

FEB 2010

Dear everyone,

My name is Alexandra Jacoby. I'm an artist, and for over nine years, I have been working on a project for women, called [vagina vérité](#)<sup>®</sup>. I'm making vulva portraits, proud and unabashed documentary photographs — *so that we can see ourselves for ourselves*.

The [project began](#) as a response to a friend who didn't like the way her vagina looked. I wanted her to know that there was no one right way to look, and it became something of a mission for me to create a document of respect and appreciation for our vaginas, our vulvas, our bodies, ourselves.

I've photographed 97 v-portraits so far.

It's important to me to include women who have survived Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in [vagina vérité](#)<sup>®</sup>. I have no personal experience with FGM/C. I just know that many women and girls suffer terrible pain, permanent health problems and death. I don't want to leave women who have gone through this experience out of the book.

My hope is that this book of our vulva portraits, while it does not actually tell any woman's story—much less every woman's story—that, by presenting our unique "faces", it will connect all of us: **that any woman who picks it up will know that she is included, unique and valued.**

I am reaching out to you today for any suggestions you may have toward reaching out to women who have survived FGM/C.

The women who participate in this project may or may not be comfortable with their bodies. They range in age, experiences and lifestyle, and relationship with their vaginas. The one thing they have in common is trusting me with their v-portraits.

I'm based in NYC, and since DEC 2002, I have been presenting [preview exhibitions](#) on my own and as part of group exhibitions, including producing two [Vagina Festivals](#) [visual & performance art weekend experiences] as well as salons in my apartment—where the v-portraits are installed on my living room walls.

Also, I established [vaginaverite.com](#); it contains over 1000 pages of questionnaire-responses on range of v-topics.

I don't have any questionnaires on the website, relating to Female Genital Cutting — *yet*. I welcome any advice/suggestion you might offer here. Over 2.7 million have visited the site so far and it currently averages over 700 visitors a day. I intend to revise the site later this year and focus energy on expanding the online community.

This project has been and continues to be the most meaningful work I've ever engaged in. I look forward to publishing and exhibiting widely.

Toward completing photography, it's not a number of v-portraits that I am pursuing, but more a feeling that we're all represented, and at this point, that means to include more:

- vulvas of survivors of FGM/C
- transgender vulvas
- vulvas of women of darker skin tone
- [vulvas with more hair](#)

This is not say that there is any vulva not welcome, wanted and integral to the project. It's just where I've gotten to so far. Everyone is invited to create a v-portrait. **vagina vérité® is for and about all of us!**

If you are interested and able to give a little of your time, I would so appreciate your help with [this part of the project](#): I am looking to reach out to women who have survived FGM/C and to spread the word to women in general. I welcome your suggestions, comments and questions relating to this, or any aspect of the project.

THANK YOU for reading and for your consideration. I very much appreciate your time and attention.

peace & gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Alex' with a stylized flourish.

P.S. I don't have plans for another preview exhibition at this time, but if you'd like to view the v-portraits, we can arrange a time. They are installed as they were during the last exhibition, in my living room, and I welcome you, with friends and associates, on your own—as you like.

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[Alexandra Jacoby](#)  
leave the castle

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