Aperture Conversations

Robert Adams/Claudia Andujar/Quentin Bajac/Kate Bornstein/Sophie Calle/Henri Cartier-Bresson/Chuck Close/Renée Cox Gregory Crewdson/Moyra Davey/Bruce Davidson/Tacita Dean/Robert Delpire Philip-Lorca diCorcia/John Divola/Zackary Drucker/Ava DuVernay/William Eggleston Hal Fischer/Samuel Fosso/LaToya Ruby Frazier/Philip Gefter/Allen Ginsberg/RoseLee Goldberg/David Goldblatt/Nan Goldin/Katy **Grannan/Philip Jones Griffiths/David Hockney** Michael E. Hoffman/Bob Holman/Jasper Johns/Isaac Julien/Kikuji Kawada/Chris Killip William Klein/Nick Knight/Yoshiyuki Kohei Josef Koudelka/Barbara Kruger/An-My Lê Richard Learoyd/Sally Mann/Christian Marclay

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by Carole Naggar

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APERTURE ISSUE 220, "THE INTERVIEW ISSUE," FALL 2015

Bruce **Davidson**

Charlotte Cotton

"Too much in photography is shoot and leave," Bruce Davidson says in his conversation with curator Charlotte Cotton. Indeed, Davidson is often intent on looking back-not out of nostalgia for the past but rather to follow the course of his subjects' lives. This has been the case with those he photographed in a number of his first and most acclaimed series, including Brooklyn Gang (1959): his work documenting the civil rights movement, the 1965 Selma march and the March on Washington two years earlier; and his project East tooth Street (1966-68), on the lives of Harlem residents. Davidson began photographing as a teenager in Illinois, transforming a closet into a darkroom and apprenticing at a local camera shop. While stationed in the military in France in the 1950s, he met Henri Cartier-Bresson, who invited him to join the Magnum agency in 1958. Davidson modestly sums up what defines his ability to connect with his subjects: "It's about trying to be a human being," he says.

Now eighty-one, even as he describes ideas for his next photographs, Davidson has been looking back again, this time through his archive, revisiting older bodies of work. Steidl has released a number of new volumes, including *Los Angeles* 1964 (2015), which may be a revelation for viewers who associate Davidson with New York City, a perennial subject of his. For this interview, Cotton visited Davidson at his home on Manhattan's Upper West Side last April. There the two spoke about his early infatuation with picture making, about walking the streets of Paris with Cartier-Bresson, and of the constant photographic challenge of getting past the obvious.

Charlotte Cotion: I read recently that in the process of recalling a memory, we literally reposition that memory in a new place in our naural systems, among new experiences—a new context. I find it a really liberating thing to think about, that we are constantly renewing moments from our past. What do you think of

Bruce Davidson: That means time hasn't affected the way I see, or what I see, or the joy in seeing. I live with a camera now in exactly the same way I did when I was sixteen. That hasn't left me—that memory, that boyhood with photography.

CC: What were you like at sixteen?

BD: Most young boys have a buddy. I had a camera. I was pretty much a loner, and I was doomed to failure because I wasn't interested in anything other than taking pictures and developing them in my darkroom.

BD: When I was old enough to take the El train into Chicago to take pictures and come home before dark. My mother allowed me to do that. Once she remarried, her husband was a lieutenant commander in the nay and he, like other lieutenant commanders, was given a Kodak camera, which was like a big Leica—it was a range-finder camera. It was quite something. Some of those pictures have survived. The joy of photographing sustains me.

CC: Where would you go to photograph when you were a teenager?

BRUCE DAVIDSON BRUCE DAVIDSON

THE NOTION OF FAMILY, 2014

LaToya Ruby Frazier

Dawoud Bey

In The Notion of Family, her first book, LaTova Ruby Frazier offers an incisive exploration of the legacy of racism and economic decline in America's small towns, as embodied by her hometown of Braddock, Pennsylvania. The work also considers the impact of that decline on the community and on her family, creating a statement both personal and truly political-an intervention in the histories and narratives of the region. Frazier has compellingly set her story of three generations—her Grandma Ruby, her mother, and herself—against larger questions of civic belonging and responsibility. Frazier documents her own

struggles and interactions with family and the expectations struggles and interactions with family and the expectations of community, and includes the documentation of the demise of Braddock's only hospital, reinforcing the idea that the history of a place is frequently written on the body as well as the landscape. With The Notion of Family, Frazier knowingly acknowledges and expands upon the traditions of classic blackand-white documentary photography, enlisting the participation of her family—and her mother in particular. As Frazier says, her mother is "coauthor, artist, photographer, and subject. Our relationship primarily exists through a process of making images together. I see beauty in all her imperfections and abuse." In the creation of these collaborative works, Frazier reinforces the idea of art and image-making as a transformative act, a means of resetting traditional power dynamics and narratives, both those of her family and those of the community at large.

Dawood Bey: What was the beginning for you, the realization that using the earners and making pictures could be your voice in the world? How early on in your engagement with photography did you begin to sort that out, to realize you wanted to make a particular kind of work?

LaToya Ruby Frazier: I always made contour line drawings, watercolor painting Latoya Kuby Frazzer: Laways made contout me drawings, watercoor paintings, and pastel drawings of my grandmother Ruby, my step-great-grandfather, Gramps, and myself. I started to get a clue of my love for photography when I used a disposable camera to take pictures of all the kids that rode my bus senior year at Woodland

cames to take pictures of all the kids that role my bus senior year at Woodland Hills High School. I didn't quite understand the significance of that particular moment. I just knew I wanted pictures of them because we survived through high school.

Things legan to further crystallize for me at Edinboro University, in Pernnydvania, in 1999, I changed my major at the encouragement of an instructor, Mark Kirsch, and declared a dalt major in photography and graphic design with a minor in speech communication. Between 2000 and 2001 I had two very intense years with Nathe Kowakisi, who became my first photography mentor. She brought in photography books, history of photography books, and theoretical photography books with an emphasis on documentary, in particular junes fage 24 Let Now Pairie Emmas Mon (941) and Roland Barrhen's Camera Lucide (1980, in her own photographic practice Kathe devoted herself to documentating limilia living in rural poverty surrounding Eric, Pennsylvania; women in prison, where she often held writing

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