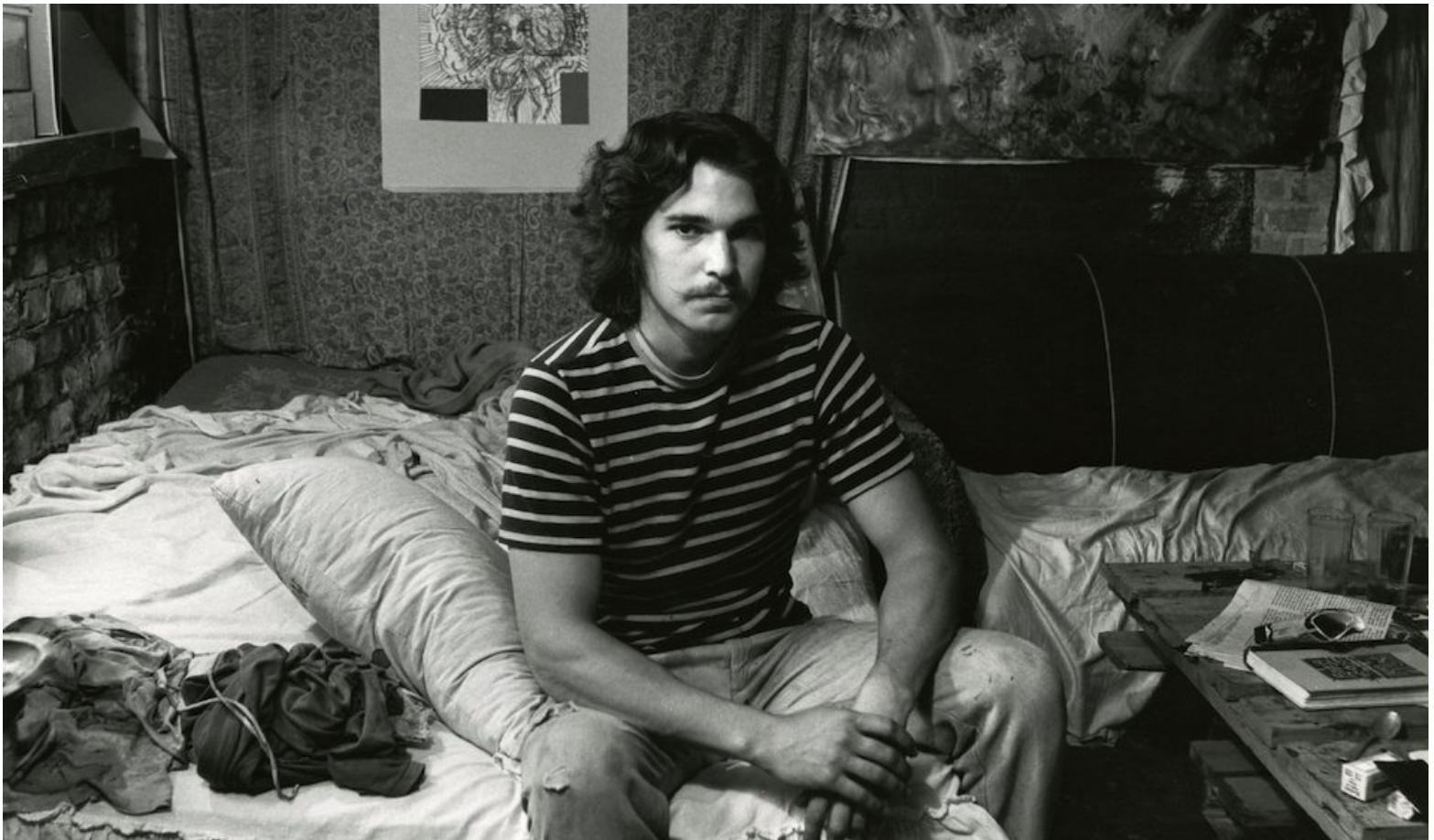




(<https://lwlies.com>).

Art & Culture (<https://www.huckmag.com/category/art-and-culture/>) / Photos of what San Francisco really looked like in the '60s



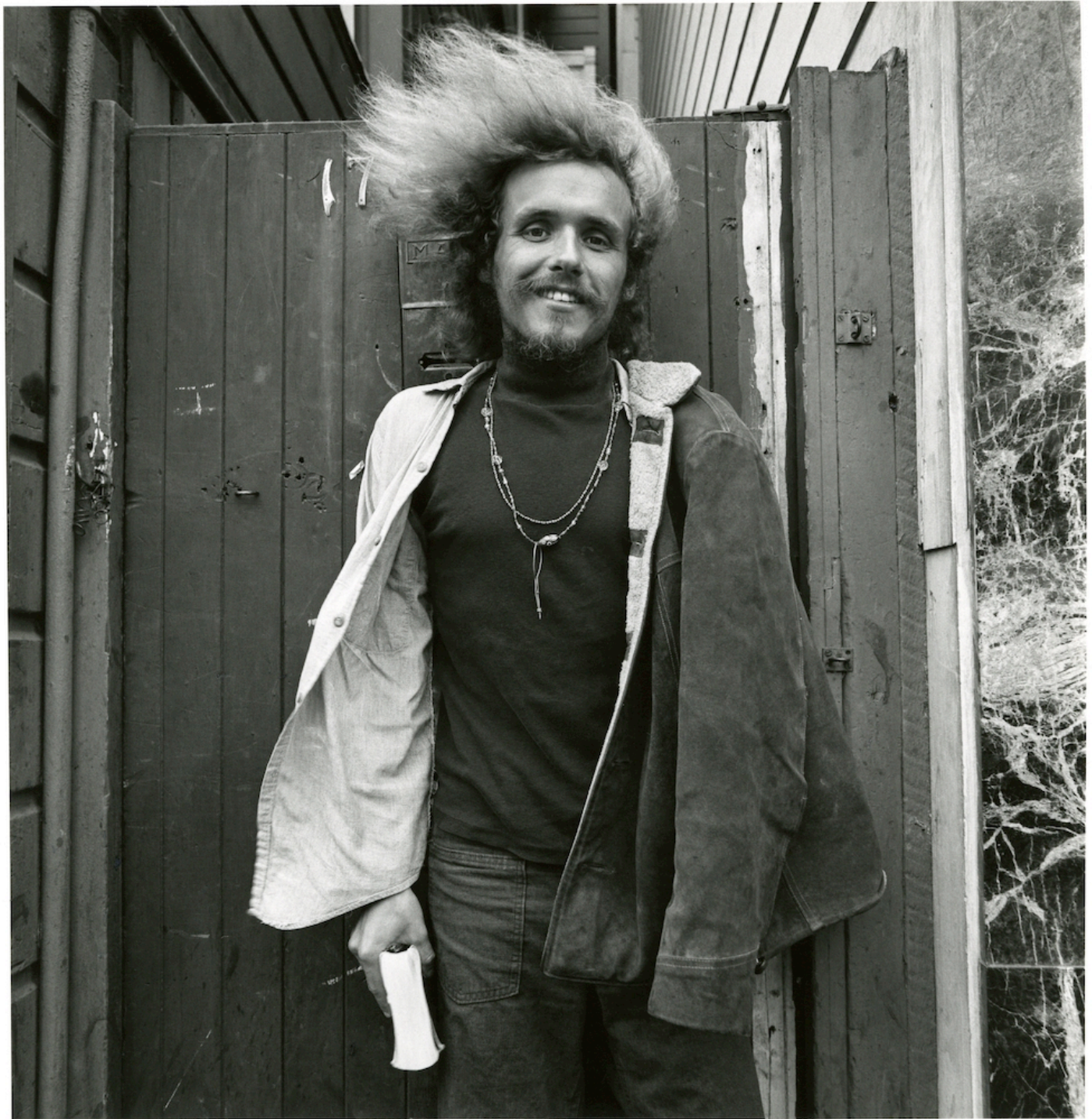
Photos of what San Francisco really looked like in the '60s (<https://www.huckmag.com/art-and-culture/photography-2/elaine-mayes-san-francisco-haight-ashbury-portraits-1960s/>)

Summer of love (<https://www.huckmag.com/art-and-culture/photography-2/elaine-mayes-san-francisco->

haight-ashbury-portraits-1960s/)

In the summer of 1967, a twenty-something Elaine Mayes, who had been living in [San Francisco](https://www.huckmag.com/topics/san-francisco/) for nearly a decade and other parts of the Bay Area before that, decided to move to the Haight-Ashbury district. She wasn't alone, it was the tail-end of the Summer of Love, and joining her were [an estimated](https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2012/07/lsd-drugs-summer-of-love-sixties) 100,000 beatnik-inspired, free-love searching, psychedelic drug-experimenting members of the hippie movement from across the country.

As a freelance [photographer](https://www.huckmag.com/topics/photography/) who was establishing herself in the local publishing industry, interested in documenting the world and people around her, Mayes felt she needed to see what was happening for herself. She moved into a commune on Central Street in the area, "essentially living out of a suitcase."

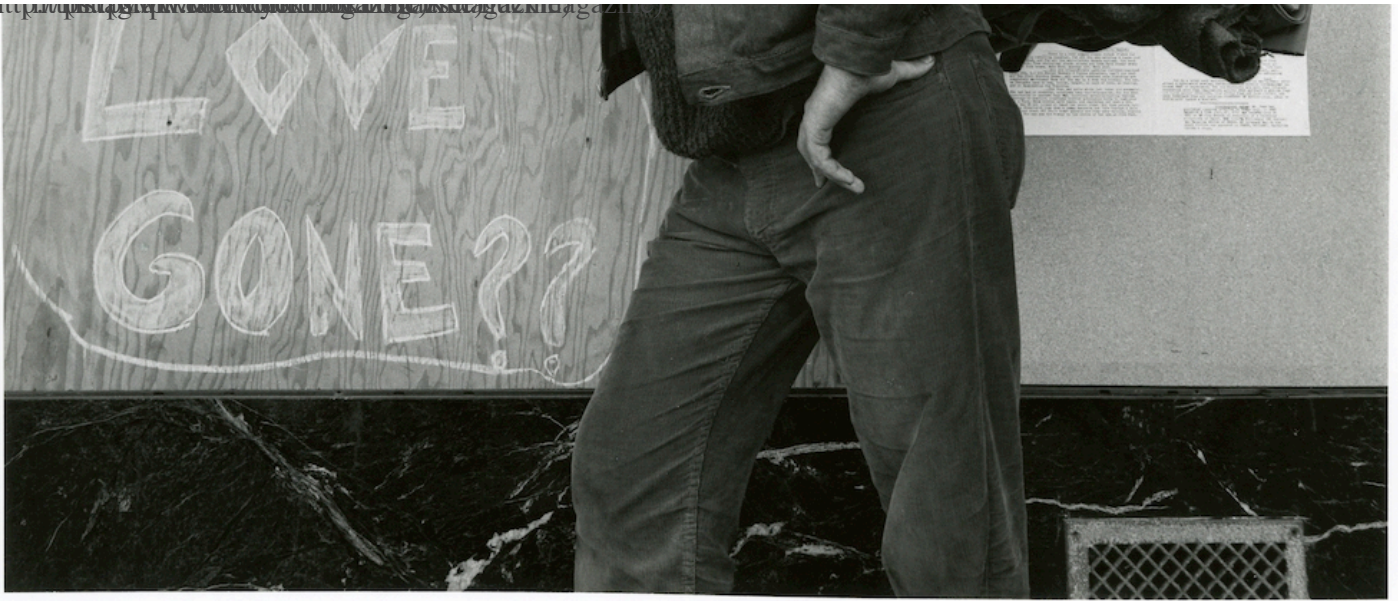




The hippie movement had been bubbling beneath the surface in the years before as a growing yet underground countercultural phenomenon, but that summer, centred around the Haight-Ashbury district, saw an explosion in its visibility and its place in the cultural consciousness. With a rise in popularity and access to [psychedelics](https://www.huckmag.com/topics/psychedelics/) (https://www.huckmag.com/topics/psychedelics/) – particularly magic mushrooms and a new drug called LSD – as well as a burgeoning music scene, bookmarked by the now-legendary Monterey Pop Festival where the likes of The Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix performed, thousands wanted to experience the fun and free love for themselves.

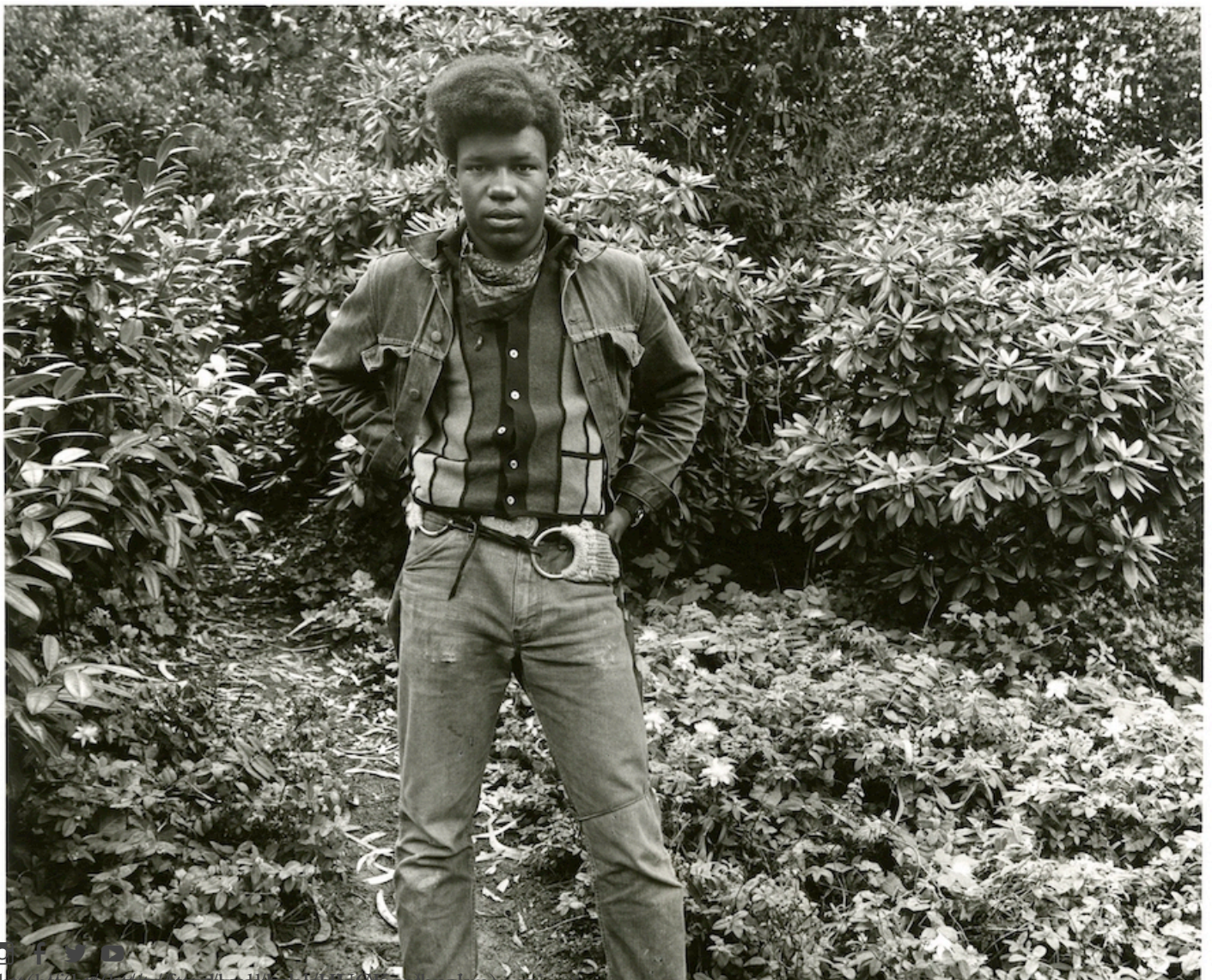
Yet it was also propelled by extensive media coverage, which in turn led to more people travelling to San Francisco – an exponential multiplying effect, which eventually caused a swarm. But Mayes felt that the media's representation of what life was actually like in the Haight and of the hippie movement, which often focussed on the hedonism and drug taking of those involved, was over-exaggerated, overly negative and often just plain wrong.

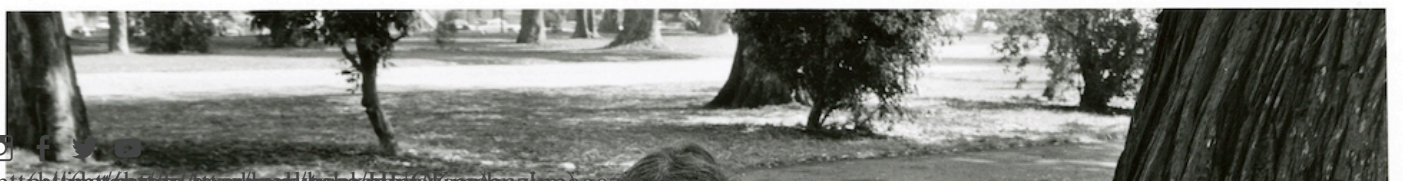




So she decided to start making her own series of pictures. “I wanted to do a portrait series because the press was promoting and talking about what was going on and it wasn’t accurate,” Mayes says. “There were a lot of people coming to this district and hanging around, looking around – they were trying to find out what everybody was doing there.”

Walking around the streets of the neighbourhood armed with her camera, she would ask passers-by in the street if she could stop and take their picture, building an archive of people who lived in the area. Now, over half a century later, a number of her portraits are presented in her new photobook *The Haight Ashbury Portraits 1967-1968*.









The Summer of Love would eventually tail off into winter, and like the communities who had lived in the area before, the demand for housing would eventually price out the hippie communities that populated the Haight for those years. “It was a place in flux,” Mayes continues. “I took the portraits because I didn’t think anybody was telling the truth about the Haight and I thought it was the most accurate record I could make – real life was different.”

The Haight Ashbury Portraits 1967-1968 by Elaine Mayes is published by [Damiani](https://www.damianieditore.com/en-US/product/836) (https://www.damianieditore.com/en-US/product/836), with a corresponding exhibition on display at [Deborah Bell Photographs](https://www.deborahbellphotographs.com/) (https://www.deborahbellphotographs.com/) in New York until March 4, 2023.

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