



***Self Portrait* by Marti Friedlander with Hugo Manson. Auckland: AUP (2013). RRP: \$59.99. Hb, 264 pp, b/w photographs. ISBN: 9781869407841. Reviewed by Cassandra Fusco.**

In 2001, Chris Saines (former director of

Auckland Art Gallery) initiated a retrospective of **Marti Friedlander's** photography.¹ Before it went on a national tour, the exhibition was visited by over 30,000 people. Clearly this woman's work generated wide interest.² Now, thanks to the very real skills of **Hugo Manson**³ and Auckland University Press⁴, *Self-Portrait* Marti Friedlander gives us access to her words and (selected) images.⁵ These impart much of Friedlander's vision and assessments of her several worlds.⁶

Apparently artless, the images are alignments of head, heart and eyes – 'landscapes' engraved with the spectrum of human complexity and "the mystery of a vanished moment"⁷ (Friedlander).⁷

"Life changes very quickly. I have the need to capture it."⁸

"I photograph what I see – it's a thinking image. Something that says something to you immediately, like a conversation."⁹

"The whole of my work is going into people's lives, asking people to let me in."¹⁰

"[C]uriosity was always the spur for my work ..."¹¹

To quote fragments is often unfair, subjective. Nevertheless, when Friedlander comments that she always had "a tremendous regard for anyone who was different", that "It would be dishonest to say we all don't have prejudices ... The thing is to learn how to cope with your prejudices," and that we should "question everything", I venture to suggest that these snippets encapsulate the ethos and breadth of vision revealed in this¹² and in Leonard Bell's 2009 study of Friedlander's work.¹³ The images speak volumes. *See them.*

- 1 Subsequently, Leonard Bell produced the superb study, *Marti Friedlander*, Auckland: AUP (2009).
- 2 Her work is featured in *Moko: The Art of Maori Tattooing* (with Michael King, 1972); *Larks in a Paradise: New Zealand Portraits* (with James McNeish, 1974) and *Contemporary New Zealand Painters: Volume One, A–M* (with Jim and Mary Barr, 1980) and is the subject of a number of books including *Marti Friedlander* by Leonard Bell (2009), shortlisted for the Montana New Zealand Book Awards, and the documentary by Shirley Horrocks, *Marti: The Passionate Eye*. Friedlander was made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 1998.
- 3 Dr Hugo Manson is a senior New Zealand oral historian. He was co-founder, with Judith Fyfe, of the New Zealand Oral History Archive (now the Oral History Centre at the Alexander Turnbull Library) and has specialised in recording contemporary oral history in many parts of the world.
- 4 Designed by Katrina Duncan of AUP, this book is exemplary in its physical and aesthetic response to its subject – designed to increase and enrich anyone's visual literacy.
- 5 Fifteen chapters flow seamlessly through Friedlander's contemplations of childhood, of being Jewish, her experience of Parihaka, collaborating with Michael King on his book, 'Moko', politics, protests, perceptions and reflections.
- 6 Born in 1928 to Russian Jewish parents, circumstances dictated that Friedlander was raised in British orphanages, with her sister, from the age of 3. In 1958 she migrated to New Zealand, married a New Zealander and began photographing people, places and protests. "I was trying for my own sake to find associations with people I had something in common with."
- 7 See the Foreword of Kapka Kassabova in *Marti Friedlander* by Leonard Bell, AUP (2009), pp xi-xiii.
- 8 *Ibid*, p ix.
- 9 From an interview between Marti Friedlander and Sarah Daniell, NZ Herald, 1.11.12.
- 10 *Self-portrait* by Marti Friedlander, with Hugo Manson. AUP (2013) p 105.
- 11 *Self-portrait* by Marti Friedlander (2013) p 108.
- 12 Supported by the insightful assistance of Creative NZ Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa, this is not an expensive publication.
- 13 *Marti Friedlander* by Leonard Bell AUP (2009).