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RAMIN SAMANDARI

BODY AND MIND

CURATED BY MICHAEL MEHL

" this is the only body i'm going to get

so i'm going to respect it, i'm going to take

care of it, nourish it.

RAMIN SAMANDARI

Born in 1960 in Tehran, Ramin Samandari emigrated from Iran to the United States in 1978 and makes his home in San Antonio, Texas. A versatile artist working with photographic and digital imaging processes, Samandari investigates the human form in relation to other forms, space, and the intangible forces of time, place and history. Samandari teaches photography at the Southwest School of Art and owns Magical Realism Studio, located in the Blue Star Art Complex in San Antonio, Texas.

Samandari's work is in the permanent collections at the San Antonio Museum of Art and the University of Texas at San Antonio, along with numerous private collections.

BODY AND MIND : Curated by Michael Mehl

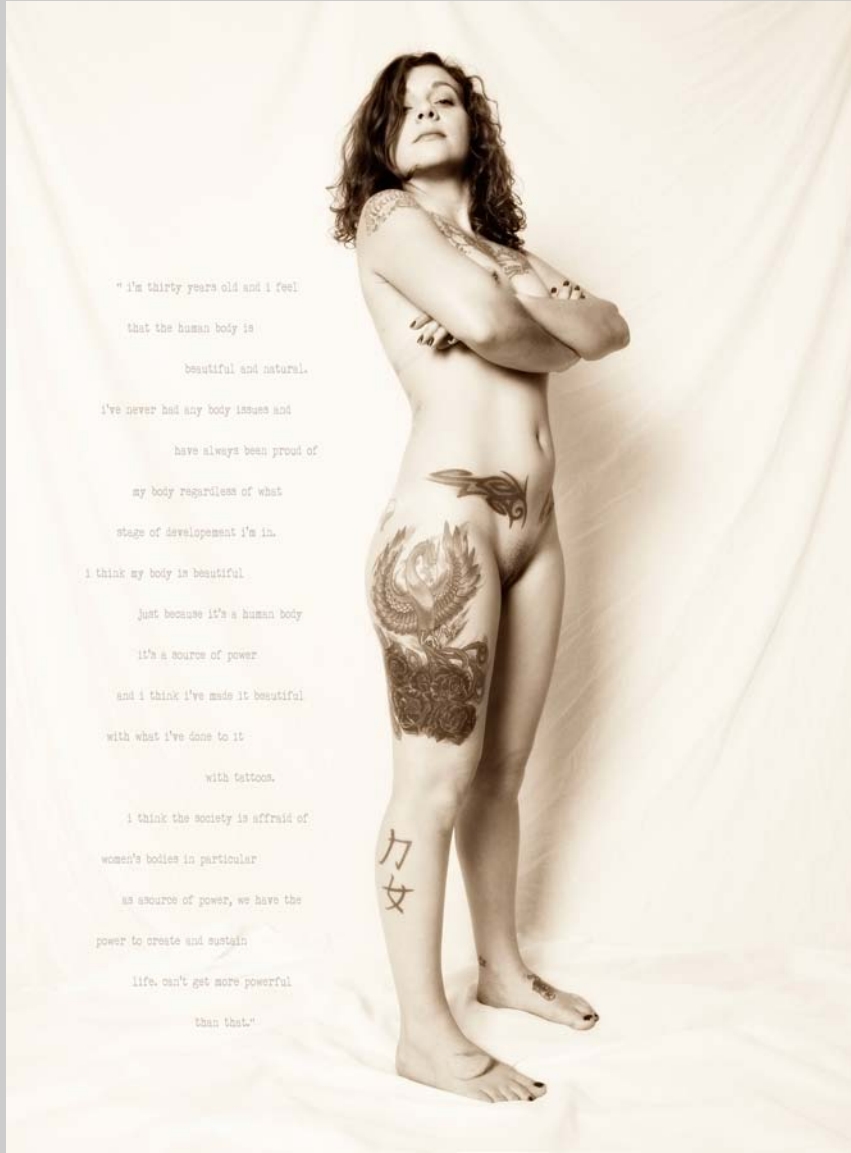
This new portrait series is the product of my ongoing fascination with the human body and consciousness.

A critical self-regard for our bodies and the paradigms of personal appearance pressed on us by society, are what drove me to create these images.

I asked my subjects to make up their own poses and to articulate thoughts and feelings about their own bodies as well as society's perception of physical ideals. Excerpts from their statements are included as text on the portraits of each subject and in the last three pages of this monograph.

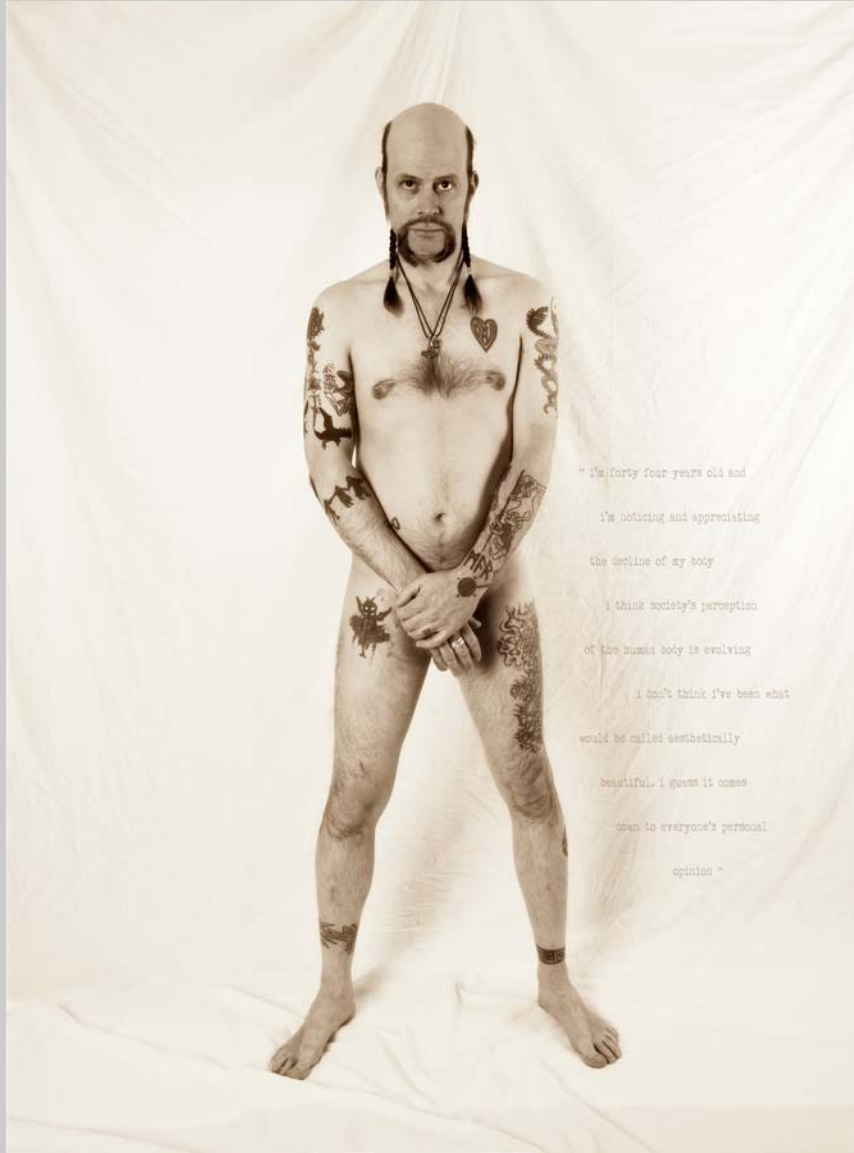
In this ongoing series, I am photographing as diverse a group of subjects as possible, including people of all ages, genders, shapes and sizes. My intent is to show that all bodies are inherently beautiful.

Ramin Samandari
magicalrealismstudio@yahoo.com



" i'm thirty years old and i feel
that the human body is
beautiful and natural.
i've never had any body issues and
have always been proud of
my body regardless of what
stage of development i'm in.
i think my body is beautiful
just because it's a human body
it's a source of power
and i think i've made it beautiful
with what i've done to it
with tattoos.
i think the society is afraid of
women's bodies in particular
as a source of power, we have the
power to create and sustain
life. can't get more powerful
than that."

Blanca



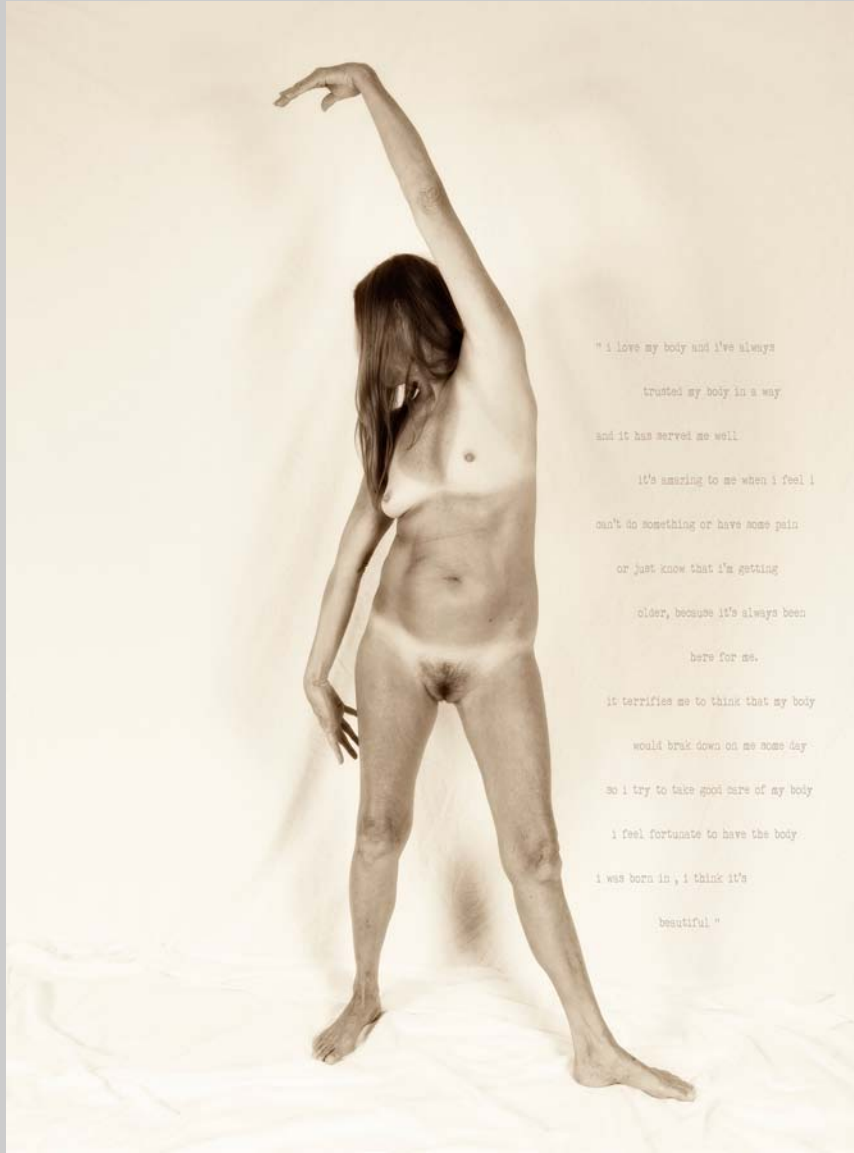
" I'm forty four years old and
I'm noticing and appreciating
the decline of my body
I think society's perception
of the human body is evolving
I don't think I've been what
would be called aesthetically
beautiful. I guess it comes
down to everyone's personal
opinion "

Patrick



" this is the only body i'm going to get
so i'm going to respect it, i'm going to take
care of it, nourish it.
i do yoga everyday, i eat healthy and never diet
it's like a vehicle, you don't
buy a new one everyday
you have to take care of it
my passion is pretty much fitness and
being happy and that consists
of food too. after this i'm
going to rosario's for anchilada "

Rhiannon



Emily



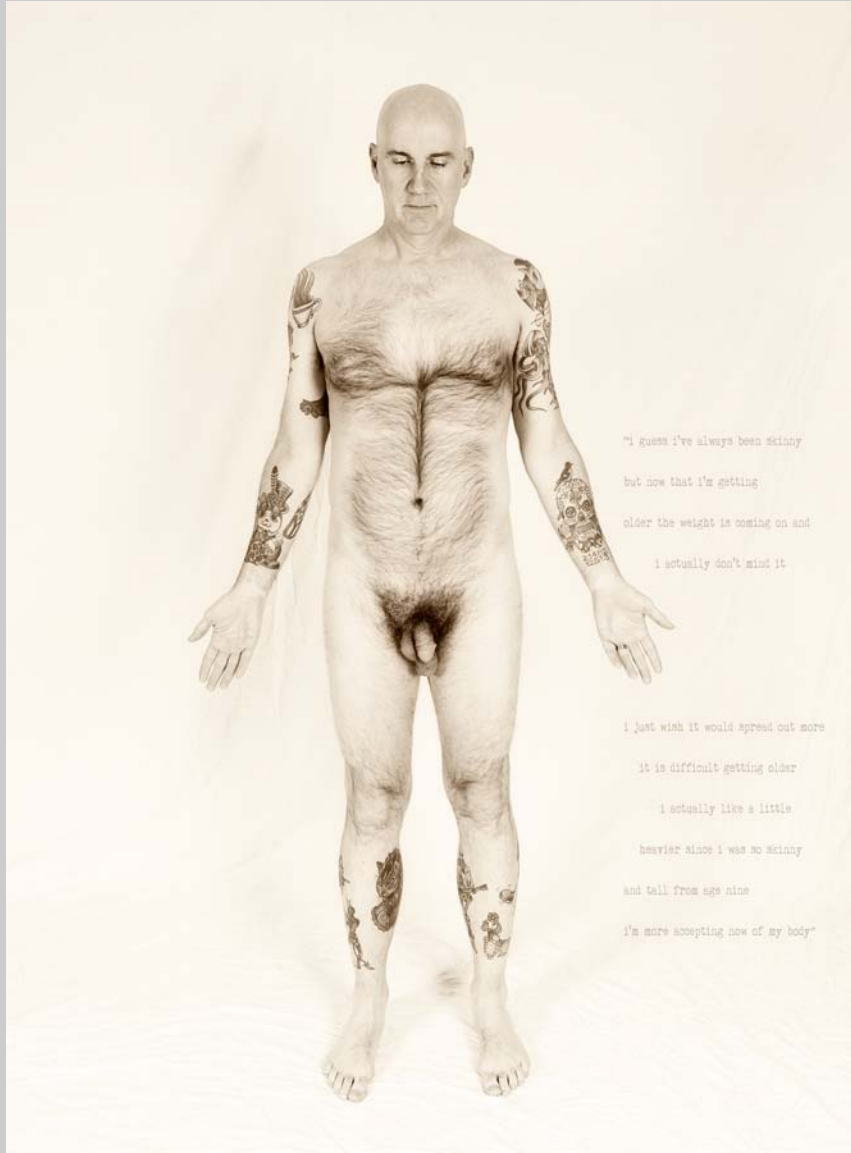
Stephen



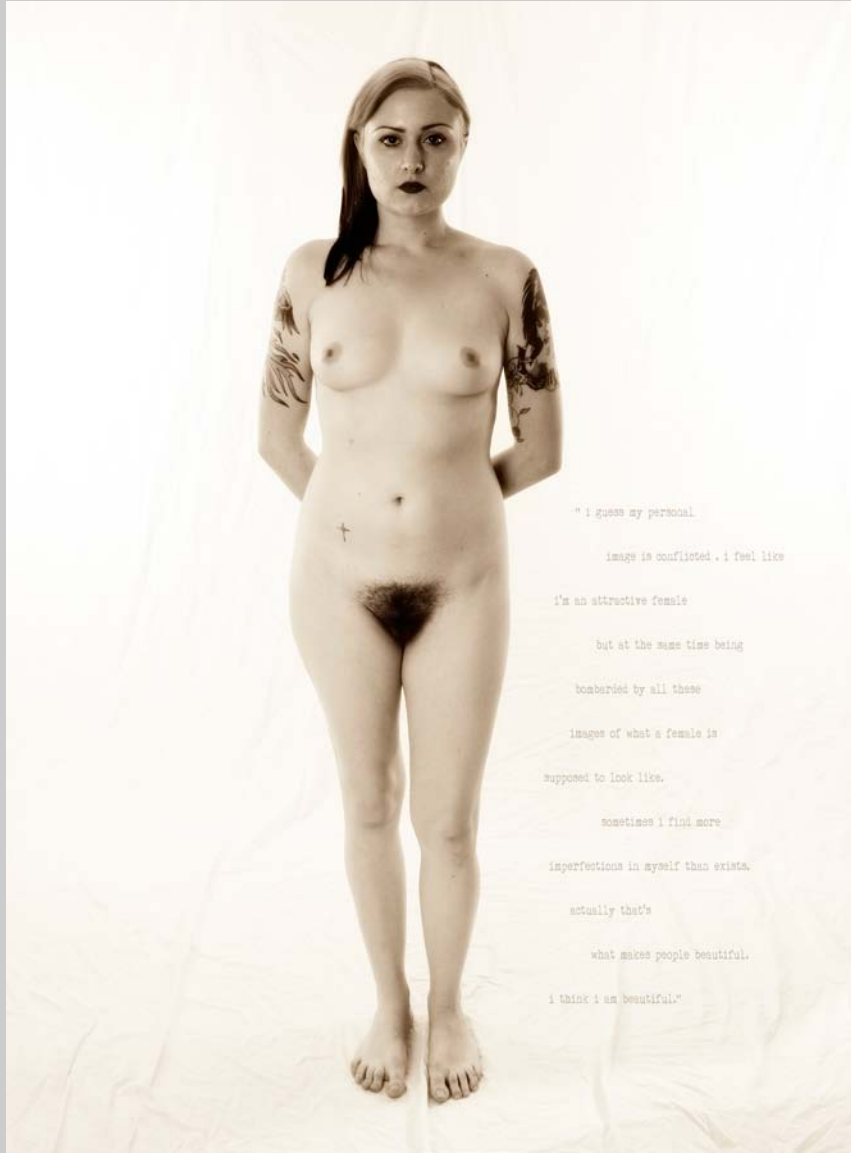
Shimi



Karen



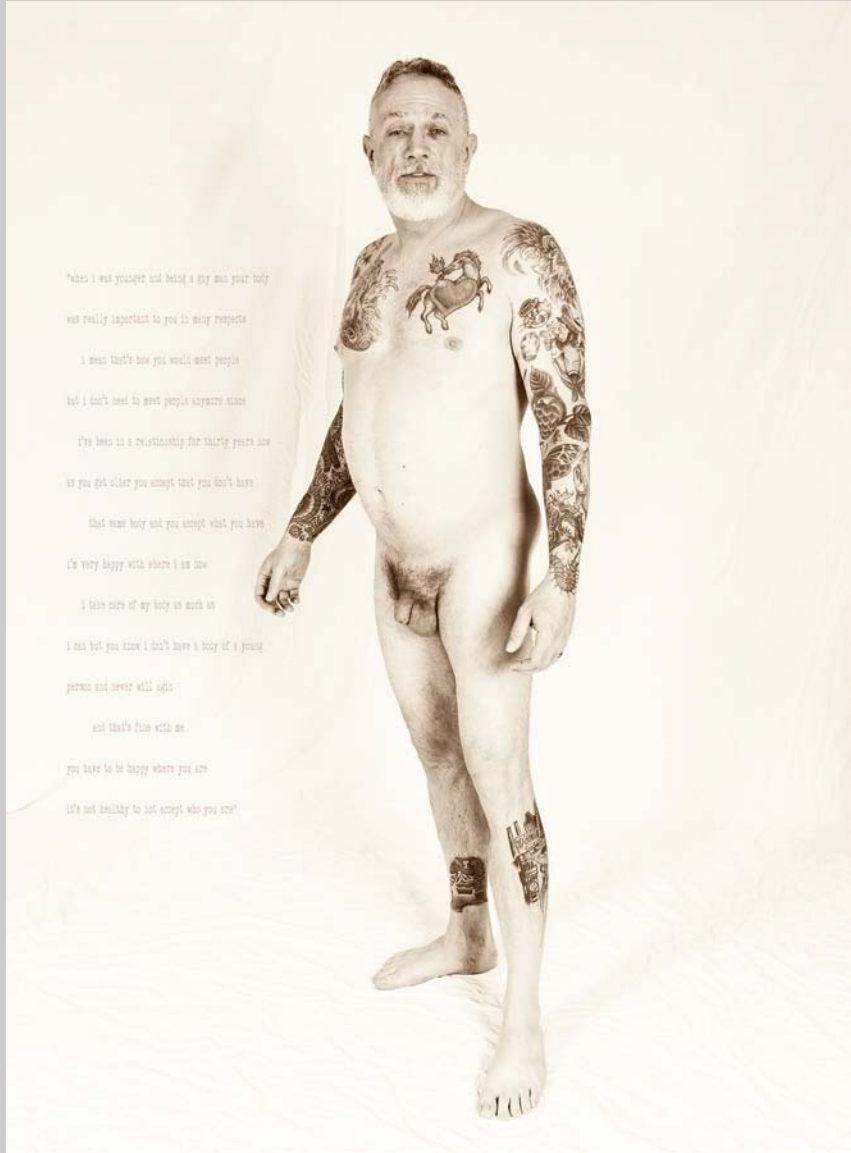
John



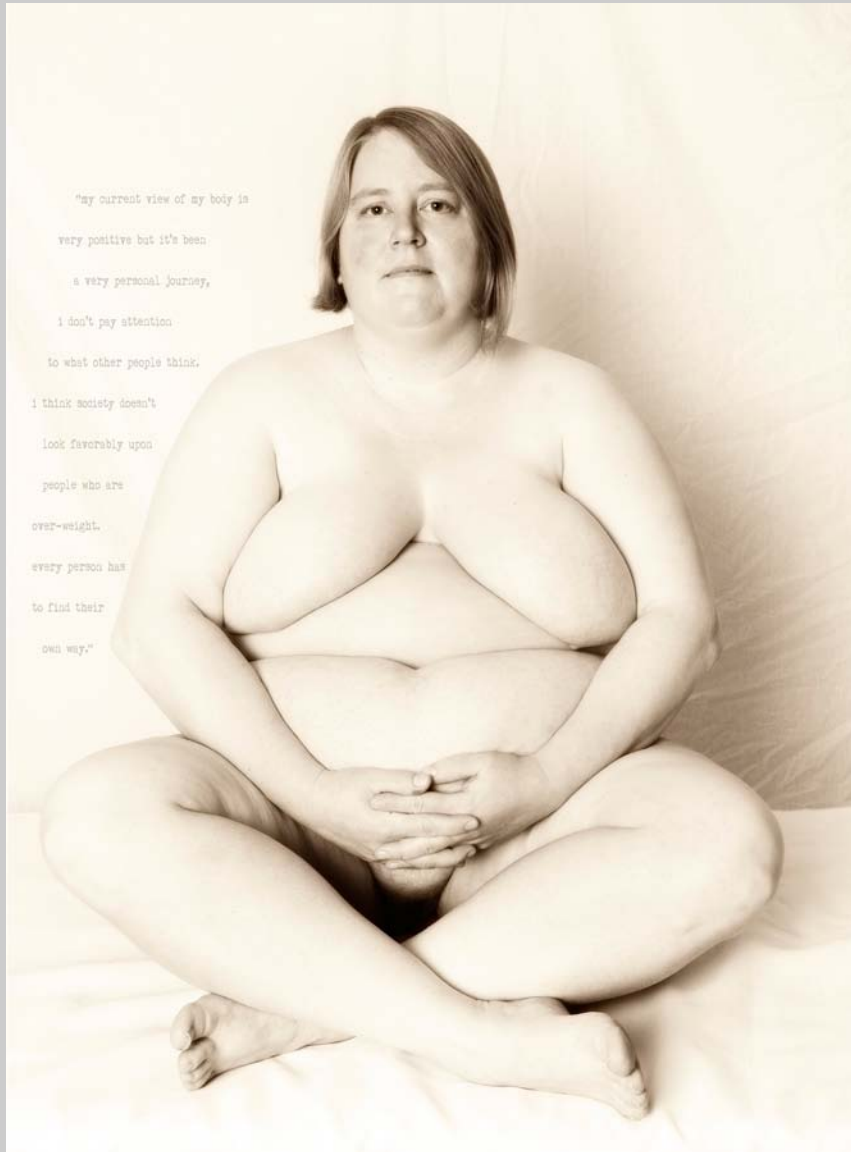
Christine



Lisa



Barry



Laurie



Victoria

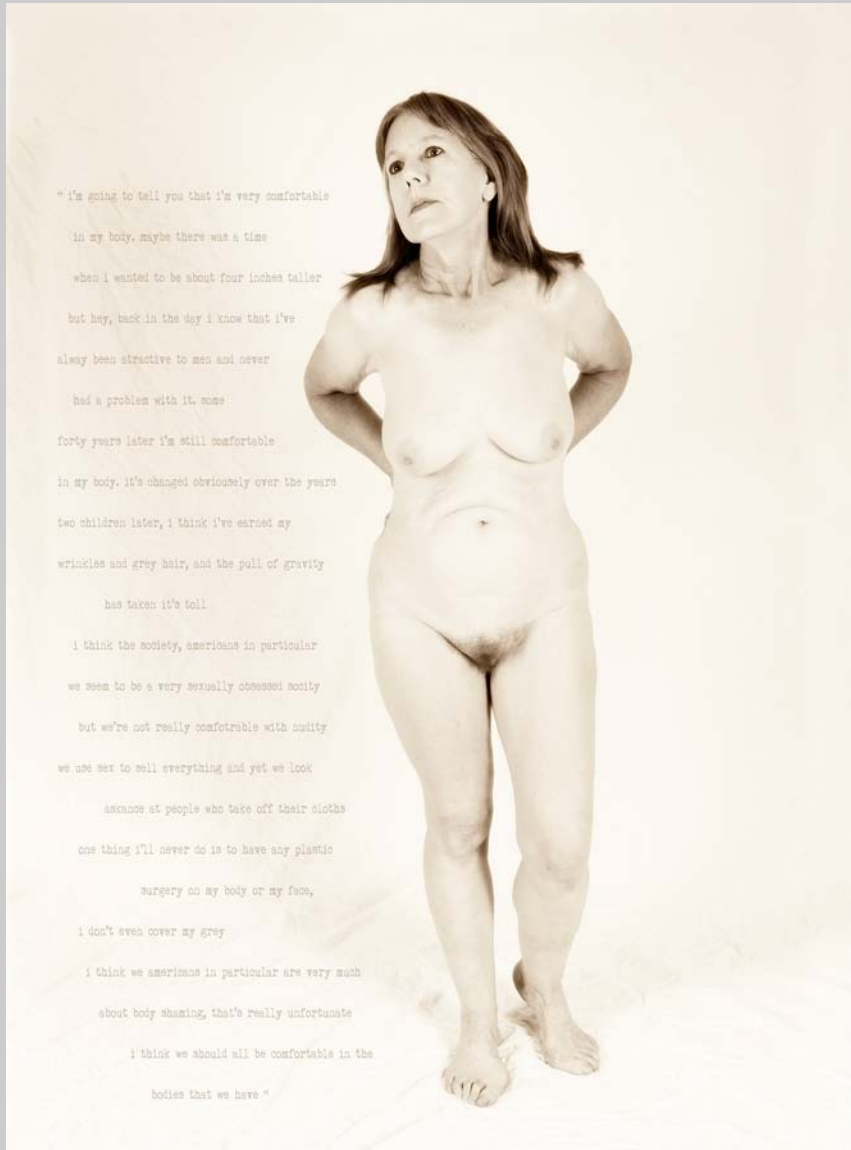


" we're constantly told by society
what kind of body is the perfect body
something very few people can achieve
personally, i'd like to have a better
body, buffer, thinner, better...
there's a lot of discomfort with
people's bodies
very hard to be emotionally
comfortable in your own skin
when you're not comfortable in
your own skin "

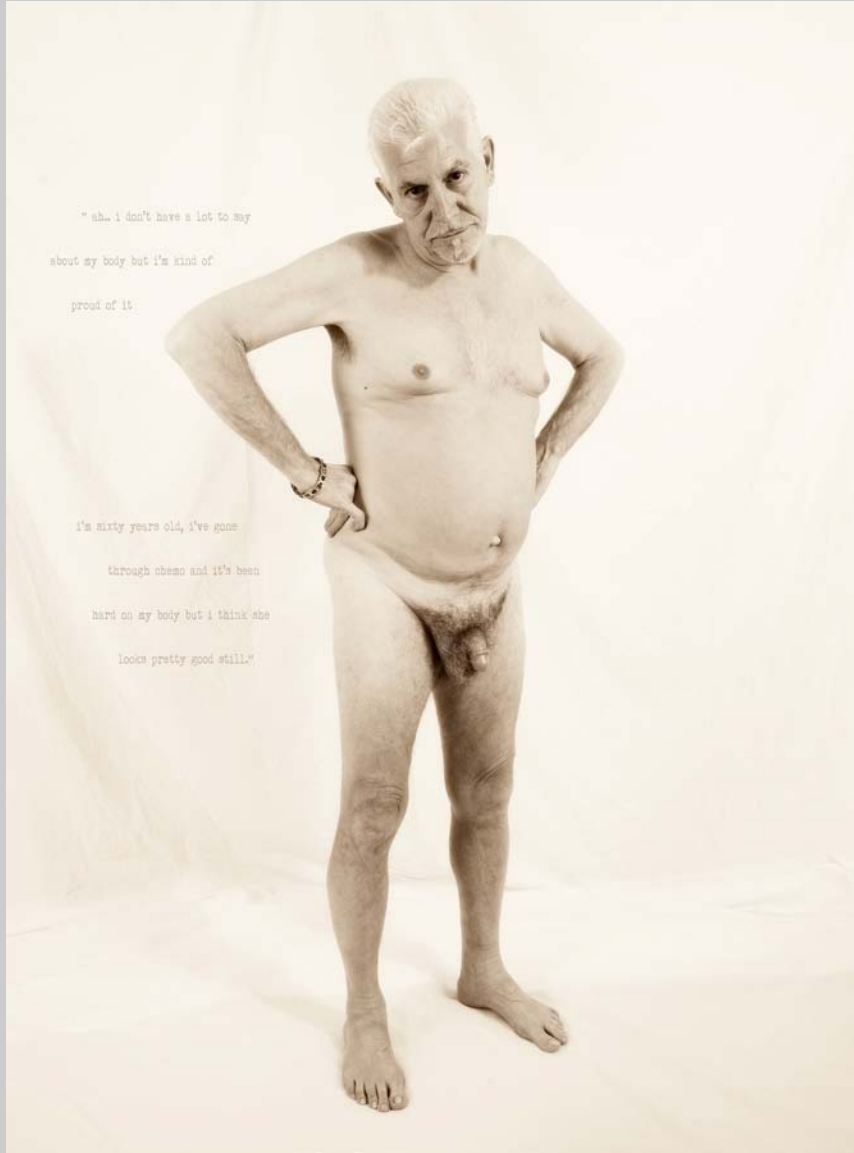
Wade



Sara



Judy



Ray



Robin

Blanca: I'm thirty years old and I feel that the human body is beautiful and natural. I've never had any body issues and have always been proud of my body regardless of what stage of development I'm in. I think my body is beautiful just because it's a human body, it's a source of power and I think I've made it beautiful with what I've done to it with tattoos. I think the society is afraid of women's bodies in particular as a source of power, we have the power to create and sustain life. Can't get any more powerful than that.

Patrick: I'm forty four years old and I'm noticing and appreciating the decline of my body. I think society's perception of human body is evolving. I don't think I've been what would be called aesthetically beautiful. I guess it comes down to everyone's personal opinion.

Rhiannon: This is the only body I'm going to get so I'm going to respect it, I'm going to take care of it, nourish it. I do Yoga every day, I eat healthy and never diet. It's like a vehicle, you don't buy a new one every day, you have to take care of it. My passion is pretty much fitness and being happy and that consists of food too. After this I'm going to Rosario's for Enchiladas.

Emily: I love my body and I've always trusted my body in a way and it has served me well. It's amazing to me when I feel I can't do something or have some pain or just know that I'm getting older, because it's always been here for me. It terrifies me to think that my body would break down on me some day so I try to take good care of my body. I feel fortunate to have the body I was born in, I think it's beautiful.

Stephen: Being inside of my body has been quite a journey. I've had a number of health issues and find my capabilities diminished and as I examine my recovery I also realize that I'm also aging so I have to balance with recovery from illness and the aging. Is it my recovery that's too slow or am I just older? I like my body but I also recognize that it's not the sum total of who I am. My existence resided within my mind and my soul as much as within my body.

Shimi: Well, I like my body now. I think it's a work in progress. When I was younger and I compared myself with other girls in school who were also dancers I never felt that I quite fit the ideals of what a dancer was supposed to look like because I didn't have long legs, my butt was too big, I was too dark...whatever. I'm not bummed about being forty, I'm in the best shape of my life. I'm proud of where I am with my body.

Karen: I believe I'm overweight but that comes from when I was younger and my dance teachers were always on me to lose weight, I guess that stuck with me through the years. I'm told I have a great body by the general public, I do not believe them but oh well... As I'm aging I'm finding some differences in my body, losing muscle, harder to keep weight off, and then there is the gravity. Your body is not just some image it is who you are.

John: I guess I've always been skinny but now that I'm getting older, the weight is coming on and I actually don't mind it. I just wish it would spread out more. It's difficult getting older, I actually like a little heavier since I was so skinny and tall from age nine. I'm more accepting now of my body.

Christine: I guess my personal image is conflicted, I feel like I'm an attractive female but at the same time being bombarded by all these images of what a female is supposed to look like. Sometimes I find more imperfections in myself than exist. Actually that's what makes people beautiful, I think I'm beautiful.

Lisa: I'm comfortable in my body, it's changed over the years with having children. So I guess I have a more womanly body now as opposed to a teenage or young body and I accept it. I have no real body issues but the society does make me uncomfortable at times where I wouldn't feel OK wearing certain clothes.

Barry: when I was younger and being a gay man, your body was really important to you in many respects. I mean that's how you would meet people but I don't need to meet people anymore since I've been in a relationship for thirty years now. As you get older you accept that you don't have that same body and you accept what you have. I'm very happy with where I am now, I take care of my body as much as I can but you know, I don't have a body of a young person and never will again and that's fine with me. You have to be happy where you are, it's not healthy to not accept who you are.

Laurie: My current view of my body is very positive but it's been a very personal journey. I don't pay attention to what other people think. I think society doesn't look favorably upon people who are overweight. Every person has to find their own way.

Victoria: I used to be very body conscience, I guess I still am. In this society everyone is, everybody is making judgments about your body. I'm in my sixties now and decided that I need to just embrace my body. I'm never going to be twenty again, I think it's a good exercise for me to make peace with my body and be OK with it. There is a lot of pressure, especially on women in our society to look a certain way. We all have to make peace with who we are and be happy with our bodies.

Wade: We're constantly told by society what kind of body is the perfect body. Something very few people can achieve. Personally, I'd like to have a better body, buffer, thinner, hotter. There is a lot of discomfort with people's bodies, very hard to be emotionally comfortable in your own skin when you're not comfortable in your own skin.

Sara: My body! It holds all the stuff inside. I'm currently a fatter girl. Out of my peer group I was the first one to get boobs, hips and stuff so I got noticed for my body right away. It was made very clear to me that this is what makes you valuable, the way you look is good so keep it up. As you get older though you stop having so much control over that stuff and sometimes you just get fat.... I have never felt so loved in my life as I do right now in this fat body so I can't be too mad at it. I just want to love myself and my body and I want everyone to feel that they have a right to do that no matter how thick or thin we are.

Judy: I'm going to tell you that I'm very comfortable in my body. Maybe there was a time when I wanted to be about four inches taller but hey, back in the day I know that I've always been attractive to men and never had a problem with it. Some forty years later I'm still comfortable in my body. It's changed obviously over the years, two children later, I think I've earned my wrinkles and grey hair, and the pull of gravity has taken its toll. I think the society, Americans in particular, we seem to very sexually obsessed society but we're not really comfortable with nudity. We use sex to sell everything and yet we look askance at people who take off their clothes, one thing I'll never do is to have any plastic surgery on my body or my face. I don't even cover my greys. I think we Americans are very much about body shaming, that's really unfortunate. I think we should all be comfortable in the bodies that we have.

Ray: Ah... I don't have a lot to say about my body but I'm kind of proud of it. I'm sixty years old, I've gone through chemo and it's been hard on my body but I think she looks pretty good still.

Robin: Now that I'm officially in the fourth decade of my life, I think my body is starting to amaze me and I'm humbled by my own beauty, even though sometimes I still see myself as if I were this skinny pubescent teenager who can barely get a date. But now here I am forty years old and I look the same as I did when I graduated from high school. I don't feel ashamed of having the body that I have. I've always been rebelling against mainstream society, for one thing, just being a black woman you're automatically going to rebel against this monolithic pedestal of European beauty. But at the same time I can appreciate that beauty alongside my own.