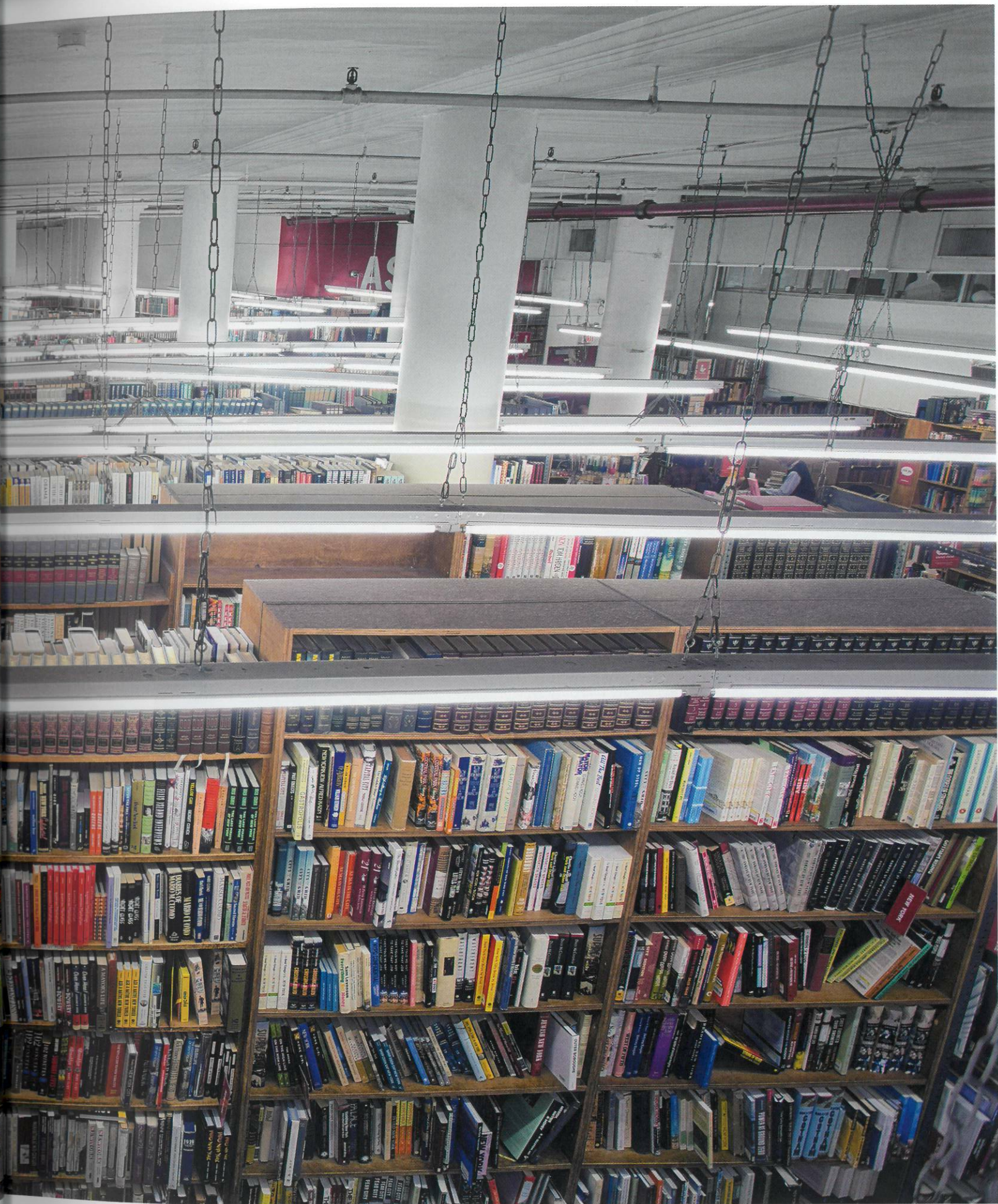
NANCY BASS WYDEN — THE STRAND — NEW YORK CITY





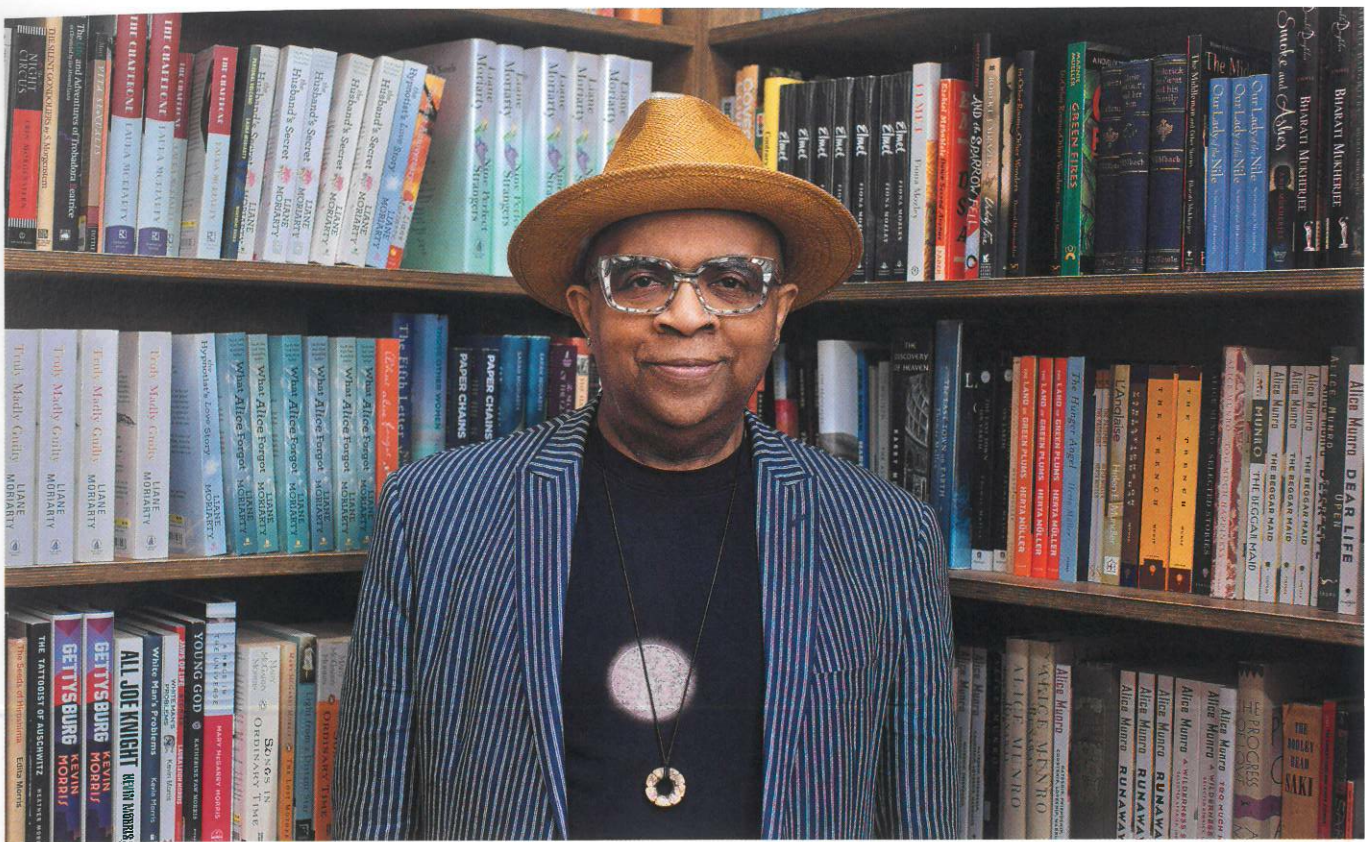
THE STRAND – NEW YORK CITY





THE STRAND — NEW YORK CITY









THE STRAND – NEW YORK CITY

Spoonbill & Sugartown

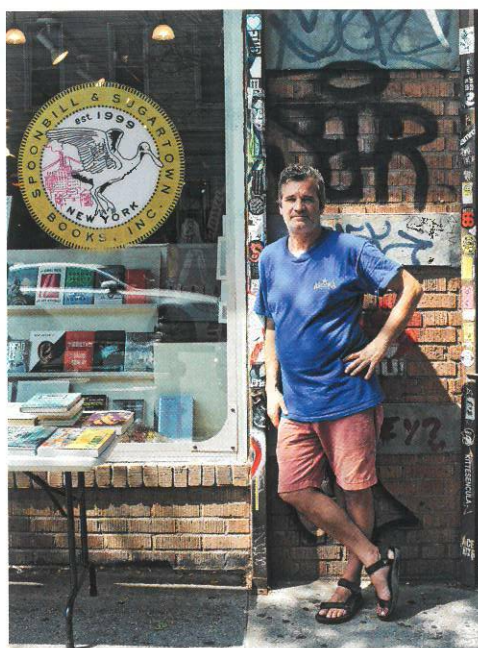
JONAS KYLE

We're not as mainstream or run-of-the-mill as other stores. A lot of them are straight, like the majority of people who live in New York City today. You don't have the freaks and weirdos and quasi-bohemians or poor starving artists or the substratum of people outside of society any more. Money swept in and drenched everything in sameness. So we present a little bit differently, which is maybe why people come in every day and say it's the best store they've ever seen. We'll have rare first editions, and interesting art monographs or academic treatises - like a photobook documenting the place of women in post-punk culture - and we'll stick with books that other people wouldn't even dream of ordering, like *Wabi-Sabi* by Leonard Koren, about the Japanese art of finding happiness, which has sold briskly here for fifteen years.

My favourite part of the store is our "Thought" section, which encompasses philosophy, literary theory

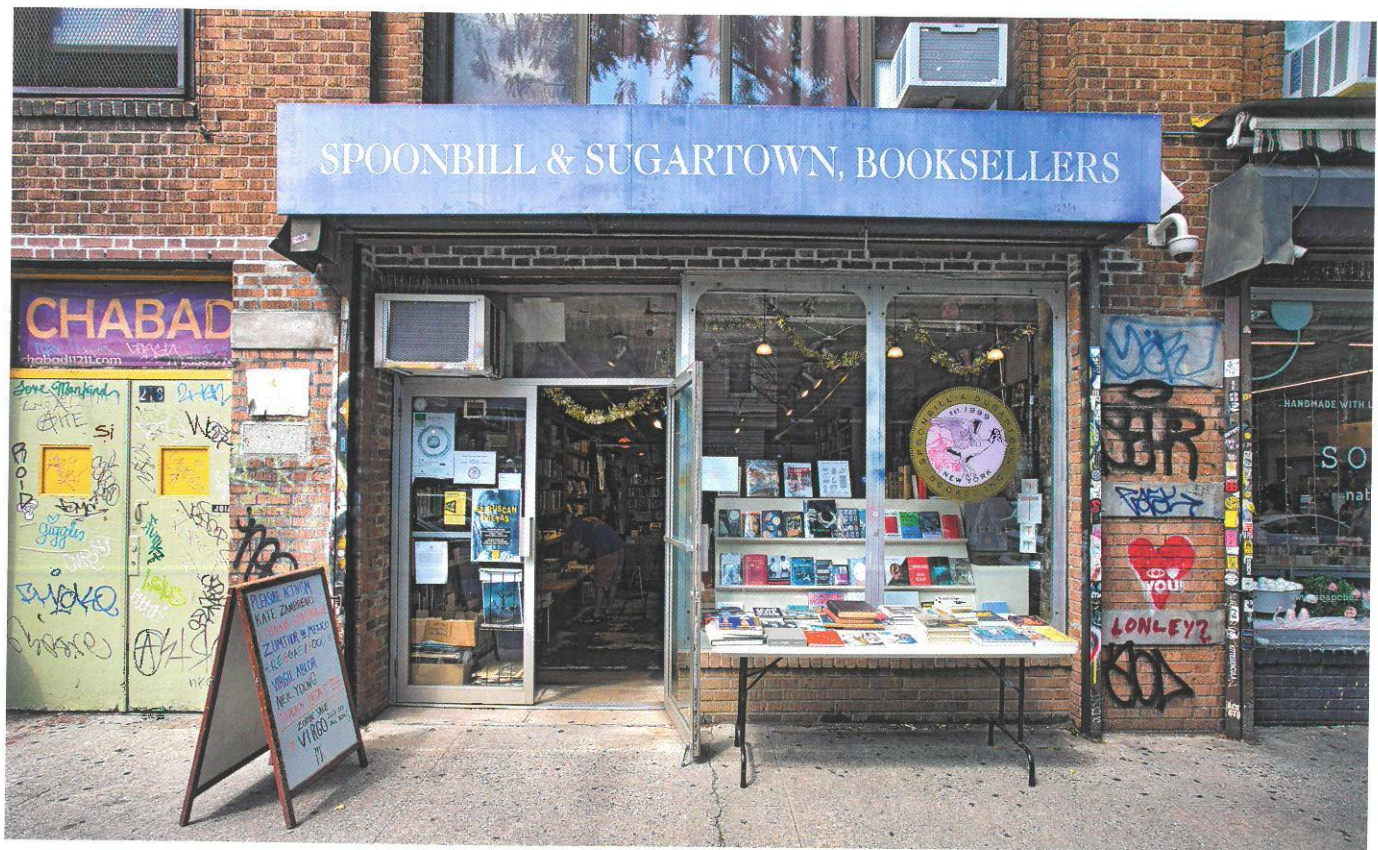
and Barack Obama. We've purposely cast our net wide, because we want people to think. I also like having the classics to hand, like George Orwell's *1984*, which is never not relevant. We'll place them next to the newest authors, so that Virginia Woolf, say, can have a little conversation with Sally Rooney. We like to blur the lines. In fact, a lot of what we do is completely blurred.

This business keeps you young. I've had twenty years of intimate interactions with customers, which keeps you on your toes. And, if you take a step back, you realize that you've played a part, however small, in the city's intellectual culture. You have a sense of the currents running along under the surface of things - like Joan Didion and her sense of pervasive unease still being a thing, or the newer writers doing sci-fi as literature to explore our present dystopias. It's good to have had that vantage point.





SPOONBILL & SUGARTOWN — WILLIAMSBURG, BROOKLYN





Dashwood Books

DAVID STRETTELL

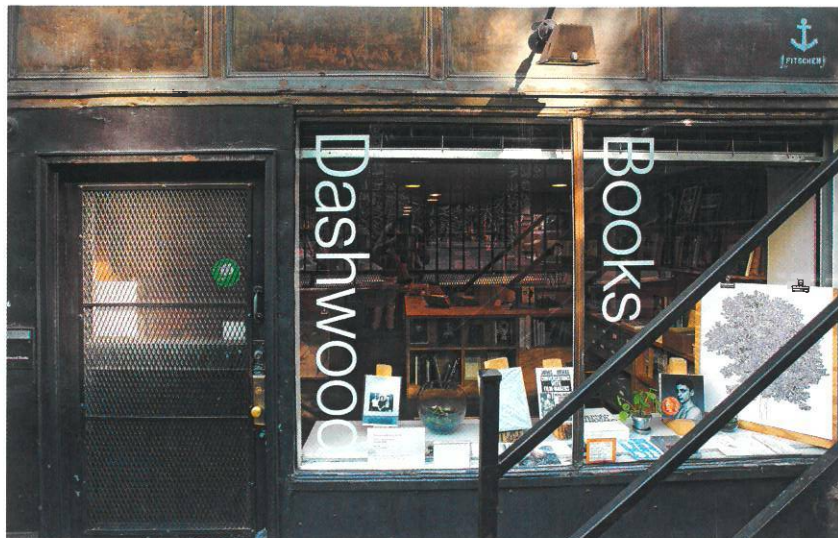
Around 95 per cent of our stock is photography titles, from rare vintage finds to exciting new books from little publishers all over the world. People told me I was insane to open this place, but I was convinced I could make it work – there wasn't a place like it in New York and never really had been. I'd previously worked for Magnum, the photo agency, in their New York office, which was great, but because it's a cooperative, I had about forty bosses, some of them quite grumpy. After leaving, I thought, I just want to do something on my own, with a very small piece of real estate, where I call the shots.

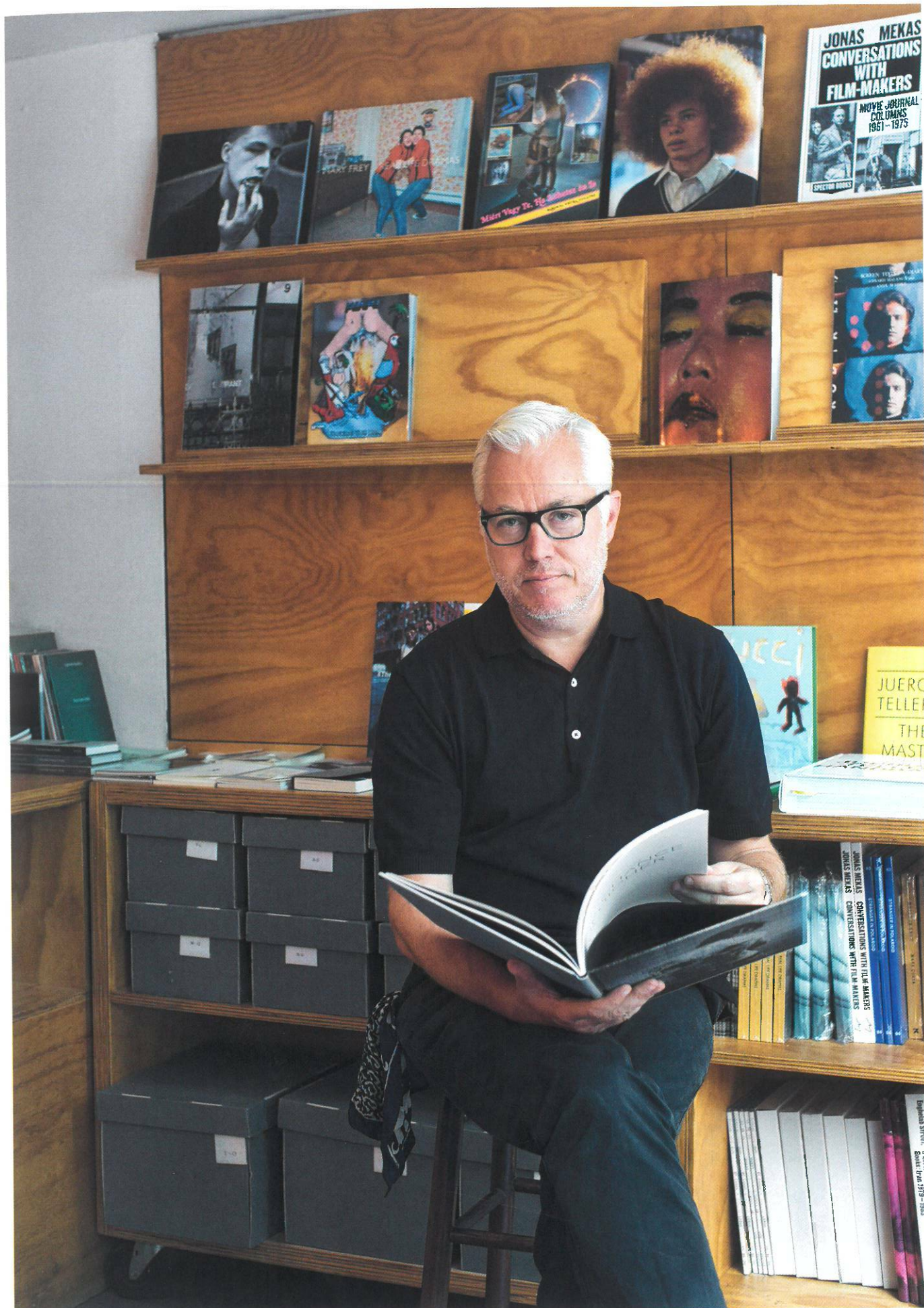
I see Dashwood as a portal for ideas, to inspire other artists and photographers and even publishers. We're in a basement, and I wanted to keep the interior very plain and simple. It's not consciously Japanese-inspired, but I'm attracted to the way their stores are really thought through. I think it's old-fashioned in many ways, like one of those bespoke hat or shoe shops in Jermyn Street in London where they keep the patterns of your head or feet. Here, we have boxes for our regular customers,

where we collect titles we think they'll like or find intriguing, to present to them each time they visit. It feels very custom. Given the internet, and the state of retail, you have to prioritize the customer, make them feel special.

The best thing about doing this? On any given day, anyone can walk through the door, from the artist Richard Prince to a bunch of students who probably won't know who he is, and interesting discussions will usually ensue. Things aren't incredibly expensive here, and we don't have an elitist attitude. It's idiosyncratic little spaces like this that make a city tick, I think.

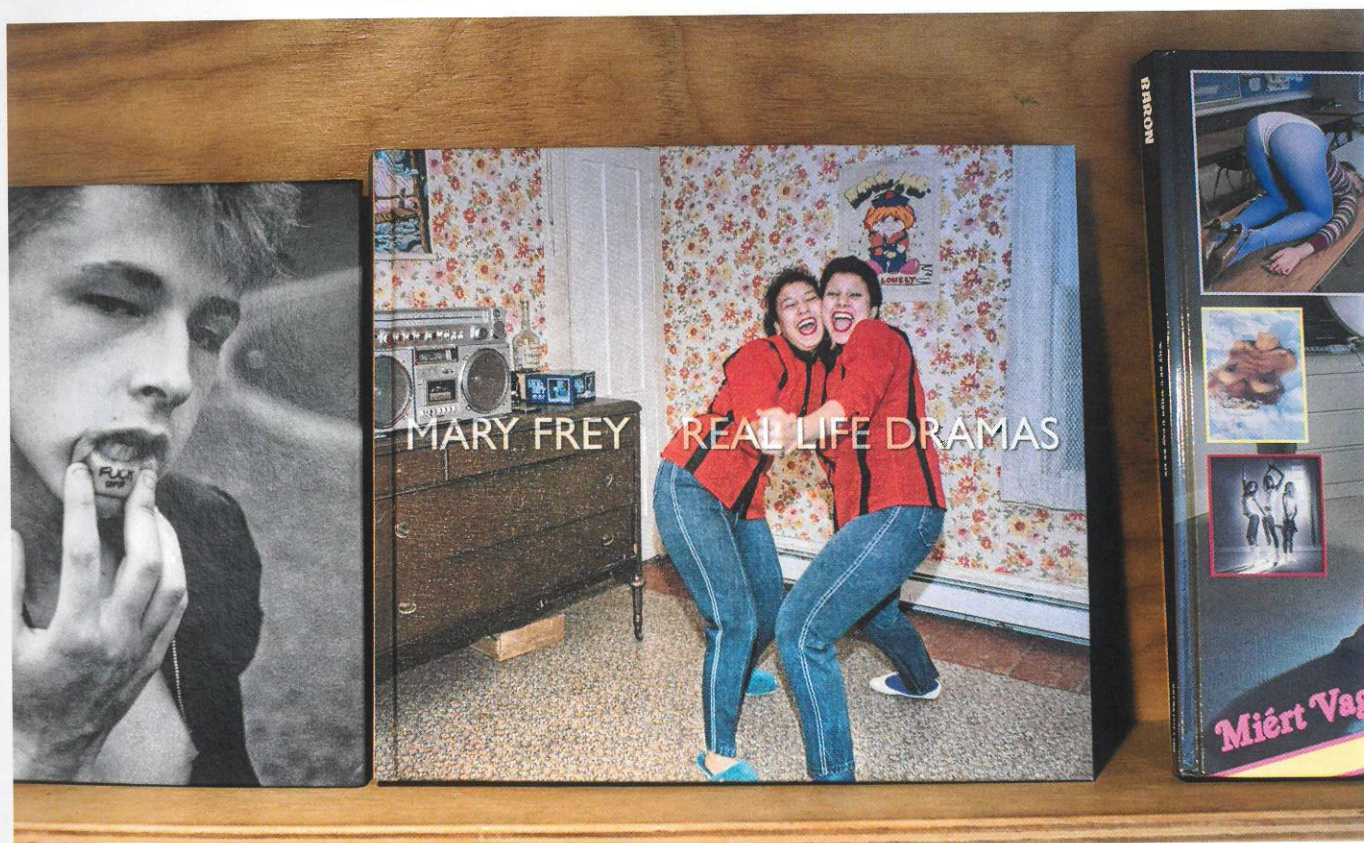
This is a good period for photography books, if not a golden age. It goes hand in hand with the medium being recognized as an art form, and the books getting collectible, not to mention the likes of Martin Parr donating his collection of photobooks to the Tate. Actually, Martin was very helpful when I was setting this place up. I buy things every day and I'm always surprised by what I find out there, so I know my customers will be too.

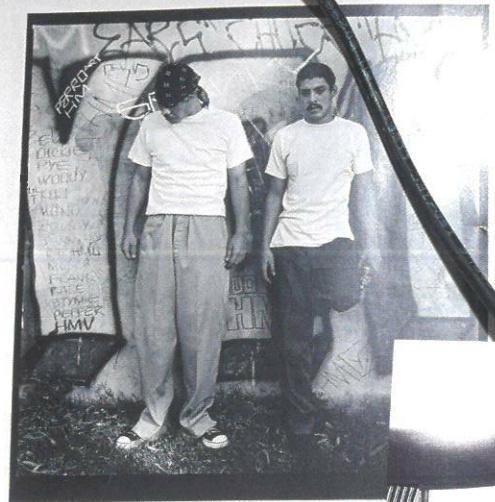
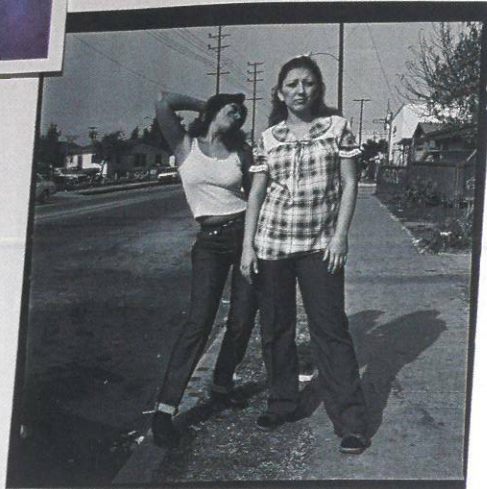




DAVID STRETTOLL - DASHWOOD BOOKS - NEW YORK CITY







RIZZOLI

LIVIA SENIC-MATUGLIA

We had a store on 57th Street for over thirty years, but the building was demolished, and it closed in 2014. At the time, many independent bookstores were closing in Manhattan – high rents, Amazon, a perfect storm – but we wanted to keep faith with the city, and with Angelo Rizzoli’s original mission, which was to provide beautiful books for an international audience. So we found this perfect space in NoMad – 5,000 square feet, eighteen-foot ceilings, three separate rooms and a skylight. When I first saw it, I thought it was it was a place where culture could be brought to life. We’d saved the furniture and chandeliers from the old store, and we got Fornasetti to design the wallpapers, which is an elegant connection with our Italian roots. So it sets off the luxury books perfectly, but we can also stage launches and events – all the things that a modern bookstore should be attentive to.

The ambience of the place? Well, New York can be loud and crazy, so there’s a cathedral-like aspect to

it; come in and have a break from Fifth Avenue, relax in our salon – there’s pew-style seating – but we’ll also warm the place up with weekend jazz brunches. Our clientele is really diverse, like New York City itself, so we have to keep pace with it.

The visual aspect of working with books is so important now, especially for an art and photography specialist like us. Book design has really come on in recent years, and we play a lot with display, like hanging pictures in a gallery. Cookbooks look amazing these days, and even our children’s section is curated with an eye on the quality of illustration.

Books are the best way I know to really engage with the world of ideas. They’re a long way beyond mere “content”. They help train your brain, open it up to different ideas and viewpoints or to beautiful or challenging things. You’re not just receiving information from them – you’re getting a sentimental education.









Books Are Magic

EMMA STRAUB

I'm an author who runs a bookstore. There are more of us than you'd think - Ann Patchett has Parnassus Books in Nashville, and Louise Erdrich owns Birch Bark in Minneapolis. And if you think about it, there's no better grounding for doing this, as we've all seen hundreds of stores on our book tours, and we've got a pretty good idea of what works and what doesn't.

I like to say that we - that's my husband Mike and I - opened this place out of necessity, when our local store, BookCourt, closed down after thirty-plus years. We were horrified; it was my family's favourite place in the world, just to go and hang out, and I knew there were plenty of other people who felt that way. We didn't need other jobs, as many people pointed out to us - I was making enough money off my books to support us, and Mike had plenty of design work. But to me, a community without a bookstore is like a body without a heart.

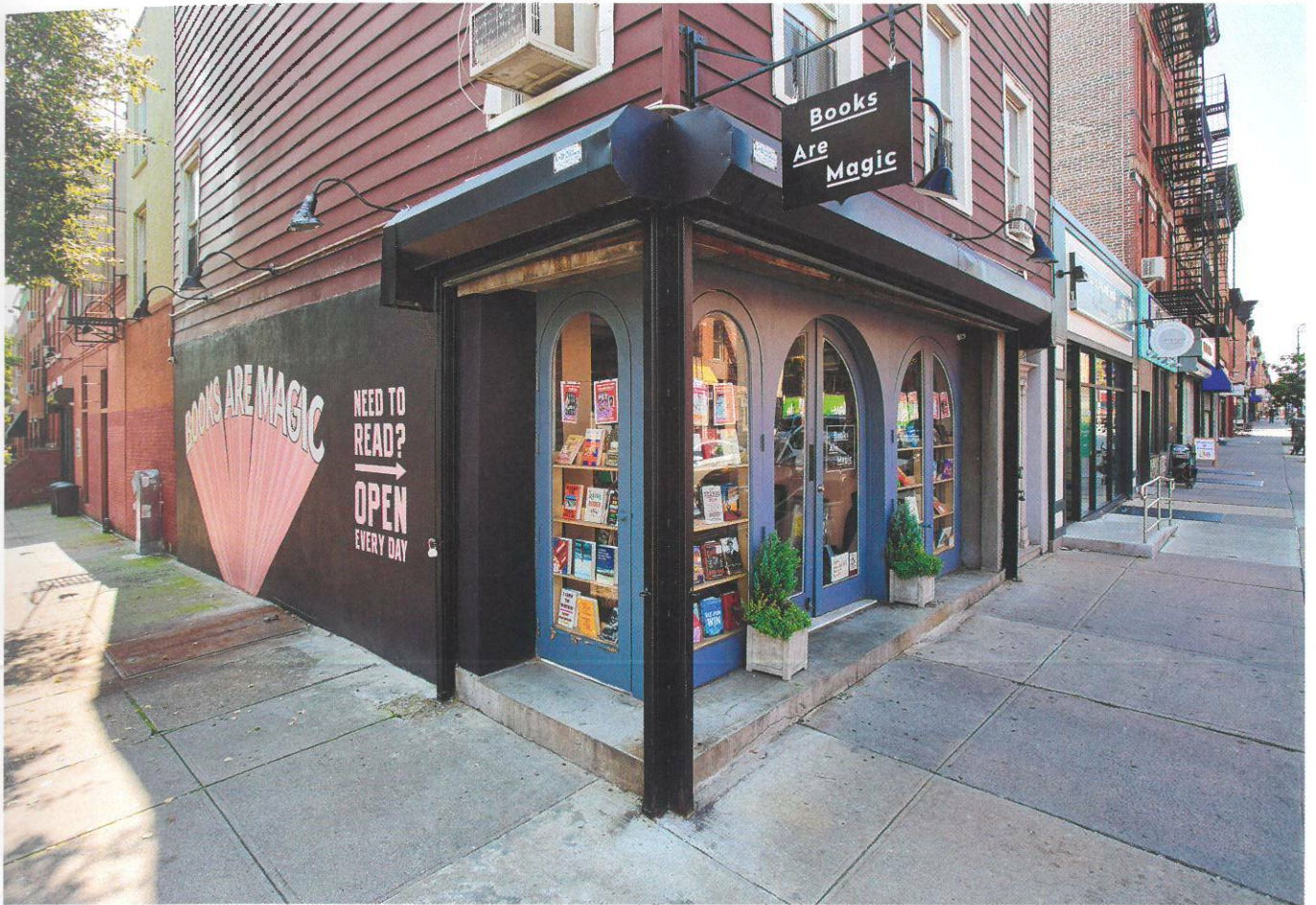
We got lucky with this space. It's warm, like books are, and we have lots of places where big and little people can sit. Linger is encouraged, and the kicking off of shoes is positively commended. It's usually filled with people sprawling and reclining amid piles of books. I love it when spontaneous things happen, like I'll hear there's an author in town and I'll phone them up and get them to come do a reading in the kids' nook, or we'll make little films for our social media feeds. We're still in the honeymoon phase. Mike and I are significantly older than most of our booksellers, but we're the ones bringing the goofy energy.

For me, this place goes beyond a community hub - it's my entire social life. Our events programme is really diverse, from cookbook launches to kids' stories to science and literary fiction readings and signings, and we get completely different audiences for each. We had a panel of romance authors, and the room was filled with 200

women, most of whom hadn't been here before. And every poetry event we hold is packed, which is extremely heartening to me. I don't claim to be a good businesswoman, but I know what's important to me: giving people a place to go where they can commune with ideas.

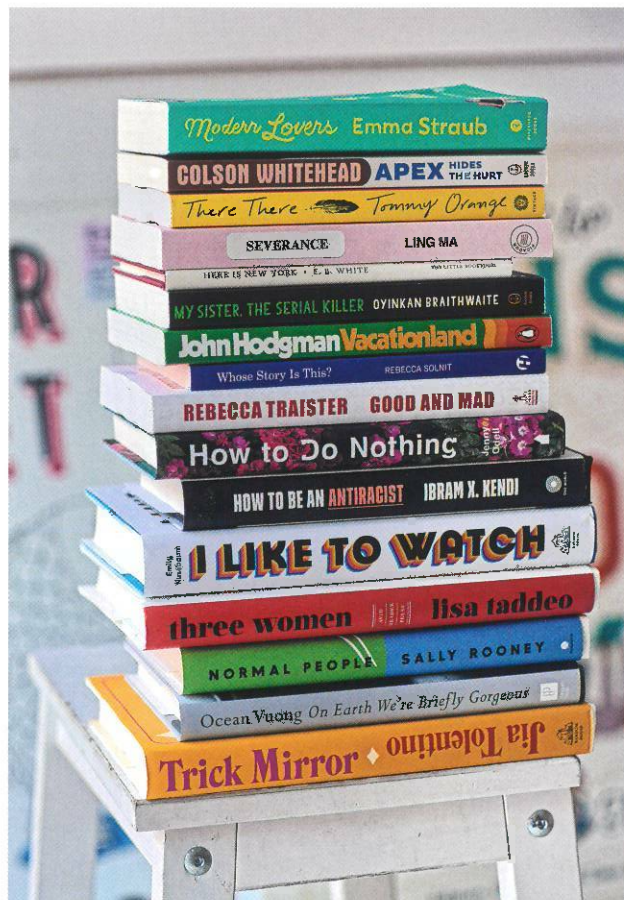
Sure, people can buy every book ever printed online - if they don't care about their soul or the rest of the world. Luckily, people who read tend to care about those things. Maybe out-of-print or hard-to-find is fine for the internet, but when people come here their bodies are bathed in glitter - figuratively, mostly, but literally, if they like - and they become part of our world of solace and refuge, which is more important than ever when we feel so powerless in the face of all the horrible things happening in the world. My megaphone got a lot bigger since we opened; we have "melt the guns" tote bags by Carson Ellis, a children's illustrator, 100 per cent of the proceeds from which go to the fight against guns. And we have a poetry gumball machine, from which minds are fed and a different charity every month is compensated.

Running this place has impacted negatively on my writing life. I'd publish a book every two years before; with the new one, it's been four years. But now we're up and running, I think I'll be able to get back to work. I'll have to split my days, but I like the mix of solitary and social. It probably wouldn't have suited J. D. Salinger, but I'm so happy selling someone a book, talking to their kids, petting their dogs, crawling around on the carpet with children who don't belong to me, or telling people what to read on their honeymoon. There isn't a day when I don't feel vindicated. I get emails at least once a week from writers who want to open bookstores. I say be realistic, it's a business of course, but if you can make it work, it'll be so rewarding.



BOOKS ARE MAGIC – COBBLE HILL, BROOKLYN





EMMA STRAUB (TOP RIGHT) — BOOKS ARE MAGIC — COBBLE HILL, BROOKLYN