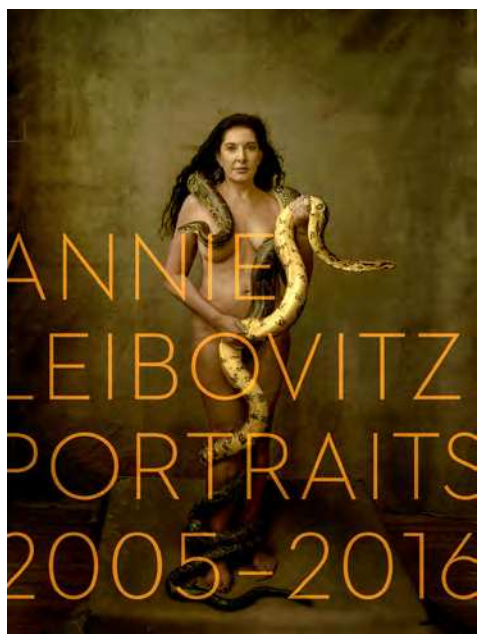


A THOUSAND WORDS

A ROUNDUP OF THE BEST PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS OF THE YEAR

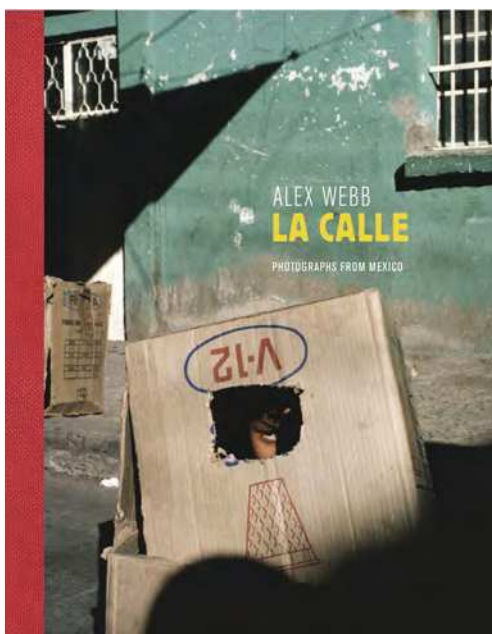
by Todd Cooper



Annie Leibovitz Portraits 2005-2016

by Annie Leibovitz.
Phaidon Press, \$89.95.

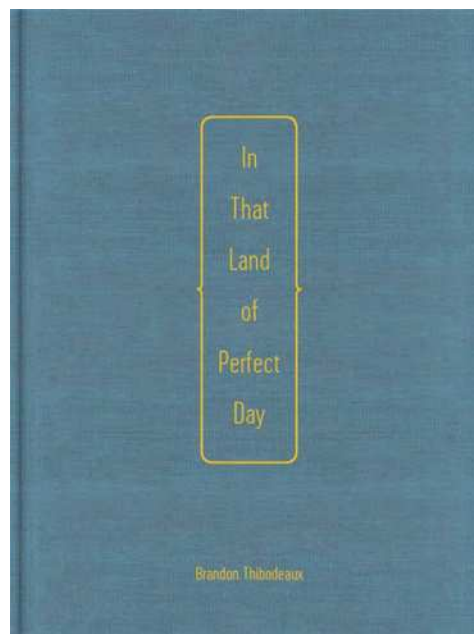
Let me start with this: I idolize Annie Liebovitz, but she frustrates me. I don't always like her work. But I always pay attention. I subscribe to *Vanity Fair* for her work alone. Undeniably, Liebovitz still has an incredible career and body of work, not to mention a level of access unrivaled by just about any photographer on planet earth. She is a titan who has done it all; she's shot everyone and continues to grow. And yet, at times in *Portraits 2005-2016*, it seems to be solely about who's in the picture — a kind of photographic name-dropping. Whereas in others, the idea, setting and epic production overpower the subject. It's when she lands a perfect pairing of the two that she blows me away. And the book has many portraits that find that balance. Like the KimYe photo-behind-the-photo-behind-the-photo photo, that controversial shot of Miley Cyrus looking like a Manet painting, David Hockney sketching in his car or what really went on under Jon Stewart's desk.



La Calle: Photographs from Mexico

by Alex Webb.
Aperture, \$60.

La Calle gets its name from the Octavio Paz poem, which is pure genius for a book on street photography in Mexico. The collection showcases more than 30 years of Alex Webb's work in that country. Even though over-referenced, his work brings Henri Cartier-Bresson's famous words to mind: "We work in unison with movement as though it were a presentiment on the way in which life itself unfolds. But inside movement there is one moment at which the elements in motion are in balance." In Webb's compositions, the stars seem to align, the chaos quiets and everything falls into its right place. But, really, he has just mastered recognizing that decisive moment some photographers strive their entire career to catch. The photos, along with commissioned passages from five Mexican and Mexican-American authors, help us better understand the roles the streets have played for generations.



In That Land of Perfect Day

by Brandon Thibodeaux. Red Hook Editions, \$60.

Brandon Thibodeaux's first book explores his time spent in the Mississippi Delta. I first saw a lot of this work in early 2016 in an accompanying exhibit ("When Morning Comes") that preceded this book in my hometown of Columbus, Mississippi. His powerful portrayal of the land and its people fully relays the complex beauty and perseverance throughout a suffocating history of poverty and racism. In the subjects, you see the struggle and the light that keeps them going. We get glimpses into rural towns like Alligator and witness the soul-piercing stares of a man named "Dance Machine." We also get reminded of the simple pleasures of childhood, like hiding in a cabinet or a backflip on an old mattress. What started out as a personal journey for the photographer teaches us all we need a little more joy, faith and determination in our lives.

FATHER'S DAY, BOBO, MISSISSIPPI, 2014 (LEFT) AND MAYORS, MOUND BAYOU, MISSISSIPPI, 2009 (RIGHT). FROM *IN THAT LAND OF PERFECT DAY* © BRANDON THIBODEAUX

