

THE SIXTIES

SEARCHING FOR PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGH A TURMOIL OF UNREST

By Helen Marketti



Robert Altman's photographs have appeared in galleries, books and magazines such as *Rolling Stone*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *The New York Times*, *People Magazine* and more. One of his latest projects has been the coffee table photography book titled, *The Sixties* (Santa Monica Press). Images captured on film, in a moment, have left behind a reminder of who we were, where we were, and what was going on at a time when life seemed rebellious while searching for peace and understanding through a

turmoil of unrest. Arriving in San Francisco during the late

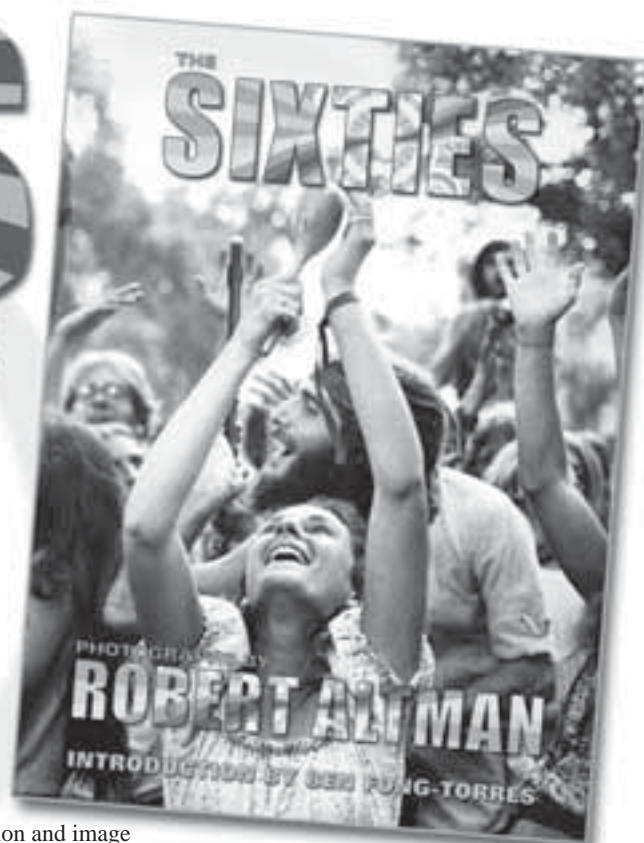
sixties found Robert and a friend of his making an impulse decision on the spot to take an apartment on a beautiful hilltop in Bernal Heights. "Spur of the moment decisions has been part of man's path time immemorial," said Robert. "That being said "people in motion" was also one of the primal practices of the 60s. Psychopharmacology certainly opened my generation up to alternative memes. The stricture that you stayed to live and work in the same area that your family did decade after decade surely cracked open wide. We were all part of LBJ's "Great Society" and some of the perks included sharing apartments and large Victorian homes where rent was cheap, jobs were available if you wanted one and food stamps were all over the place if you were hungry. There was plenty to be had in the land of plenty."

Indeed the 60s were a generation of overturning the old and getting a foothold on the new. Robert seemed to have a natural motivation to capture these moments on film. "Stephen Jobs stated emphatically, "LSD was one of the two or three most important things I have done in my life." For me, it was the pot that opened wide my experience of the possibilities that you could be anything you want this time around. That was happening concomitantly to so many others of my generation and we definitely perceived we were part of this new club," remembers Robert. "We even created club regalia... long hair, colorful clothes, common gathering spots to be with each other and talk, play music, demonstrate and learn. This was exciting and colorful and together with a desire to pursue the arts I easily migrated toward photography in order to capture all the excitement and euphoria."

Looking through the book, *The Sixties*, the expressions and the emotions can be experienced through Robert's images. There was a great deal going

on in every corner of society and for Robert it was a time that included every moment, not only one moment. "It was all good," said Robert, then quoting from the 50's movie *The Wild One*, "What are you rebelling against? (Pause) Marlon Brando, "What do you got?"

Robert Altman knows what captures a photograph that connects the time, emotion and image itself. "A great photograph is well composed, balanced, colorful, arresting and possibly tells an entire story captured in one frozen moment, in one frame," explains Robert. "It speaks to the viewer in an uncommon way. It is unique unto itself as a medium. I've never seen a still



photograph and then seen film of the same moments that were at all alike. Very strange."

The Sixties is a photography book that will take many on a journey of peace, love, protest and rock and roll. People are drawn to the

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from reinventing the wheel to shaping its own style, society, culture, music and life. "The 60s was dynamic, seminal, colorful, musical, fun, sometimes painful, global and most of all and especially... original," said Robert. "It all came together as if pre-ordained. The right elements at that time colluded and collided which then rocked society's boat and caused a shift in collective human behavior.

Everyone felt it and was touched by it to some extent. A lot of rules were rewritten."

Robert Altman captured "the time of the season" on film and is pleased with the connection. "It feels wonderful. I was blessed with a gift and thankfully, I had a passion to get it on celluloid whether I was assigned to do it or not. It was never about the money then, ever," he said. "That being said...things change. There is an old quote that originated with Churchill, "If you haven't rebelled by the time you're twenty you have no heart. If you haven't profited with the establishment by the time you're thirty, you have no brains." These days I do tend to the business end of photography."

Current projects with other events and plans in the works keep Robert at a fast pace with his photographic images. "I recently completed an exhibit at Macy's Herald Square in New York



where we filled all their windows with over 100 pieces of my work. They called it, "Art Under Glass."

I also wrapped up a very successful exhibit in London and was part of Keith Richards magnificent autobiography. I just gave the keynote graduation address at a digital art college and was presented with an honorary doctorate. We are traveling an exhibit that just completed a six-month run at the Woodstock Museum at Bethel Woods. I am in discussion with Santana people regarding merging my work with Carlos' Mens fashion design. Thankfully, there's always

something exciting out there. Photography and the iPad are a natural fit."

For more information about Robert Altman and his incredible photo images, please visit: www.altmanphoto.com

The Sixties, Photographs By Robert Altman (Santa Monica Press) is available at most area bookstores and Amazon.com.

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generation of changing times and its message. "I'll jump ahead from the usual advances that occurred when we rhapsodize about the 60s, advances like the environment, woman's lib, stopping the Viet Nam War, civil rights and gay rights, etc...and I'll jump ahead to one future scope it impacted enormously...the digital age," said Robert. "The whole open source, file-sharing culture was begat from the 60's meme...that is, folks sharing things freely with each other and not particularly for gain. You can follow that trail of personal computing to social networking which is changing the planet explosively in the Middle East as we speak."

It was indeed a generation that moved away



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