

## **Smokers and sleepers : photographs by Jerome Mallmann.**

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# SMOKERS AND SLEEPERS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEROME MALLMANN



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With preface by Andrew Stevens

Elvehjem Museum of Art  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
2004



The book is published on the occasion of the exhibition *Smokers and Sleepers: Photographs by Jerome Mallmann* held at the Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison from June 12 through August 22, 2004.

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Front cover: *Soul Mates on Mercer Street*, New York City, 1995

Back cover: *Finishing Touches*, East Village Café, New York City, 2000

## JEROME MALLMANN'S SMOKERS AND SLEEPERS

The photographs in this catalogue, taken by Jerome Mallmann between 1991 and 2003, record the most basic of human needs played out in the public places of New York City. In these Mallmann brings his insights to bear on city life. New York has always been a rich source for street photographers; Leon Levinstein, Robert Frank, Helen Levitt, and W. Eugene Smith at their best revealed the city.

Although he has lived in New York for more than three decades, Mallmann was born in Kohler, Wisconsin in 1931 and received a BA in French with an art minor from the University of Wisconsin in 1953. He pursued these interests traveling frequently to Paris and taking painting classes in San Francisco at the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute). He became interested in photography in 1967, although his first camera was later stolen and not replaced until 1985.

Mallmann explores the city unobtrusively, looking for telling moments, using a Leica camera, currently an M6. This compact, quiet, well-made camera suits his style of capturing images. He keeps the camera prefocused to about 15 to 17 feet. He always uses Tri-X 400 ASA film and sets the shutter speed to 1/250 of a second. After years of practice he has become so familiar with this setup that he has an intuitive feel for lighting and can avoid attracting attention and intruding on the scene by manipulating the camera too much. This is crucial because he is drawn to subjects who are in a contemplative mood, lost for a moment in themselves, and he strives to capture that reverie without disturbing them.

Mallmann himself printed the photographs that make up this book. For the most part he prints his images the full frame on 11 x 14-inch slightly warm-toned paper. Since 1986 he has used the dark rooms and enlargers at the Camera Club of New York, a venerable institution founded a century before. There he regularly exhibits with the other members in group shows.

His work in this exhibition is tightly focused; these are selections of two groups of photographs. However, the smokers and sleepers represent only two aspects of his photography. He thinks of his work more broadly as street photography. Street photographers allow the city to reveal itself by recording the little dramas of its citizens, always on display in the streets. For Mallmann it is part of his way of life to investigate the character of his environment by taking pictures when he has the opportunity; he has also

taken photographs in the streets of Paris and Sheboygan. In fact, he had not originally set out to chronicle the smokers on the streets of New York or the people sleeping in its public places. Instead, as he reviewed several years of his photographs, he found so many of these images that he decided to look out for more in his photographic forays around the city.

Mallmann says of his work that he tries to reveal the solitude, rather than the loneliness of the people in his photographs. The search for solitude in New York is naturally answered by smoking and sleeping. The social conditions of the city force these two dispossessed populations into the streets to seek their respite, making their solitude a public display. Mallmann found that smokers tended to pose themselves. The youngest smokers, self-conscious and invulnerable, display a cigarette as an item of personal adornment as precisely calculated as a piercing or a tattoo, apparently intended to reinforce a personal space. However, for the oldest smokers in these photographs, there seems to be no pleasure left in the act at all, and style seems to have devolved into little more than addiction. Mallmann's sleepers are similarly at the mercy of their own needs. They shut out the city by shutting down in a public place. From the homeless to the merely exhausted, the sleepers are at their most vulnerable, least posed.

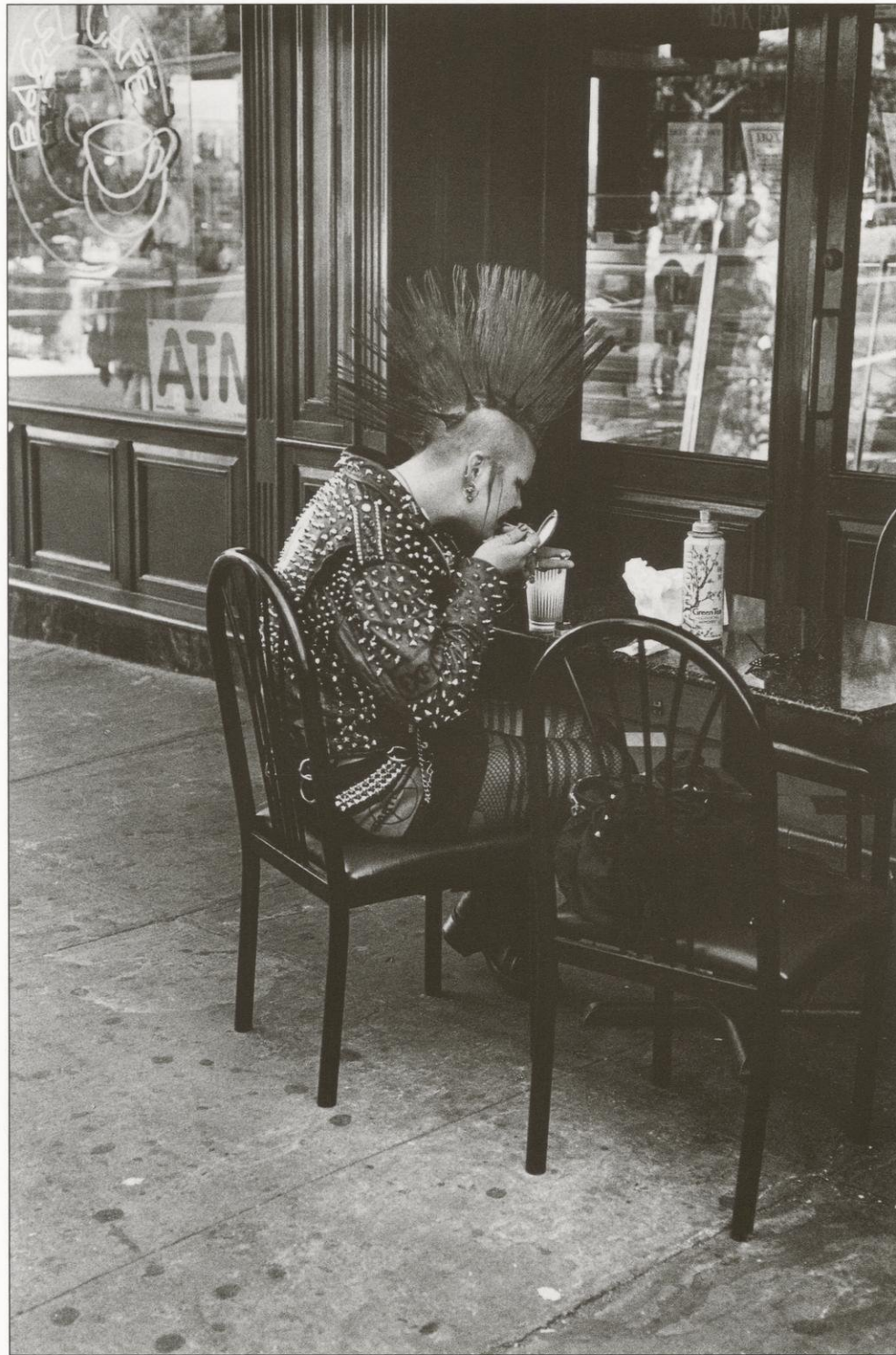
In the city, isolation is a social skill; everyone needs some personal space, and they build defenses to snatch it where they can: smokers with their territorial posing, sleepers by a lapse of consciousness. The rest of us are aware of the taboos and generally respect solitude, stepping around smokers and sleepers alike without actually looking. Even looking at people can be an invasion, an insult, an invitation. At the same time, of course, habitually averting our eyes is as deadening a habit as smoking. These photos challenge us to see the most-viewed city in the world a bit more clearly.

The museum and I would like to thank Johanna and Leslie Garfield for introducing us to the work of Jerome Mallmann and for their encouragement and support of this project and also the Anonymous Fund and the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin.

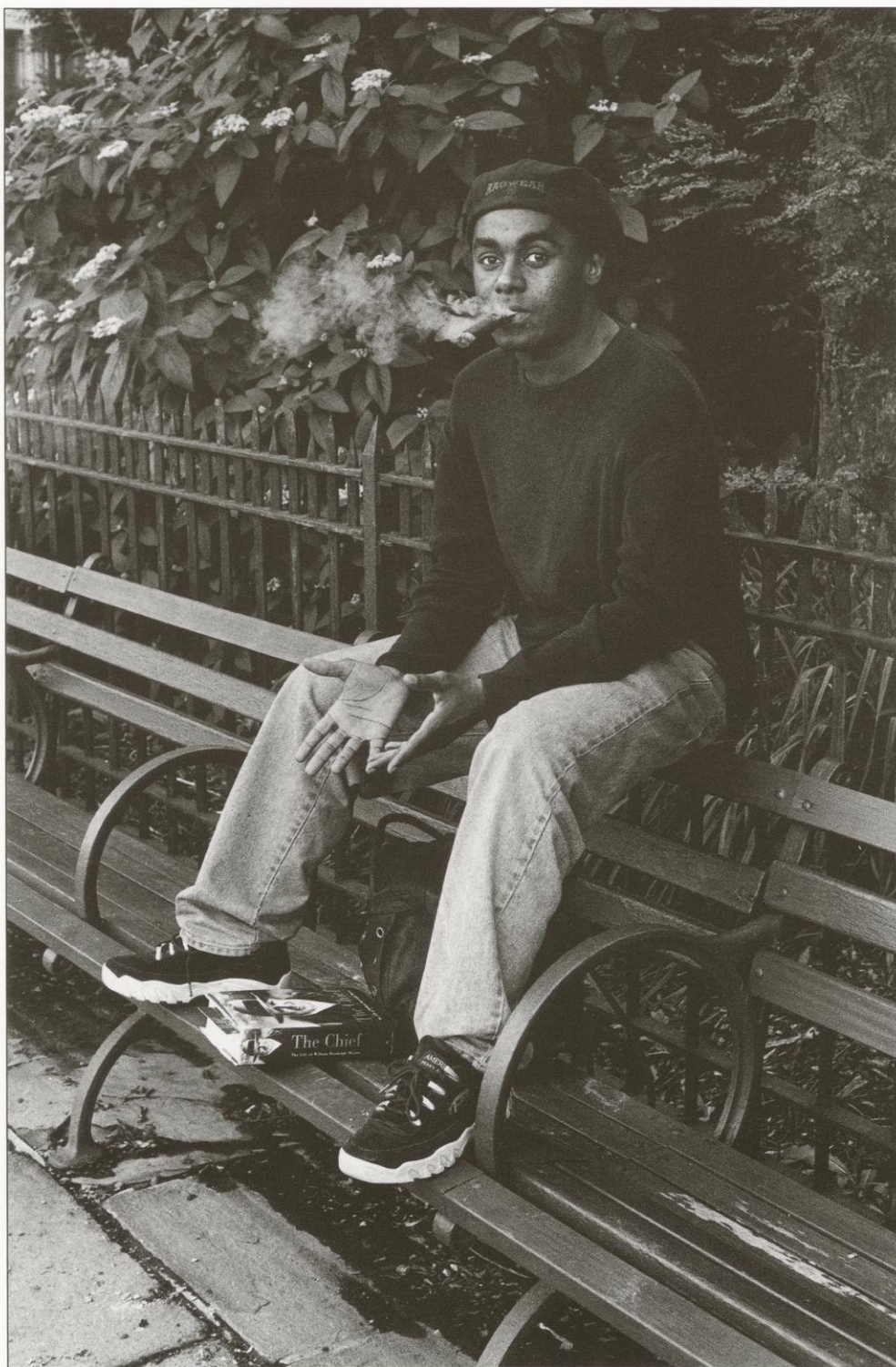
Andrew Stevens  
*Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs*



# SMOKERS



1. *Finishing Touches*, East Village Café, New York City, 2000



2. *Cigar Smoker*, Brooklyn Heights, New York, 2000





3. *Cigarette Break*, SoHo, New York City, 2000





4. *Cigarette Break*, New York City, 1998



5. *Young Woman with Cigarette*, New York City, 2003





6. SoHo Street Corner, New York City, 2001



7. *Cigarette Break*, New York City, 2002





8. *Cigarette Break*, Lafayette Street, New York City, 2000



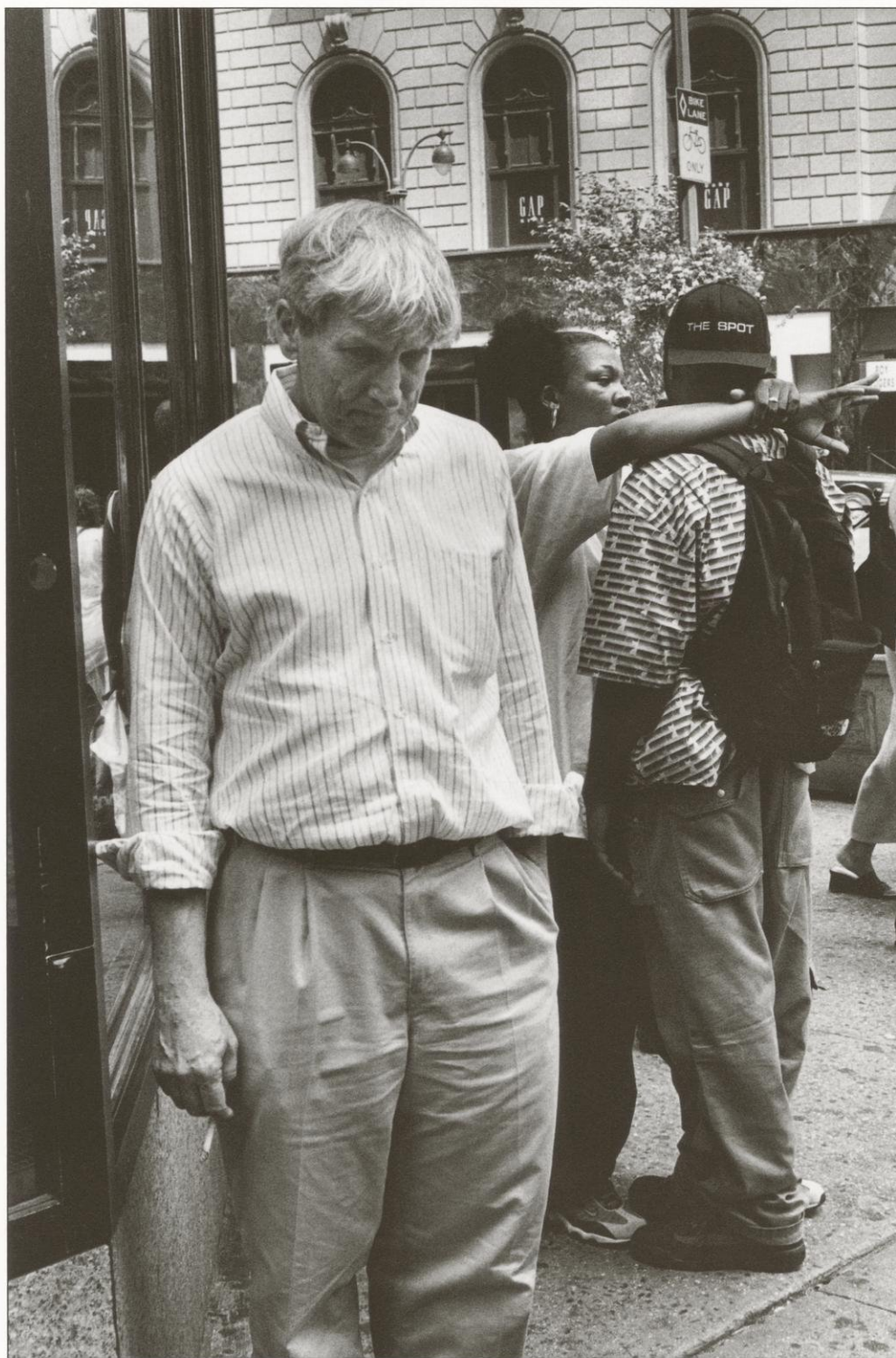


9. *Cigarette Break (Bad Boy)*, Greenwich Village, New York City, 2000



10. *Cigarette Break*, Times Square, New York City, 2003





11. *Cigarette Break*, New York City, 2000



12. *Cigarette Break*, New York City, 1999





13. *Cigarette Break*, New York City, 1999





14. *Cigarette Break*, Fifth Avenue, New York City, 2003



15. *Bleeker Street at the Bowery, New York City, 1998*



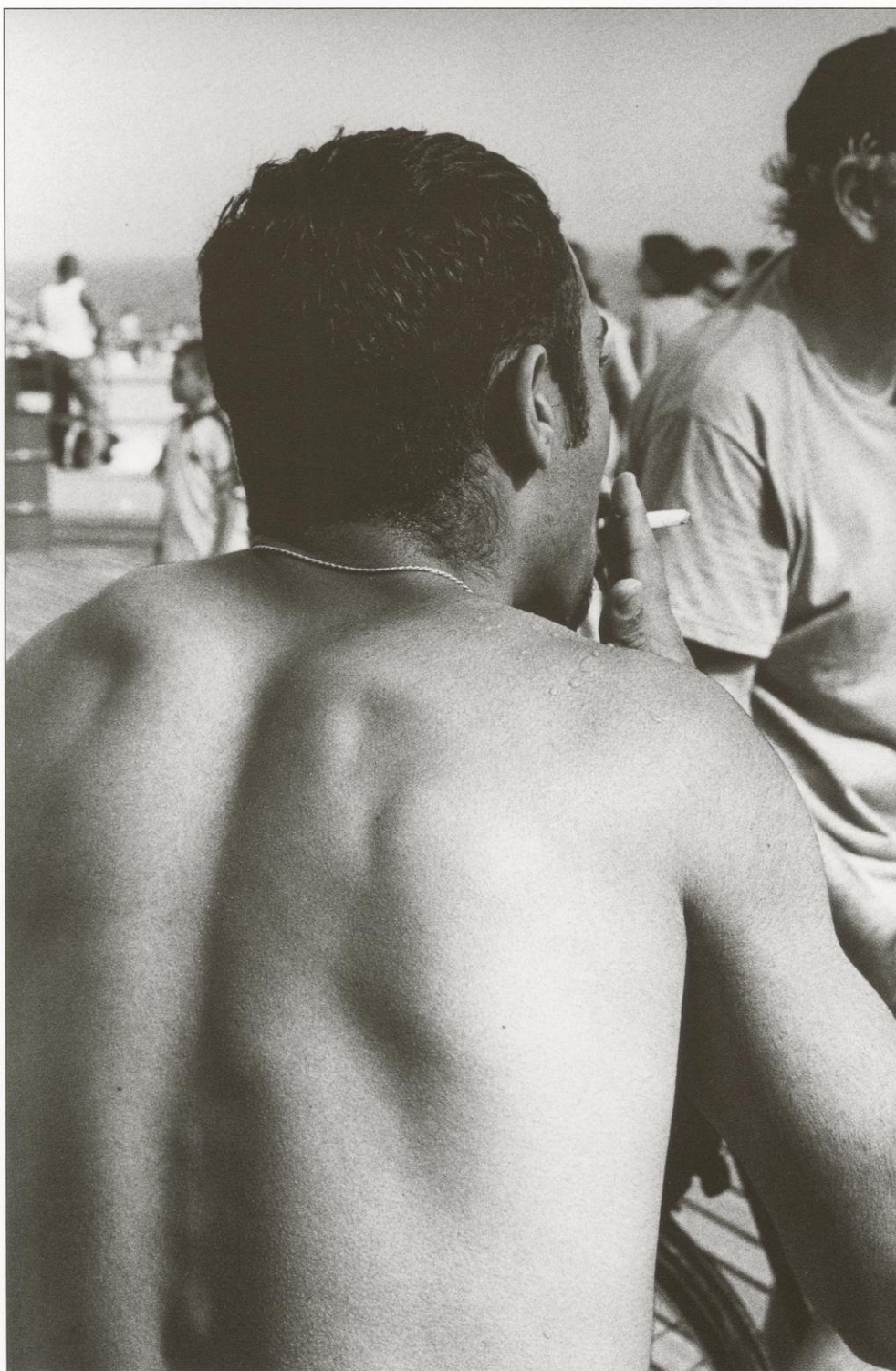


16. *Cigarette Break*, New York City, 2002



17. *Cigarette Break*, SoHo, New York City, 2002





18. *Cigarette Break*, Coney Island, Brooklyn, 2000





19. *Cigarette Break*, New York City, 1999



20. *Cigarette Break*, SoHo, New York City, 2001





21. *West Houston Street, New York City, 1991*



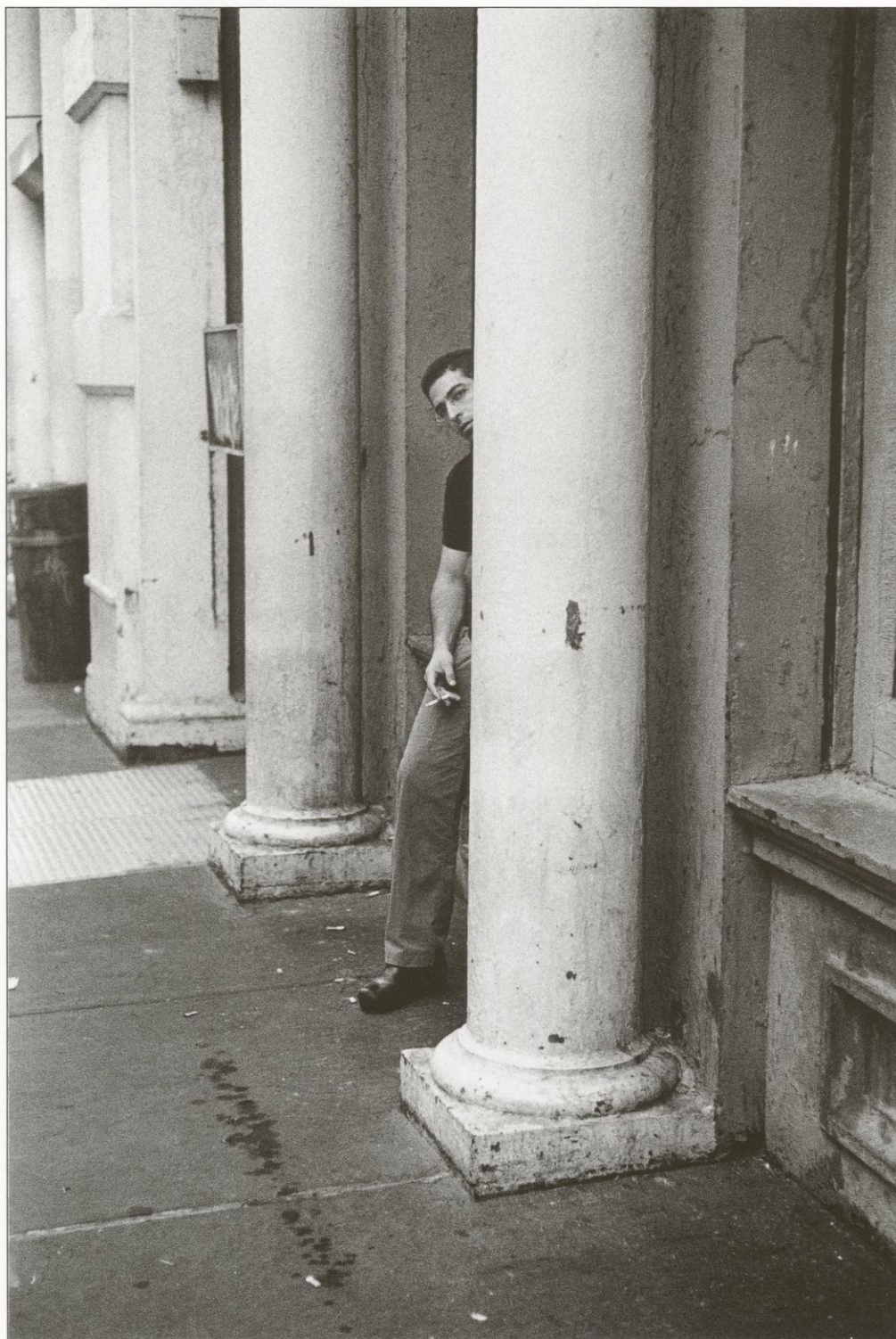


22. *Man with Cigarette*, Greenwich Village, New York City, 1991





23. *Cigarette Break*, New York City, 1999



24. *Cigarette Break*, SoHo, New York City, 2001



# SLEEPERS



25. *Café Sleeper*, Astor Place, New York City, 2003



26. *Stairwell*, Penn Station, New York City, 1993





27. *Sleeper*, New York City, 1997





28. *Sleeping Woman with Parasol*, St. Mark's Churchyard, New York City, 1998





29. New York City, 1999



30. *Soul Mates on Mercer Street, New York City, 1995*





31. *Sidewalk Sleeper*, New York City, 1998



32. *Avenue A Café*, New York City, 1997





33. *Sleeper*, Coney Island, Brooklyn, New York, 2002

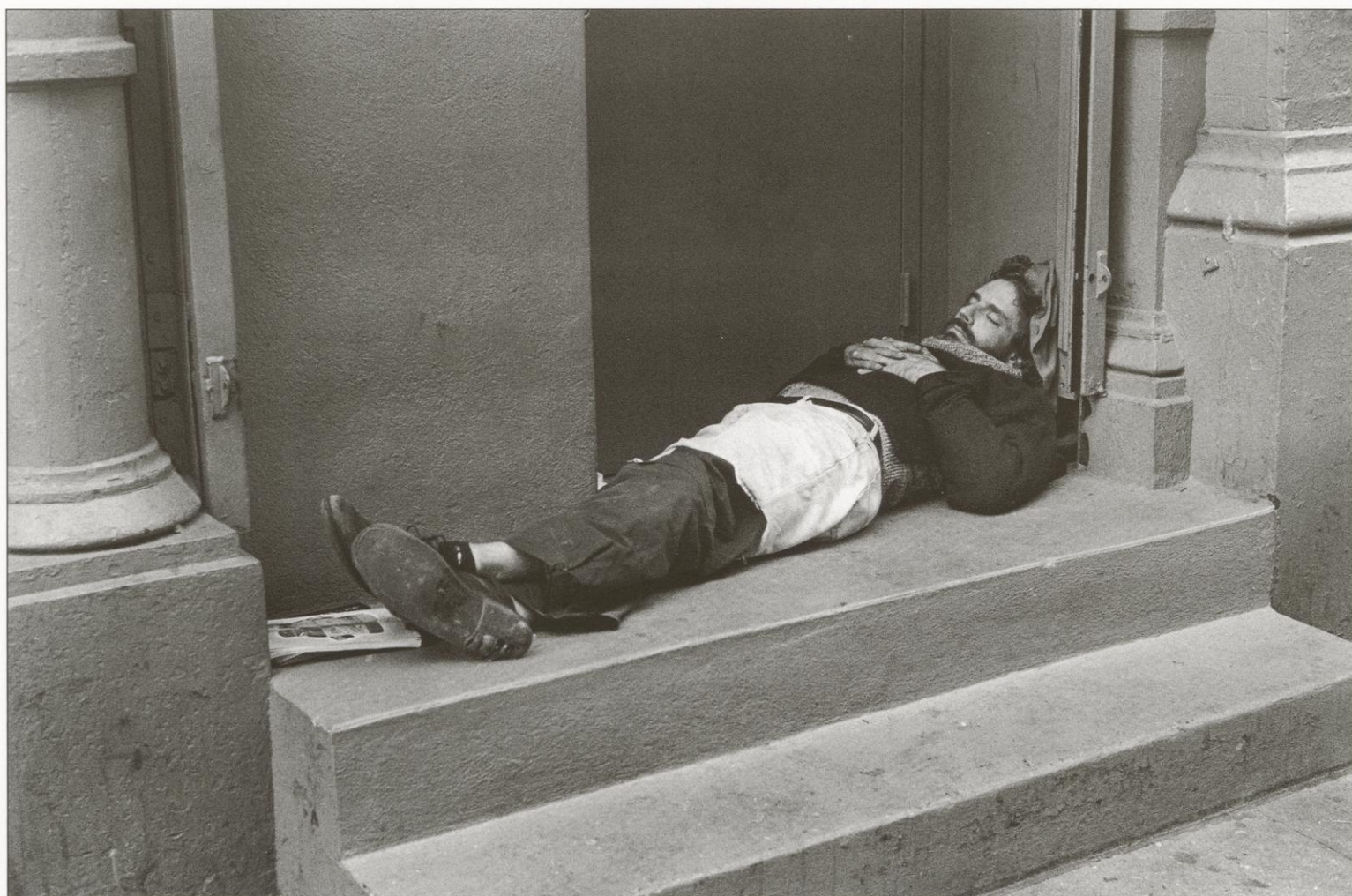


34. *Sleeping Woman*, Subway Platform, Brooklyn, New York, 1999





35. *Pavement Dweller*, New York City, 1997



36. *Doorway Sleeper*, New York City, 2003





37. *Subway Sleeper*, New York City, 1998



38. Homeless Person, New York City, 1999





39. *Untitled*, Brooklyn, New York, 1992



40. *Subway Sleepers*, New York City, 2003





41. *Pavement Dweller*, New York City, 1998





42. *Man in Wheelchair*, New York City, 1997





43. *Sleeping Woman*, Subway Train, New York City, 1998





44. *Sleeping Youth with Tulips*, New York City, 1997





45. *Sleeper*, New York City, 1997







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