

MOYRA DAVEY

Newsstands



Newsstand #3, 1994.



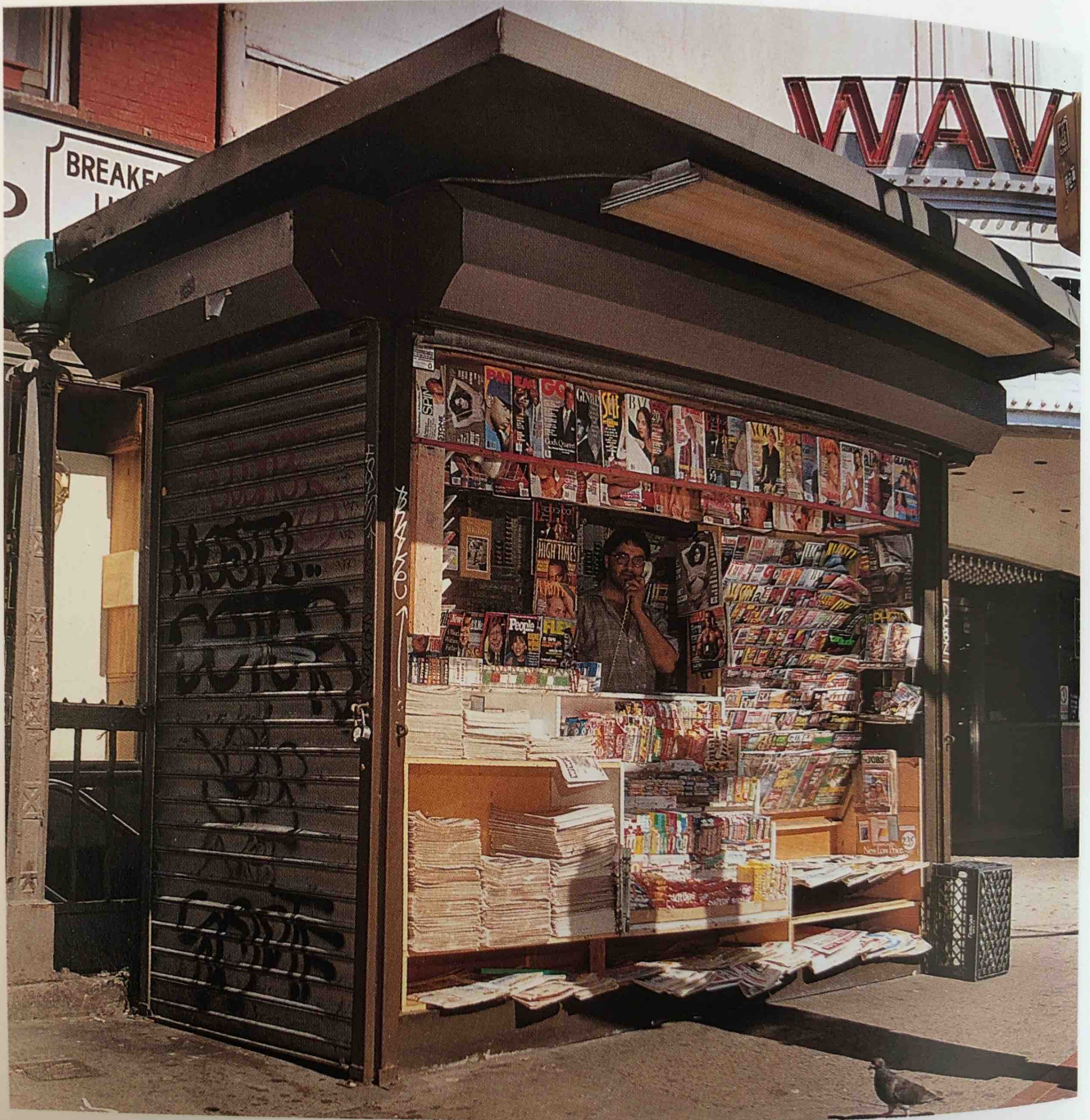
Newsstand #22, 1994.



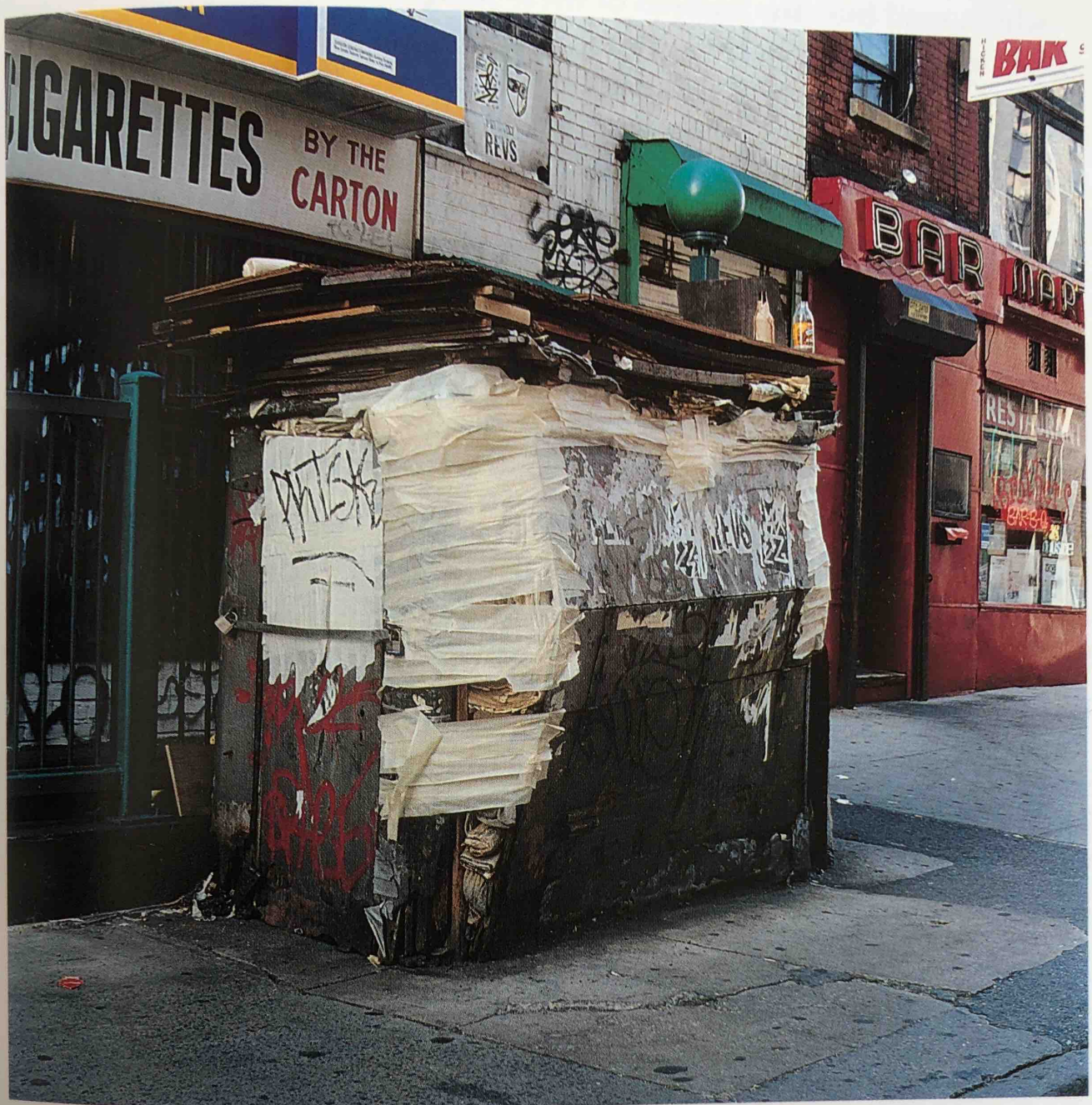
Newsstand #14, 1994.



Newsstand #16, 1994.



Newsstand #13, 1994.



Newsstand #1, 1994.

A major contradiction in the history of photography is that a discipline such as taxonomic photography, which often aims for the cool, distanced, and objective recording of architectural structures is invariably usurped by the sociological readings which steal into any analysis of these images.

Moyra Davey's photographs of newsstands in New York City in 1994 were taken with this disparity in mind. Like other anthropologically-influenced photographers, Davey attempts to capture and record the societies, objects, or structures which are assumed to be on an extinction list. Like photography itself—which is destined to be conditioned and transplanted by digitized imagery—the newsstands she has chronicled may mutate or lose their function, as news services become accessible from home on the information highway.

Yet any determinist notion that these ad hoc, urban structures are relics that properly belong to the last century, or are remnants of the Mechanical Age, ignores the culture behind them, the convenience, pleasure, and sustenance they provide—how they enliven the commuter's daily journey with such ephemera as lottery tickets, horoscopes, and racing forms, and provide relief for those in need of cigarettes, a snack, soda, or aspirin on the run. Foot-hold businesses—like taxi-driving or deli-groceries—generally run by immigrant groups, these newsstands and the life within them provide a mirror-image of the city's varied cultural configuration and an example, in miniature, of the ownership and monopoly structure of New York's commercial life.

These clear, detailed photographs don't put a gloss on the disorderly. Instead, they reinvigorate an objective style by exposing it to the quotidian.

—Jackie McAllister