

ARI MARCOPOULOS

## NEVER DONE

The pictures before us were made between 2009 and 2018, a span of ten years in the life of Ari Marcopoulos. By the time this book is in hand, another five will have gone by. He has surely amassed even more pictures: Ari, an artist who is never done. Picture-making for him must be a necessity, an aspect of being alive, of holding on to people and places. This, of course, is an impossibility, though surely one of the key factors in its pursuit. Any number of those who inhabit these pages are gone—Vito Acconci (who famously followed strangers in the street as a work), Robert Frank (who gave us the photographic landmark, *The Americans*, 1958), and the artist/poet John Giorno (pictured, appropriately enough, before his work, *Life Is a Killer*, 2017). There are those who appear in pictures within pictures, often posters in a teenager's room, or on a t-shirt, embodied—Jean-Michel Basquiat, Jim Carrotti, Kurt Cobain, Michael Jackson, Heath Ledger (as the Joker), Wendy O. Williams of the Plasmatics. We see a couple now uncoupled—Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon and Thurston Moore. Ari is certainly someone who understands that it is art and music and literature that live on. In these pictures, as much as a person or a place seen, is it the impossibility inherent in photography: life held, that he represents? Why does his now decades' long activity amount to a persistent record-keeping of it? The time stamps on these pictures identify the day, month, and year, reminding us that images and art objects may serve as markers in time. Among these photographs, a newspaper's front page appears with some frequency, time's passage in the larger sense. This is a visual diary, life as a life sentence—written, spoken, erased, reinscribed—in Ari's case, with its subject, vibe, and complement. Bob Nickas

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## DESCRIPTION

This new volume by cult photographer Ari Marcopoulos unveils a selection of more than 600 black-and-white and color photographs taken between 2009 and 2018, reproduced chronologically. Spanning a decade, it offers a personal diary gathering together portraits of his family and friends, trees and graffiti, landscapes and urban scenes, allusions to contemporary American life (the Obama and Trump eras) and his own visual obsessions. His self-taught style brings his subjects in close and captures, without sentimentality or voyeurism, the intimate essence of their daily lives and the spontaneity of his interactions with culture luminaries and the artistic milieu.

Populated with idiosyncratic characters, each of Marcopoulos' photographs is particular to a unique time and place; yet his images reach us through their expression of familiar themes. Like all great photographers, Marcopoulos has the ability to distill a riveting and timeless image from the flux of activity that surrounds us. As Bob Nickas writes in his newly commissioned essay for this monograph, "Picture-making for him must be a necessity, an aspect of being alive, of holding on to people and places. This, of course, is an impossibility, though surely one of the key factors in its pursuit [ ... ] Ari Marcopoulos may only appear in a few of these pictures, but of course he is in every one of them."

This massive publication features an introduction text by Ari Marcopoulos as well as an essay by art critic, curator, and New York figure Bob Nickas.

Born in Amsterdam in 1957, Ari Marcopoulos came to New York in 1979 and quickly became part of the downtown art scene that included up-and-coming artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring, and Robert Mapplethorpe. Since then, he has become recognized as a key documentarian of contemporary culture as it unfolds: recording the emerging hip-hop scene, shooting snowboarders hurtling down a vertical mountain face, or chronicling the vicissitudes of his own family life, Marcopoulos' works unerringly capture the zeitgeist.