

**DENNIS STOCK**



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Foreword by  
ANTON CORBIJN

Essay by  
CAROLE NAGGAR

TIME IS ON YOUR SIDE



**PRESTEL**  
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i regret never having met Dennis Stock, nor having been aware of his work the way i am now, in mid-edit on a film called LIFE that focuses on his work with James Dean. i have come into contact with his work through research for the film and then realized that i had seen his images without registering the name. peripheral vision i guess, but it felt like an inconceivable omission. even the famous image of THE PHOTOJOURNALIST by Andreas Feininger had not registered with me as being Dennis as i always thought it depicted a woman (sorry Dennis!), but if we'd have met it would have been a good starting point for a talk about what it is that we are seeing.

having looked in depth over the last year or so at his photographs, i find that his incredible eye for detail in life, humor, man, and surrounding made me want to explore more, go out into the world and discover how much there is to see. it is an unobtrusive and slight poetic language he is using to seduce us to observe and participate. the guy had a fantastic eye and he had great timing. timing can be the tool of a comedian. generally i find it very hard to make a "funny" picture, but Dennis seems to do this effortlessly. it is only a very sharp observer who manages to coordinate situations with timing, but a sharp observer he was. he was not really a portraitist—you'd be very hard-pressed to find more than five portraits amongst his work—but he set off people against their surroundings. backgrounds are an important and determined element in his work and i can very much relate to that. it colors the person with the added bonus later on that it tells you a lot about an era; although that obviously only starts playing a role as time passes, it is a fascinating characteristic of photography. probably one out of many differences in our work is the reason why one would work like that. in my case it came partly out of shyness, keeping a distance helped somehow, and a protestant upbringing that made me look at the situation people lived in, plus the absence of iconic images around our home made me somewhat unaware of portraits, iconic or otherwise. watching pieces about Dennis on film i would not put shyness as a factor in his way of operating in the world, but he obviously enjoyed context, which is what a background can give you. these days this is a very overlooked possibility in the photography of people who can be viewed as "well-known," or as "celebrities," that dreaded word. photographers want to sell their work, so it is all about portraits or about full body shots with an "idea." never mind that the idea is usually crap, it sells, which perplexes me. anyway, Dennis is very, very good at shooting people with and within a context. he calls his work "making essays," stories, and i can see why he looked at it that way.

preparing for the film i obviously had to delve into him as a private person, and found that his desire for adventure left his personal life with a lot to be desired, but i guess that is what it takes for some of us. he found beauty in his work and love with several wives over the course of his restless life, while his son Rodney, who visited the film set of LIFE for quite a few days, said he learned more about his father through the film than he had in real life. taking into account that we were kind to Dennis in the film (played by Rob Pattinson) compared to how he was in real life, that is a shocking reality but not one that makes his work any less interesting. for someone who couldn't share the love of life with his son, he miraculously certainly managed to share it with the rest of the world.

july 2014, new york





**JAMES DEAN**

James Dean in Times Square. New York City, 1955

