

STIG DE BLOCK – 'An intimate portrait of East LA, the 'Eastside of all Eastsides' in DAZED, OCT 2026

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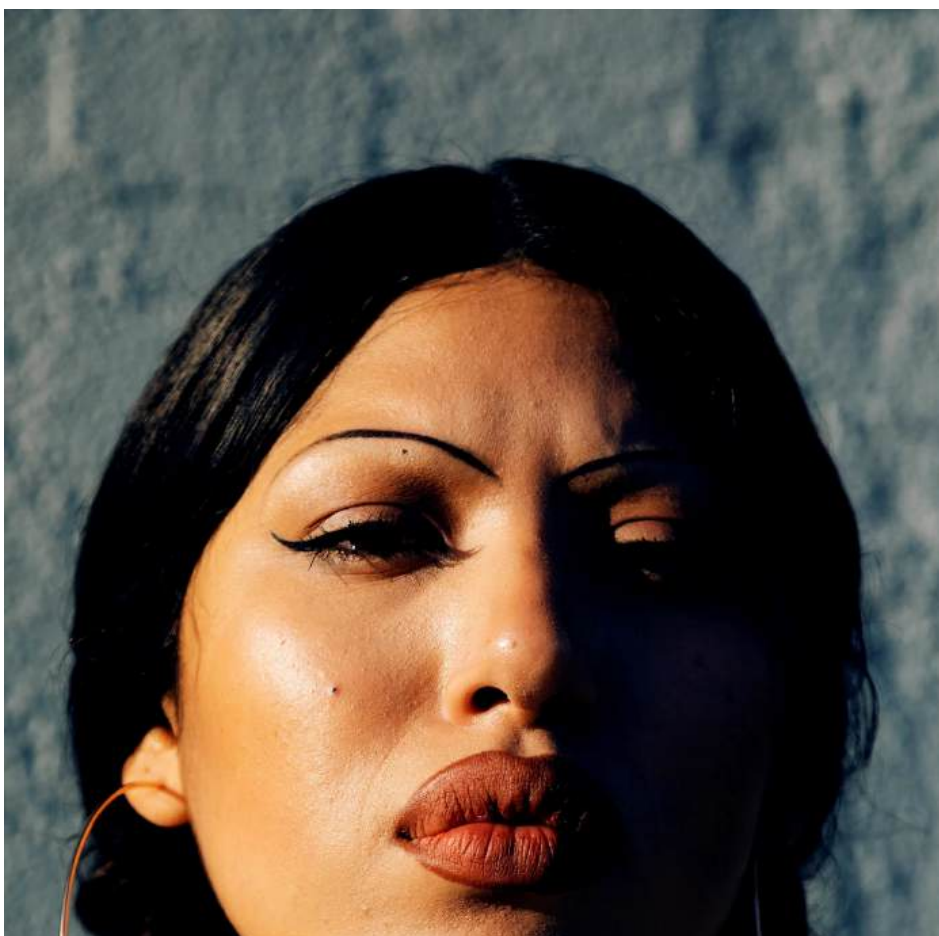
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An intimate portrait of East LA, the 'Eastside of all Eastsides'

Inspired by the work of Los Angeles Poet Laureate Luis J. Rodriguez, Stig De Block's photo book East Los presents a tender vision of the neighbourhood

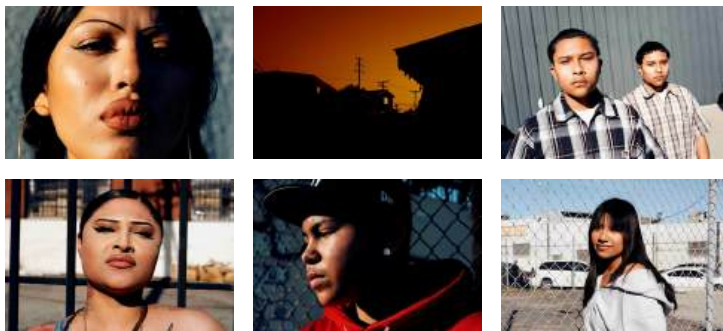




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Text Matthew Burgos

Stig De Block, East Los



GALLERY / 26 IMAGES

For the past eight years, Belgian photographer [Stig De Block](#) has been documenting Los Angeles, drawn to the city's ever-evolving subcultures and close-knit communities. His first book, *Bac Back*, brought together four years of intimate portraits from LA's lowrider scene. Now he returns with his second monograph, *East Los*, which focuses on the friendships, rituals and everyday life of young people in East LA.

Here lies the LA River, the physical and cultural line separating Downtown Los Angeles from the Heights – a neighbourhood that has often been reduced to stereotypes of crime and deprivation. "East LA has often been photographed sensationally, and I wasn't interested in confirming those expectations," the photographer tells Dazed.

When he started the project four years ago, De Block admits he was initially drawn to some of East LA's more familiar visual tropes: cityscapes against dramatic sunsets; roosters running through the streets; utility poles plastered with printed announcements. But halfway through the project, his approach shifted after he encountered the work of former Los Angeles Poet Laureate Luis J.

Rodriguez. "I was captivated by his presence, his aura," he says. "He describes the LA reality in a cinematic way, with vivid descriptions of gestures, locations, atmosphere. From then on, I learned to look for the quiet details in the lives of the communities there."



Courtesy of Stig De Block and Gallery FIFTY ONE

De Block was especially drawn to Rodriguez's writing about Los Angeles, including the poem *The Eastside of All Eastsides*, which evokes the history and texture of East LA, the endurance of Mexican-American culture and the layers of posters and paint that accumulate across the neighbourhood like a "real-life collage". Near its conclusion, Rodriguez acknowledges the area's hardships while insisting on the vitality that persists within it: "life that sings us all to power".

Inspired by Rodriguez's more nuanced and compassionate vision, De Block's subsequent photography came to reflect his own interpretation of the poet's work as he photographed across Montebello, Happy Valley, Boyle Heights, Maravilla, Belvedere Gardens and Ramona Gardens. Even when hardship enters the frame, he focuses on quieter, more tender details – like a young man commemorating his deceased brother by wearing a shirt bearing his portrait and the words 'In Loving Memory'.

In one photo, the photographer interprets Rodriguez's idea of "rooted cultures" quite literally, capturing a tree with overlapping trunks next to an image of three women's arms and hands intertwined. "It's a juxtaposition, a reference to family trees and deeply rooted heritage in the community. The position of these three friends gestures in the same direction as the tree trunks," says De Block.

He also photographed a young woman leaning on her front porch in a blue Dodgers shirt, framed against a wall where an ageing Dodgers logo peels from the plaster, while an elderly man peers out from the shadows. For De Block, the image speaks to the generations who have shaped Eastside LA and continue to live there. "With *East Los*, I wasn't looking for extraordinary moments, but for stories that quietly showed the overshadowed details we miss in everyday Eastside LA," he says.

Stig De Block's [East Los](#) launches on November 12th, 2026, followed by a solo exhibition at [Gallery FIFTYONE](#)

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