



THE JOURNAL OF THE  
**LESLIE/LOHMAN**  
GAY ART FOUNDATION



**NO**  
**ON THE**  
**BRIGGS**  
**INITIATIVE**  
**B.A.C.A.B.I.**

LET FREEDOM BE

69



ABOVE  
**Left:**  
 Caren Jo Shapiro,  
*The Performer 2*,  
 Oil on canvas, 7' x 9'

**Right:**  
 Ana Ferrer,  
*Paradise Garage*,  
 Oil on canvas,  
 93" x 68"

**RIGHT**  
 Barbara Madsen,  
*Forgotten Detritus*,  
 Photograph  
 ©2009

(see article  
 on page 12)

COVER IMAGE:  
 Rink Foto,  
*Couple and Child*,  
 1978,  
 B/W photograph,  
 20" x 16"





**THE LESLIE/LOHMAN  
GAY ART FOUNDATION**

is a non-profit foundation established in 1990 to provide an outlet for art work that is unambiguously gay and that is frequently denied access to mainstream venues. The Foundation's gallery mounts exhibitions of work in all media by gay and lesbian artists with an emphasis on subject matter that speaks directly to gay and lesbian sensibilities, including erotic, political, romantic, and social imagery and providing special support for emerging and under-represented artists. Its programs include regularly scheduled exhibitions, artists' & curators' talks, panel discussions, a quarterly journal, an archive of artists' data, & a permanent collection of art.

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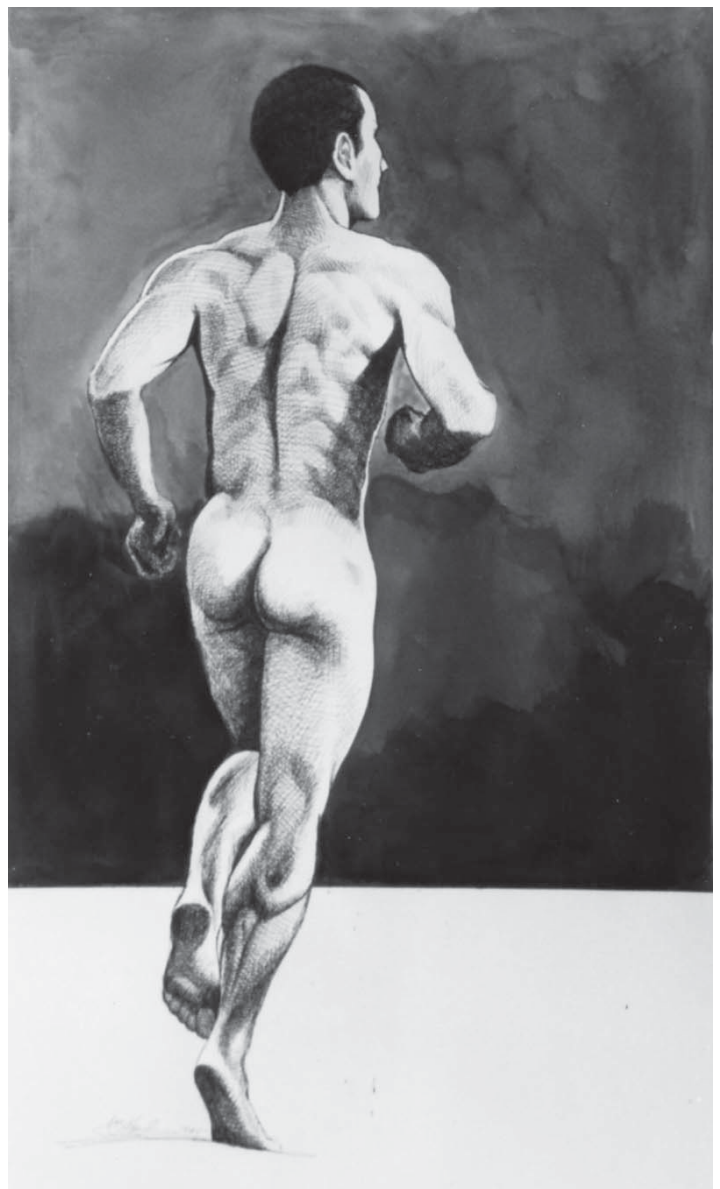
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**Foundation and Gallery:**

26 Wooster Street  
New York, NY 10013-2227  
212-431-2609  
admin@leslielohman.org  
www.leslielohman.org

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THIS ISSUE OF  
*THE ARCHIVE*  
IS ENTIRELY  
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BY A  
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J.B. Harter, *French Streak*, 1995, Pen & ink, 40" x 26"

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# MAKING MECCA: RINK'S EARLY SAN FRANCISCO PHOTOS

BY JONATHAN DAVID KATZ

Talk to just about anyone in the queer community in San Francisco, and they know Rink, at least by reputation. Go to any queer demonstration, street fair, bar event, film screening, or protest march, be it early in the morning or late at night, and Rink's there, his face hidden behind a camera, crouched down to get the best shot. If you're lucky enough to know Rink, he'll say hi in that hyperkinetic way of his and then regale you with the scandal du jour, the latest political dust up or who's been spotted on his knees in some restroom.

He always gave the impression, at least to me, of being everywhere at once, of knowing exactly what was going to happen, often long before it did. He must know half of San Francisco by name. And he's been doing this for over 30 years, making him the dean of San Francisco's queer photographers.

To see Rink's voluminous output in a gallery context is to flirt with skewing his mandate, which was, and has always been, reportage. Rink is a photojournalist, but as with other photojournalists like Frank

Capra, Dorothy Miller, and the incomparable Henri Cartier-Bresson, the prosaic term "journalism" doesn't do full justice to the work. That we are showing Rink at the Leslie/Lohman Gallery as a photojournalist, in an historical exhibition chronicling the transformation of San Francisco into the epicenter of the gay and lesbian movement (yes, New York, sorry, you had Stonewall, but San Francisco is still the epicenter), in no way conflicts with also showing Rink as an artist. In this exhibition of but a tiny percentage of Rink's nearly half a million images, you can assess his photographic eye for yourself. Like Cartier-Bresson, Rink seems to have a gift for being there at the right moment, not only to catch the action, but also to catch the image that is rich enough, dense enough, strange enough, to tell, like all memorable photos do, a complex story without words.

After college in 1969, Rink moved to San Francisco, having first lived for a few months in New York. He was an army brat born in Gainesville, Florida. His parents, after socializing with fellow of-

Rink Foto,  
*San Francisco Gay  
Freedom Day  
Parade, 1978*  
B/W photograph  
27" x 30"



ficers who happened to be black, earned the enmity of the KKK and they were almost literally run out of town. They moved north to Georgetown in Washington, DC. Rink and his boyfriend—then still teenagers—traveled throughout the countercultural art scene of the late sixties, meeting Andy Warhol at the Factory and Studio 54, Truman Capote at parties, flirting with Leonard Bernstein on the beach at Fire Island. Rink's first celebration of his birthday in his adopted city of San Francisco took place on June 27, 1969 and was interrupted by a phone call from a friend in Greenwich Village relating the Stonewall riots in real time.

After meeting and befriending the lyrical photographer Imogen Cunningham in the early 1970s, Rink found himself amazed by her frank and beautiful portraits, male nudes, and flowers. He remade himself as a portrait photographer, but soon, getting caught up in the then-nascent LGBT political movement, instead turned his focus to the rich fabric of queer social and political life, chronicling San Francisco's seismic self-transformation into the queerest city in the world in the space of a decade. One of the first photos in the exhibition, fittingly, is a shot of Harvey Milk's camera store. Before beginning his political career by becoming the first openly gay elected official in the US, Milk ran a well-known camera store in the Castro, and Rink was a regular cus-

tommer. Over time, the two became friends, and Rink, who had moved to the city earlier than Milk, introduced the future politician to his friends and some early political supporters. Rink held fundraisers for Milk's campaigns, and his very first public exhibition took place in 1974 in the large plate



Rink Foto,  
*Inauguration*  
(George Moscone &  
Harvey Milk), 1977  
B/W photograph  
16" x 20"

glass windows of Milk's camera store at 575 Castro Street of the 1974 Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade. That storefront exhibition was the very first mirror of the newly queer Castro, a political self-reflection that would in time prove run of the mill, but in 1974 was still exhilarating for some and shocking for others.

The Castro wasn't the site of San Francisco's first queer neighborhood: the Tenderloin holds that distinction. But the community in the Castro was different, made of newer immigrants to the city, many of whom

had been already radicalized by the antiwar and civil rights movements. Yet the Castro was still an old Irish enclave, and the assertive, immigrant queers and the old timers mixed uneasily. When in 1977 Anita Bryant began her campaign to turn back the clock on Dade County Florida's queer civil

rights legislation, wrapping herself in the sanctimonious garb of the Christian Right (now so familiar from but at that point still largely untested), those same windows where Rink had his first queer exhibition were shattered by homophobes.

Rink is just Rink, no last name used, a self-nomination of a piece with the immigrant's tendency towards self-reinvention, a trait commonly encountered as San Francisco made itself over into a queer utopia. The great historical value of Rink's work is the nearly day-by-day chronicling of

Rink Foto  
Two lovers meet in person, after a year-long relationship over the phone, mid-1970s, B/W photograph, 16" x 20"



the gradual and occasionally violent birthing of the San Francisco we know today. With a nose for transformative people and events, Rink presciently captures such iconic figures as Robert Mapplethorpe, Divine, and Sylvester very early in their careers, well before their reputations were made outside the queer communities in which they first achieved renown. But the celebrity-driven aspect of photojournalism was never Rink's mode and with equal alacrity, he pictured then nascent social and political organizations, political movements, and community institutions. He's especially proud of his early and continuous focus on the richness and diversity of our communities. A true son of his bar-

rier busting parentage, Rink always went out of his way to chronicle important developments among women and people of color, long before the term "diversity" became linked with the idea of community.

For all its emphasis on the particular codes, customs, and commonalities within diverse queer communities, Rink's photos transcend the particular for the general, an imaging of a common humanity legible in its full emotional range from fury to tenderness to loneliness, triumph, and abandon. There's a lovely image of four men shot from behind, framed and announced by a street sign bearing the words Castro made before that word, and that sign, itself became iconic. They're linked arm in

arm, except that one man has his finger intimately hooked into another man's back pocket, the kind of telling gesture that announces intimacy as a casual, private familiarity here made public as political statement. Or there's another image of the protest march against Anita Bryant, with protesters flanking her visage with the likes of such mass murderers as Hitler, Stalin, the KKK and Idi Amin. But what makes the photo work is the man in front, bowler hatted and cape bedecked, evoking, almost subliminally, the image of the drummer in the celebrated patriotic painting *The Spirit of '76*, by Archibald Willard (completed for the 1876 centennial celebrations of the American Revolution), as if to suggest that this queer

protest is the true heir to the American promise of liberty from tyranny.

Rink's portraits of Harvey Milk seem especially prescient, born of the kind of intimacy of long association. In one particularly compelling image, Milk is photographed back-to-back, politicking with San Francisco mayor George Moscone. The two men now linked in death as common victims of Dan White are here figured in terms of their shared political mastery, their shared ideology, their shared palpable humanity, a trait perhaps even more in evidence in a casual image of Milk as a secular saint. Again and again, Rink exhibits a gift for capturing the most resonant detail in the flux of the moment: two mustachioed young men protesting the Briggs Initiative (which would have prevented queer people from teaching in public schools for fear of teachers "recruiting" children into homosexuality, and was, in a great political upset, soundly defeated by the voters after a vigorous campaign), here depicted with a child lovingly, unexpectedly, perched on one man's shoulders; two African-American men in radical farie garb, smiling, whose warm eyes radiate, farie-like, commingled acceptance, vulnerability and fellowship; Robert Mapplethorpe in full leather conversing with a man in a suit; the 1974 Gay and Lesbian Pride parade, the first in San Francisco with ample female (and child) presence. These are por-

traits of people to be sure, but they're also portraits of the ineffables—of politics, love, sexual desire, and aspirations for the future. Rink's great subject has always been the slow, difficult building of a better world, one, in which, if we're not yet able to experience that, future, we can at least see it figured—a quiet utopianism populating the image of the everyday.

*San Francisco: The Making of a Queer Mecca—Early Photography by Rink Foto is at L/L Gallery from September 16–October 24, 2009. It was curated by Julia Haas, and developed and supervised by Jonathan D. Katz.*

*Jonathan D. Katz is an art historian, a community and political activist and a member of the Foundation Board.*

*For more information, visit Rink's Web site: [www.rinkfoto.com](http://www.rinkfoto.com).*



Rink Foto, *Harvey Milk with the Castro Camera cart*, mid-1970s, B/W photograph, 14" x 11"

# BOOK REVIEW

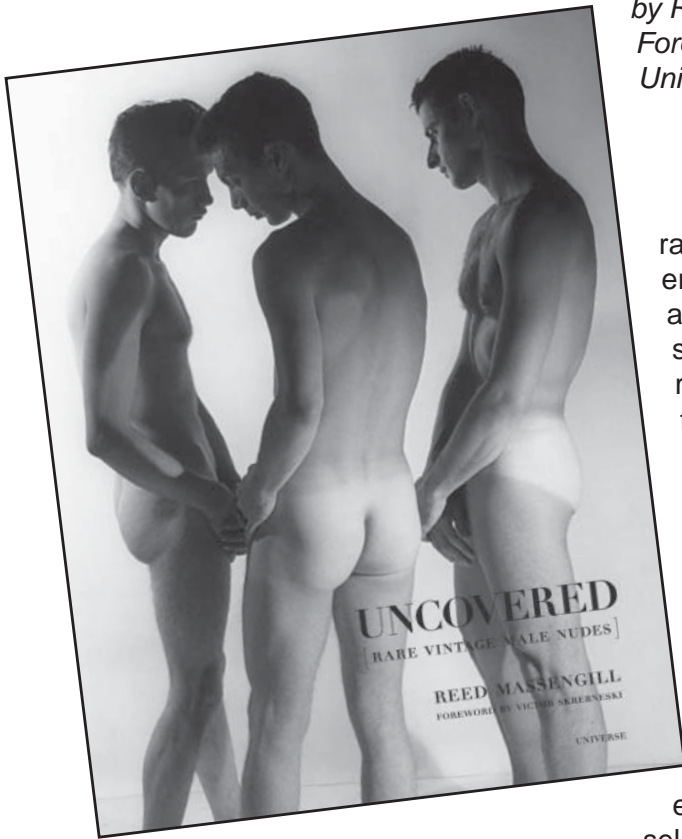
BY DANIEL KITCHEN & JAY BODA

## *Uncovered: Rare Vintage Male Nudes*

by Reed Massengill

Foreword by Victor Skrebeneski

Universe, 2009



ABOVE  
Book Jacket:  
Vulcan Studios,  
*Three Graces*, n.d.,  
B/W photograph

PAGE 9  
Clockwise  
from top left:

Al Urban,  
*Untitled*, n.d.,  
B/W photograph

Earle Forbes,  
*Barton Mumaw*, n.d.,  
B/W photograph

Antonio Arabia,  
*Unidentified Model*,  
n.d., B/W photograph

Issue Number 32

In the title of Reed Massengill's tenth and latest book, the word "uncovered" refers to two of his life's passions: collecting photographs of muscular, nude men and rescuing any of those images that might be hidden in an attic or a basement corner saving them from oblivion as rubbish or pornography.

This book focuses on ten artists, who worked during the Golden Age of physique photography from the 1940s to the mid-60s and in many cases longer. This courageous group's work was once considered obscene and criminal. Photog-

raphers and their customers were harassed and arrested, even ruined, such as Newton Arvin, a renowned English professor at Smith College and mentor of Truman Capote, who, in a high profile case, was arrested by the postal authorities for receiving obscene material in the mail. For this volume, Massengill, who has played a key role in locating numerous endangered images, has selected mostly works that have heretofore been unpublished.

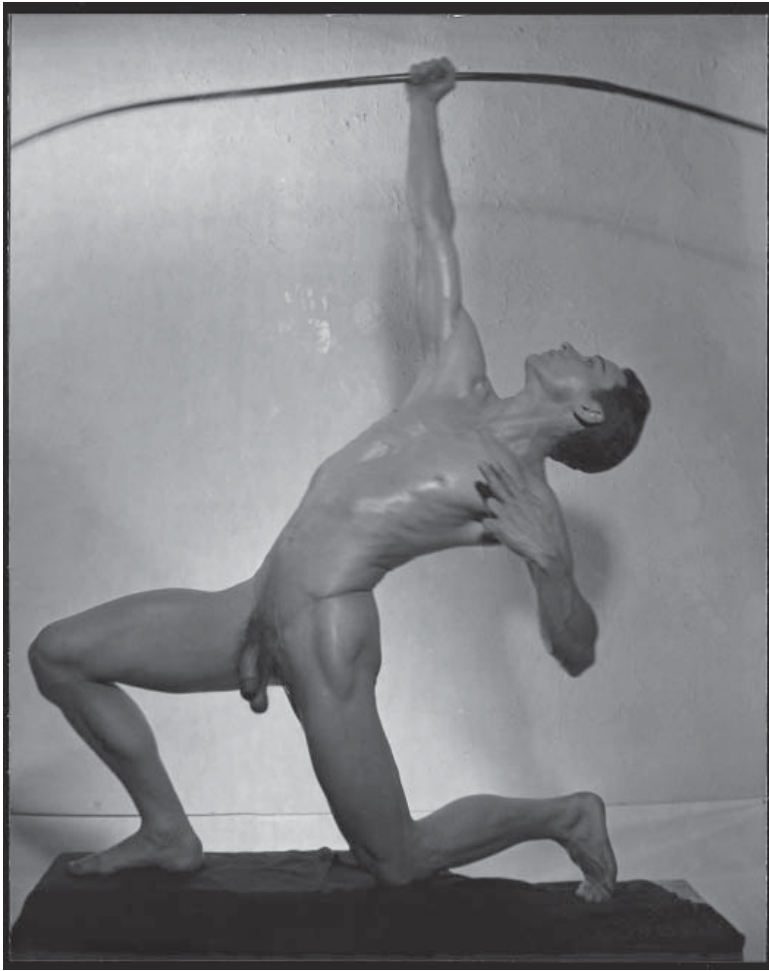
The book is divided into ten parts, one for each photographer with a brief, often witty, sometimes poignant summary of their careers and how their works were uncovered. The artists are: Al Urban (1917-1992), Frederick Kovert (1901-1949), Earle Forbes (1897-1970), Don Whitman (1916-1998), George Platt Lynes (1907-1955), Plato [George Haimsohn] (1920-2003), John Shreeve Barrington (1920-1991), Antonio Arabia (1931-1993), Vulcan [name withheld] (b.1921), and Robert Galster (1923-

1991).

The life and death and progeny (his work) of Antonio Arabia illustrates Massengill's concern of how difficult, and sometimes impossible, it is to both find and preserve a collection of great artistic worth.

Arabia was an unknown photographer who lived in eastern Pennsylvania and whose work is published in this book for the first time. A few years after his death, the entire corpus of "6,000 photographic prints, negatives, slides, and all rights related to the material" was auctioned on eBay. Their beauty and importance was immediately recognized by collectors and experts. There was a fear, though, that someone would buy the collection and break it up to sell piecemeal and destroy the cohesion of the work. A West Coast collector finally bought it for \$10,000 and plans to keep the collection intact. For a perspective, a single George Platt Lynes vintage photograph would sell for twice that sum.

This book is a handsome, mouth-watering production. It has been carefully thought out to make the



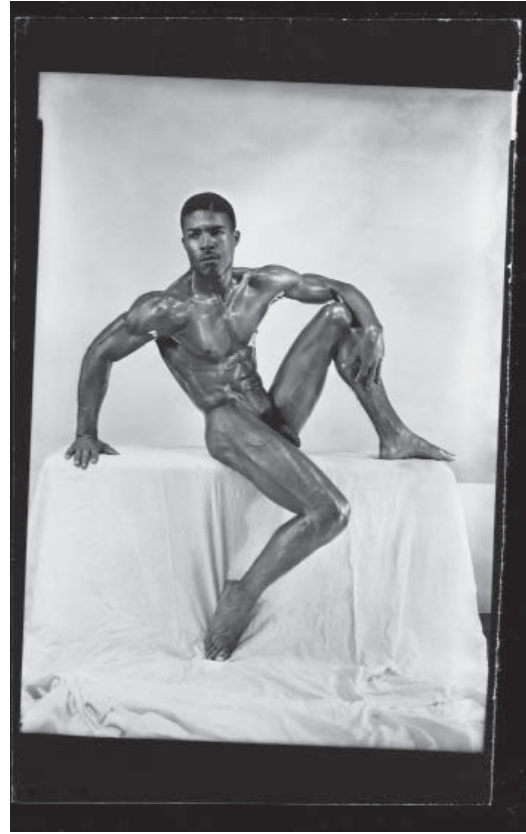
strongest visual impact and gives the reader the rush of the erotic stimulation of this once illicit venue.

Massengill's introduction, *Rescued Nudes*, is a succinct, factual, and beautifully written history of collecting vintage male nudes. Today, eBay is the prime method of ferreting out these images by collectors. The bidders sit anonymously behind the protective shield of a computer screen as opposed to exposure in high profile bidding at an auction house. Massengill ends with a passionate clarion call for the collection, preservation, and exhibition "of gay, lesbian, and transgender art" as a critical component to understanding the magnificence

and beauty of our community's esthetic heritage. These goals have a strong resonance with the mission of the Leslie/Lohman Gay Art Foundation.

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*Daniel Kitchen has done post-graduate work at the Barnes Foundation. He is a member of the LLGAF Advisory Committee and is a writer for this journal.*



NOTE: Arabia often used young men from a local commune as models and used the wilderness as his backdrop. These young, blond men, attempting to live on the land, have come equipped with perfect plows, handsome faces, and muscular bodies as Adams in paradise (if they were all James Dean) before Eves. This photograph was first published in Massengill's book, and he has graciously given us to permission to use it in our journal. Another first.

# WINDOW GALLERY SPOTLIGHTS EMERGING ARTISTS

BY JAY BODA

On July 16, a merry group of queer folk could be seen in front of the Leslie/Lohman Gallery at 26 Wooster Street, celebrating the opening of the exhibition in the 30 foot previously unused space currently referred to as the window gallery. It is entitled *Homeland: Portraits of America's Queer Youth*, curated by Cora Lambert, and features large-scale photographs. The prints are mounted to face the street giving passersby a moment to stop, reflect, and be se-

duced by the haunting faces staring at them. Beautifully lit by the gallery's lighting director, Victor Trivero, the exhibition may be experienced best during the dark quiet hours.

In 2008, during a Foundation board meeting, Jonathan D. Katz proposed making use of the long stretch of window space to display works of art devoted to new and emerging artists and encompassing four separate shows each year. Charles Leslie, the Foun-

dation Director, was immediately taken by the idea, and he made it a priority, for much planning was needed to make the idea a reality.

Lambert had co-curated Leslie/Lohman's 2008 lesbian show, which was called *Pink and Bent*. Based on her achievements there, she was asked to be the curator of the window gallery. The *Homeland* show has confirmed the astuteness of the board's decision.

In *Homeland: Portraits of America's Queer Youth*

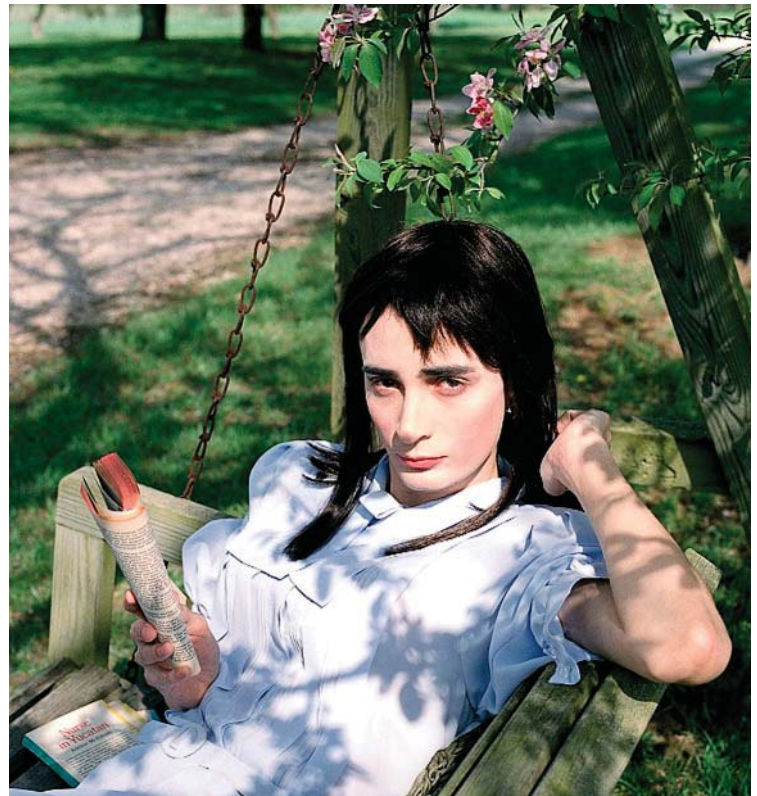
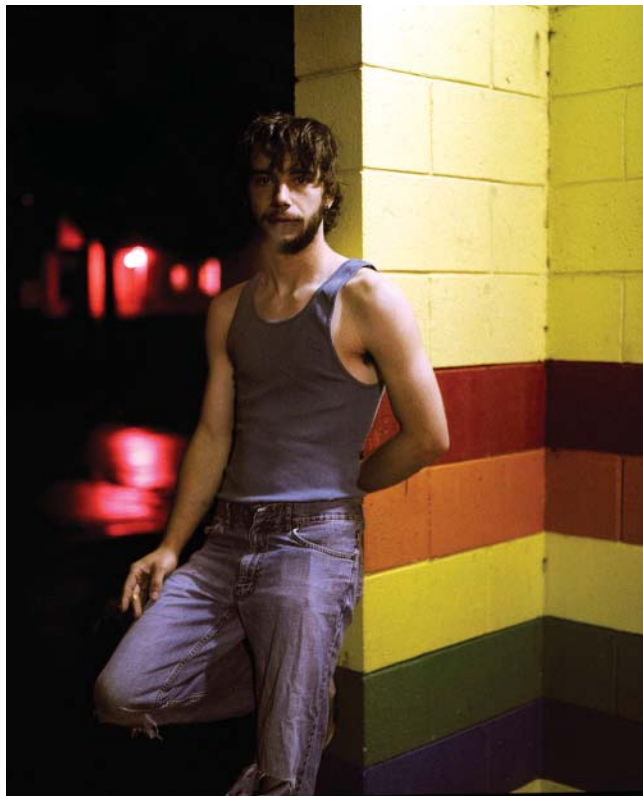
Bret Bell

**Left:**

*Boy on the corner*, 2005, C-print, 30" x 30" (1/5)

**Right:**

*Girl reading*, 2005, C-print, 30" x 30" (2/5)





(subtitled: Two photographers explore identity, sexuality, and gender in rural and urban America), Lambert showcases the photographs of Bret Bell (b.1982) and Molly Landreth (b.1978).

In many respects, *Homeland* reflects Landreth's ongoing project *EMBODIMENT: A Portrait of Queer Life in America*, a multimedia project that is touring much of the globe and has commitments from galleries through 2010. A powerhouse in creating her artistic vision, she has a Web site ([www.mollylandreth.com](http://www.mollylandreth.com)) and a blog that show her to be an artist of boundless energy and resourcefulness. While she has lived in both New York and Los Angeles, she now works out of

her native Seattle.

Landreth's large-scale C-prints are mainly of couples, some who are undergoing gender reassignment, and others who are asserting their special identities. They all engage the camera head-on. They do not eye it hostilely but confront it directly as if in celebration of who they are.

Bell hails from Missouri. In 2008, he received an MFA in photography from Parsons School of Design. He now splits his time between New York and St. Louis. His C-prints are on a smaller scale than Landreth and mainly focus on loners, often in ambiguous settings and attitudes, but recognizable as inhabiting the grim margins of mainstream



America. Bell also has a Web site, [www.bretbell.net](http://www.bretbell.net).

In bringing these two artists together, Cora Lambert has written that "*Homeland* explores how GLBTQ youth ...are isolated from the major centers of queer culture ...these images depict subjects, both real and fictional, that help create a picture of what it means to be queer in America today."

*Jay Boda has volunteered for the Foundation and has written and proofread for The Archive of which he is the editor.*

Molly Landreth  
**Left:**  
*Jalesa aka Cruz,*  
*Columbus, Ohio,*  
*2007, C-print,*  
*42" x 32" (2/10).*  
**Right:**  
*Simon and West,*  
*9 a.m., Seattle,*  
*2007, C-print,*  
*40" x 32" (2/10)*

# LESLIE/LOHMAN HOSTS *PASSION: LESBIAN VISIONS 2009*



B.J. Watkins,  
Silver Light Per-  
forming *FUCK* at  
Leslie/Lohman,  
July 14, 2009

"In seven short years and a miniscule budget, Fresh Fruit Festival has established itself as an important cultural event not only for the LGBT community but for the city itself. The Festival celebrates and supports the great talent and diversity of our community. It always seeks to branch out and embrace, cooperate, and partner with community artists, audiences, and cultural communities," says Carol Polcovar, Festival founder

The art exhibition *Passion: Lesbian Visions 2009*, hosted

by the Foundation and curated by the intrepid Heidi Russell, asked the question: "Who occupies post-modern Lesbos?" *Passion* explored the answers of nearly 50 artists working in nearly every media possible, although perhaps not elephant dung. One of the show's purposes was to reflect the viewer's passion with the sumptuous range of images wrought by the creative process.

To top it off, there were two special events: *Passions Ignite: An Evening of Performance Art* on July 14 and *Pas-*

sions in Prose: An Evening of Literary Readings. The exhibition ran from July 10 to 25 and was a testament to the ferment and excitement in the contemporary Lesbian art world.

The following artists participated in the Fresh Fruit Festival's *Passion: Lesbian Visions 2009*:

Prinny Alaví, Jeanine Alfieri, Michele Amatrula, Lillian Binder, Stephanie Bonvissuto, Theresa Brown, Christa Burkner, Cecy Canarte, Yoseli Castillo, Deborah Cherena, Felice Cohen, Maggie Cousins, Julie Crotty, Marge Doherty, Stefanie Dworkin, Ana Ferrer, Judy Francesconi, DRED Gerestant, giegia, Liz Gold, Rainbow Dee, Nora Karara, Joan Katz, Kerry Kehoe, Valerie King, Jill A. Kolodin, Rosita Librede Marulanda, Silver Light, Barbara Madsen, Judith Z. Miller, Lora Morgenstern, Jennifer Pawlitscheck, Carol Polcovar, Ann Post, Janet Restino, Felicia Reyes, Fran Ryan, Rose M. Santos-Cunningham, Caren Jo Shapiro, Gladys Sille, Chaney Sims, Rica Takashima, Fotini Vurgaropoulou, Whisper, Alina Wilczynski, YaliniDream, Heather Young, Ely Rosa Zamora, Lisa Zilker

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Please check our website for upcoming exhibitions and events.

