



vagina vérité

artist's statement - Alexandra Jacoby, June 2005

One day, out of the blue, a friend of mine asked me if I liked the way my vagina looked. Apropos nothing. Did I like the way my vagina looked? As I answered, I realized that I had never really taken a good look at it, and that, other than a bit of porn, I hadn't actually seen any other women's vaginas.

While I was pretty sure that they were all different, I had no evidence to point to when talking with my friend, who clearly thought there was something wrong with how hers looked. There was nothing I could say that would get her to take another look at her vagina.

I began asking around and found that most women didn't have much of a relationship with their vaginas, had not seen other women's vaginas – or their own. Our gynecologists and lovers, they knew them, were intimate with them, but not us.

It bothered me more and more that such an integral part of us was embarrassing, forgotten, unappreciated – when I thought about men and their penises, it was a completely different story. Men are best friends with their penises. I see the penis as a power symbol, while women have hardly introduced themselves to their vaginas. Why and how did it come to be that the vagina, the gateway to life, would hold this lowly place in our collective consciousness?

That's when the vagina vérité project began.

There should be a book, a visual reference for women, so we could see ourselves for ourselves. Then I could show my friend. Then we could talk. Being a photographer, I decided to shoot one.

To date, I have photographed 50 vagina portraits. The v-portraits are close-up, there are no stylists, no details about the model to set the mood for fantasy – just the elusive faces of the vagina in plain view. Each beautiful and strikingly unique.

I look forward to presenting you with the book! and to making vagina vérité available to all women. My intention is to provide a collective mirror, to spark conversation about issues many of us have about self-image, intimacy, sexuality and identity. This book is for my friend, for all women – so we can see ourselves for ourselves.

about the artist

Alexandra Jacoby is a self-taught painter and photographer. A 39-year old activist, she holds two Bachelor's degrees, one in English Literature and one in Psychology. Jacoby grew up in Jericho, Long Island, and has been living and working in NYC since 1990.

She is not a vagina expert. Through her photographs and companion web site of vagina explorations, Jacoby seeks to provide a collective mirror, to spark conversation about self-image, intimacy, sexuality and identity — to bring into focus the value of individual experience and expression, and to examine how they relate to cultural choice and responsibility.

recent exhibitions

Society for Menstrual Cycle Research, June 2005, Boulder:

The v-portraits, along with excerpts from vaginaverite.com questionnaire-responses, were presented as a starting point for reflection on individuality and diversity, to spark conversation about our experiences of our bodies, and how that relates to our health and well-being.

Love Your Tree: ABC Carpet & Home, Dec 2004-Jan 2005, NYC:

Spire (a 6' 3" totem of eight v-portraits) was included in the Love Your Tree exhibition of 16 photographers' work on women's relationships with their bodies. The LYT space was the companion exhibition to Eve Ensler's *The Good Body* - a place for women to gather, talk and listen.

Threat: A Gathering of the Tribes, Oct-Nov, 2004, NYC:

The v-portraits were exhibited as at A Gathering of the Tribes' *Threat* exhibition. Standing together, unabashed, unaltered, these portraits of women's most private selves challenged the concept of power as domination.