

## Kayne Griffin Corcoran



### David Lynch's Clandestine Nude Photography

The filmmaker and artist's project is the product of his typical, deeply personal creation process, and manages to veil and unveil secrets at once.



*"I like to photograph naked women. The infinite variety of the human body is fascinating: it is amazing and magic to see how different women are,"* David Lynch stated in a press release for his book of nude female photography, simply titled *Nudes* (2017). But that statement barely skims the surface of what Lynch created, and the whole project is cloaked in immense mystery, the details obfuscated as much as the photographs themselves. Who the models were, and when exactly the photographs were taken, remains unclear (although one can make assumptions). In his unmistakably childlike handwriting, all Lynch states in his introduction to the collection, is the following:



Evemy, Benjamin Blake. "David Lynch's Clandestine Nude Photography." Mutual Art. 19 June 2020. Web.

Known mostly for his work in film and television (*Eraserhead*, *Blue Velvet*, *Mulholland Drive*, *Twin Peaks*), David Lynch's surrealistic vision has also spilled over into a plethora of other mediums, including painting (he studied painting at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and originally intended to make a career of it), music, and photography – which he picked up after establishing his name as a filmmaker. Lynch had previously delved into the world of nude photography with his 1999 series *Distorted Nudes*, in which he took images from *1000 Nudes* - a book of nude and erotic photography from the Uwe Scheid collection (one of the largest in the world), and altered them using digital methods. The results are disturbingly beautiful.



With his nude series of photographs, the artist shows an apt eye for detail, composition and tone. The photographs themselves showcase the spectrum of femininity. The images are bold, poignant, sexual and, at times, surprisingly delicate.

Lynch's photography is often almost voyeuristic in execution. A blonde nude in a red leather armchair with matching painted toenails sits out-of-focus behind a cloud of the photographer's trademark cigarette smoke. It's images like these that truly encapsulate Lynch's lopsided vision and bring the viewer into a surreal world unlike his own. A world that is both sensuous and dangerous, where something always lurks just out of sight.

Lynch primarily has a penchant for photographing two things – factories and naked women. While the space between these disparate subjects may seem vast, a distinguished similarity can most-definitely be found. The lighting and use of shadows especially. And some of the black and white prints in Lynch's nude collection, were very likely shot during the same time as some of his factory photographs, which were also taken in Lodz, Poland, in the year 2000. Although Lynch has strong ties with the European city, and has visited it often, so even this is typically uncertain.

But just as interesting as the work Lynch produces, is the way he goes about producing it. The artist typically goes into projects rather blind. He'll have a vague idea, most times not much more than a feeling or a fleeting image in his head, and then runs with it. He is also known to use Transcendental Meditation as an almost divine means to discover these initial intuitions. Thus, his subsequent creative process is often extremely spontaneous as well as incredibly unique. And that spontaneity, when it comes to his nude photography, yields exceptional results. The images of the female nude Lynch has produced, are often distinctly indistinct: the photographer more easily recognizable than the subject. Shadow-cast black and white close-ups of uncertain body parts that possess immense beauty in their almost alien shape.



David Lynch is an enigmatic character, at times offering up detailed descriptions of creative methods and meanings, and just as often remaining tight-lipped. But it is by no means uncertain that he was greatly influenced and shaped by past events in his life. His time living in the slums of Philadelphia while at art school greatly impacted Lynch, and led to the stark, darkened, industrial world of his first feature-length film, *Eraserhead*. When he was just a child, he witnessed a scene in small-town Montana that was immensely strange and equally fascinating. One night, while outside with his brother, the boys saw a woman stumbling down the street, stripped of all clothing, battered and bruised, blood running from a wound on her mouth. The boys stood transfixed, and Lynch never found out who the strange nude woman was – although it was a scene he would recreate in his 1986 film, *Blue Velvet*.

- Benjamin Blake Evemy