

What Goes on in the
Mind of the Nerve
Personals Dater?



INTRODUCING

The Nerve
BLOG-A-LOG

They Blog. You Vote.



Home | Personals | Photography | Features | A&E Lounge | Blogs | Video | Interact | Shop | About Us | Help ?

personal of the day

DISPATCHES

1722 online now



mitford

More about what I am looking for: "An insecure bassist in an underground New York rock band who cries when Bambi's mother dies."

BROWSE ALL
PERSONALS NOW!

search articles

go

NEW THIS WEEK

Face/Off by the Nerve
staff

See where Bush and Kerry really stand on ten major issues.

Girlie Power by Ada Calhoun
How the candidates are courting single women.

Cock the Vote by Steve Almond
Two new sites attempt to stuff the ballot box.

Storyville by Michael Berkowitz
A tribute to the working girls of a naughty New Orleans neighborhood.

The X Factor by Whitney Lawson
Iconic photographer Timothy Greenfield-Sanders on his new book of porn-star portraits.

The Days of Lithium and iMovie by Andy Horwitz
With *Tarnation*, Jonathan Caouette reinvents the documentary.

Film Reviews by Logan Hill and Noy Thrupkaew
This week: *Stage Beauty* is a one-man show; *Last Life in the Universe* is a gorgeously bipolar romance. Plus: Date DVD.



If you have been photographed by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, you are either incredibly famous and accomplished, or a little-known member of a subculture. The artist began his career by documenting the characters in the New York art world in the '50s. His technique — a trademark combination of humanism and monumentality — lent itself to his portraits of the major icons of our time. (Hillary Clinton? Yup. Nelson Mandela? Check.) Lately, he has turned to people who are a little bit of both: porn stars. We spoke with him about art, XXX, Warhol and fluffers. — Whitney Lawson

You are famous for photographing cultural icons, literary giants, political figures — I think of your pictures of Patti Smith, Lou Reed, Vaclav Havel, and Muhammad Ali. How did you get the idea to bring famous and up-and-coming porn stars into this pantheon?

It goes back to when I saw *Boogie Nights*, and I was immediately overwhelmed by the idea that these were, one, celebrities in a way, and two, that they were such interesting people. I'd never thought of porn stars as people who had lives; they were always

just these objectified people. That was '97, and I decided to think about doing a series of porn star portraits. I didn't do anything until '99, when I met a porn star through a friend. And he came over and posed for me, and after we did this portrait of him — clothed, of course, because I hadn't even thought about nude — he said, "Well, let's do the nude one now," at which point I was sort of flabbergasted. And I said, "Well, why don't we do it in the same pose?" And then the next day when I looked at the film it



promotion

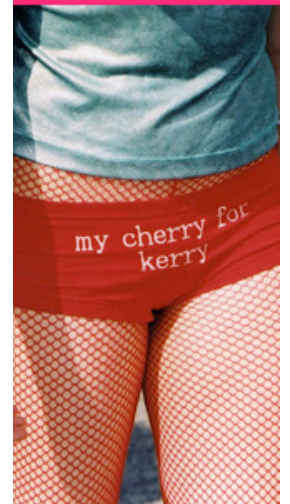
promotion

Enter the Nerve
Amateur Photo
Contest
and win
\$500!

THIS MONTH'S
THEME:
Sexiest presentation
of a political slogan.

Or just check
out the entries!

Gallery
online now.



sponsored links

Your link here
Powered by MarketBanker

Advertisers, click here to get listed!

Sex Advice From . . .
Puppetry of the Penis
Stars by Barbara

Atkinson

Q: What's a good place
to engage in public sex?

A: Anywhere your
mothers aren't.

Sight Unseen by Lily

Oei

Director Catherine
Breillat's passion for the
provocative.

**Stop the World, I Want
to Get Off** by Sarah

Hepola

MTV's reality staple
betrays a fan for the last
time.

Sexology's Little Death

by Justin Clark

How conservatives and
the drug industry are
killing sex research.

Scanner by Ada Calhoun

Hilary Duff, Dolly Parton,
and Girls on Bulls.

Horoscopes by the

Nerve staff

Your week in sex.

Afterschool Shockfest

by Carrie Hill Wilner

An 18-year-old author
on the sex diary that
scandalized Europe.
(Yes, Europe.)

A Night Out With

Melissa P. by Melissa

Panarello

"I sat at the table with
my legs spread, the
heels of my boots nailed
to the floor and my sex
visible to all."

was amazing: there was this kind of incredible dialogue between the two pictures, and each was fascinating in its own right, but together they were kind of like one plus one equals three. It was very powerful.

Did you approach any of these subjects any differently than your usual highly-accomplished subjects?

Not really. I think I approach everyone in the same way, which is that there's a kind of dance that goes on here in which I try and make the subject as comfortable as possible. And whether that's Madeleine Albright or Tera Patrick, it's my figuring out what's going to make them feel comfortable. It's often coming up stairs, having a drink, coffee, getting to talk a little bit. You have to realize that a photo situation is inherently awkward for most people. So I do certain tricks and things to make people feel comfortable. Compliments usually work.

And alcohol?

Alcohol sometimes; I try not to, because it gets sloppy when you're on the set. But I have had to use alcohol as a last resort.

Some of them look more natural clothed, and some look more themselves naked.

I think what I was interested in originally was them clothed, because it was so interesting to see porn stars clothed: off-duty, who they are as real people. And then what I found was that they are very much more empowered unclothed. I think that's what so great about the project: these two different views of people.

How did pick the thirty people? Was it word of mouth?

You start to talk to people in this world, and you know that you've got to get Jenna, and you've got to get Nina Hartley, and you've got to get Tera Patrick, and you've got to get Sean Michaels, Michael Lucas. Certain key people you want. On top of that, I wanted a very diverse group. So I wanted a brunette, I wanted a gay guy, an older straight man, an Asian, a Hispanic. I wanted the widest range I could get, because with only 30 people, these are almost types in a sense.

You asked some of your famous friends to contribute written pieces to the book — Gore Vidal, Wayne Koestenbaum, John Malkovich. Why did you ask for their input?

Just like the porn stars, I wanted a wide range of writers that could reflect as many different opinions as possible. And I think they did that.

The book's introduction says you were influenced by Andy Warhol. You definitely bring high and low together: Gore Vidal and Ron Jeremy in the same book.

Andy Warhol is my hero, absolutely. I didn't know him as well as I would have loved to have known him, but I knew him a bit. I was actually set to photograph him again the week he died. For me, Andy Warhol was this artist who really understood that you don't have to be just one thing. He was the first person to say you can be a painter and you can be a sculptor, you can be a filmmaker, you can be a fashion model. You can do all these different things and you don't have to limit yourself, you don't have to be pigeonholed. And I've always thought that was so brilliant, and I've tried to do that with my own career.

Now that the Internet has somewhat taken over the porn industry, do you consider these film stars a dying breed to be celebrated and



documented? Or is this strictly an art project for you?

I think it's a combination of those things. In a way, I wanted to photograph porn stars because it is a sort of disappearing world. And also I wanted to photograph the legends before they were gone.



[Click here to see the nude versions.](#)

Now that these people been photographed by you, they seem like bigger stars. In your pictures, they're monumental. Was that your intention?

Well, Elvis Mitchell was here earlier and he said that the pictures were "gladiatorial," and I thought it was a wonderful word to use. I want people to look the way they see themselves at their best. So when you look in a mirror and you say, "Y'know, I look pretty good today," and you're kind of turning a certain way, and the light is kind of cheating how you look: I want to capture that on film, to get people to look their best, to feel their best. But also they're very real, they're not soft-focused, they're not very re-touched. They're very much who they are, but I shot them in a way that brought out the best in them.

The point is that these are big stars. It's not really said out loud enough. There are a lot of people who watch porn, and they know who these people are. My work has always been about people of great accomplishment, not just celebrities. These are the people who are the best at fucking; they're accomplished!

It's interesting how differently shaved they are.

Yeah, shaving is a whole fetish, I think. Karen Finley was saying to me how it's all about infantilization. "I don't have pubic hair, and therefore I'm still a child." You could write a whole essay on the pubic hair of porn stars.

Karen Finley's essay in the book is called "Make Porn Not War." Is this a message that speaks to you personally?

I think so, sure. The war in Iraq is probably the worst mistake any president has ever made, period. I can't imagine anything stupider than to go into an Arab country and invade it the way we did, with no reason whatsoever, no danger to us, the wrong enemy. I think we're at a very dangerous time where the nation is very much split between this kind of shame-based Bush agenda and another side of the country that's much more open, that's trying to be open to many different people and ideas. It's a real psychological split, almost a physical one in some ways.

What was the most odd or interesting thing to happen on the shoot?

There was a moment when one porn star asked if anyone wanted to fluff him. But we moved past that very quickly. n°



To buy *XXX: 30 Porn-Star Portraits*,
[click here.](#)

[home](#) | [photography](#) | [personal essays](#) | [fiction](#) | [dispatches](#) | [poetry](#) | [opinions](#) | [regulars](#) | [search](#) |
[personals](#) | [horoscopes](#) | [retronerve](#) | [NerveShop](#) | [about us](#)

[account status](#) | [login](#) | [join](#) | [TOS](#) | [help](#)