

WASTE YOUR YOUTH

FLORIAN GEISS – THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE FOR A NEW GENERATION

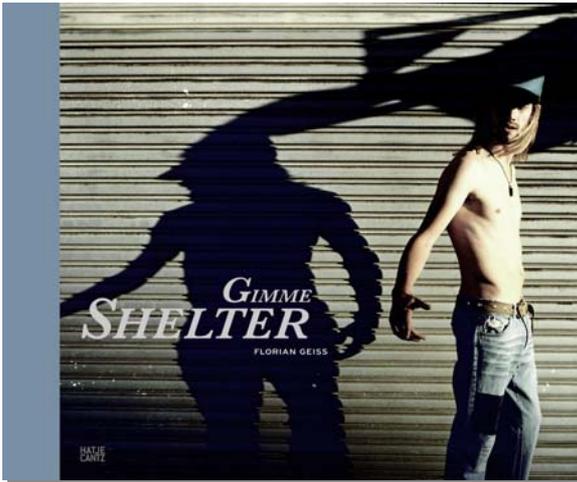
Yearning, fragility, self-dramatization, and demands—all of these things are included in Florian Geiss's atmospherically thick photographs, which radiate a fascinating, yet disturbing aura. *Gimme Shelter* is a book of photographs that presents its protagonists' search for identity between the poles of the iconic American way of life and their own individuality.

Berlin, May 9, 2017 At first glance drenched in light and clear, Florian Geiss's (*1969 in Koblenz) photographs reveal a rather mysterious atmosphere upon closer inspection. For his project *Gimme Shelter*, the Hamburg-based artist traveled along the west and east coasts of the United States, as well as through the American southwest, and in Africa and Asia, capturing a vast landscape full of yearning. It seems to symbolize an American way of life that can be achieved anywhere in the world, along with a strong sense of melancholy.

Right at the beginning of the book the lines "doubt is threatening me | help I need some shelter or I'm gonna hide away" create a mood. Doubt and the search for shelter become the themes. While the global political situation and social and cultural conflicts force millions of refugees into homelessness, having a roof over one's head is considered normal in the so-called First World. Here, another type of uncertainty predominates: spiritual homelessness. "In *Gimme Shelter* the men are tough guys, cool characters, cowboys, and hobos—and yet a sense of fragility clings to them. Besides their hard shells they not only have a soft core, but are deeply insecure," writes author Sebastian Lux. "They've liberated themselves from all traditions, all conventions, all ties—and now? The women are beautiful and radiate self-confident eroticism. They too, have freed themselves from the constraints of tradition and convention—and now? Big families and the narrow concept of home have been left far behind; they are disconnected from religion and social expectations. They are dynamic, flexible in every respect, everything is subject to negotiation." Everyone in Geiss's pictures seems to be looking for something—an anchor, a home, new goals, meaning.

Like film stills, Geiss's photographs seem to distill a single moment; referring to a past and a present, they nevertheless seem to want to withhold the event in and of itself. The visual rhythm doesn't fall within an explicable framework, but resembles a scene from a Nouvelle Vague film. Protagonists and poses, places and subjects seem to change randomly. It isn't until one starts leafing through the book that the motifs add up to a whole, an atmospheric image out of which the reader returns to reality, wistfully and full of longing.

Geiss's deliberate method of dealing with color and light reflects the approach of American New Color Photography. The same sort of melancholy that makes *Gimme Shelter* so impressive also seems to permeate the photographs of road trips by Stephen Shore or Joel Sternfeld from the late 1970s.



**FLORIAN GEISS
GIMME SHELTER**

Texts by Johannes Finke, F. C. Gundlach, Sebastian Lux

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In keeping with our ambition to make it possible to experience art beyond the medium of the book, Hatje Cantz has launched the EDITION GERD HATJE as we continue to expand our portfolio of strictly limited, signed editions featuring works on paper, photographic works of art, and art objects.

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