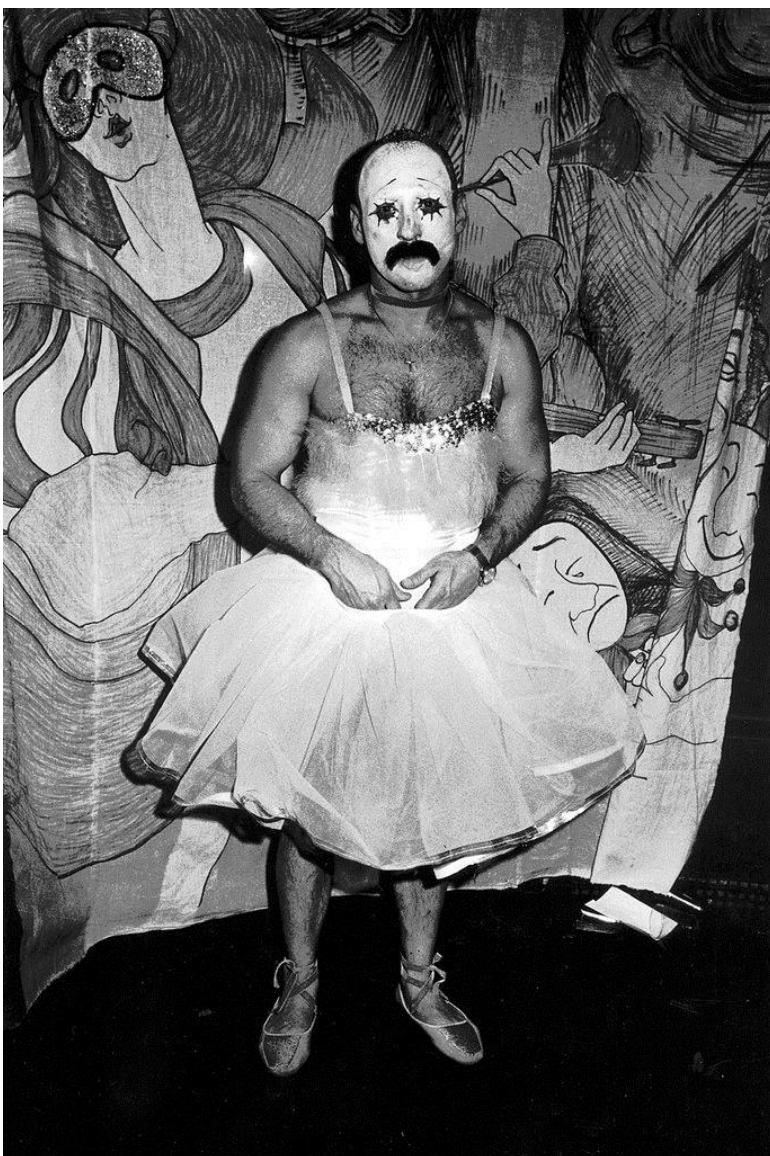


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**The New York Times**

*For a Street Photographer, 'The Weirder, the Better'*

By JOHN LELAND  
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Jill Freedman's New York was invisible to most people even when she shot it. Now it is invisible even to her.

"I don't feel it's New York anymore because they destroyed the neighborhoods," Ms. Freedman, 75, said the other day, from her apartment in Morningside Heights. "New York was all about the neighborhoods. Now everything's just real estate."

From the mid-1960s through the late 1980s, Ms. Freedman immersed herself in a city that felt to her like home. Hiding behind a camera, she found her subjects where others were not looking — "beggars, panhandlers, people sleeping on the street," the police and the firefighters, the people washed ashore by forces bigger than

themselves. "It's the theater of the streets," she said. "The weirder, the better."

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She worked obsessively, embedding herself on police patrols, sleeping in a fire chief's car to capture the round-the-clock rhythms of a firehouse. She shot her city in black and white to avoid cloaking it under a veil of pretty.

"I set out to deglamorize violence," she said. "I didn't want to make it easy for the viewer. Color would have shown all that beautiful red."

Then in 1988 a diagnosis of breast cancer and a lack of health insurance nudged her out of the city, and when she returned in the mid-2000s, it was to a New York she did not recognize. The disintegration that had seemed permanent was gone, replaced by an order that felt even more insubstantial.

"The suburbanites won," she said. "Instead of having to commute, they brought the suburbs in with them."

The photographs here are part of [an exhibition called "Jill Freedman: Long Stories Short," at the Steven Kasher Gallery in Chelsea](#) until Oct. 24.

Last week, Ms. Freedman was preparing herself for the opening reception. "I keep forgetting to buy a flask," she said. "That'll help."