



GETTING THE PICTURE

Glen E. Friedman

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WHAT DOES PHOTOGRAPHY DO? ALL THE WAY SINCE THE BEGINNING, THE THOUGHT OF CAPTURING TIME WAS CRITICAL. DRAWING WITH LIGHT CAME CLOSER TO THE TRUTH THAN EVER. YOU SEE A FRAME OF THE PAST TENSE, WHAT USED TO BE. BUT YOU KNOW TIME ROLLED ON AFTER THE SHOT. CAN THE STORY BEHIND CHANGE WHAT HAS BECOME HISTORY?

“My pics – my reality” Glen E. Friedman says about his 30 years of photographic art. He is famous for being *the* underground photographer from the late 1970s and also for documenting an era of rebellious youth cultures. But that is nowhere near the motivation of the American artist. It was hardly a progressive guarantee for future generations to see what was cooking, as much as it was an organic part of the scene as it lived and breathed. Neither was it about getting famous.

“I’m really into spreading cultures and exciting people about the cultures I think are interesting. Skateboarding and punk rock and hip hop were all kind of cultural revolutions in their own time. I was very inspired by these things, and the creativity that was exhibited in all of them was inspiring me, so I wanted to further inspire other people.” The man shoots photographs of people and places where a culture has emerged to the surface. He claims to carefully choose his motives; his heart has to get into the picture too, or else it would show on film. “I know I have a personality and an outspoken opinion on things and I appreciate getting the chance to voice that opinion, but it’s not spreading a culture as much as spreading the Glen E. Friedman perspective. And I think the photos are more important than any personality of mine getting in the way, the photos I create tell the story really better than anything else, the last thing people need to see is my mug. In fact when the work is strong I think it takes away the impact of the work to see the actual person who creates”.

Today it seems that Glen E. Friedman’s photography was the genesis of several massive cultures. The probable reason is the power of picture. “I was there right at



the point when it was starting to get big and I kind of helped a lot of these things get big.” By opening a peephole into the scene, his documenting art IS what happened back then. People don’t know anything else. Friedman’s photographic legacy has perhaps become the monument to an ideal. Thank goodness the photographer had integrity enough to add some motivation to each image.

STRAIGHT WEDGE

Did and do people get inspired? The answer is split. In a way youth cultures today never make it before they burn out their own candle in eagerness to grasp it all in a second. Friedman has doubt that cultures like the ones he has witnessed will have the type of impact they used to have. “The current generation really want everything right away.” he says. “Many people don’t get the chance to really develop before they’re exposed to the world. Bands, people and artists and musicians, they need a chance to marinate in their own juices.”

Even if it is a short stay on Earth, good things take their time to fulfill. Like any of Glen E. Friedman’s shots. “So how much time did it take? It took my whole life to take that one great photo. The end value is on how much creativity is in it, how great is it at the last moment when you present it to the world? That’s what matters.”

It’s been a while since 1976. Still, Friedman presents his world to the rest of it. Keeping on burning as in remembering where you came from is a combination of realizing what and why you did it, and at the same time accept that anyone that takes in of your work make up their own perception of how things were. It might be different from how it really was. The artist cannot prevent this, nor is it his prerogative. He can tell the truth the best he can.

Many get the message. Spreading what he thought needed to be spread; today Friedman can witness a worldwide identification. Even though the scene has split

up in more ways than could be foreseen, his inspiration was truly inspiring. “If there were more skateboarders, more punk rockers and more people loving hip hop than ever because of my pictures, then that was the goal.”

GREAT PLEDGE

As photographer, he does not yearn for prestige; the work is the important part. If you look to ‘Fuck You Heroes’ and ‘the Idealist’ you will see what moves him. To him, it is worth full attention. The least one should do, is open up to it. Many read the story told in images and the character in the photograph does not escape them. They will, to the extent of their own personality, perhaps help Glen E. Friedman in his purpose: to leave this planet in a better condition than it was when they entered.

But Friedman is not preaching. It’s about giving people an idea instead. “I don’t want you to follow me. I want you to think for yourself! And let other people know that there are big options out there; some people don’t even realize it.” By taking photographs of those who acted out their inspiration he has done his best to pay it forward. Not that you have to be a punk rocker, a skater or a hip hopper to get influenced by his art. “Real stuff comes from real people”, Friedman says, and it will probably create a resonance in anyone made out of the same substance. The honesty of the photographic surface. “If you have integrity, you know it, and if you don’t have integrity, you know it too.”

“It was never about becoming huge.” Friedman explains “There’s nothing worse than creating art for no reason other than to just to make money. It’s not what it is about for any of us.” The urge he felt was by living in a time when movement actually was fueled by motivation, to spread what he saw and experienced for others to see and to want to create something that would mean as much to them. So perhaps the history is still in the making and the story just goes along as long as there are images to illustrate it. “Just by keeping the legend alive, it continues.”

All photographs from the Glen E. Friedman books *Fuck You Heroes*, *Fuck You Too*, *DogTown -The Legend of the Z-Boys*, and *Keep Your Eyes Open*, reprinted with permission from Burning Flags Press (www.BurningFlags.com)

“...I wanted to further inspire other people.”



bottom//

Black Flag
At the Coocko’s Nest, NYC
1981



"So how much time did it take? It took my whole life to take that one great photo."

left//
Tony Alva
1977

top//
Beastie Boys
Westchester, LA, 1984

bottom//
HR / Bad Brains
CBGB's, NY, 1982

top left//
Tony Hawk



top right//
**Flavor Flav & Chuck D/
Public Enemy**
Wearing Minor Threat, Out Of Step t-shirts



bottom left//
Minor Threat
CBGC's, NYC, 1982

bottom right//
Milo/ The Descendents
CA, 1982





bottom//
Jay Adams
Dogbowl, 1977

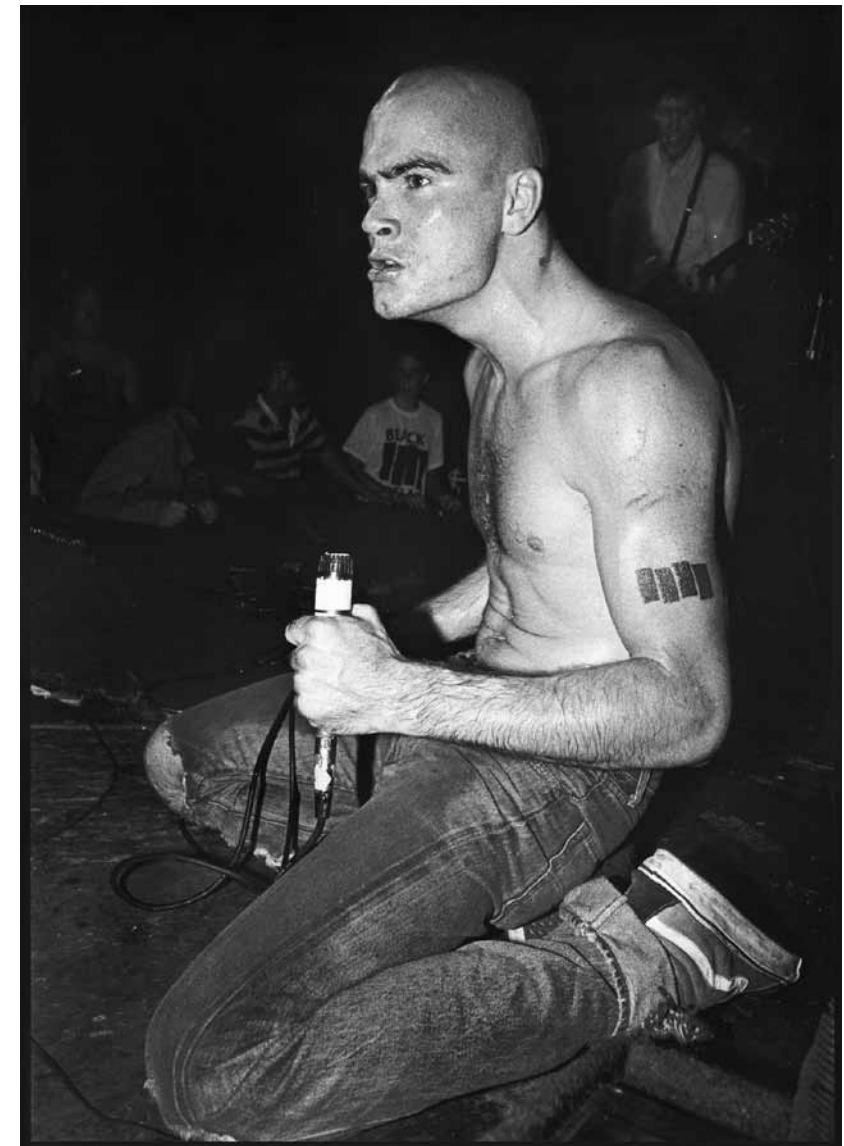
top//
Minor Threat
on the stairs of the Discord house, 1982

right//
Glenn Danzig/The Misfits





top left//
Shogo Kubo
Dogbowl, CA, 1977



top right//
Henry Rollins/
Black Flag
Cuckoos Nest, CA, 1981

bottom right//
Fugazi
Stockholm, 2000

bottom left//
Run-DMC

