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Bill Hayes: How New York Breaks Your Heart

February 15th - March 17th, 2018

Opening Reception: Thursday February 15th, 2018

Steven Kasher Gallery presents the first ever exhibition of photography by renowned writer Bill Hayes. A love letter to New York City, the exhibition *How New York Breaks Your Heart* features 24 black and white and color photographs. Hayes photographs ordinary New Yorkers at their most expressive and at their most fleeting, bringing the texture of the city to life. The exhibition launches the publication of a book of the same name, published by Bloomsbury, which features 150 photographs from the series woven through with Hayes's lyric reflections. The exhibition also launches the paperback edition of Hayes's widely celebrated memoir *Insomniac City: New York, Oliver Sacks, and Me*.



Hayes cites Garry Winogrand, Peter Hujar and Diane Arbus as his artistic influences. Much like Arbus, Hayes photographs people on the streets of New York at close range with a straight on composition. But as the *San Francisco Chronicle* pointed out, "[Hayes's] photos are reminiscent of Diane Arbus' street portraits, the difference being that Arbus was drawn to the strangeness in people while Hayes is drawn to their warmth and beauty." Former United States Poet Laureate Billy Collins says, "It's in these ocular embraces that we feel the humanity and the beautiful eccentricity of individuals being revealed. Hayes gives us glimpses into the souls of the city's characters in these arresting on-the-spot portraits."

Street photography purists seek invisibility and don't engage with their subjects beforehand. On the contrary, Hayes always ask his subjects if he can take their picture, creating a momentary intimacy. "I want to create portraits, but taken on the spot, on the fly, with no set-up or props, and only using natural light."

Hayes is instinctively drawn to young people. "I find them compelling: open to life, open to the city, open to romance, open to the experience of having their picture taken, open to me." Hayes credits his relationship with Oliver Sacks as the catalyst for his compassionate interest in the elderly. "Why old people? I admire them, especially living in New York, something I came to understand by being with Oliver [Sacks]. It's a tough place for old people. They are survivors, and also can be quite vulnerable."

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Bill Hayes (b. 1961) is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in nonfiction and the author of four books, *Sleep Demons* (2001), *Five Quarts* (2005), *The Anatomist* (2009) and the critically acclaimed memoir *Insomniac City: New York, Oliver Sacks, and Me* (2017). He is a frequent contributor to the *New York Times* and his writing has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Review of Books*, *BuzzFeed*, and *The Guardian*. His photography has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, and the *New York Times*. His portraits of his partner, the late Oliver Sacks, appear in the volume of Dr. Sacks's suite of final essays *Gratitude*. Hayes has lectured at NYU, UCSF, and University of Virginia, and has appeared at the Sydney Writers Festival, the 92nd Street Y, the Times of India (Mumbai) LitFest, and other venues. He serves as the Creative Director of the Oliver Sacks Foundation and as a co-editor of Dr. Sacks' posthumously published work.

Bill Hayes: How New York Breaks Your Heart will be on view February 15th-March 17th, 2018. Steven Kasher Gallery is located at 515 W. 26th St., New York, NY 10001. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 AM to 6 PM. For inquiries, please contact Cassandra Johnson, 212 966 3978, cassandra@stevenkasher.com.