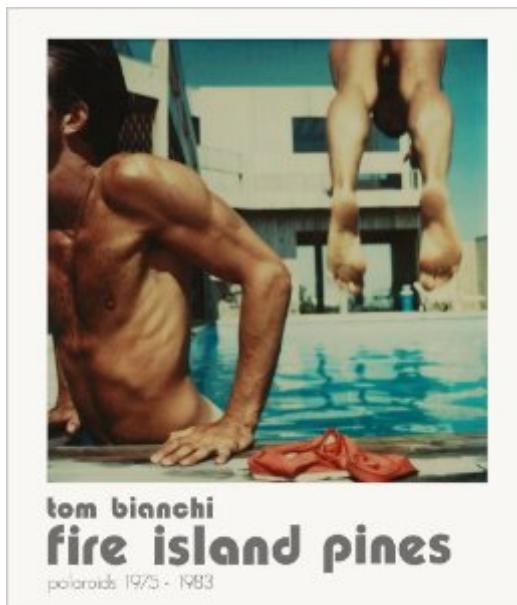


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# Tom Bianchi: Fire Island Pines, Polaroids 1975-1983



## Synopsis

Growing up in the 1950s, Tom Bianchi would head into downtown Chicago and pick up 25-cent œphysiqueœ magazines at newsstands. In one such magazine, he found a photograph of bodybuilder Glenn Bishop on Fire Island. œFire 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

In addressing the concept behind this collection of Polaroids taken on Fire Island from 1975 to 1983 Tom Bianchi has stated 'The book is a personal diary told in the form of a visual poem. In this spread I take you to the beach where I ran into a friend who'd spelled my name in suntan lotion on his abs - a ploy that ensured his inclusion in this book. I also introduce my buddy / playmate, Harold Gates, slipping off his tangerine suit - always up for getting naked to play with me and my camera. The Pines was a dreamlike mythical place. I fell in love with the Pines and with the men I met there. In these years we were defiantly learning to play and love at the edges of a culture that condemned us. So much of that life was lost in the plague, this book brings that time and those friends back to life. The book will take the reader to the Pines in the years before AIDS when we were young and up for the celebration of our freedom in a world of our own invention. The first page spread contains three iconic images exemplifying the Pines fame for gorgeous men. The first two pictures were taken at my first home on Pine Walk and the third at my last home on Sky Walk.' What sets this portfolio apart from the very popular other portfolios of men that Tom Bianchi has continued to produce (Out of the Studio, On the Couch, Deep Sex and In Defense of Beauty, etc) is the sentiment behind these images. These are unposed images, candid shots of men at play unaware of the incipient cloud that would change everything. The design of the pages is from Bianchi himself and the juxtapositions of the Polaroids tell a series of tales. As much as this book is a portfolio of men at play, images of the beauty of Fire Island, moods and atmospheres, it is also now an historical document of a time in the past before all the subsequent changes, both negative and positive, in the debate of gender studies that continues today. Grady Harp, May 13

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.

Of course this is heavy on other people sexual preferences. But I was a straight guy dating a girl who grew up on the island. And the Tea dances and the people were wild, fun, and innocent. This was all pre-AIDs. It was another world. I remember seeing Paul Lynde, the comedy actor wearing a flowing robe on the beach, surrounded by all these laughing, scantily clad young me and thinking

this worlds is a lot different than Mannasquan Beach in SOuth Jersey. The book stirred those memories of just being a young guy in love with a girl in a wild freaking place!

Tom Bianchi has put together a beautiful collection of photos of an idyllic time gone by, when gay men could be themselves on Fire Island beaches. At the time, it was a dream island in a sea of homophobia. For a few brief years before AIDS hit, Fire Island was a paradise on earth for gay men. These photos capture this magical time and place perfectly. A lovely book for your coffee table. The Pines are still a popular resort area for gay men, but we'll never see times like these again.

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.

I was reminded of some very happy memories as I paged through this book. Having lived during this era and experiencing an anything goes lifestyle was a trip. Hate to sound corny but this is a trip down memory lane. Woof! We have been there and done that.

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.

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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