



The book was found

# Tom Bianchi: Fire Island Pines, Polaroids 1975-1983



## Synopsis

Growing up in the 1950s, Tom Bianchi would head into downtown Chicago and pick up 25-cent "physique" magazines at newsstands. In one such magazine, he found a photograph of bodybuilder Glenn Bishop on Fire Island. "Fire Island sounded exotic, perhaps a name made up by the photographer," he recalls in the preface to his latest monograph. "I had no idea it was a real place. Certainly, I had no idea then that it was a place I would one day call home." In 1970, fresh out of law school, Bianchi began traveling to New York, and was invited to spend a weekend at Fire Island Pines, where he encountered a community of gay men. Using an SX-70 Polaroid camera, Bianchi documented his friends' lives in the Pines, amassing an image archive of people, parties and private moments. These images, published here for the first time, and accompanied by Bianchi's moving memoir of the era, record the birth and development of a new culture. Soaked in sun, sex, camaraderie and reverie, Fire Island Pines conjures a magical bygone era. Tom Bianchi was born and raised in the suburbs of Chicago and graduated from Northwestern University School of Law in 1970. He became a corporate attorney, eventually working with Columbia Pictures in New York, painting and drawing on weekends. His artwork came to the attention of Betty Parsons and Carol Dreyfuss and they gave him his first one-man painting show in 1980. In 1984, he was given his first solo museum exhibition at the Spoleto Festival. After Bianchi's partner died of AIDS in 1988, he turned his focus to photography, producing *Out of the Studio*, a candid portrayal of gay intimacy. Its success led to producing numerous monographs, including *On the Couch*, *Deep Sex* and *In Defense of Beauty*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

" My first impression of Fire Island was, Oh my god, a magic place exists, for real - a place that I had dreamed about", says Bianchi, whose Polaroid photos of men frolicking at the Pines have become a poignant social document of gay life pre-AIDS. " It was a place that gave birth to my soul as an artist, because I found myself in a community of enormously creative and supportive people who were saying, ' Yeah, go for it!' in ways that our families never could understand." For those born too late to experience that world, there is now Fire Island Pines, a handsome collection of Bianchi's photos that capture the sun, sex, and camaraderie of that lost era. (OUT Magazine)A collection of SX-70 Polaroids made between 1975 and 1983, 'Fire Island Pines' is a fraught and fascinating period piece: a dazzling view of Eden before the Fall. (Vince Aletti TIME)For nearly a decade the lawyer-turner-photographer captured the hedonistic parties, the sun-kissed, chiseled bodies and sexually-charged experimentation of the storied weekend getaway. This summer a collection of Bianchi's picturescelebrating the euphoric, anything-goes years preceding the AIDS epidemic has been published for the first time in a coffee table tome Tom Bianchi: Fire Island Pines, Polaroids 1975-1983. (Luigi Tadini Paper Magazine)Bianchi began documenting all aspects of life in the gay Pines enclave where he spent his summers-- the love, the partying, the natural splendor of the barrier island 60 miles east of the city, where a deep sense of community was available to many who felt closeted or stifled in their everyday lives. (Kimberly Chou The Wall Street Journal)The beautiful men who occupied those houses are the focus of another new book due to arrive this week: [Fire Island Pines: Polaroids 1975-1983](#), by the photographer Tom Bianchi.For decades, the pictures in that book lay in boxes at the photographer's Palm Springs, Calif., residence; when he finally retrieved them, Mr. Bianchi explained last week, he was startled to discover a trove recording not merely hundreds of muscular bodies, but a record of a forgotten place and time.True, the images he created focus largely on buff young men disporting themselves. But they also capture something far less obvious: the exuberance of a culture in transformation, of a generation discovering itself in what Mr. Bianchi termed "a gay Brigadoon." "I was the young, lonely gay boy in the Midwest who had no idea paradise existed," Mr. Bianchi said. "Everything about the Pines was new, the very idea of a place where you could play on the beach and hold hands with a guy and be with like-minded people and dance all night with a man."The period his book documents, in the last moments before a random

virus laid waste to a generation of gay men, “was a very sexy and a very sexual time. “But it wasn’t a shallow experience whatsoever,” he said. “I met some pretty incredible people. We certainly loved.” (Guy Trebay The New York Times, Styles Section) “After knocking on too many more locked doors, I put the photos away in a box. The Pines was ground zero as AIDS exploded about that time. That was 40 years ago. A horrific amount of the life recorded in my pictures was consumed in the chaos of the crisis within a few years. I could not have imagined then that my Polaroids would so suddenly become a record of a lost world my box of pictures a mausoleum, too painful to visit. When I reopened the box decades later, I found friends and lovers playing and smiling. Alive again.”

Tom Bianchi (Editors OUT Magazine) This year, Fire Island’s legendary enclave the Pines celebrates its 60th anniversary season, but its real heyday dates to the 1970s and early 80s, when fit young men started streaming into the area, earning the Pines its reputation as a sand-swept gay bacchanal. Tom Bianchi’s Polaroids captured the liberated mood of those days, and they’re now collected in a handsome book, “Tom Bianchi: Fire Island Pines” (Damiani). (Alex Hawgood The New York Times: T Magazine) “I wanted to make a book about these people that’s going to be interesting 100 years from now,” says Tom Bianchi of his new volume, *Fire Island Pines: Polaroids 1975-1983* (Damiani), which depicts eight summers of gay life on the Long Island sandbar. “In taking the photos, my first mission was to show that boys like me knew they had a place to go, and the second was to let the world know there was nothing threatening about us,” says Bianchi of his intimate, sun-dappled images. The book’s subjects are shown frolicking at the beach, lazing in bed, dancing, holding each other, and hanging out in modernist beach houses are palpably exhilarating, and the sense of joy is so immersive that it’s easy to forget, if just for a few minutes, the waiting epilogue that struck the gay community soon after. “The book has for me a profound emotional resonance,” says the 67-year-old photographer, who lives in Palm Springs but still spends several weeks every summer on Fire Island. “I’m looking at myself and many other young men who were vividly alive and celebrating their freedom for the first time.” That celebration, of course, involved easy sex, which is imprinted throughout the book in the group shots of beautiful men who seemed to live primarily in and out of Speedos. “Being a sort of horny devil, I can remember a beautiful figure emerging from the surf, saying ‘Hi,’ getting a smile back, and finding your life transformed in a moment,” says Bianchi. “It was about the connectivity. I tried to give a sense of the world we lived in. I found very strong connections between us, our style and the place you would never attempt a community anywhere but in a place that beautiful.” Bianchi took a prototype of the book to a major

publisher in 1980; editors loved it but the sales team blanched and quashed the project. In the years since, Bianchi became known as one of the premier horny devils of male-physique photography via a number of art books devoted to the classic nude. "But I always knew the time would come for the Fire Island book," he says. "I hope it's available to a younger audience who can see how gay freedom started and what it looked like." Bianchi takes a freighted pause. "I can't say we martyred ourselves. We had no choice. The world was too beautiful, and we had too much fun." (Michael Martin Interview) Unbridled hedonism, superlative beauty, endless sunshine. This is the world of Tom Bianchi—Fire Island Pines, a barrier island off the coast of Long Island, New York that has been a holiday haven for the gay community since the sixties. (Tish Wrigley Another Magazine)

I absolutely LOVE this book!!! Having come out in the late '70's, I barely experienced the cusp of the great gay heydays of that time before Aids came along and ruined the party. I never travelled to Fire Island, as I was too young. I did, however, have great friends in the small town of Macon, Ga. who became mentors to me, and who were well connected with guys who would come and visit from P'town and Fire Island. They would bring me 12 inch records and regale me with tales of their days in the sand and nights on the floors of the discos dancing to the pulsating beats. This book makes me feel almost as if I was actually there, in those days in the sun before the clouds rolled in. Bianchi has such a great eye, and this book really captures a time and place from a bygone era that sadly was stopped dead in its tracks all those summers ago. I sat and read the book and gazed at its pages yesterday afternoon while the afternoon sun streamed through the windows of our home in the mountains, and felt transported back to a place I'll never really know firsthand....still, this book is the next best thing. Cannot recommend highly enough this treasure trove of gorgeous photos of beautiful men living their lives freely and openly, and celebrating what it means to alive. Long live the dead....

I am a longtime Tom Bianchi fan. His books are so wonderful, that I blindly buy them knowing that handsome men will be contained within. These old Polaroids are a departure from his typical books, but I loved it nonetheless. The playfulness of these bare balls men running around are engaging and beautiful. I look forward to Tom's next book.

The book is a beautiful collection. You must read the text to fully understand and appreciate the pictures. I honestly didn't even like it as a picture book until I read what was written and developed

an emotional connection with the pictures. I love it now and it will remain in my library.

As a long time aficionado of Fire Island Pines, I found Mr. Bianchi's book to be as magical and dreamy as the community itself. The photos are wonderfully evocative of a lost era. The special nostalgic feeling of those Polaroid SX70 images brought back a torrent of bittersweet memories of a place and time that has been nearly lost to history. But it is mainly the memories of so many beautiful friends who are now gone.... friends who introduced me to the Pines in 1979, and who guided me on my initial journeys to this mystical isle. And some of these friends are actually mentioned in his extraordinary text. And it is this text that accompanies the photos that I found most remarkable... and most moving. In fact I was moved to tears several times by the beauty of his prose, and the memories that were stirred up by it. He has found a way to bring back to me, in a profound way, one of the most life-altering periods of my life. And for that I am truly grateful. If you are a lover of this scrumptious sandbar that is two hours from New York City and a million miles from reality... or if you have interest in knowing something of its history, get this book. I personally will treasure it forever.

Beautiful book. Images aside, the book itself feels wonderful. The pages and cover are soft and thick. And the photos are classic, gorgeous, historic, and fun.

A beautifully done book which really evokes a time and place of legend. Bianchi was (and continues to be) a trail-blazer with his photography.

A great work of art. The fact that Bianchi was able to capture the beauty of the nude (gay) male body on Polaroids is a miracle in and of itself. These shots, as a collection, seem to tell a story of the tail-end of a bygone era. There were no iPhones, not even laptops. No internet. No digital cameras. Just guys hanging out and having a wonderful time enjoying their sexuality together. HIV/AIDS was not even in public consciousness during the period when these shots were taken. The moments are crystallized beautifully. I'm sure Bianchi had a good number of 'bad' exposures along the way - there was no manual focus with those cameras. I look forward to re-reading this book many more times. I will admit, the male foot is one of my favorite parts of the anatomy and it was the striking cover photo that made me decide to buy the book. There is something amazingly sensual about male feet and although there aren't many pics that prominently feature guys' feet, there are enough barefoot shots to satisfy me. Is this a stroke book? Probably not. But what is cool

is just mentally transporting/teleporting back to 1975-83 and placing myself amongst those guys and sharing in their good time.

Took me back to my summers on fire island,A very special time in my life!!Beautiful book! Gay men young& old should have a copy, to enjoy this rich history

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