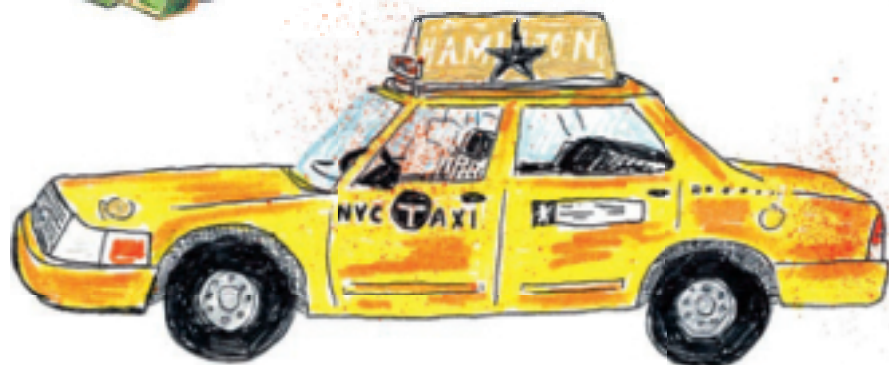


# NYC STOREFRONTS



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ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE BIG APPLE'S  
BEST-LOVED SPOTS

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AKA NEW YORK NICO

PRESTEL

Munich • London • New York

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# FOREWORD

NICOLAS HELLER AKA NEW YORK NICO



New York is the greatest city on earth. Hands down, no contest. What sets it apart from any other city? Simple. It's the people and the small businesses. Where else will you find specialty shops like Chess Forum, Casey Rubber Stamps, or Punjabi Deli? Sure, there might be a few places in other cities that sell similar things, but they don't have the same types of individuals running them that we have here.

As a filmmaker, I travel around the city every day meeting exciting New Yorkers and highlighting small, local businesses on Instagram. The most fascinating people I have ever met are shop owners—like Big Mike, who runs Astor Place Hairstylists, or Jamal, who runs Village Revival Records. These are so much more than just stores to me. They are spots where I can go and hang out with good people.

Joel Holland's illustrations capture these storefronts beautifully. His style is so unique, and I always look forward to seeing new pieces from him. More importantly, the owners of the places he draws take pride in these depictions. Many of my favorite businesses have his illustrations front and center when you walk in. In fact, Joel and I first met when I recommended that he draw Artful Posters on Bleecker Street to help its owners promote the store. They were thrilled with the result (see page 120 of this book).

There are lots of amazing places included here, and it feels impossible to choose a personal favorite. But pro tip: order the New York Nico Special at La Bonbonniere.

With NYC rents soaring, it is so important to keep supporting these establishments. If New York loses its local butchers, bakeries, record stores, barber shops, etcetera, then it might as well be any other city.

*Nicolas Heller is a filmmaker who was born and raised in NYC. Known as the "unofficial talent scout of New York City," he uses his popular Instagram account (@newyorknico) to highlight charismatic citizens, including local business owners. He also spearheads fundraising campaigns to help keep them in operation. His first book, New York Nico's Guide to NYC, was published in 2024.*

# INTRODUCTiON



My family moved into a new apartment on March 13, 2020—during the same week that New York City shut down due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The move had excited me for many reasons, despite it being only two blocks (long blocks!) west of our old place. We'd now be closer to my daughter's school, some friends, Ralph's Ices, Mohammed's fruit stand, convenient bus stops, the Epiphany Library, and family too. But with quarantines and closures, all that turned moot.

This is when I decided to start drawing storefronts. It began mostly as a way for me to visit, in some small way, my favorite places and businesses—like a visual love letter. It was my method of grabbing tight to New York and squeezing. Hard.

Economy Candy on Rivington Street (open since 1937!) was the first of these illustrations. I drew it for my two daughters as a rain check for not being able to go there. It proved sufficient ... though my personal stash of Swedish Fish did seem to disappear rather quickly, until they started shipping again.

The project took on new meaning for me after news broke that an East Village staple, Gem Spa—maker of the best egg creams and the only place around to buy Hav-a-Hank bandannas—was closing. After surviving a yearslong battle with their landlord, they simply couldn't win the war against the coronavirus. I drew the store and posted it to Instagram along with my rendering of Economy Candy, and the immediate enthusiastic response compelled me to continue. It was gratifying and, more importantly, gave me a way to send good vibes to the businesses themselves. Maybe it would even help drive customers to them.

During this process, George Floyd was murdered at the hands of the police, and people took to the streets. Meanwhile, Asian Americans were being targeted and senselessly attacked, and New Yorkers

rallied in support. Restaurants reopened, closed again, then opened outdoor seating, then closed portions of indoor seating—and on and on. Some places closed for good. Some merged with other establishments. Some relocated.

The determination of what to illustrate started as mine, but over time family, friends, and people online began suggesting places to draw too. I haven't intentionally focused on locations that are off the beaten path, but sort of (it's Manhattan; there is no unbeaten path here). They are drawings of storefronts that I treasure: the shops I see while riding the southbound M9 bus to play basketball on Mondays. Or the infinite stores seen during Chinatown walks.

This book isn't meant to capture every storefront that keeps New York moving. These are just a few of the places that act like glue, holding a seemingly endless number of different communities together as one great city. Some of these establishments have recently closed, but I wanted to draw them anyhow. Others may have shuttered or moved since *NYC Storefronts* was published, so make sure you double-check before heading out somewhere.

Whether your favorite spot is included here or not, hopefully you will be inspired to visit the places that make New York such a great place to live or visit. And if you're too busy, you can always order takeout.

Go for a walk. Ride the bus. Look up. And over. And keep going.

Peace,  
Joel Holland





## NOTE TO THE READER

New York is known for many things—among them, constant change. Care has been taken to provide current addresses for the storefronts in this book, but some may have since moved or closed. Certain illustrations depict places that have permanently closed. In these cases, the old address is provided, and the text notes that the business has shuttered. Other shops changed locations after the illustration was made, during the process of creating this book. For these, the old storefront is depicted, but the new address is provided to direct readers to the current location (to help keep it open there).

