

Body Alchemy: Photographs

Body Alchemy: Photographs

Author: Loren Cameron

Publisher: Cleis Press

ISBN: 1573440620

Publishing Date: 1996

Pages: 100

Format: Trade paperback

A photographic study of female-to-male (FTMs) transsexuals. Using before-and-after photographs of FTMs, accompanied by self-portraits and autobiographical text, the work includes photographs of genital reconstructions, with text by three FTMs who discuss how they feel about their surgery.

- Buy for R194.36 at kalahari.net (Price as per August 2005)

- Buy at amazon.com

About the Author

Loren Cameron was born in 1959 in Pasadena, California and grew up in rural Arkansas. His early love for photography was inspired by pictures of depression-era America by Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange which he found among his parents' photo books. "My father had stories of his own about what it was like to grow up in Iowa near the end of the Great Depression. Through Lange's photographs, I gained a visual understanding of my father's stories about working-class survival. Her images touched me deeply and helped me understand his tough attitude about living and his generation's no-nonsense work ethic, as well the universality of the human condition of pain, strife and the will to persevere." In 1979, Cameron moved to San Francisco, where he lived in the lesbian community. By the late 80s, Loren identified as a female-to-male transsexual, a journey through which Loren has evolved to the man he is today, sporting a beard, abstract cat-striped tattoos on legs, forearms and chest, and a well-muscled body. Cameron began taking pictures to document his own transformation. "What was initially a crude documentation of my own personal journey gradually evolved into an impassioned mission. Impulsively, I began to photograph other transsexuals that I knew, feeling compelled to make images of their emotional and physical triumphs. I was fueled by my need to be validated and wanted, in turn, to validate them. I wanted the world to see us, I mean, really see us." Cameron's photographs have been exhibited in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Minneapolis. They have been published in numerous books and magazines, including *Transgender Warriors* by Leslie Feinberg and *Constructing Masculinity: Discussions in Contemporary Culture* (Routledge, 1995), *Anything That Moves*, *Artweek*, *Camerawork*, *Chrysalis Quarterly*, *Deneuve*, *Exposure*, *Frontiers*, *On Our Backs*, *San Francisco Sentinel*, *San Francisco Bay Times*, *San Francisco Weekly*, and *Transsexual News Telegraph*. Cameron has been interviewed on BBC and in *The New Yorker*. He has been a guest speaker at the Society for Photographic Education Conference, FTM International Conference, University of California/Berkeley, Richmond Art Center, California State University/Northridge, School of the Art Institute in Chicago, San Francisco Art Institute. From the Publisher

Body Alchemy is an intimate, remarkable self-portrait of a female-to-male transsexual by an emerging photographer, the first art book from Cleis Press, and winner of two Lambda Literary Awards. A project we are very proud of!

Reviews

The idea of gender is no longer as fixed as it once was: Tootsie, La Cage aux Folles, and Milton Berle saw to that. But none of this has prepared us for Loren Cameron's amazing portraits of transsexuals. Beautifully reproduced and complemented with notes and short essays, these portraits of women who are now men may startle, but they will also make you marvel at the genuine complexities of life, sex, and desire. Body Alchemy might have been a curiosity, like Diane Arbus's photographs of those outside the physical and cultural mainstream, but Cameron's art is so empathetic, so precise, that we are left in awe and with a new understanding of the realities of being human.

amazon.com

This collection of transsexual photos and interviews is not recommended for general library purchase, but any collection specializing in sexual/gender issues and any personal collector will find this a unique, intriguing survey of the transsexual experience. Anticipate graphic yet artistic black and white photos.

Midwest Book Review

"I was so drawn to Loren Cameron's photographs that I went to see the original exhibition on which the book is based several times. Like all good art it demystifies its subjects. Where other photographs of transgendered people, even those taken by talented outsiders, inevitably emphasize their 'otherness' and view them theatrically, Loren Cameron makes them seem so immediately familiar (even when the poses and nudity could seem, in other hands, shocking and confrontational). Perhaps because the subjects themselves are so comfortable with their own bodies and with the

participant-observer, we are comfortable with them, too. No matter how distanced and detached we may feel when we start to view these works, it is simply impossible to 'gawk' at them, to remove ourselves from the intimate experience we are witnessing."

Richard M. Levine

"At just the moment postmodernism would have us believe there is nothing photography hasn't already shown us, Loren Cameron's images defy all expectations. Welcome to the future."

Doug Nickel

"An irreplaceably valued documentation of a cultural moment"

Diane Middlebrook, author, *Anne Sexton: A Biography*

"Loren Cameron's razor-sharp vision compels us to focus on the complex transition from which transsexual men emerge. Cameron's photographs are as exquisite as they are meaningful."

Leslie Feinberg, author, *Stone Butch Blues* and *Transgender Warriors*

"Andy Warhol, Robert Mapplethorpe, Dianne Arbus among many others have all trained their lenses on the transgendered figure. Never have the transgendered seriously photographed their own. Not until Loren Cameron, that is."

Kate Bornstein, author, *Gender Outlaw*

"Amazing..."

The Advocate