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The Male Ideal: Lon Of New York And The Masculine Physique



Synopsis

Long before Bruce Weber or Herb Ritts picked up a camera, there was a photographer whose images glorified the male nude. But Alonzo Hanagan, better known as Lon of New York, was working during the 1940s and 1950s, when images of the male nude were not just illicit but illegal. Twice, his studio was raided and his negatives destroyed by police. Many of the images in this book thus exist only as prints purchased by collectors at the time. Now, for the first time in more than forty years, these photos are published in one comprehensive collection that recovers this lost body of work. Suffused with a coy playfulness and a naïve vulnerability, these erotic images of men evoke a time of greater innocence but also of greater suppression, revealing much about gay history and the history of photography.

Book Information

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Universe; First Edition edition (March 4, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0789309963

ISBN-13: 978-0789309969

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 0.6 x 11 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.7 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (12 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,500,643 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #452 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Nude Photography](#) #2050 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Portraits](#) #2164 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Visual Arts > Photography](#)

Customer Reviews

I bought my first book of Lon of New York photographs two years ago, a title called "Lon of New York: American Photography of the Male Nude, 1940-1970," giving it a generally negative review here on . I noted at the time, however, that Lon had a reputation as a very prolific photographer over many years and hoped that there were better examples of his work somewhere out there. The photographs brought together here by R. Massengill in "The Male Ideal: Lon of New York and the Masculine Physique" is that collection. These are beautiful images of beautiful young men, many of them presented as full-page plates rather than as among several pictures on a single page. The photos themselves are crisp and clean copies presented on good quality paper. an important

feature in allowing the full beauty of the models and of Lon's vision to come through. Unlike the first book of Lon's work I bought, there are few of the silly props -- faux Roman military helmets for instance -- in this collection. The photos selected for this book generally reference classical Greek sculpture of the male physique or classic body-building poses in the era when body-building focused more on the aesthetics of the male form verses the ability to pack on mounds and mounds of raw muscle by any means necessary that it became in the Dorian Yates era and beyond. Massengill organizes these photos by decade from the 1930s through the '50s/early 60s, and identifies most of the models by name, some of whom were prominent in the world of competitive body-building when these photos were taken. His biography of Lon's life is fairly detailed, quite moving and often sad when we learn of the police harassment.

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