

George Tate Photography

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Biography

Photographer George Tate (1920-1992) displayed his uncanny ability to capture the giddiness and hope of a place and time through mesmerizing images of mid-century Southern California. Tate learned the technical aspects as a photographer in the US Army during World War II. Following the war he worked at several photography studios in the Fort Worth, eventually teaching at the Fort Worth School of Photography. In February 1951 he headed West after receiving a scholarship to the Art Center School of Photography in Los Angeles where he honed his compositional and aesthetic ideas. After completing his studies in 1953 he worked as a staff photographer for Firestone Tire and Rubber Co. in their Guided Missile Section until 1958. In June of that year he struck out on his own as a freelance photojournalist until he retired in the 1970's.

His 1950's work delves into the health and fitness life style of Muscle Beach in Santa Monica, California and shows the sands teaming with contestants, athletes and adoring crowds. His unique look at people that made up the scene captures a range of emotions and moments silhouetted against an always- brilliant sky. Towards the late 1950s, he explored candid street photography showing the hustle and bustle of the city with endless sidewalks, coffee shops and storefronts as backdrops. Some of his most moving work captures the loneliness at the heart of the city, "lonesomer than the desert even."

His Venice Surfestival Beauty Pageant series from the 1960's takes the best from his candid street photography and brings that back to the beach. Editorial in spirit, the images show what's behind the smiles of pageant hopefuls as they fret and worry before taking the stage. Concurrently he also photographed many models, hopeful starlets and took a variety of classic cheesecake images.

During the 1970's Tate focused on his commercial career and began photographing gas stations and car washes that were being built to serve new suburban developments throughout Southern California. These images show period cars proudly gleaming as they're dried off under swooping roof lines. All in color, these photographs are a great historical record of the ubiquitous structures that once dotted practically every street corner.

Tate's photography archive, housed at the Santa Monica History Museum in Santa Monica, California, captures a wide range of people, places and emotions of a modern day Babylon springing up along the West Coast. "People look, but they don't see" was a frequent observation.

Education

1945 Honorable discharge Army Air Force, Photographer
1953 The Art Center School, Photography, Los Angeles CA

Group Exhibitions / Collections

2020 Art to Benefit the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, Craig Krull Gallery, Santa Monica
2019 Light & Shadow, Santa Monica History Museum, Group Exhibition, Santa Monica
2019 City of Santa Monica, Muscle Beach Crowd 1953 large format print, Santa Monica
2016 Garland Hotel, Muscle Beach – The Pit 1953 large format print, North Hollywood
2016 Este Lauder, Licensing Agreement, Venice Beach 1957 print, Bumble and Bumble, New York
2015 Bobrick Equipment, Car Washes and Gas Stations, commissioned 8 large format prints, Los Angeles
2015 HK Photographs, Both Sides of Sunset: Photographing Los Angeles, New York
2015 Paris Photo Los Angeles, Paramount Studios, Both Sides of Sunset: Photographing Los Angeles

2014 Petroleum Capital Advisors, Gas Stations, commissioned 3 large format prints, Los Angeles
 2014 Driving L.A., Craig Krull Gallery, Santa Monica
 2014 Viva Las Vegas, Charles Phoenix, Orleans Hotel, Las Vegas
 2014 Architecture in LA, Charles Phoenix, Palm Springs Art Museum
 2014 Bowlarama: California Bowling Architecture 1954-1964, A+D Museum Los Angeles
 2013 Architecture in LA, Charles Phoenix, Art Center College, Pasadena
 2013 Car Wash, Craig Krull Gallery, Santa Monica

Books / Media / Entertainment / Licensing

2021 The Philosophy of Modern Song, Bob Dylan, Simon & Schuster, Peep Show
 2021 Gold's Gym Documentary, Director Mark Martinez, Muscle Beach Images used in film
 2020 Precept Wine, Muscle Beach image for wine labels
 2019 Santa Monica, Landmark Home construction fencing, Muscle Beach image
 2016 KCET ArtBound, Third LA with Architecture Critic Christopher Hawthorne
 2016 History of Muscle Beach, Iron Witness
 2015 Both Sides of Sunset: Photographing Los Angeles, Metropolis Books
 2015 George Tate's Black and White Babylon, Sixty Hotels Culture Blog, October
 2014 Drive! George Tate's Muscular, Mid-Century Photography, The Clyde Fitch Report
 2014 Viva Las Vegas, Charles Phoenix, Retro Slide Show, Orleans Hotel, Las Vegas
 2014 Architecture in LA, Charles Phoenix, Retro Slide Show, Palm Springs Art Museum
 2014 The Powder Room, Issue #2, George Tate
 2014 A Region Gets Transported, Los Angeles Times
 2014 POBA Virtual Arts Center, James Kirk Bernard Foundation, Founding Member, New York
 2013 Architecture in LA, Charles Phoenix, Retro Slide Show, Art Center College, Pasadena
 2013 Architecture in LA, Charles Phoenix, Retro Slide Show, Natural History Museum, Los Angeles
 2013 Architecture in LA, Charles Phoenix, Retro Slide Show, Getty Center, Williams Auditorium
 2013 LA's Timeless Carwash Culture, Audio Vision, 89.3 KPCC
 2013 It's Time for a Throwback, Shape Magazine
 2013 Striving for the Body Beautiful in the 1950s: From Pageants to Weightlifters, Daily Mail UK
 2013 Beauty Pageants, Muscle Beach, and Gas Stations: Capturing Mid-Century California, Slate Magazine
 2013 Architecture in LA, Charles Phoenix, Natural History Museum, Los Angeles
 2013 Architecture in LA, Charles Phoenix, Getty Center, Williams Auditorium
 2012 Backyard Oasis: The Swimming Pool in Southern California Photography, 1945-1982, Palm Springs Art
 Museum
 2012 Backyard Oasis: The Swimming Pool in Southern California Photography, 1945-1982, Rizzoli
 2011 Muscle Beach, Permanent Collection, Santa Monica History Museum
 2010 New Collection Spotlight: George Tate Jr. Photography Collection, Santa Monica History Museum
 Newsletter
 2010 Ambiguous Clothing, Licensing Agreement, Venice Surfestival