



To print this page, select "Print" from the File menu of your browser



Jenna Jameson

Naked (and clothed) came the porn stars

A noted photographer takes before and after pictures of Jenna Jameson and other XXX performers.

By Pete L'Official



Nov. 9, 2004 | Timothy Greenfield-Sanders made his name photographing luminously iconic **portraits** of the artistically and intellectually accomplished. Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Orson Welles, Toni Morrison, Sidney Poitier and Hillary Clinton have all appeared before his camera. His photographs manage not merely to capture but also to powerfully radiate with the intensity of his featured subjects -- their personalities pour forth from the frames.

Greenfield-Sanders has now re-focused his lens on a whole new crowd: **porn stars**. His latest book, "**XXX: 30 Porn-Star Portraits**," released last month by Bulfinch Press, features 30 startling diptychs of some of porn's most famous performers, gay and straight, shown in their day clothes and their birthday suits. (The photos are also **on display** through Dec. 18 at the Mary Boone Gallery in New York.) Jenna Jameson, Ron Jeremy, Tera Patrick and Gina Lynn are among those who strike twinned poses for the photographer, in some cases revealing far more confidence in the buff than in their blue jeans. The book also features 15

essays, both erudite and eccentric, about pornography and culture from a remarkable group of writers, thinkers and performers, including Gore Vidal, Francine du Plessix Gray, John Malkovich, Nancy Friday and John Waters.

Porn stars were a radical change of pace in many ways for the photographer, who'd never photographed nudes before. But with the subject of porn becoming increasingly visible in popular culture -- Jenna Jameson's **well-received** autobiography being one recent example -- it became not only impossible to ignore, but also fascinating enough for the photographer to study. Though pornography has long existed in various forms, it may take the bright key lights of the mainstream -- or of a prominent photographer for that matter -- for us to honestly look at those who produce it. As Sunrise Adams, one of the porn stars who posed for Greenfield-Sanders, says in "Thinking XXX," a documentary about the making of the book that recently aired on HBO and is set to **return to regular rotation** soon: "Everybody's fucking somebody to get somewhere in life. We're just doing it on film."

Salon recently spoke to Greenfield-Sanders by phone:

What made you decide to put together this book?

Years ago, I saw "Boogie Nights" and was struck by how interesting porn stars were, and thought they'd be challenging for a portrait series. I never thought of shooting them nude. And it developed over the years, the idea. Eventually I met a porn star, and I did portraits of him. He asked to pose nude at the end of the shoot, and I was shocked and didn't know what to do or how to shoot it. So I used the same pose as the clothed one. The next day when I saw the pictures, they were so striking that I realized that this was a great way to shoot them because they were equally interesting both as people and as nude studies. I only imagined them for a gallery show at first. I never thought of it as a book. But as I met more porn stars I realized how interesting, how diverse and how exceptional they were. I thought a book might be cool too.

How do you choose your poses?

As a photographer I think of the whole project at all times, not just that single portrait. "XXX" consists of 30 portraits, so you don't want to do the same pose over and over again, even though 10 or 15 people might look great in that pose. One uses up the limited body positions quickly. The trick is to get everyone to be different in some way, and at the same time look powerful, and interesting, have dignity, and look like himself or herself.

You've said that your photo of Briana Banks was inspired by a Cézanne painting of a young boy. Were many of the other poses similarly inspired by works of art?

I have a B.A. in art history, so I often think in art historical terms. I look at a pose and think, "Oh, that's the pose of George Washington with his hand up at his chest," or, "That's Mona Lisa." I think the Cézanne painting of the bather is such a great pose, and it was an interesting start-off point for her.

Goya is mentioned in the introduction to your book as one of the primary inspirations for the diptych form you've chosen, primarily his "Maja, Clothed and Nude" paintings.

When Goya did the Maja paintings, those were radically controversial. [Labeled "obscene works," they were seized by the authorities.] I think in some parts of this country, there are probably people who feel the same way about my book. So while in some ways a lot has changed -- these porn stars can be nude and confident, and powerfully nude -- there are people that still view it as they did 300 years ago.

Are you hoping your project will change their minds?

I don't know if I can change people's minds, but I would like to create a dialogue about the subject and these people -- about porn stars -- and what they do, and about sex.

What did you learn about porn stars from working on this project?

I was very lucky to pick porn stars to pose for the first nudes I've ever done because these are very accomplished people in front of the camera. They're great at posing, so it was easier for me than it would have been with another group who wasn't really comfortable with their bodies. Porn stars are very exhibitionistic and very at ease naked. Nudity empowering to them.

Did your porn star subjects ever remark about how different your photo shoots are from, or how similar they are to, what they're used to?

I think that they would agree that it was a very different experience for them, because I was there to bring them out as people, to emphasize that and to make them look good, but in a very different way than they're used to. They're used to doing a box cover or magazine layouts -- it's a different aesthetic. I think they felt that I respected them and I don't think that is always the case on other photo shoots.

Were any of them surprisingly shy?

I think that it takes a certain personality to be a porn star. I think exhibitionism is a big trait; an incredible drive to be successful is another one. I've only shot these 30, plus a few that didn't make the book. They all have that in common -- this push to be somebody, whether it's for the money or whether it's for the fame -- and I think there's a certain commonality to them all in terms of that.

Your portraiture generally manages to convey your subjects' fierce intellect and self-assuredness. These photos convey a different type of confidence and self-assurance. Were you concerned that this series might not carry the same power because of who you were shooting?

I approach all my shoots the same. There's this dance that goes on where I try to make the person feel comfortable, to get them in a certain mood, so that by the time I get them in front of the camera, I can get the best out of them. And whether that person is Madeleine Albright or George Bush or John Kerry or Briana Banks or Tera Patrick, it's the same for me.

About the writer

Peter L'Official is a Salon editorial fellow in New York.

Sound Off

Send us a [Letter to the Editor](#)

GO TO: [Salon.com](#) >> [Arts & Entertainment](#)

[Indie film](#) | [Books](#) | [Life](#) | [Comics](#) | [Audio](#) | [Dialogue](#)
[Letters](#) | [Columnists](#) | [Salon Gear](#)

Reproduction of material from any Salon pages without written permission is strictly prohibited

Copyright 2004 Salon.com

Salon, 22 4th Street, 11th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103

Telephone 415 645-9200 | Fax 415 645-9204

[E-mail](#) | [Salon.com](#) [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#)