

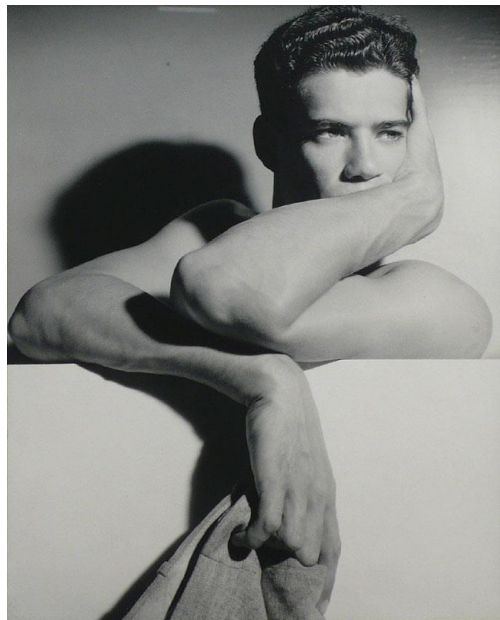
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George Platt Lynes Photography Opens in New York



Ballerina Tamara Toumanova, 1941



Robert McVoy, circa 1941

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In the 1930s and '40s, George Platt Lynes shot covers for numerous fashion glossies, photographed celebrities such as Gloria Swanson and Katherine Hepburn and directed campaigns for the New York City Ballet. But he is perhaps best known for his nudes: Intimate, sometimes surreal portraits that paid homage to the male form.

These photos—which Lynes produced from the 1930s to his death in 1955 at the age of 48—were astonishingly ahead of their time. They celebrated not only the

naked body, but also homosexuality in a period of harsh repression, and would influence future gay male photographers such as Robert Mapplethorpe, Bruce Weber and Herb Ritts, whose works also express sexuality and the body.

George Platt Lynes, which runs through April 7 at the Steven Kasher Gallery in New York City, contains more than 40 vintage prints spanning Lynes's too-brief career. The exhibition includes not only the artist's nudes, but also examples of his fashion, celebrity and experimental photographs.

Lynes's psychologically probing nudes, of course, represent the biggest bulk of the exhibition: beautiful young men lying supine on bare mattresses, sometimes in couples or groups, or crouching before the camera, looking off into the distance. Some of these compositions are classical (fitting since the men with their chiseled bodies look like Greek sculptures), but many are off-kilter. A couple of the photos look as though Lynes had cut and pasted disparate bodies into a bedroom scene, like a Dadaist collage. In another picture, a woman in a nurse's uniform faces the camera, flanked by two naked men, their faces turned away: They look as though they might disappear into the floor or wall (a neat lighting trick).

Yet *George Platt Lynes* demonstrates that the photographer's commercial work was equally imaginative. One fashion photograph, for instance, shows a woman in an exotic black velvet dress with bangles cowering under a towering, menacing carousel horse, which is both hilarious and frightening. Another portrait, of Japanese-American dancer Sono Osato, has its subject wearing a giant diamond bow on her forehead. These portraits rival those of Lynes's much more famous contemporary Cecil Beaton, another fashion and celebrity photographer influenced by surrealism.

Yet unlike Beaton, Lynes never flattered his sitters. His photographs—both his commercial work and his nudes—aren't particularly glamorous, even though their subjects are beautiful. What makes Lynes's work so engaging is his interest in capturing his sitters' humanity: their vulnerability, their shame, their fears and, of course, their strength.

<http://fashion.elle.com/culture/2012/03/02/george-platt-lynes-photography-opens-in-new-york/>