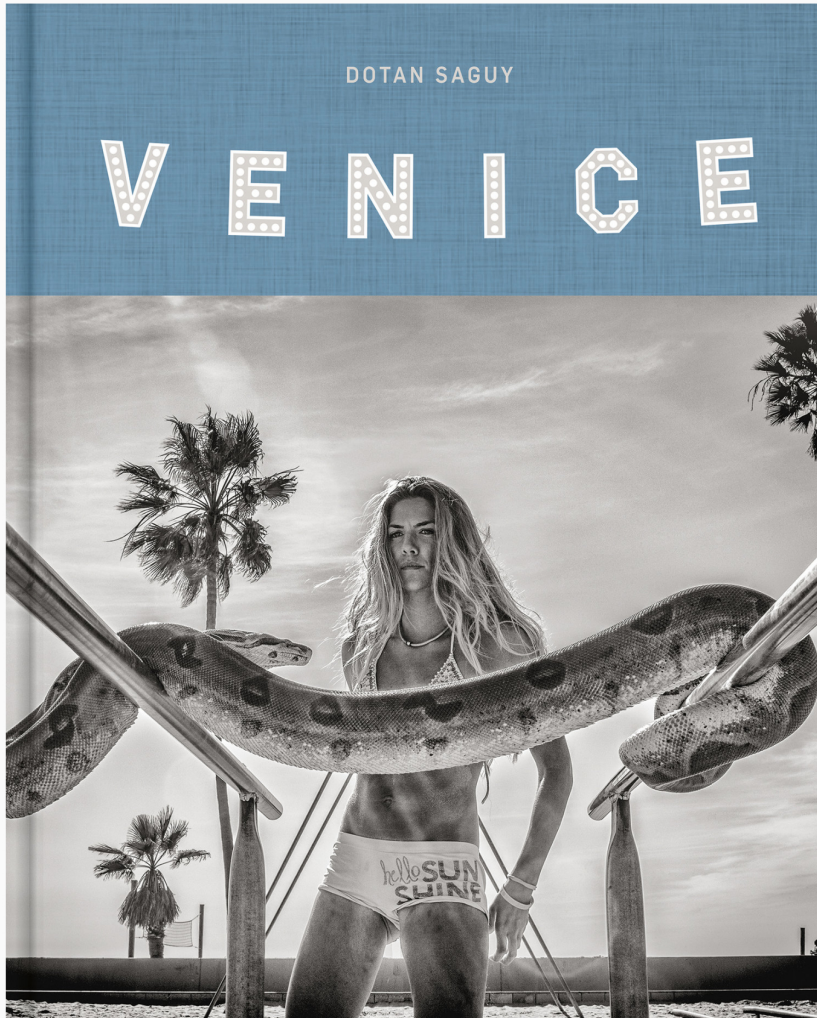




AUG 2

## Book Review: Venice Beach: The Last Days of a Bohemian Paradise

REVIEWS



© Dotan Saguy  
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By Brigid Kapuvari

What is the purpose of photography? To galvanize people? To shock, frighten, anger, and evoke the viewer's fibers until the only sensible reaction is to spring into action? Indeed, pictures possess the potential to stimulate by disclosing wrongs—an apparent message in copious contemporary pieces today—but let's not bracket photography to a sole objective.

The primary aim of creators is not always to rile up. It can be to calm, reassure, summon a smile—demonstrate that mankind hasn't ceased to be unified, wholesome community altogether. With "Venice Beach: The Last Days of Bohemian Paradise," Dotan Saguy, a street photographer, highlights a theme of togetherness as well as celebration. Through his



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photography, he proves that there's as much exhilaration in merriment as in revolution. And moreover, since Venice Beach is on the brink of collapse due to economic issues and prejudice, Saguy stresses the astronomical loss of such a place.



© Dotan Saguy  
*Jingles' Blessing*

Although Saguy's images are shot in black-and-white, there's no absence of color. There is not a single photograph that's dull or humdrum because this population is boisterous, connecting with every aspect of life. Whether parading around snakes, toying with mannequins, shredding on skateboards, flaunting wacky outfits, or dashing through the ocean waves like champions, these individuals embrace the undomesticated parts of their personalities, never worrying about formalities. In fact, as far as maintaining appearances, one could say the norm for them is to be completely and utterly *unleashed*.



© Dotan Saguy  
*Boy and Snake*

There is a photograph where a boy, sprawled out lazily on a sea of sand, gazes entranced at a boa constrictor coiled around a metal handle. In a different setting, it's more than likely that

sea creature coiled around a metal handle. In a different setting, it's more than likely that the average child would have shrieked and bolted from the snake for dear life—but not in Venice. Saguy shot this event to emphasize the exclusiveness of the culture. Fearless of the animal before him, this boy encompasses the attitude of those living in Venice Beach: marvels do not exist to be repulsive but respected and relished.



© Dotan Saguy  
*Muscle Gym Beach*

Furthermore, throughout the work, Saguy illustrates the intoxicating, triumphant nature of this paradise. One image reveals two men exercising at the world renowned Muscle Beach Gym. Both men are chiseled, muscles defined and prominent, signaling that they are relentlessly dynamic, refusing to take a healthy physique for granted. In another picture, a woman rocks her body brazenly to a rhythm created by a series of percussion instruments, closing her eyes in a manner that suggests the beat has consumed her.



© Dotan Saguy  
*Venice Drum Circle*

These folks, exuberant in character and spirit, dedicate their efforts and passions not towards a movement or revolt, but towards a pleasurable way of life merely for themselves, and that's what is so refreshing.

No pretenses.

No limitations.

NO LIMITATIONS.

Venice Beach is a nirvana: an idyllic space where people can engage in any activity on a whim. When Saguy raised his camera, he was seeking out unconventional moments that impress on viewers feelings of jubilation and ecstasy. In doing this, he reminds them that there is a colossal liberty to just... being. He broadcasts the essentialness of free will, not by spotlighting injustices, but by divulging how such a world would truly look without them.



© Dotan Saguy  
*Freedom and the Bird*

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