

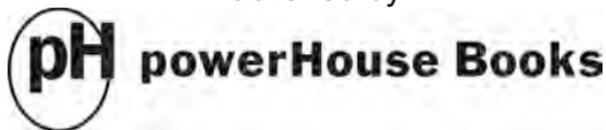
I Knew Jim Knew  
Jim Walrod  
Foreword by Andy Spade



# I KNEW JIM KNEW

By Jim Walrod

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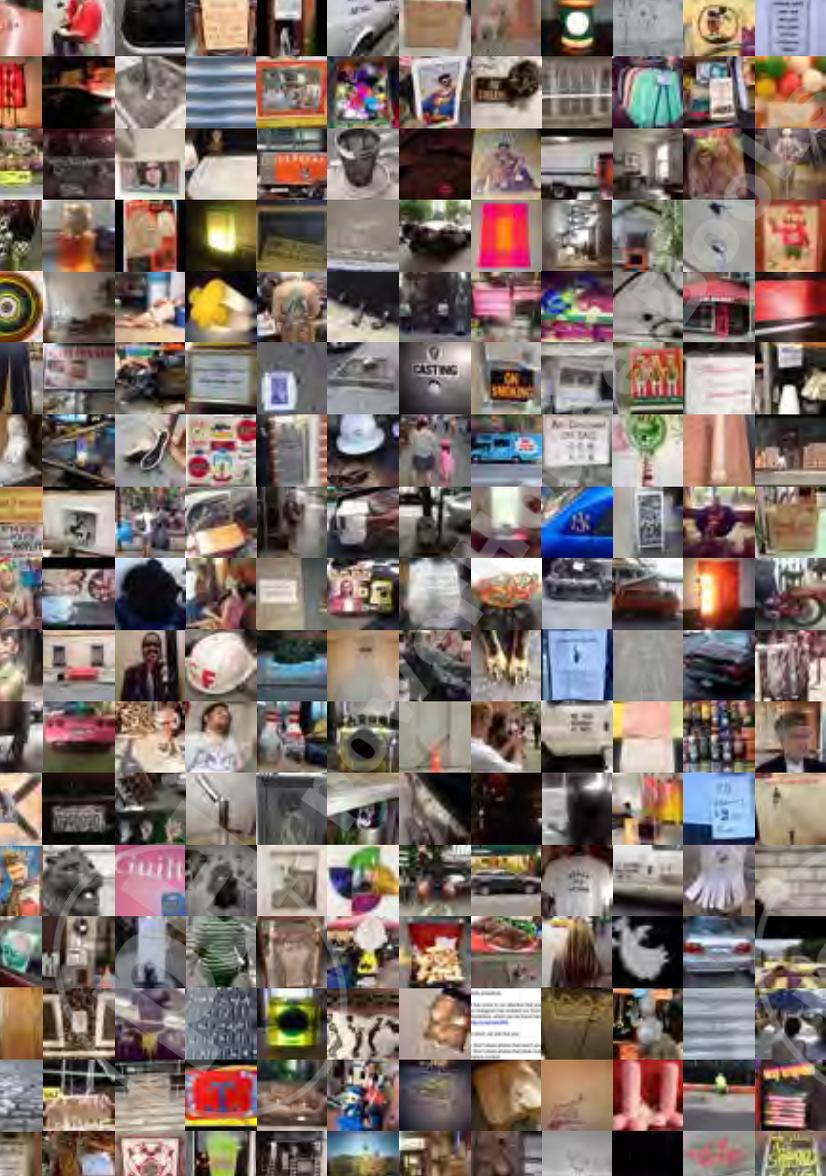
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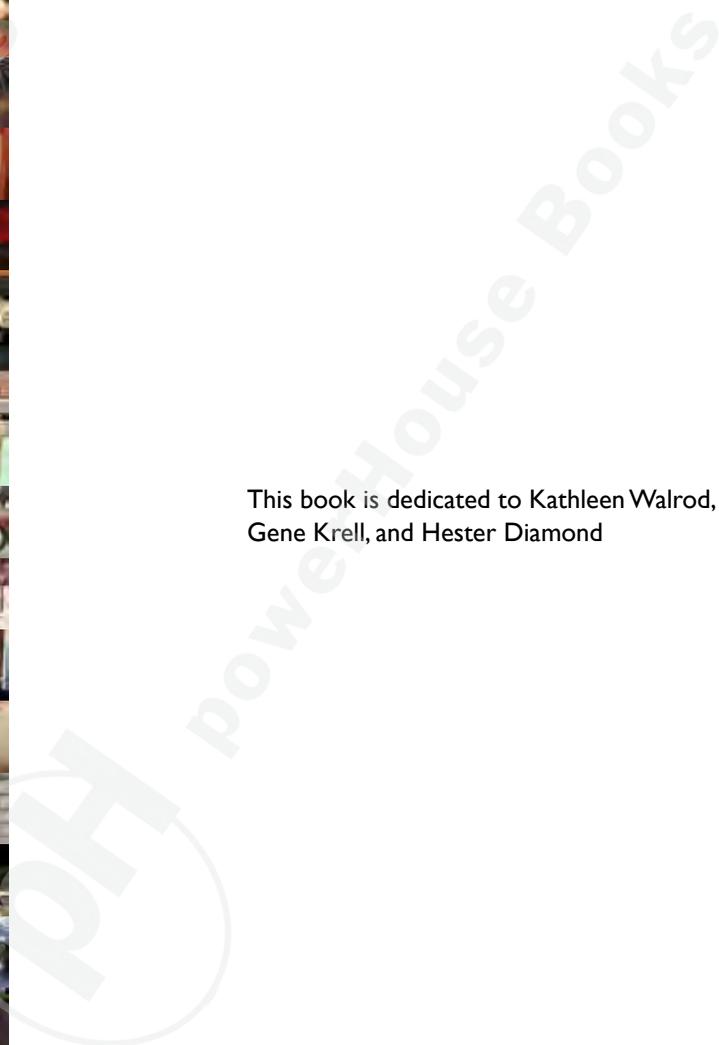
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This book is dedicated to Kathleen Walrod,  
Gene Krell, and Hester Diamond



Years ago I knew a little about what Jim knew via mutual friends but I didn't know a lot about Jim so I invited him to the Bowery Hotel to ask him some basic questions: Where are you from? What did your parents do? Any siblings?

I had a Bic pen and a yellow legal pad. Jim arrived in his signature jeans and matter-of-fact outerwear. I've always liked how Jim dressed. Not showy, not nothing—but in-between.

We sat down and ordered two Cokes.

Someone in the Bowery recognized Jim and came over to say hello. A discussion began. He was Jean-Michel Basquiat's first assistant, and of course Jim knew him. They talked about his legacy and something about lost paintings.

Apparently, Jim happened to run into someone who knew where they were.

They rambled on and on about Jean-Michel Basquiat, people, places, long-ago clubs, and I felt jealous.

Tangent after tangent, they recounted stories about old friends, art galleries gone bust, Patrick Cox, fashion, girls and guys they liked and disliked, graffiti, furniture, architecture, music, and more. I could not, giving my best effort, connect the dots.

Another person walked up to say hello to Jim. A woman whom I think was also involved in saving Jean-Michel Basquiat's beautiful work from the hedge-fund monsters.

More people arrived. I put my pen and paper down and listened.

That is what Jim knew that day. Next time I see him it will be something completely different, yet equally fascinating.

Lately I've been trying to figure out how my great interest in unusual information became so important to me in my life and career and how it all started and I can trace it back to two moments, one when I was 13 years old and another a few years later:

One day my friends and I were heading up to Playland on 42nd Street, back when Times Square was at its best. Playland, for any of you who grew up in New York City in the 1970s, was exactly that, a playland for teenagers filled with fake IDs, pinball machines, and 007 and Tiger knives. On this one night instead of going to 33rd Street on the PATH train and walking up to 42nd Street my friend Gerard Corso and I split off from the group and got off on 14th Street I'd read about a club in *Hit Parader* and *Creem* magazines called Max's Kansas City and knew it was somewhere near the 14th Street stop. After walking around for about 20 minutes we found it. As crazy as it now seems for a pair of 13-year-olds to do, we just walked right in the door and straight to the bar. I didn't know what we were going to do there and the two of us only had \$10 between us. Gerard ordered a Michelob, which, to our shock, the bartender gave him. As I glanced

around the room, which looked exactly like any of the steakhouses that my mother and father had taken me to, I noticed there were people that looked a lot different, with spiky hair, leather jackets and generally scary-looking. I could hear short spurts of electronic music from the jukebox and only later realized it was "Warm Leatherette" by The Normal.

Although I was scared I've never felt more at home in any place in my life. I'd read about punk but hadn't really ever heard a punk record. All I knew was that it was really scary and something that I wasn't supposed to like, but did. The second I discovered it I started studying the pages of magazines like *Hit Parader* and *Rock Scene* and reading Lisa Robinson and Wayne County's articles about Max's.

As we stood there, my friend drinking his beer, both of us trying to act like adults, a bouncer walked up and asked us what two kids were doing there and to put the beer down! A guy with a black leather motorcycle jacket, spiky red hair, and a chain with a lock around his neck stepped up and said, "Leave them alone, they're just listening to the jukebox." It was Cheetah Chrome from the Dead Boys, I

had seen pictures of him in my magazines! The bouncer said we were just kids and that we couldn't be drinking. Cheetah said that the beer was his, and with that I said, "Yeah it's my Uncle Cheetah's." The bouncer said, "Your Uncle Cheetah?" "Yeah," I replied. I looked at Cheetah, who looked at me with shock, trying to figure out how a little kid knew who he was. As the bouncer backed off and left, Cheetah asked me how I knew who he was and I said, "Your name is Cheetah Chrome, you're in the Dead Boys, I've read about you, you live in the Chelsea Hotel right? You're from Ohio. You used to be in Rocket From the Tombs with the guys from Pere Ubu." He just looked at me and Gerard and said, "Jesus you two are little freaks," and we got to stand at the bar and talk to him for another 20 minutes before we left to go meet up with our friends on 42nd Street.

A few years later I was walking out of Bloomingdale's after applying for a job there as a stock boy, when I ran into Andy Warhol and his assistant Benjamin Liu. I knew all about them from my magazines and we got to talking about a number of things and I told them I was looking for a job. We walked by Fiorucci, the groundbreaking design/

lifestyle/concept store which was right next door, and naturally I'd read all about that as well and knew the great influence it had, especially with its promotion of Memphis and anti-design for an American audience. Not surprisingly Andy knew everyone there and as we walked by he told me to knock on the window and point to him so he could acknowledge he knew me and was essentially vouching for me. I was immediately hired, leading to an immersion in the design, music, and nightlife scenes, giving me an education like no other and an introduction to some of the world's most important people in those spheres.

Those were both defining moments in my introduction to New York and the rest of my life, and the first times I realized the power of information which I thought was only important to me. Hopefully some of the "useless" information in this book will open some doors for you.

Jim Walrod

10 The strange two-story building at 496 Broome Street in SoHo was John Lennon and Yoko Ono's downtown home. If you climb on the railing and peek in the window you can still see their belongings.



11 There is a full-size replica Sopwith Camel fighter biplane, complete with runway, on the roof of 77 Water Street in Lower Manhattan.

It was put there by the building's owner in 1969 to amuse inhabitants of surrounding skyscrapers, notably the World Trade Center.



28 Salvador Dalí made a holographic portrait of Alice Cooper in 1973 titled *First Cylindric Chromo-Hologram Portrait of Alice Cooper's Brain*.



In 1999 Beastie Boy Mike D released a country record on vinyl exclusively for family and friends titled *Country Mike's Greatest Hits*. Bootleg versions have fetched up to \$400 online.

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68 Writer Glenn O'Brien is the underwear model for the inside cover of the Rolling Stones' album *Sticky Fingers*. Andy Warhol took the photograph.

Claes Oldenburg was a maintenance man and wallpaper hanger for the furniture design team of Estelle and Erwine Laverne.

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72 From 1962-1971 Sears hired actor, and serious art aficionado, Vincent Price to assemble collections of fine art to sell to the general public.

Simply called "The Vincent Price Collection of Fine Art," original works of the great masters—Rembrandt, Chagall, Picasso, Whistler, and more—as well as those of the best contemporary artists at the time were offered for sale from \$10 to \$3,000. When the program ended, more than 50,000 pieces of fine art passed through the collection.

Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns designed the window displays for Tiffany & Co. in 1956. The duo worked under the name Matson Jones Custom Display.

73



78 In 1999 Tom Sachs got his gallerist, Mary Boone, arrested for unlawful distribution of ammunition, possession of unlawful weapons, and resisting arrest.

Sachs landed her in trouble with his Alvar Aalto glass vase filled with live bullets, which were given away as party favors in Hermès-style airsick baggies, and a gun cabinet, called *Ace Boone Coon*, stocked with his signature homemade handguns.

In 1979 cartoon/graffiti-based artist Kenny Scharf had his first solo exhibition at Fiorucci titled "Fiorucci Celebrates the New Wave," and it included a performance by New Wave opera singer Klaus Nomi.

Inspired by Scharf's success, Jean-Michel Basquiat tried to get a similar deal, but showed up high for his big interview and was asked to leave the store after a series of unfortunate events.

79



92 Rob Zombie was the first delivery guy for Two Boots pizzeria, which opened in New York City in 1987.



It was announced in 1985 that Michael Graves would design an addition to the Whitney Museum of American Art. The original building would be the “modern” building of his post-modern scheme. The idea was scrapped in 1989 due to fierce museum trustee opposition.

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I Knew Jim Knew

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