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Bruce Davidson: Subway



Synopsis

Bruce Davidson's groundbreaking *Subway*, first published by Aperture in 1986, has garnered critical acclaim both as a documentation of a unique moment in the cultural fabric of New York City and for its phenomenal use of extremes of color and shadow set against flash-lit skin. In Davidson's own words, the people in the subway, their flesh juxtaposed against the graffiti, the penetrating effect of the strobe light itself, and even the hollow darkness of the tunnels, inspired an aesthetic that goes unnoticed by passengers who are trapped underground, hiding behind masks and closed off from each other. In this third edition of what is now a classic of photographic literature, a sequence of 118 (including 25 previously unpublished) images transport the viewer through a landscape at times menacing, and at other times lyrical and soulful. The images present the full gamut of New Yorkers, from weary straphangers and languorous ladies in summer dresses to stalking predators and homeless persons. Davidson's accompanying text tells the story behind the images, clarifying his method and dramatizing his obsession with the subway, its rhythms and its particular madness.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

American photographer Bruce Davidson was born in 1933 in Oak Park, Illinois to a single mother, who worked in a factory. At age 10, his mother built him a dark room in their basement and Davidson began taking photographs; as he was given the freedom to wander the streets of Oak Park alone. Soon after, he approached a local photographer who taught him the technical nuances

of photography, in addition to lighting and printing skills. In his mid-teens, Davidson began to ride Chicago's elevated train system into the city, exploring neighborhoods and the Chicago Loop, observing wide varieties of people, and most importantly developing skills and interests that would be seen in his later photographic works. His works have always been on the leading edge of seeking out the sources of social unrest in the ghettos and in all the civil rights movements, and his ability to non-objectify the people he photographs has made him one of the most realistic of contemporary photographers. In 1986 the original book SUBWAY was published by Aperture, a collection of images Davidson captured in the subways of New York, focusing on the 'outsiders of society more than the white collar commuters. That award winning book has since become unavailable and this current release is a re-print edition published by Aperture in September of 2011. It is well to examine these startling images again - and this edition adds 25 images not previously published. The gritty, seamy images found in this collection allow us to examine from a safe distance the seamier side of the subway riders.

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