



Men for Men: Homoeroticism and Male Homosexuality in the History of Photography, 1840-2006

Pierre Borhan

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As soon as the invention of photography made it possible to be photographed with one's loved one, early daguerreotypes - small, unique images housed in their cases - were made as tokens of enduring affection or intimacy. Male couples were no exception. Under strict Victorian moral conventions photographs of the male nude were reserved strictly for academic study by artists. It was not until the early twentieth-century that the first openly homosexual photographers were able to explore the overtly erotic, and this they did by wrapping their subjects in historical reference by evoking images of ancient Greece or Pre-Raphaelite symbolism. After Alfred Kinsey's revelations of male sexuality, published in 1948, an enormous photographic market emerged for pictures of the muscular male physique. Homoeroticism had entered the mainstream photographic language. In this ground-breaking book organised by Gilles Mora with a substantial text by Pierre Bohran, the whole history of the genre is charted from its clandestine origins to its open glorification, including the work of photographic masters such as Brassai and August Sander, as well as the notorious underground excursions of Robert Mapplethorpe. We can follow how a homosexual view has now shaped the new iconography of fashion and the public male image.

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