

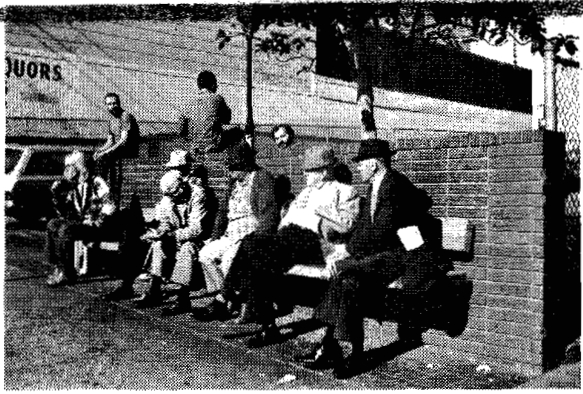
18th Street near Castro x 24



9:00 a.m. Saturday morning and the street is quiet. A few people on their way to work wait at the bus stops. P walks up 18th Street to catch the 33 over to the Haight. I take the picture and stroll down to the corner. A man outside the telephone booth offers me 5 quaaludes for \$10.00. His friend on the telephone signals him to wait, he thinks he has a better deal. I spend the rest of the hour at the Bakery Cafe. H is eating breakfast with friends he met the night before in the back room of the Jaguar Bookstore.



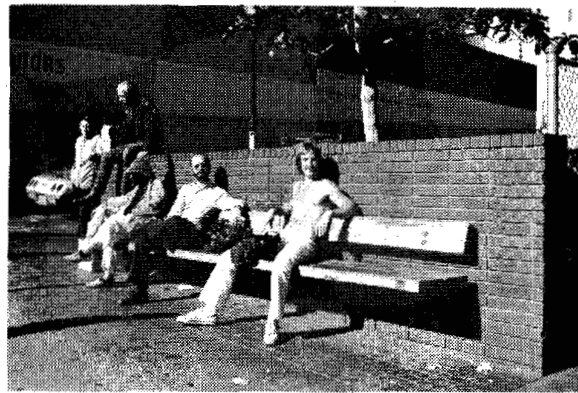
10:00 a.m. The old men begin to arrive. They ignore me, they're used to anything occurring in the Castro. Once this was their neighborhood, now it's the largest gay enclave in the world. The working class bars the men frequented are gay now, and their gathering points have turned into cruise areas. The rents have doubled and tripled, and the bakeries, hardware stores and barbershops have been transformed into kitchenware emporiums, clothing boutiques and restaurants.



11:00 a.m. The bench fills with old men, but already the first boys appear with the sun. Behind the wall some boys pass a joint. They cruise me a bit, compliment me on my green eyes, and offer me a hit. I walk back to the Bakery. M, T and D are eating breakfast and I tell them my plan to photograph the bench for 24 hours. S, J and D are sitting at the next table and I explain the piece again. They have just finished running in the women's race from Golden Gate Park and are discussing a film they plan to make.



12:00 noon The old men depart. I think the sunbather has irritated them. They knew the bench would be inundated with boys tanning their bodies. The sunbather inquires about my picture taking. He nods in approval and seems happy to be a part of the mosaic. Everyone understands the significance of the bench. It seems much later than noon. How am I going to last until 8:00 a.m. Sunday morning? I walk over to T's house which has a for sale sign on the front lawn. I think about all the work he'd done on his flat and how they would surely force him to move once it was sold. I walk up the stairs ready to knock on his door, but the paper is lying on the stoop so I assume he's still asleep. I head down 19th Street and stop at the rummage shop. A bare chested, pretty blond haired boy nods as I walk past. We cruise each other for a few moments. I waiver, but continue down 19th and onto Castro.



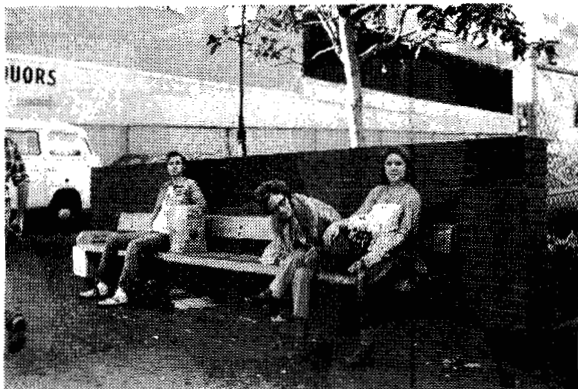
1:00 p.m. The sunbather smiles and makes me feel comfortable with the project. My friends were worried that someone might take offense with my presence and break either my head, camera or both. The possibility has crossed my mind. I am excited by both the sense of potential danger and the possibilities in the unknown or untried. I wander down to the Bakery and sit on the stairs in the backyard. A group of men congregates at one table. I try to untangle their obviously intertwined relationships.



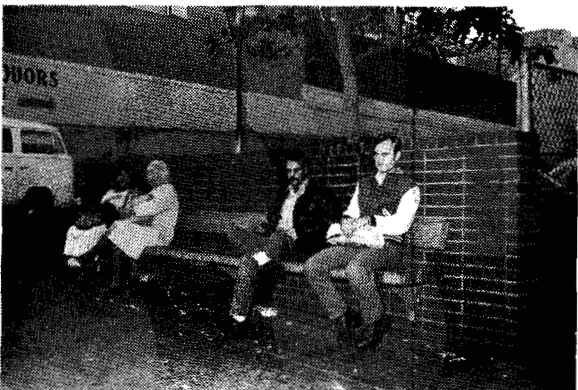
2:00 p.m. They reach a compromise at the bench. The bus passengers sit on the seat and the sunbathers claim the wall. Down on Castro Street the boys are gathering in front of the drugstore and Toad Hall. Shoppers push their way through a double row of men. One-half line up against the storefronts, while the other half sit on parked cars or lean against the parking meters.



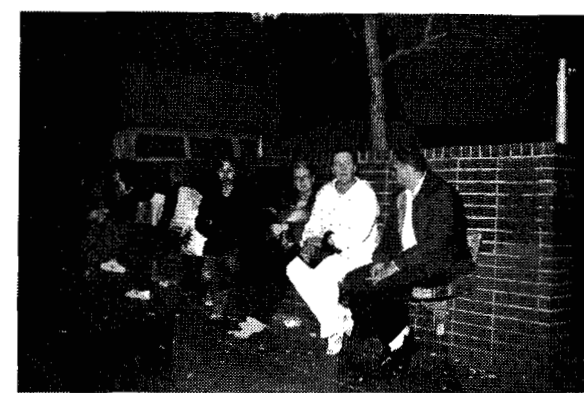
3:00 p.m. It ends so quickly. Without the sun the boys have no interest in the wall. A few of the old men return, but it's really too chilly. Back at the Bakery I run into G. She introduces me to B who works down the street. We've met before but she doesn't remember me. Like everyone else who frequents the Bakery on a regular basis, we have a number of mutual acquaintances. In fact we even have one former lover in common.



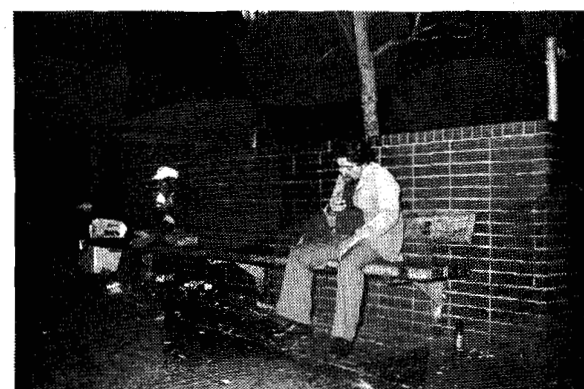
4:00 p.m. The commuters return laden with shopping bags and parcels. The punks are also more prevalent and over by the curb a teenager demands that I take his picture. I shoot one frame and he splits, obviously satisfied that I complied. He doesn't bother to ask where the picture will be shown.



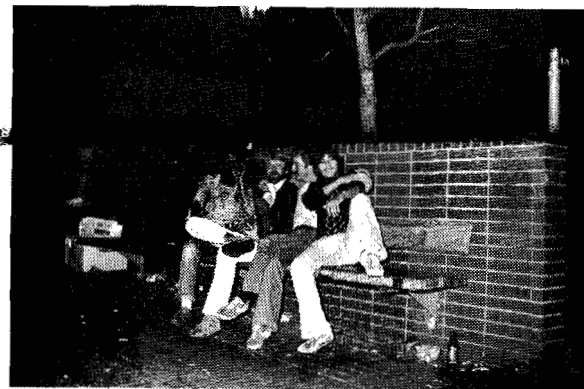
5:00 p.m. Castro is busy with people preparing for Saturday night. Boys rush by with blue paper packages from the Chinese cleaners. The laundromats are jammed with men washing their levis and flannel shirts. The bench is peopled with characters whom Arbus might have found intriguing. A Mexican girl aching to talk with anyone questions me about my astrological sign. I expect her to request a photograph of her dog, but she doesn't. J bolts across the street to talk to me. He's dressed in black leather and I tell him he's ideal for the 3:00 a.m. shot. J promises to be there and then darts back into Badlands. J is always in perpetual motion, driving his beat up station wagon between the Haight and the Castro.



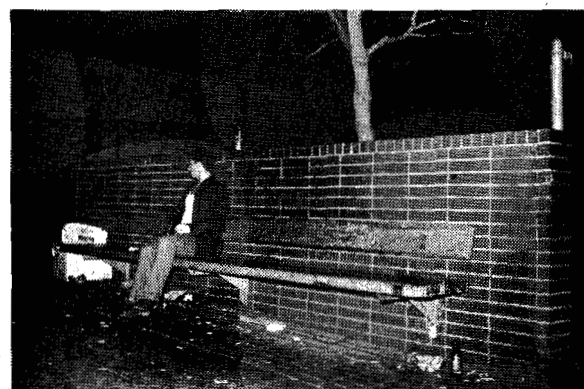
6:00 p.m. The slowest part of the day. I try to delay dinner for as long as possible because it's the only thing I have to look forward to. K, dressed in black leather chaps and studded belt, appears on the corner. I haven't seen him in months. He has no sense of time, but simply moves on whim. I think K is looking for an early evening trick. C and a couple other photographers show up and we discuss the project. I can't wait any longer, and walk up to Andy's for dinner.



7:00 p.m. I make a big production out of taking this photograph because I'm intimidated by the people on the bench. In the dark I fumble while focusing the camera. I wander down to the corner where the traffic has picked up in front of the drugstore. I finally take the black beauty. N promised it would keep me up for at least 12 hours. I go to the laundromat to call N. The speed seems to take effect immediately. The laundromat is warm, and I hang out for awhile, making notes in my journal. On the way back to the bench I run into R who used to be a regular at Gus' Pub. He's a writer and under the street sign at 18th and Castro we discuss gay artists and authors. I'm carried along by the speed.



8:00 p.m. The evening bench party commences. The boys are into posing for me. We talk a bit. They ask me if I'm straight. The boys are quite high and I can't imagine what condition they'll be in by midnight. I depart, wandering down Castro Street. The restaurants are filled, but the bars won't get crowded until 10:00 p.m. A clump of boys gather in front of Toad Hall.



9:00 p.m. The bench is almost empty and I begin to worry. Is it possible that tonight will be slow? The boy on the bench motions me to come over. We introduce ourselves and W tells me he's a carpenter and masseur. He's very mysterious, dropping fragments of his life's experiences here and there. W is Canadian but has lived in New York and New England. We discuss the differences in lifestyle between the east and west. I feel myself merging into the bus stop mosaic and must leave. W and I walk over to Toad Hall for a beer.

