

PHOTO BOOTH

"I'M AN OUTSIDER ON THE INSIDE": AN INTERVIEW WITH BRUCE DAVIDSON

By Chris Wiley June 13, 2019

For more than six decades, Davidson has specialized in photographing people at society's fringes. Photograph by Jonno Rattman for The New Yorker

The photographer Bruce Davidson, who is eighty-five years old, has lived with his wife, Emily, in a rambling apartment on the Upper West Side for the past five decades. It is appointed with broken-in chairs and couches, an impressive folk-art collection, and has an extra bedroom, to accommodate visits from their four grandchildren. A bathroom has been transformed into a darkroom, complete with a custom-made Leitz enlarger and a fibre print washer installed in the claw-foot tub. An archive of Davidson's prints and negatives are housed throughout the apartment in floor-to-ceiling shelving.



Davidson's archive in the apartment he shares with his wife, on the Upper West Side.
Photograph by Jonno Rattman for The New Yorker

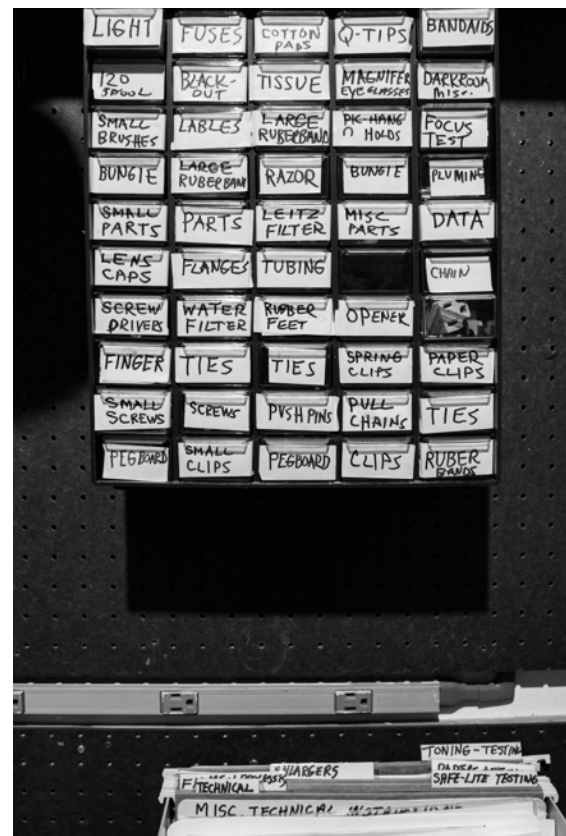


One of two enlargers in Davidson's darkroom, which occupies one of the apartment's bathrooms.
Photograph by Jonno Rattman for The New Yorker

On a recent day, over tea and pistachio cake, Davidson sat down with me to reflect on his long and remarkable career, which is the subject of an exhibition on view through the end of this week at Howard Greenberg Gallery, in Manhattan. For more than six decades, Davidson has specialized in photographing people at society's fringes: the lonely widow of a minor impressionist painter in Paris; a troupe of travelling circus performers; a teen-age gang in Brooklyn; the residents of a blighted block in East Harlem. Born in Illinois, Davidson grew up in Oak Park, outside of Chicago, and became interested in photography as a boy. He joined the Magnum photo agency in 1958. In 1961, having read about the attacks on the first Freedom Rider buses, he travelled south and joined the civil-rights protesters on the ride from Montgomery, Alabama, to Jackson, Mississippi.



35-mm.-film-developing cannisters in Davidson's darkroom.
Photograph by Jonno Rattman for The New Yorker



Darkroom supplies.
Photograph by Jonno Rattman for The New Yorker

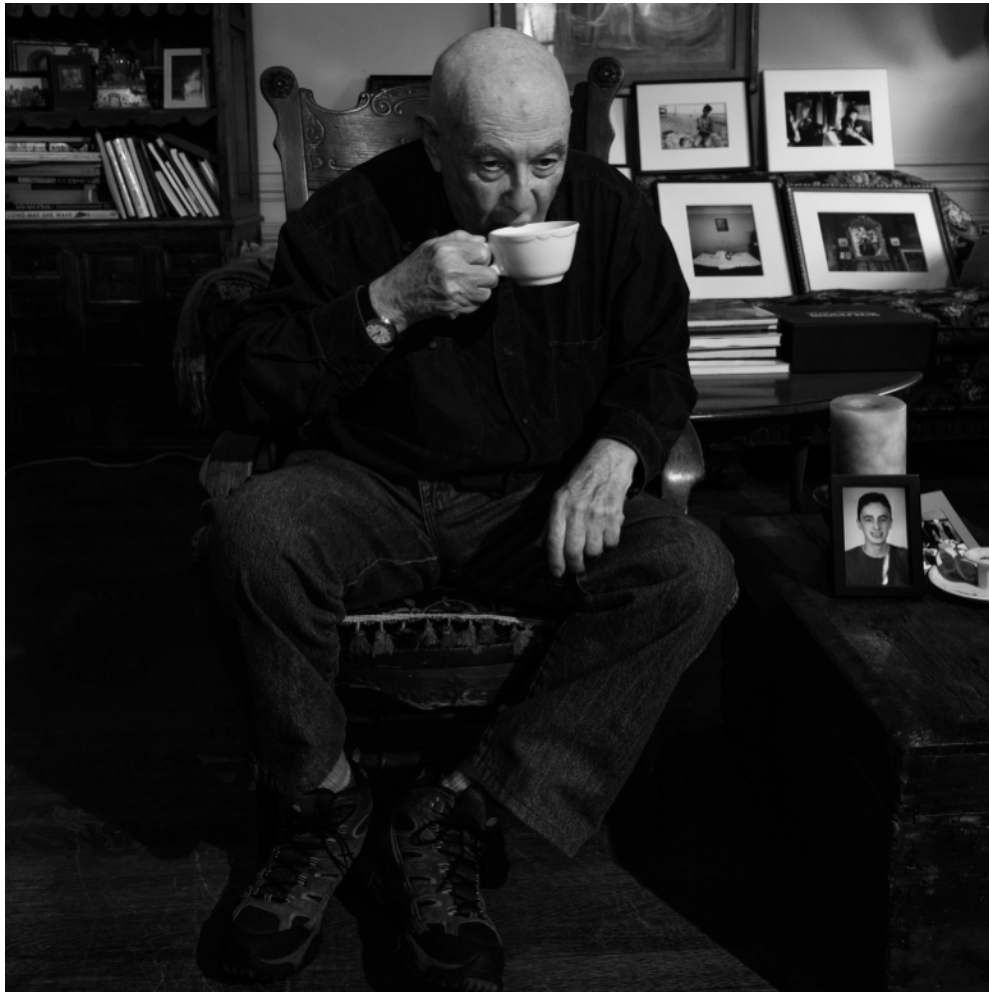


The sink in Davidson's darkroom.
Photograph by Jonno Rattman for The New Yorker



A fibre print washer occupies the bathroom's claw-foot tub.
Photograph by Jonno Rattman for The New Yorker

Davidson's civil-rights work, which he pursued for five years, produced some of the most hopeful photographs of the Selma-to-Montgomery marches, as well as an indelible record of the violent repression that the civil-rights protests faced. It also marked Davidson's political awakening as a photographer. In the late nineteen-sixties, he worked with the Metro North Association, an activist organization, to earn the trust of the East Harlem community he documented in his "East 100th Street" series. The Association later used Davidson's images to advocate for neighborhood-revitalization projects. At one point in our conversation, I asked Davidson if he considered his own work to be a kind of activism, in the same lineage of an artist like Ben Shahn, who advocated for workers' rights through his murals before signing up to photograph impoverished farmers as a part of the Depression-era Resettlement Administration (later the Farm Security Administration), or Davidson's contemporary Danny Lyon, who photographed the civil-rights movement as a part of his involvement with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. But Davidson insists that he is less an activist or an intellectual than an observer, pure and simple. His desire is to see; his methods are instinctive. He told me, "I'm a photographer. I take pictures."



Davidson drinks tea in his favorite chair beside photographs from his projects "Brooklyn Gang" and "East 100th Street."

Photograph by Jonno Rattman for The New Yorker

Let's start at the beginning. How did you become a photographer?

Well, Oak Park has alleys, and alleys have garages, and garages have hoops. And I was waiting one day to get into a basketball game—we used to play Donkey—and a friend of mine said, "You want to see developing in my basement?" And I said, "What is that?" So I went into this dark, Midwestern, dank basement, and there was a red light, and he put in a piece of paper and flashed the light and then put it in the water and the image came up. And that shock of seeing something after nothing sustained me. I ran home to ask my mother if she could empty our jelly closet so that I could make a Bruce Davidson photo shop. And that was the beginning of my encounter with photography.



"Time of Change (young man with 'Vote' painted on his forehead walking in the Selma March, Selma, Alabama)," 1965. Photograph by Bruce Davidson / Magnum / Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery

And you started taking pictures immediately?

Yes. I used to go down to a place called Maxwell Street in Chicago when I was fourteen. And my mother would let me go by myself, provided I was back by dark. My mother was a single parent for many years, but then she remarried, and her new husband gave me an expensive camera that was issued to him because he was a naval officer, a big Kodak Medalist. So I would go down to Maxwell Street. That was exciting to me. The junk dealers and hustlers, and even the Pentecostal Church.

I also apprenticed with a commercial photographer in town, Mr. Cox—he was Southern, always had a cigar in his mouth—and he taught me how to make dye-transfer prints. He was a press photographer, and he would take me along for the engagement pictures. He showed me how to work with a Rolleiflex and a flash, and later he made a strobe for me.

Life is made up of accidents. When my mother remarried, we moved into a Tudor house across the street from the forest preserves. I would go into the woods and take pictures. And I took a picture of some baby owls, and I submitted it to a Kodak high-school competition and won.



Martin Luther King, Jr., at a press conference, declaring the Freedom Rides will continue. John Lewis (with bandage) was beaten by the K.K.K. earlier on in Montgomery, Alabama, 1961.
 Photograph by Bruce Davidson / Magnum

You attended college at the Rochester Institute of Technology, and then began graduate studies at Yale. But after a term there you were drafted into the Army, and you became a military photographer. How did that happen?

I was in Fort Huachuca, in Arizona. I'd submitted some pictures I'd taken of the Yale football team to Life, and they ran the pictures. And then I was at the barracks, sand blowing through, and the captain told me, "We came from the barbershop. We saw Life magazine. Put away that mop. You're photographing the general now, sir."

Later, I was sent to Paris. There was a security lab there, where an experimental heart operation was being performed, and they wanted documentation of that. I was there for eleven months or so.

And that was when you made the "Widow of Montmartre."

Yes, I was introduced to a French soldier who liked painting—he was an artist, actually. And he said, "There's a widow you should visit—she's very interesting. She's 92. She is the widow of Leon Fauchet, an Impressionist painter. And she lives alone on top of this garret, all the way up eight flights of stairs." So he introduced me to the Widow of Montmartre. And if you look through the contact sheets you can see how close a relationship we had with her. She took me to a market, and the people in the market would make fun of her with this young chap.



"East 100th Street," 1966-68.

Photograph by Bruce Davidson / Magnum / Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery

While in Paris, you got to the Magnum agency.

Well, I wanted to meet Henri Cartier-Bresson [the head of Magnum at the time] and show him my pictures. And they said, "He's very busy. Come back next week." So I returned the next week, and he was there, and he looked at my pictures and pointed out certain ones that he thought were right.

And then, in 1957, I left the Army and returned to New York to work for Life as a freelancer. And one day I was on the Fifth Avenue bus and I saw Cartier-Bresson walking down the sidewalk. I jumped off the bus, tapped him on the shoulder—it's New York, anything can happen. And he said, "Come on upstairs. I want you to meet some people at Magnum." And that was the beginning.

We had a picture librarian at Magnum who happened to be an amateur trapeze artist. And he took me aside, and he said, "There's a circus in town that has a white tent. You won't find that anyplace else—you'll be able to take pictures in this tent, which is light." So I took a bus to New Jersey and I met Jimmy Armstrong, the clown from my circus series. That was the first encounter.



"The Dwarf (with cigarette and flowers)," 1958.
 Photograph by Bruce Davidson / Magnum / Courtesy
 Howard Greenberg Gallery



"Brooklyn Gang (young man standing under awning)," 1959.
 Photograph by Bruce Davidson / Magnum / Courtesy

The first assignments that you gave yourself were already focussed on people who were marginalized from society, or weren't fully integrated. What was it that they drew you to those kinds of subjects?

I'm an outsider on the inside. I am better seeing on the dark side of things than I am on the light. I think I'm also kind of an explorer, and I need commitment in order to exercise the passion I might have for a particular series of pictures. I always said to myself, "My pictures begin the night before I arrive." Almost like a bullfighter, I would prepare myself emotionally to go into a world that's somewhat painful. In the case of my "East 100th Street" project, it took two years before I felt, I've finished looking here. I have to look someplace else.



"Subway," New York City, 1980.
 Photograph by Bruce Davidson / Magnum



"Subway," New York City, 1980.
 Photograph by Bruce Davidson / Magnum

With the “East 100th” work especially, but for many of your projects, it does seem like it was very painful to see the things that you saw and to document the things that you documented. How did you deal with that?

Well, you know, I was young. And in the case of the civil-rights movement it took five years before I understood what I was looking at. I was not born understanding how important those marches were, and how violent they could be. I was there to see, to look.



“Brooklyn Gang (boys on the boardwalk),” 1959.
Photograph by Bruce Davidson / Magnum / Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery

Did you ever feel like you were in danger when you were doing the civil-rights work?

Oh, yeah. We didn’t know what was going on. For instance, I was on a bus once. The bus was full of youths singing. But we didn’t know who was in the bushes alongside the bus. Because it was a rural highway, with lots of trees. There could very easily have been a sniper. We were afraid.

I also went to a Ku Klux Klan meeting once, and drove my car too close to their bonfire. I wanted a good view. And they said, over the loudspeaker, “New York plates, you’re too close to the fire!” I knew the next thing would be somebody coming over to question me—“Are you an agitator?” So I got out of there as fast as I could.



"Wales, Great Britain," 1965.
Photograph by Bruce Davidson / Magnum

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"Time of Change," 1963.

Photograph by Bruce Davidson / Magnum / Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery

But with your work you were also doing politics.

If you wake up in the morning, you're making a political statement.

Did you feel like the "100th Street" photographs were an extension of your work in the civil-rights movement?

Definitely.



"Widow of Montmartre," 1956.

Photograph by Bruce Davidson / Magnum / Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery

Would you have thought to do that kind of work in Harlem if you hadn't seen what happened in the South?

I think I was sensitized. I was humble in the face of people's lives. It was the Citizens Committee [at the Metro North Association] that allowed me to photograph in East Harlem. I was allowed to enter homes on a Hundredth Street, night and day. But at first they said, "Photographers come through our neighborhood all the time and take pictures and nothing changes and we don't even get a picture." And I said, "I work a little differently. I work more eye-to-eye. If you allow me to make one photograph to show you, to present to you, then I will go along with your decision." So that's what I did. They assigned me an escort, José Rosa, a young activist. So he would take me along, and I said, "I'd like to make a picture of a family of ten." And they let me through.

There's one photograph I took of two children on a fire escape. At first, the mother saw me taking pictures and took the kids back in. I counted the number of stairs and went up and knocked on her door. And she said, "If you take a picture of my children cleaned up, I'll let you take them when they're in the window." And that's what I did.



"Time of Change (Freedom Riders)," 1961.

Photograph by Bruce Davidson / Magnum / Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery

For your "Brooklyn Gang" series, I remember you saying, in an interview, that you found out where to find the gangs were because you read about one of their rumbles in the newspaper.

Yeah, in the Daily News. I knew where they were so I went there, and, as I remember, I brought some rolls of color film with me and took some pictures of kids with bandages.

What was it that compelled you to want to photograph them?

I think I was drawn to their life—their depression, their anger. I fit right into that. I was also aware that things could change for them and change for me, because I wasn't that much older. I was twenty-nine. But I knew those emotions. The fact that they were so needy in seeing themselves.

The first day I was there, the gang leader said, "There's a great view on this roof. I'll take you up. I said to myself, "If I go with him, he's gonna toss me off." It happened in "West Side Story," why wouldn't it happen to me? But I knew if I didn't go, they wouldn't respect me. So I went. It actually was good views.

You were friends with Diane Arbus. Do you think that your photographs, particularly of the circus, influenced Arbus at all?

Well, she used to say that she was better when people were looking at the camera. And I was better when they weren't.

You photographed outsiders, she photographed outsiders. But when she photographed them, to me, at least, it always seemed like she was photographing herself. And you weren't, I assume?

I was looking for myself. I just couldn't find him. I think that's what drove me on.



Fourth of July fireworks, Coney Island, New York City, 1962.
Photograph by Bruce Davidson / Magnum

Chris Wiley is an artist and a contributing editor at Frieze magazine.



HOWARD GREENBERG GALLERY

For Immediate Release

**BRUCE DAVIDSON
SUBJECT: CONTACT
Howard Greenberg Gallery
May 2 – June 15, 2019**



Brooklyn Gang, 1959 © Bruce Davidson, Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery/Magnum Photos

NEW YORK— BRUCE DAVIDSON, *SUBJECT: CONTACT* will present contact sheets in context with vintage prints from four seminal projects from the 1950s and '60s—*Circus*, *Brooklyn Gang*, *Time of Change*, and *East 100th Street* —illustrating Davidson's connection to some of the 20th century's most important social, cultural, and political moments. The exhibition will be on view at Howard Greenberg Gallery from May 2 through June 15, with an opening reception attended by the artist to be held on Thursday, May 2 from 6-8 p.m.

Poetic and profound, powerful and tender, Davidson's work derives its strength from the unique and long-lasting relationships he developed with his subjects, first gaining their trust, then allowing them to open up to him and his camera, before documenting their lives. "I stand to the side respectfully until I am invited in," Davidson has said. "There is a lot of patience and stillness in the making of a photograph."

Providing a rare glimpse into the photographer's immersive process, Davidson's contact sheets from each series will be presented together with a selection of related vintage prints, allowing viewers to see the connection between images in sequence as a work in progress and how the photographer made his final selections.

Davidson's deep personal engagement with his subjects sets his work apart. Through close proximity, he captured more than just an image; his contact sheets suggest something much

more emotive about the connections he made. SUBJECT: CONTACT bridges the divide between the personal and the professional: between Davidson's heart, his eye, the camera lens and the film. In revealing more of Davidson's creative process, the exhibition expands the viewer's appreciation of how his aesthetic and technical mastery resulted in the creation of some of the most powerful, personal images of his time.

1958: *Circus*

In the late 1950s, big top circuses were slowly disappearing across the American landscape as audiences began staying home to watch television. In 1958, at the age of 24, Davidson was encouraged to visit the mammoth three-ring circus at the Palisades Amusement Park, where he spent weeks immersing himself in the everyday world of its performers. Drawn to backstage candid experiences, he depicted with dignity the loneliness and triumphs of lion tamers, a human cannonball, and, most famously, Jimmy Armstrong, a dwarf clown, who would come to be a close friend of Davidson's. The photographs became the first installment of the series *Circus* (which he revisited in 1965 and 1967).

1959: *Brooklyn Gang*

During the summer of 1959, having read about street fighting in Brooklyn, Davidson went in search of a gang to photograph. He found a group of rebellious teenagers called "The Jokers" and became one of the first photographers to explore and ingratiate himself with the alienated youth culture they represented. Says Bob (Bengie) Powers, one of Davidson's subjects who reminisced about this work decades later, "He was interested in us. Just as people. And he was nice to us." Davidson stayed close, stayed for months, and captured this nuanced world of outsiders. "They allowed me to be with them and just hang out. I saw their reality," noted Davidson.

1961-1965: *Time of Change*

In 1961, Davidson joined a group of Freedom Riders on the bus ride to Mississippi, as much a participant as he was a photographer. His photographs from this critical moment in American history depict the struggle for justice and equality during a time of protests, marches and police violence as it unfolded around him. He captured the heart of the Civil Rights Movement through 1965 with photographs of the era from Harlem to Chicago and through the South including the crowds at the 1963 March on Washington, scenes from the 1965 Selma to Montgomery March, protesters in action, as well as quieter moments during turbulent times. Witnessed and shot at close range, Davidson has said: "I felt I was part of something, not apart from it."

1966-1968: *East 100th Street*

From 1966-68, Davidson spent two years documenting the neglected block, dire social conditions, and residents of East 100th Street in Manhattan. "My way of working," Davidson has said, "is to enter an unknown world, explore it over a period of time, and learn from it." To gain trust, he befriended 18-year-old José Rosa and made contact respectfully, by knocking on doors with Rosa and connecting with the East Harlem community before taking a single picture.

By meeting people eye-to-eye, his enduring portrait of a neglected subculture is suffused with humanity and depth.

Bruce Davidson

With a career spanning more than 60 years, Bruce Davidson is one of America's most distinguished photographers. Born in 1933 in Oak Park, Illinois, he began taking photographs at the age of ten. He attended Rochester Institute of Technology and Yale University, where he studied with artist Josef Albers and Alexey Brodovitch, best-known for his art direction at *Harper's Bazaar*. Davidson was later drafted into the army and stationed near Paris where he met Henri Cartier-Bresson, one of the founders of the renowned cooperative photography agency Magnum Photos.

After his military service, Davidson worked as a freelance photographer for *LIFE* magazine and in 1959 became a member of Magnum, producing photo essays that would leave a lasting mark. In 1963, the Museum of Modern Art in New York presented his early work in a solo exhibition, the first of several. Upon completion of a body of work on the American Civil Rights Movement, he received the first grant for photography from the National Endowment for the Arts. His work has been exhibited at major institutions including The Museum of Modern Art and the International Center of Photography in New York, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. He has received many grants, awards, and fellowships in addition to an honorary doctorate in fine arts from the Corcoran School of Art and Design. His photographs have appeared in numerous publications, and his work is the subject of many books. A new book, *Bruce Davidson: Unseen*, will be published by Steidl in 2020. He lives in New York City.

About Howard Greenberg Gallery

Since its inception over 35 years ago, Howard Greenberg Gallery has built a vast and ever-changing collection of some of the most important photographs in the medium. The Gallery's collection acts as a living history of photography, offering genres and styles from Pictorialism to Modernism, in addition to contemporary photography and images conceived for industry, advertising, and fashion. Howard Greenberg Gallery is located at 41 East 57th Street, Suite 1406, New York. The gallery exhibits at The ADAA Art Show, The Armory Show, The Photography Show presented by AIPAD, Photo London, Art Basel, Paris Photo, and Art Basel Miami Beach. For more information, contact 212-334-0010 or info@howardgreenberg.com or visit www.howardgreenberg.com.

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Bruce Davidson on His Photographs of Los Angeles

by Abby Aguirre on October 15, 2015



Bruce Davidson lives in a big, bright apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, with tall windows that light pours through, even on a rainy morning. Framed prints of his photographs are hanging on walls, stacked on couches, leaning against furniture on the floor. The eyes of Davidson's subjects peer out from behind glass panes. Here, a New York City subway rider in 1980. There, a Brooklyn gang member in 1959. The faces, caught in everyday, anonymous moments, command a visitor's gaze. They command the gaze of Davidson, too, who, on the way to give this visitor a tour of his workspace, stops before each image to make an introduction, as though we were all guests at a party.

"This is a self-portrait I made in '54, '55," Davidson says, pointing to a black-and-white image of himself, taken in the reflection of an ornate mirror. "This is Bobby," he says, motioning to a print of Bobby Powers, the leader of the Brooklyn street gang the Jokers. "This is the nature of Paris," he says, pausing before a black-and-white photograph of a plant. He then stops in front of an arresting, poster-size

print of a woman riding a train in 1980, wearing an uncertain expression and a red carnation in her hair. “This is from the ‘Subway’ series,” Davidson says. “It’s a dye-transfer color print.”

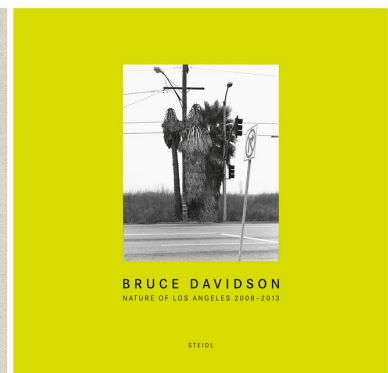
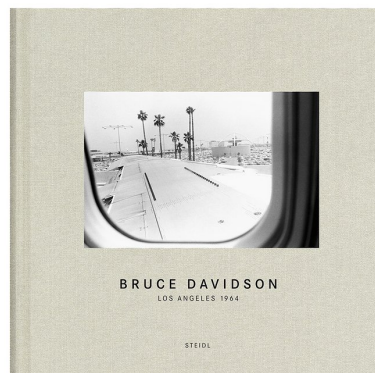
We walk down a long hall lined with yet more prints to his office, where two assistants are working and decades’ worth of contact sheets and negatives are stored in labeled boxes. (“East 100th Street.”) Standing here, amid all the labeled boxes, I am suddenly dumbstruck by something I already knew: the Freedom Riders, the subway riders, the residents of East 100th Street—one person took all those photographs.

It is easy to forget, now, how difficult it once was to get even a simple picture, how much technical skill was required, how much finality there was in the release of the shutter. To prepare himself to photograph his seminal “Subway” series, Davidson underwent a military fitness exercise program: “I knew I would need to train like an athlete to be physically able to carry my heavy camera equipment around in the subway for hours every day,” he has written. “Also, I thought that if anything was going to happen to me down there I wanted to be in good shape, or at least to believe that I was.” In his office, Davidson picks up a box labeled “Tools” and begins to riffle through the metal instruments inside. “I’m like a burglar,” he says. “A visual burglar.”

Davidson, 82, still burgles pictures, and though he no longer trails gang members, his process is no less painstaking, methodical, physical. From 2008 to 2013, he photographed the plants and trees of Los Angeles, a subject that had him hiking foothills at night, scouting boulder fields, and, at one point, rappelling down a ravine behind the Hollywood sign. To Davidson, the “Nature of Los Angeles” series is part of a triptych—with his studies of Central Park and the “Nature of Paris”—about flora in urban areas. But the series is also half of a diptych, next to his previous study of Los Angeles, captured more than four decades before, when Esquire sent Davidson to photograph the city in 1964. With this in mind, Steidl Books has just reissued both volumes, *Los Angeles 1964* and *Nature of Los Angeles 2008-2013*, and it’s these two bodies of work I discuss with Davidson over coffee in his sun-filled living room.

You were on assignment for Esquire when you went to Los Angeles in 1964. What was the assignment?

Just to photograph. I guess they were looking for a writer. They sent me out there. Whoever sent me, sent me without any baggage. I had no point of reference. There wasn’t a writer. Previous work with Esquire and other magazines, they would send a writer out. I once did some photographs with Tom Wolfe, the writer. He was doing a story on countercultures, beach boys, surfers. I made photographs of a place called the Pump House.



I grew up there, in La Jolla.

Oh, you did? So you’re a surfer?

I am not. I won’t say that. But my brother is.

You know the culture. Probably the sexiest picture I ever made, I made of one of the Pump House girls running down the beach.

Do you still have that picture?

Yeah. It’s not in any publication. Maybe in *The Pump House Gang*. I remember some old-time beach guy. Tom and I crossed over this wall, and there were no surfers. This guy was a surfer in his head. He was illusory.

Right. So you were on assignment in L.A. and you didn't have any baggage.

I didn't have an agenda. For a kid who's coming from New York, it was really surreal. If I can use that word. It was strange.

It's so interesting to hear you say that because—

That's your home.

That's my point of reference, but I look at your pictures and I see the landscape differently. It's familiar and surreal at the same time.

Yeah. In '64, I followed whatever instincts I had to photograph the grayness there. The smog. I didn't get into the music or film culture. Just street culture. Coming from New York, the street has a meaning. Sidewalks and street.

You write in Los Angeles 1964, "I walked up to strangers, framed, focused, and in a split second of alienation and cynicism, pressed the shutter button. Suddenly I had an awakening that led me to another level of visual understanding." What was that new level of visual understanding?

The absurdity of city life. Of life. I sort of saw things within myself. Alienation. A certain adrift-ness. And it's all with my camera. It's all through my photography. That's my one magic wand.

It's a little bit like a love affair. The first love affair. You know? And actually I liked what I was doing during all those absurd days on the strip. There was a certain beauty in it for me. If beauty can be expressed in an artistic way.

You also write that people "were euphoric as they watered the desert." I wondered what about it seemed euphoric to you.

Well, one of the pictures, there is a woman watering this sandy landscape. I mean, I would never see anything like that in Manhattan. They might dump their garbage on the sidewalk, but they're not going to sweep it up.



Euphoria kind of means a dream state. It seemed to be like a dream state—a dream that went awry. And so I was photographing Los Angeles in that way. At the same time, I was working in the Deep South, where it was dangerous. And abusive. And so I just kept moving. Photography does that.

I love how in your photographs the palm trees and the cars are not just there—they're looming, like they're little beings.

They're poems.

They're poems?

They're poems because they're not indigenous. They're brought in. I tried to find a palm tree that was about to die or just recently died. And no one could tell me where I would find one. I would ask hundreds of people. It's like the palm tree is kind of invisible to them. And it shouldn't live. Its roots are very shallow. You know? I think it's because of the mantle of foliage and the top sort of keep it from blowing over.

So the palm tree itself—I began to become kind of buddy-buddy with those trees. People take them for granted, and then some people won't sell palm tree seeds anymore because they don't want any more of those palm trees laying around. But of course L.A. is so vast. You can have anything you want there if you say it. It's little pockets of reality.

You write that the editors rejected the way that you saw the place, that you had an ironic perception of the place, which was rejected. Why do you think your perception of the place was rejected?

Maybe I didn't go deeper into their perception of what L.A. is. There was always an eastern snobbery attached to L.A. That was Tinsel City. That was decadence. That was traffic. Highways. I don't know what they had in mind. But it's good that they gave back all my pictures, because they became kind of valuable after a while.

Can we look at some of these specific pictures?

Anything you like.



Was this one taken from a pier?

You know, I was trying to figure it out. I had come back from an assignment for Vogue in Leningrad. And when I was in Russia, I bought a lens that I couldn't get in America. It was a Russian mirror optic. So in other words, it was like a 500-millimeter lens, but it was shrunk in a little box. I had that with me. I never could find that place again.

Maybe you were on a jetty.

Yeah, a jetty. But at a great distance, you know? Further than my eye could see. I had that lens and I was dying to use it. I had that lens in L.A. that was made with that mirror optic lens. I probably was pretty far away. I would have to look into it. It wasn't a very good lens, but it was good enough.

What drew you back to Los Angeles to make this study 45 years later?

L.A. had changed. And so I had changed, too. I wanted to be left alone and explore the mountains with a 4×5 view camera. It was completely my own thing. It was great not to have to be with a Los Angeles gang.

I'd rather climb up on a ladder and climb down and photograph the back of the Hollywood sign—what the sign sees, which is desert. I had a very good assistant who helped me with a rope come down to a place where we were able to take the picture. We went there two or three different times. And what happened was the Los Angeles County Museum [of Art] gave me a letter to say I was on assignment for the museum. And that enabled me to just call and say, "We're coming up. We'd like to come up tonight." And they said, "Fine."



I went back a number of times. Once with a ladder and flashlights. Walked up the road that goes to the top. Stayed there long enough that there was no more jet travel, jet planes, because they would streak my pictures. So we just stood there in the darkness. I was afraid that I'd step on a rattlesnake.

I had to find a motel that had big closets, because I needed to make a darkroom. I brought several yards of waterproof and completely opaque cloth. And little metal pushpins. Metal, not the plastic ones. Metal. They don't show a hole. So we made this darkroom so that I could load and unload my day's shoot. Typically what I would do, [my assistant] would pick me up at, say, 9:00. And we'd have a spot that we were going to photograph. Maybe it's a boulder field just outside of L.A. It's an hour's drive just outside of L.A. And then in the afternoon we'd take a picture somewhere else of something. But we'd always be planning because of the traffic.

I'd go in [to the hotel] and I'd be exhausted. I actually would go to bed. And when I'd wake up at, say, 2:00 in the morning, I could load and unload. I didn't want to load and unload the film when I was tired, because I'd have to keep everything clean. So that would happen every two weeks, and then I'd go home. That was a spiritual kind of thing for me. Because I was doing things very quietly, very contemplatively. I thought L.A. was absolutely, incredibly beautiful. And incredibly ugly. It's not the great mountains of the West, you know.

You're drawn to nature in the city. There's something about the two butting up against each other that interests you?

Yeah, exactly. I'm interested in nature being where it wasn't before. I never know when that will happen and whether it will become a creative thing. I just have to be right for it. I have to be ready for it. I have to want to understand something about it that would draw me in. I hate to be bored.



The New York Times

Art & Design

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Like a Plant, His Roots Are Showing

By RANDY KENNEDY



Damon Winter/The New York Times
Bruce Davidson in his Upper West Side apartment

IN the rambling Upper West Side apartment where the photographer Bruce Davidson has lived for almost 40 years, he and his wife keep an extra little bedroom reserved for their grandchildren, done up with flowery bedspreads and dolls flopped on a dresser. Showing a visitor through the apartment recently, Mr. Davidson stopped in the room and eased the closet door open carefully, as if a Fibber McGee-type avalanche awaited. Inside was a small museum's worth of boxes of vintage prints from his storied career of more than half a century.

"The stuff is crowding us out," Mr. Davidson said. "I'm like a cancer that spreads."

He enjoys comparing himself to things, animate and inanimate. For most of his photographing life — which began at the age of 10 in Oak Park, Ill., after his mother built him a darkroom in the basement — he was, as he says, "a coyote, a wolf," prowling for the perfect picture in a succession of circumscribed worlds he found and entered: tent circuses, Brooklyn gangs, East Harlem tenements, Jewish cafeterias, the civil-rights-era South.

Mr. Davidson is 76 now, a vigorous, round-faced man given to wearing heavy work shirts and boots that lend him the appearance of a carpenter. And as contemplative landscape photography increasingly dominates his time, he describes himself these days as being more like a plant. "Plants kind of speak to me, and trees, particularly palm trees," he said, smiling as he listened to himself. "Birds less so, but I'm getting very interested in them too."

Another description, especially now, might be heavyweight. This month the German art-book publisher Steidl will issue a door-stopping three-volume retrospective of Mr. Davidson's work, books for which he painstakingly reprinted thousands of images from his archives, eventually choosing more than 800 pictures, some never seen before. The publication coincides with two Manhattan exhibitions. One, at the Howard Greenberg Gallery on East 57th Street, recreates a sequence of pictures chosen by the curator John Szarkowski for the 1970 Museum of Modern Art exhibition of Mr. Davidson's "East 100th Street" series, an unflinching — and hotly debated in the context of the times — examination of urban poverty and perseverance in the late '60s.

The other show, at Bryce Wolkowitz Gallery in Chelsea, surveys Mr. Davidson's career, but the gallery has decided to do so in an elliptical and unusual way: by blowing up a dozen or so of his images to contemporary-photography proportions, big 30-by-40-inch prints, some of which — like a 1958 picture of a circus dwarf named Jimmy Armstrong — take on a vaporous Seurat-like ethereality at that size.

"I wasn't sure about it at first," Mr. Davidson said one afternoon, watching an assistant with a paintbrush carefully touching up the poster-size circus print, which blanketed a big swath of his dining-room table. "I didn't want them blown up just for the sake of blowing them up, for size. But now I look at them as completely different pictures, accomplishing something that a smaller print doesn't do."

From almost the beginning of his career Mr. Davidson's pictures have accomplished a lot. He was among the leaders of a loose-knit new wave of photographers — including Lee Friedlander, Danny Lyon, Garry Winogrand and Diane Arbus — who emerged in the early 1960s with the desire to tell stories that didn't fit neatly, and often didn't fit at all, into the art world or into the magazine picture-essay tradition.

Mr. Davidson's work has always been marked by a quiet sympathy that balances even his more caustic visions — gaudy Los Angeles, waitresses in a topless restaurant, the dead-end members of a Brooklyn gang called the Jokers — and by a sophisticated, undramatic sense of form. The critic Michael Brenson, writing in 1982 in *The New York Times* about a highly regarded series of pictures taken in the subway, a rare foray into color for Mr. Davidson, called his brand of realism "almost novelistic in its multilayered ambition."

The artist's life has not been easy. For most of his career, even after becoming a marquee member of the Magnum photo collective, Mr. Davidson paid the bills mostly by shooting for corporate annual reports or other business publications, work he liked better than magazine assignments "because it really kept me out in the world, seeing how things worked." For a short time in the early 1960s he did fashion work for *Vogue* magazine, but it never kept his interest.

"All I cared about was, 'Can I make enough money here to pay for my livelihood, so I can get back out on the streets and shoot what I want?' " he recalled.

But the life has also paid him back richly in experience. His first daughter was conceived (as his wife, her mother, smirkingly confirmed, sitting at their kitchen table) in Death Valley, Calif., while Mr. Davidson was taking pictures on the set of Antonioni's "Zabriskie Point." He can talk about shooting Marilyn Monroe in 1960, or about Richard Avedon and André Kertész helping him teach workshops at his Greenwich Village loft. Or about when Arbus took him to Atlantic City for a burlesque show, or the time he kept Isaac Bashevis Singer's parakeet. (Mr. Singer was a friend and a neighbor in the Belnord, Mr. Davidson's building, and Mr. Davidson made a short film about him in 1972.)

The impetus for a book project encompassing his career came partly from Mr. Davidson's daughters, Jenny and Anna, who told him once, surveying the mountains of his prints and film that his assistant, Amina Lakhane, helps him keep in order, " 'You're not going to leave all this for us to sort out, are you?' " Over the last three years, as Mr. Davidson printed in his home darkroom, Gerhard Steidl, the legendarily exacting founder of Steidl, would sometimes bring a box to the Belnord on his trips to New York and fill it with prints to take back to Steidl offices in Germany.

Mr. Davidson's initial plan was to give the volumes a title commensurate with their weight and with his feelings about the importance of photography to the world and to himself: "Journey of Consciousness."

"Everybody gagged when they heard it," he said.

So the title was changed to "Outside/Inside," a good description of Mr. Davidson's work approach, which often involves long, immersive dives into the lives of his subjects, some of whom, like Robert Powers, a former Brooklyn gang member known as Bengie, have stayed in touch. (Mr. Davidson's wife, Emily Haas Davidson, is working on a book about Mr. Powers.)

"I always felt that my best way with the camera was to stay longer, to get to know things," he said. "Not for a picture story, per se, but for a series of images that are kind of like charcoals that catch fire and burn into each other."

In an essay accompanying a book of the subway pictures, the curator Henry Geldzahler described how he had once asked Mr. Davidson whether there was a message implicit in the photographs, a strangely beautiful collective portrait of a weary, graffitied, enduring city.

“ ‘Lift your head,’ he shot back, as quick as that,” Mr. Geldzahler wrote. “And that’s it.”

Over the last several months Mr. Davidson has been making frequent trips to Los Angeles to further his landscape interests, what he describes as a “lifelong urban rat’s” preoccupation with nature meeting the manufactured, which he has also pursued for many years in Central Park and in Paris. Though the work mostly requires waiting patiently for the right light, one recent trip to the West found him equipped with rappelling gear, navigating his way with a helper down a steep slope in the Hollywood Hills to shoot the back of the Hollywood sign, which looks like a strangely familiar minimalist sculpture in his pictures.

“It’s not that I’ve given up on photographing people,” he said of his turn to landscape. “But I guess I just need a break from it for a while.”

Mostly for himself, as a kind of therapy, he said, he has been photographing the same gnarled oak tree on Martha’s Vineyard, where he vacations, over a period of 40 years. Of his recent fascination with palm trees, he said he still can’t quite understand the attraction: “They’re absolutely useless. They don’t give shade or coconuts. They’re 100 feet tall, and there aren’t even enough leaves to do much in the way of photosynthesis.”

Mr. Davidson takes pains to emphasize that, retrospective or not, he has no intentions of winding down his career anytime soon. His mother is 98 and doing quite well, he said. Then he pointed to a long bank of shelves in his apartment filled with books of his contact sheets arranged by year, going back to 1954.

“I think I have space here for about another 10 to 20 years,” he said. “And then that’ll be it.”

Subway

by Bruce Davidson



Going underground

In his mid-teens, **Bruce Davidson** (1933, USA) began riding Chicago's elevated 'L' train into the city, exploring neighbourhoods and observing wide varieties of people. It was in those days that he developed skills and interests that would be seen in his later photographic works. This becomes apparent when one looks at *Subway*, a now classic portrayal of the New York underground train network in the late 1970s. It represented the blood-filled arteries of a city pumping with organic, authentic, urban-brewed culture.

The New York Subway (MTA) is one of the oldest and most extensive public transportation systems in the world. This dark, democratic environment provided the setting for Davidson's first extensive series in colour, originally published in 1986. At that time, it was common for people to dress down, so as not to attract unwanted attention, while riding the subway in the pre-Giuliani and pre-zero-tolerance era. People went on the subway because they had to, not because they wanted to. Looking at these pictures, you can smell the sweat... and fear.

In 1979, when Davidson worked on this series, New York City was in default. Riding the subway was never a dull commute. The subway was dismal and dangerous. If you had a gold chain around your neck, it would be ripped off. It was a frightening place. But Davidson nevertheless felt the atmosphere needed to be documented down there. Not just the misery, not just the grime, but also the beauty.

Photography is particularly well suited to documenting the grandeur of large public works. But never before had the subway been portrayed in this idiosyncratic style, revealing the interplay of its inner landscape and outer vistas in such detail. Although black and white has always been an essence for Davidson, the meaningful colour of the graffiti in the subway was displayed in tones he himself described as reminiscent of ocean fish photography. By using an extreme wide-angle lens and utilising light and colour to accentuate subjects, Davidson defined a new approach in photojournalism.

Depicting strangers in an enclosed environment is almost a genre in itself, starting with Walker Evans' famous series taken in the late 1930s. With a 35mm lens poking through his buttonhole, Evans aimed to break free from the artifice of conventional studio portraiture and went on to create one of the most important and influential series in American photography. Something similar could be said about Davidson's *Subway*.

People went on the subway because they had to, not because they wanted to.

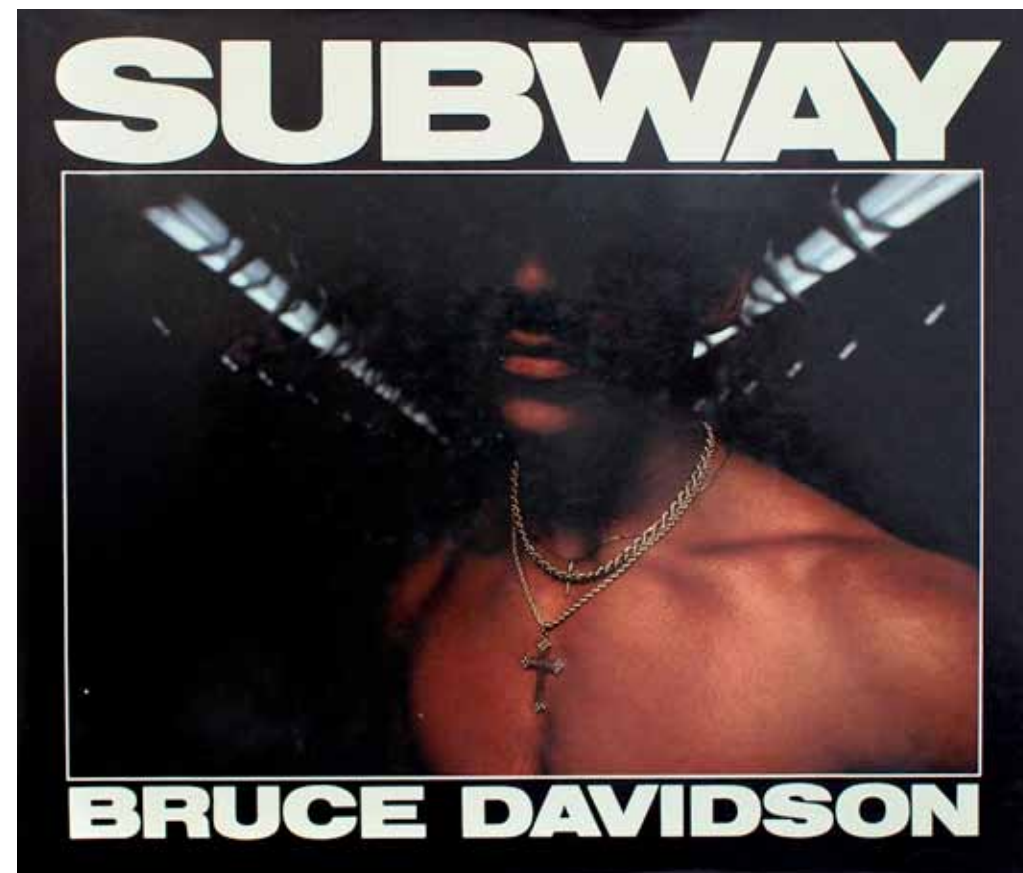
However, unlike Evans, Davidson did not hide his camera so that he could operate anonymously. Yet he cannot do away with the voyeuristic potential of the camera. That is to say, the proximity to fellow passengers on the subway allowed him to indulge in an activity that in other parts of the city would be impossible to perform.

Whereas Evans' subjects appear to ride the subway with pride and a sense of purpose, Davidson's subjects at first appear lost and alienated in a sea of urban grime. But when having a closer look it becomes apparent that he wanted to transform the subway from its dark, degrading, and impersonal reality into images that open up our experience again to the colour, sensuality, and vitality of the individual souls that ride it each day.

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Bruce Davidson recently won the
Outstanding Contribution to Photography Award
at the Sony World Photography Festival.

All images © Bruce Davidson / Magnum Photos

*The New York Times***Lens**PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO AND VISUAL JOURNALISM

JUNE 28, 2010, 5:00 AM

The Renowned, Unknown Bruce Davidson

By *JAMES ESTRIN* and *JOSH HANER*

Bruce Davidson, a member of Magnum Photos, is one of the most influential photographers of the last half century. A long-awaited collection of his work — “[Outside Inside](#),” a three-volume, boxed set — was published this week by the master printer [Gerhard Steidl](#). James Estrin and Josh Haner interviewed Mr. Davidson at his New York apartment in April.

Q. Tell us about the process of putting these books together.

A. I felt that I had to put together a decisive collection of this journey because I started when I was 10 years old and photography — I mean classical photography, analog photography — is really within my DNA. It’s in my bones.

I began by editing all my contact sheets and books. I edited for two or three days and then printed for two or three days. I can’t edit and print in the same day. That took a couple of years, because I made all the prints.

I methodically edited and printed, and that was an experience in itself. For instance, the circus dwarf photographs are somewhat well-known. [[“Circus,”](#) 2007.] But what isn’t well-known is that I also photographed the circus itself, which I never printed. So there are a lot of photographs in this collection that no one has seen before.

I have a book in color of the subway in 1979 and 1980. [[“Subway,”](#) 1986 and 2003.] But I started in black and white, so there’s a whole passage in this new book with subway photographs that are equally good.

Q. Why did you switch between black and white and color in the subway work?

A. I work in color and I studied in color. But black and white has always been an essence for me. It’s how I began. In the subway, the graffiti became something I had to deal with. And color was a challenge in the subway. It’s full of meaningful color.

To get back to your question: I edited, printed photographs and put together the book. Gerhard Steidl had published my England book [[“England/Scotland 1960”](#) and circus book. He wanted very much to do this retrospective. So did a number of other people. But he won out because of the quality of the printing.

Q. Did you mean this to be a definitive collection of your work?

A. It is certainly an essence of my photographic being, because I put things in there that are transitional. For instance, the series of photographs I made of an old couple out west. They were prospectors. They had a Model T Ford. I lived with them on the weekends. That was a prelude to the the widow of Montmartre photographs, which I did next.

I am attracted to very elderly people — except now I'm not, because I'm one of them.

Q. Now you're attracted — by definition — to younger people.

A. I don't want anyone taking my picture.

Q. Did you learn anything about your work or your career?

A. One thing I learned is that I had photographs that were very contemporary in their scope that I didn't print. At the time, I didn't think they were worthy. What's great about looking at your work is the emotion comes back. The emotion comes back. The rhythm of what you were photographing comes back. It's almost like a musical score. You can see where I may have quit too soon, or stayed too long. Or was bored and took a lot of pictures of nothing because I wanted to put film through the camera. All kinds of things are working when you're looking at the contact sheet. Also, you see old girlfriends and friends and your children going up *and* my hairline receding.

"She ran off with an English professor. He was an older man. I was left with Cartier-Bresson, which was good enough."

— Bruce Davidson

Q. When you say contemporary, what exactly do you mean?

A. Contemporary is not a good word, because it could mean art-school photography, mimicking the teachers; what galleries might want. When I say contemporary, I don't really mean the latest emperor's new clothes.

Q. So what do you mean, then?

A. I mean that there was an implicit reality in the photograph that is a new way of looking at something. "[East 100th Street](#)" may be an example of that, certain photographs I made in the circus, certain photographs I made of this elderly couple living in the desert. There are photographs there that have a certain poetic essence that you would expect later on in photography.

Q. You didn't choose them the first time around.

A. No, I didn't choose them the first time around, because maybe I didn't understand how good they were.

Q. One more question (like asking which of your children do you like the best): What are some of your favorites that you rediscovered?

Bruce Davidson/Magnum Photos Thirtieth and Arlington,

Los Angeles. 2008.

A. The child I like best is the child that is unborn, because it's always a quest for something and I don't know what it is. I'm working on a project in the last chapter of that book. I'm in Los Angeles. I'm photographing the nature of Los Angeles. I don't know what the hell it's about. It sounds like it's about saving the planet, but it's not quite that. It's about the fact that we overlooked something. It's more about observation and taking things for granted.

In L.A., people think about their drive or they think about their next acting job or a number of things. But they are surrounded by botany: palm trees, cacti, all kinds of plants and flowers. There won't always be water, but there is water now. I'm photographing the relationship between the organic, the botany and the city. I'm trying to see the city in some ways through green spaces and plants and cacti. But I don't know what it's about.

Q. Are there any similarities between "Brooklyn Gang" or "East 100th Street" and the conflicting landscape of Los Angeles?

A. "[Brooklyn Gang](#)" is always an underpinning. The Brooklyn gang series is not really about gangs; it's about emotionality and tension, abuse and abandonment. These kids had nothing. And they were poor. So, it was that connection with the emotionality of those kids—that's the story. The fact that they have a gang, they're called the Jokers, and they do some mischief; it didn't really matter.

Q. When did you know that the gangs project was about those things?

A. I felt it was about me because I felt somewhat abandoned — not abused, but abandoned. Isolated. That part of me related — in a silent way — to them, so that I think I like those kids. In fact, my wife, Emily, has been working on a book for about five or six years with Bengie, the gang leader, who is now 65 years old. He comes over and they talk in the kitchen.

Q. I [James Estrin] remember, from taking a workshop with you 35 years ago, a story you told of riding the train down from Westchester and passing the buildings in East Harlem and looking through the windows and seeing a woman in the window and wondering about her.

A. That's right. We were living in Hartsdale and we took that train. At one point, it skims the South Bronx and you can see into — you get glimpses of life inside those rooms. That drew me to 100th Street.

The title of the new book is "Outside Inside," and I am nosy enough that I want to be inside.

Arnold Newman once told me that to photograph someone, they have to feel equal to you. And that's true. Sometimes, a magazine you're on assignment for is so prestigious that it allows you to be at a level where you're not just someone coming over to take pictures.

Q. It's equally true for those less powerful. They have to feel you as an equal as well.

A.

That's right. Exactly. They can't feel that you're condescending. You're struggling and striving for the same thing they are. "East 100th Street" was done for better housing.

In the retrospective edition [2003], there's a section on returning to East Harlem to show that the community has changed and there's all kinds of possibilities now. When I applied for grants to go back to 100th Street, I hadn't realized 100th Street had changed. Everyone had gone away. I could only find one or two people. But what they started there, rippled through East Harlem. So, I can photograph tutorial programs, the new school, ballet schools, new housing. All that started to grow two years after I left.

Bruce Davidson/Magnum Photos "East 100th Street." New York City. 1966.

Q. I [James Estrin] grew up on your work and I wanted to — like hundreds of other people — photograph the teen gangs and the poor neighborhoods and the subway. When you throw in Danny Lyon's prison photographs, you pretty much have the grand themes of the past 40 years.

A. That's true. In my own case, there was a period when I would try to look for Cartier-Bresson pictures. In the opening of the Cartier-Bresson show, I came across a picture of a woman — a street vendor — and I thought it was a wonderful picture. In my winter in Paris series, there is a woman vendor. There she is. I know images that come into your DNA. You're looking for your prison picture like Danny Lyon, or a Cartier-Bresson photograph, and you say, "If only I could find that experience."

Q. When you were young, what were you looking for? You were looking for Cartier-Bresson?

A. In '52, when I was in college at R.I.T. photography school, that's when I first saw a Cartier-Bresson photograph. It was with one of the two girls in our class, Joan. I was courting her a little bit and we were sitting in a girl's dorm and she had brought out "The Decisive Moment." I laughed. She was pointing out the pictures that really moved her and said that Cartier-Bresson was her true love. So I went out and I bought a little Leica, a used Leica, and started to imitate his images in some way. What I did was photograph the Lighthouse Mission, which was all drunks. They gave them a sermon and a bologna sandwich and a cup of coffee. And when they left, they'd pull out the bottle again. But those pictures, were a little Cartier-Bressonish.

Q. Most importantly: did it work with her?

A. No. What happened is she ran off with an English professor. He was an older man. I was left with Cartier-Bresson, which was good enough.

Q. Was there anybody else?

A. Oh yeah, I can assure you. There's Eugene Smith. "Brooklyn Gang" had a tension and a structure of Gene Smith, perhaps; it was too raw to just be a Cartier-Bresson picture. My England photographs were more Cartier-Bresson. I give acknowledgment to Cartier-

Bresson, Gene Smith, Robert Frank and Diane Arbus. You can't make a move in photography without touching their psyche.

Q. Who do you like among younger photographers?

A. I don't think I know younger photographers that well. But my younger daughter [[Anna Mia Davidson](#)] is a full-fledged photographer who spent six months by herself in Cuba. Her Cuban pictures are not cliché. What I like about her work is that she's an activist. At the same time, she's a lyricist.

I am not politically astute — at all. Unconsciously I am. It's implicit in my work. But I wouldn't call myself an activist. My wife's an activist.

Q. What would you call yourself?

A. I'm just a humanist. I just photograph the human condition as I find it. It can be serious. It can also be ironic or humorous. I'm political, but not in an overt way. Of course, everything we do in life is political. Almost everything.

Q. Through the years, there have been some people saying that you saw what you wanted to see on 100th Street, that you didn't fully capture the other aspects of life on that block.

A. What was important at the time was to show the politicians, the bankers and the mayor what was going on in terms of housing. That was No. 1. There's enough dignity, there's enough humor, there's enough life in the body of work when you look at it. There were those who thought I made the place look too bad. Other writers said I didn't make it look bad enough.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. I'm still going back to East 100th Street. In fact, I was just invited to a retirement party.

And Millie [[Feliciano](#)] agreed to write [the foreword]. She didn't have to. She's a real activist. She's 70 now, but she was very vocal in the community. And when she met with the mayor she took the book, or early prints before the book was published.

I don't have any qualms about the approach I took.

Q. Let's go to the books. I want to see which photos you rediscovered.

A. I thought this photograph [[Slide 5](#)] was not a picture you would expect me to make at 22. It was the essence of the relationship: they're almost invisible to each other. The sun hitting the hand. There's a sort of silence built up there. And the use of the frame, finishing off with the missing hand. This is a picture that is as good today as it was then. The body and the towel [[Slide 3](#)] you wouldn't expect and this picture sort of predicts the widow [[Slide 7](#)].

"I am attracted to very elderly people — except now I'm not, because I'm one of them."

— [Bruce Davidson](#)

Q. Were there any photographs that didn't remember so much, that you found in the contacts?

A. The subway black and white.

Q. You have two photos of the same man on the subway; one in black and white and one in color. Is the black and white a conversion or did you have two cameras? What were you thinking?

A. It's a real black-and-white photo. I see color as a language. I integrated the idea of the project with the idea of color, so that worked. I started out with black and white and my Leica. Later, I switched to my color camera, which was my reflex. I was able to do things with a reflex that I couldn't do with a Leica.

Q. Did you often carry two formats?

A. In Central Park I did. I might have a Hasselblad this day, or my panoramic Noblex, or I had to do something in 35 that I could only do in 35 — maybe a night picture or something like that.

Q. How would you like to be remembered?

A. What I'd like is to be rediscovered. One of the reasons I did the book before engaging any institution in showing my work is that I knew it would stay. (No one was beating down my door, anyway.) I thought: "I want the curators to see. I don't think they know me. I want them to see me, to see what I've done and what I could be doing."

Q. Through this book, what will they learn about you that they might not know?

A. They'd learn that I was a real photographer, you know. They would know there were a lot of parts to me. For instance, the subway color dye transfers shown at I.C.P. when Cornell-Capa was there are now being shown for the first time at the Tate Modern in London. People are starting to see me.

I didn't play the art world at all. I didn't even play the fashion world. I could have easily become an incredible fashion photographer. I threw it aside because I felt a calling. It seemed real to me. And I think I learned that from Cartier-Bresson. He didn't do any perfume ads. There was also the Magnum climate. There were serious photographers there: Ernst Haas, Elliott Erwitt.

Q. What's the single biggest misconception you think was out there that you hope this book might correct?

A. I don't know. I just felt that if I put out the essence of my photographic being and it's printed well and it's in volumes and it's truthful, that sooner or later, someone is going to pick it up.

Bruce Davidson/Magnum Photos Eiffel Tower, Seventh Arrondissement. Paris. 2006.

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