

ELAINE MAYES

HAIGHT-ASHBURY PORTRAITS 1967-1968

November 17, 2022 - March 4, 2023

Reception & book signing: Thursday, November 17, 6 to 8pm

Deborah Bell Photographs presents *Elaine Mayes: Haight-Ashbury Portraits 1967-1968*, an exhibition of vintage prints of portraits the photographer made in the now-legendary San Francisco neighborhood called Haight-Ashbury. Celebrating the recent publication by **Damiani** of the book by **FotoFocus Artistic Director and Curator Kevin Moore**, *Elaine Mayes: Haight Ashbury Portraits 1967-1968*, the exhibition opens November 17 and will be on view through March 4, 2023. **A reception and book signing with the artist, in cooperation with FotoFocus and Damiani, will take place in the gallery on Thursday, November 17, from 6-8pm.** This is the first monograph of Elaine Mayes's Haight-Ashbury portraits, published more than 50 years after the photographs were taken.

Kevin Moore writes in his text for the Damiani book:

Mayes regarded the young people in her neighborhood not as a passing cultural phenomenon but as individuals who defied the media stereotypes. If they are alive to us now, it's because they embody both a historical moment and a timeless state called youth. They are permeated by a sentiment of tentative idealism, which is both San Francisco in the 1960s and twenty-somethings the world over. Casual, static, and bluntly square format, Mayes grants her subjects agency in their own representation. Many do seem to be urchins of that deflated cultural moment, post-summer of 1967, when the flower children had transitioned from blissed-out idealists to disaffected grifters, when free love turned over to hard drugs, as if the campaign to shake off their bourgeois upbringing had started off strong but then led nowhere, leaving them stranded. What unifies these portraits most is their common sense of poise...a twinkling between adolescence and adulthood, idealism and disillusion.

Elaine Mayes explains her experience in making these portraits:

Early on in the Haight I had realized that the Summer of Love was a media-fueled idea, and the media in fact had created the situation in the Haight. I knew I wanted to make pictures that would show something other than the media version of the Haight Ashbury. Most of the pictures were taken right then and there, exposures of people standing on the street or sitting on stoops or in the park. Sometimes we went to where the person lived. In those days in the Haight, hanging out with strangers was normal. I was using a Hasselblad on a tripod with long exposures and was not looking through the camera when the exposure was made. Everyone I photographed related to my idea for the pictures. After all, it was the '60s. The Haight Ashbury portraits were from a time and a place that had a particular quality and spirit, with large numbers of young people who hoped to discover a better way of life. That time in San Francisco was unique and transformative for our culture and left its mark on everyone.

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DEBORAH BELL PHOTOGRAPHS

Elaine Mayes was born in Berkeley, California in 1936. She graduated from Stanford University, where she majored in painting and art history. After Stanford, Mayes attended the San Francisco Art Institute, where her instructors included John Collier, Jr., Richard Diebenkorn, and Minor White. Mayes was one of a handful of students to study photography in the then-new photography program. She was the first woman to teach studio art photography at the University of Minnesota in 1968. Mayes moved to New York in 1982 and began a teaching career at Bard College, Pratt Institute, the International Center of Photography, and New York University, where she was Chair of the photography department at Tisch School of the Arts until her retirement in 2000.

Elaine Mayes's photographs have been exhibited internationally in museums and galleries. Her work can be found in the permanent collections of the Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), among many other public institutions worldwide.

Kevin Moore is the artistic director and curator of **FotoFocus**. He is the author of *Old Paris and Changing New York: Photographs by Eugène Atget and Berenice Abbott* (Yale University Press); *Starburst: Color Photography in America 1970-1980* (Hatje Cantz); and *Jacques-Henri Lartigue: The Invention of an Artist* (Princeton University Press).

FotoFocus is a Cincinnati-based nonprofit arts organization that champions photography and lens-based art through exhibitions and public programming. Since 2010, the organization has engaged art and educational institutions throughout the region to support and expand the cultural dialogue around the medium that has come to define our time. With an emphasis on intellectually and academically rigorous programs, the organization provides uniquely enriching access to lens-based art, film, and practices inspired by photography. **FotoFocus** has collaborated with organizations, curators, academics, and more than 1600 artists and participants, to present over 750 exhibitions and programs and awarded close to 600 grants to support partners presenting projects and educational programs that are accessible and engaging to the public. Signature FotoFocus programming includes the **FotoFocus Biennial**, **FotoFocus Symposium**, **FotoFocus Talks Series**, and **Film and Video** programming. Past Biennial editions have presented work across the Cincinnati region by historic and contemporary artists including Berenice Abbott, Eugène Atget, Roe Ethridge, Zanele Muholi, Karl Blossfeldt, Francis Bruguère, Thomas Ruff, and Akram Zaatari. Other landmark events include the **Symposium**, which has contributed significant dialogue and insight to culturally relevant topics including the controversial Mapplethorpe exhibition, and the **Talks Series**, which has brought globally renowned artists like Zoe Leonard and William Wegman to Cincinnati.

Gallery hours for the exhibition are Wednesday-Saturday, 11am - 5pm. **Please note that our new address is 526 West 26 Street, Room 411, New York, NY 10001.** For further information please contact the gallery at 212-249-9400, or by email at info@deborahbellphotographs.com. High-resolution scans are available.

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