

# Wallpaper\*

## A SURVEY OF 1960-90s PHOTOGRAPHY REVEALS OMENS OF AMERICA'S CURRENT STATE OF DISCORD

By Grace Banks, October 16, 2017



What do William Eggleston, Diane Arbus and Stephen Shore have in common? A flair for recording the most dire political times in America, according to Nottingham Contemporary's exhibition, 'States of America'. The exhibition examines a crucial generation of photographers that experimented with ingenious approaches to documentary photography over three decades, from the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s and 70s to the Reagan Era.

Delving into the vast collection of the Wilson Centre for Photography, curators Irene Aristizábal and Abi Spinks have framed the show through the Donald Trump's dysfunctional presidency, with the 250 photographs by 17 artists prelude America's current discord. They make a convincing case: images by Milton Rogovin like Lower West Side, Buffalo (1970) display the rapid disintegration of American city centres, while Bruce Davidson's 1966 portrait of three girls in East Harlem touches on racial and social divisions.

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The Wilson Centre, founded in 1988 by James Bond screenwriter Michael G Wilson, is widely known as one of the most exhaustive contemporary photography collections in the world, with a focus on political art. Many of the images in this exhibition reflect modern American today, like William Eggleston's Las Vegas (yellow shirt guy at pinball machine) 1965-68, and Stephen Shore's Ginger Shore, Causeway Inn, Tampa, Florida (1997), where a woman stands listless in a swimming pool.

Through these images, Aristizábal and Spinks triumph in exploring the political shifts that happened in those three decades from 1960-1990, and how they continue to have an impact on American life as we know it.