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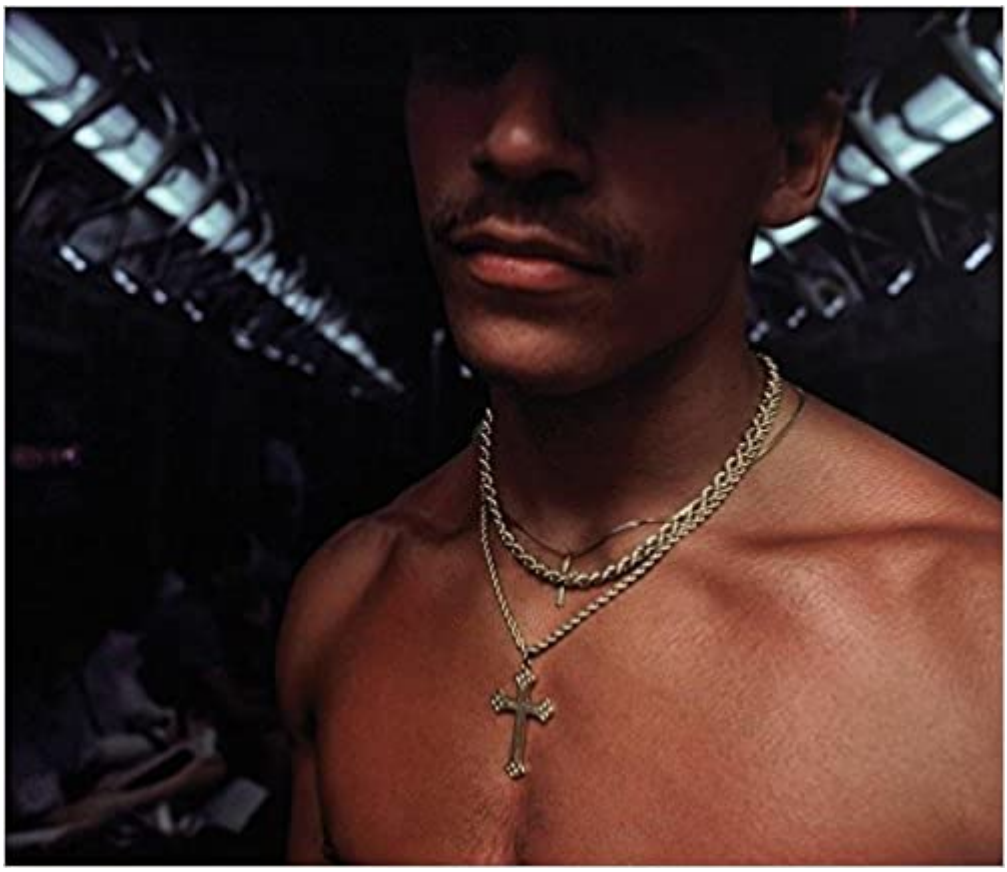
Bruce Davidson: Subway



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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 In this third edition of what is now a classic of photographic literature, a sequence of 118 (including 25 previously unpublished) images transport the viewer through a landscape at times menacing, and at other times lyrical and soulful.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

Subway is Davidson's visceral take on the New York underground system of the 1980s complete with beleagured passengers, Guardian Angels, graffiti and a palpable, all-pervasive sense of fear. A glimpse of a New York that is already long gone. Ã¢â ¬â œThe GuardianHere, the enclosed world of the subway is a metaphor for New York itself, in all its frantic hustle and bustleÃ¢â ¬â •its

violence, its humanity and its hope. Ã¢â ¬â œThe GuardianBruce DavidsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s SubwayÃ¢â ¬Â| has become iconic for its juxtaposition of humanity against urban machinery. Ã¢â ¬â œArtinfoThe brilliant flash, combined with fluorescent lighting, intense colors and Davidson's probing vision, produced images that are dramatic and at times surreal. Ã¢â ¬â œPhoto District NewsEssentially, DavidsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s images manage to hark back to a forgotten New York City, while simultaneously tapping into a contemporary sense of why New York, with all is attitudes, is still seen to be one of the globeÃ¢â ¬â„¢s most vibrant and happening urban cities. Ã¢â ¬â œWingsÃ¢â ¬Â|Davidson was able to capture an ominous, hautingly poetic, and emotional atmosphere. Ã¢â ¬â œ Juxtapoz

Bruce Davidson is an award-winning photographer whose career spans nearly sixty years. He became a member of Magnum Photos in 1958, and received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1962, grants from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1967 and 1980, the Lucie Award for Outstanding Achievement in Documentary Photography in 2004, and a Gold Medal of Honor Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Arts Club in 2007. His work has been shown at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; and Aperture Foundation, New York.

I grew up in the Northeast in the 1970's and 1980's. These images remind me of my youth, riding the subways in Philadelphia. While inner cities these days have their fair share of crime, poverty, etc, these images are haunting and a stark reminder of what inner cities really looked like back then. It was a different world, a different time. While some of the images can be disturbing, they still convey a sense that life was simpler. I can easily get lost in this book for hours on a single image. I highly recommend this book for anyone into photography or the history of modern inner cities, hip-hop, and/or trains. To echo Fab 5 Freddy "Thank you Bruce Davidson." The most wonderful moments of my life are losing time staring at an open book, this book doesn't disappoint.

This book is beautiful. I owned E 100th street and other Bruce Davidson books, and Subway is the best. I had seen it a long time ago and I don't have an explanation on why i didn't buy it earlier. Magnificent lightning, framing and subject matter. Subway is now my favorite photo book.

Subway is a book about people. And therefore Btruce Davidson is not photographing the underground railwaysystem. For him the subway brings people together and for him the interaction

between the users is his subject. In a magnificent way he portraits those men, women and children who uses the subway. His pictures are honest and full of humanity. When I compare this book with other books about the subway (and not necessarily in New York) it is one of the best books I ever saw.

In 1980, Bruce Davidson began to photograph the New York subway system. He first started photographing in Black and White and then decided that the project required color. Davidson generally asked permission before photographing someone -- ironically the one notable exception was a man Davidson did not know was blind. It is one of my favorite images (p. 54). He offered to send them a print of the picture. Yet most of the photographs do not appear posed. The breadth of life on the New York subway system is impressive. You will see beautiful women, daring and frightening young men, some violence, people dealing with crowded situations, lonely people, business people, elderly people, musicians, graffiti, people in love, street people, an arrest -- in short the full panoply of life in NYC. It's just wonderful. The images are a bit on the dark side which fits the subject. Davidson used a flash -- as this was necessary. Many of the images have too much flash but I did not find this to be more than a modest distraction.The quality of reproduction is excellent. I learned about the variety of humanity below the ground in New York. The enterprise was not without risk. Someone stole one of Davidson's cameras. The book does not make the NY subway seem to be a safe place but certainly one where it's possible to genuinely connect with the humanity we all share.Highly recommended.

Amazing photos from the underground, NYC's subway. It's like going down with him to the subterranean world. The photos he's taken are unflinching and beautiful.

Beautiful and very powerful work. The context and story jump at you from the photos, and the reproduction is excellent. Skin tones and fatigued metal create beautiful visuals under the harsh flashguns of Mr. Davidson.A book that you can show to anyone (keeping in mind the appropriateness of one or two photos - I believe there is some violence and nudity).

Subway is a masterpiece that any photography lover should have in their library. I never thought that after The Americans, by Robert Frank, another book could portray the ethnic and cultural diversity of American society with the same depth and accuracy. Obviously I was mistaken.

Brings me back to my childhood riding the gritty NY subways, which are now sanitized like the rest of the city.

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