

PHYSIQUE PICTORIAL 46

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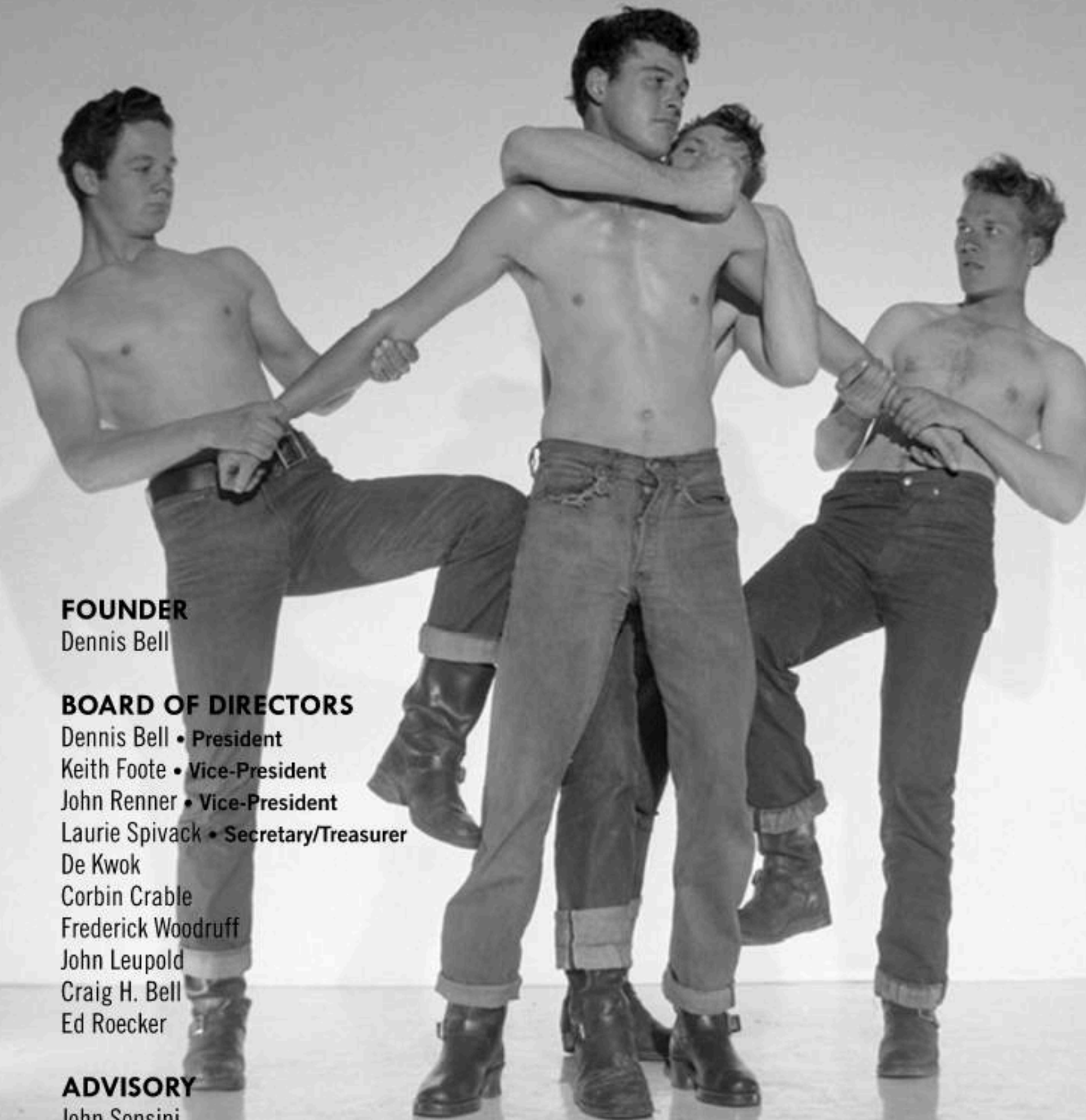
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This Page: Bob Mizer. Untitled [#YU3D-B], Los Angeles, c.1953. Photograph, 10 x 8.5 in. Collection of Bob Mizer Foundation, Founders' gift.

Front Cover: Bob Mizer. Untitled [Roland Steiner #ZX-76], Los Angeles, c.1950. Photograph, 10 x 8.5 in. Collection of Bob Mizer Foundation, Founders' gift.

Back Cover: Bob Mizer. Untitled [Bob Shealy, #X06-AH], Los Angeles, c.1958. Photograph, 10 x 8.5 in. Collection of Bob Mizer Foundation, Founders' gift.



NICK TURNER

EQUUS









Nick Turner creates intimate stories with his self-portraits. His photography explores the place of man in nature, especially as man relates to another of nature's most beautiful creations — the noble horse. His deeply felt observations of that species, as well as his affinity for the ocean, lend his work a timeless, spiritual quality. **Nick is 6' 1" and a Libra.**

Can you explain a bit about your affinity with horses — is this your animal? There is a sense of peace in those photos.

Horses have been in my life since I was a kid. I grew up eventing for a while and had an Austrian Haflinger that I competed with for years when I was young. Because of my constant traveling and different kinds of education horses became my tribe for a while. I felt very comfortable around them and less comfortable around people. There is a sense of delicate power in horses that I always connected with, so naturally as I moved from painting to photos (I did a lot of paintings of horses in the past as well) I started shooting horses and actually had an idea of trying to do a series of self-portraits with them, but not as a man just posing with horses. I wanted to show I was one of the tribe, part of that world, hence this body of work.

In one image from your gallery show, your handwriting informs us MAN = ANIMAL. Is it fair to include your images of horses under the category of portraits?

I am not sure I would categorize with a label like portraits. I tend to refer to most of this work as "self examination." This is a body of work based on a few things, one being my personal bridge to nature which has been the horse for a long time. Also my personal life experience as a man growing up and the bigger dialogue is about man as a species. I'm very much a Thomas Hobbes fan and the idea that man is still on a basic level primal by nature I think is still very relevant today as it was in the past. We have not evolved out of what I guess I would call human nature. Our survival mechanisms and instincts are still as present today as in history, which I think is part of why history repeats itself often in society.

I also believe we are part of the bigger ecosystem of nature, not separate, and this connection also plays into my interests a lot. The older I get the more I tend to reflect on these ideas of the human condition and our place in the natural world living within our social contract and the society we have built within the bigger system of nature.

Is it liberating riding bareback bare?

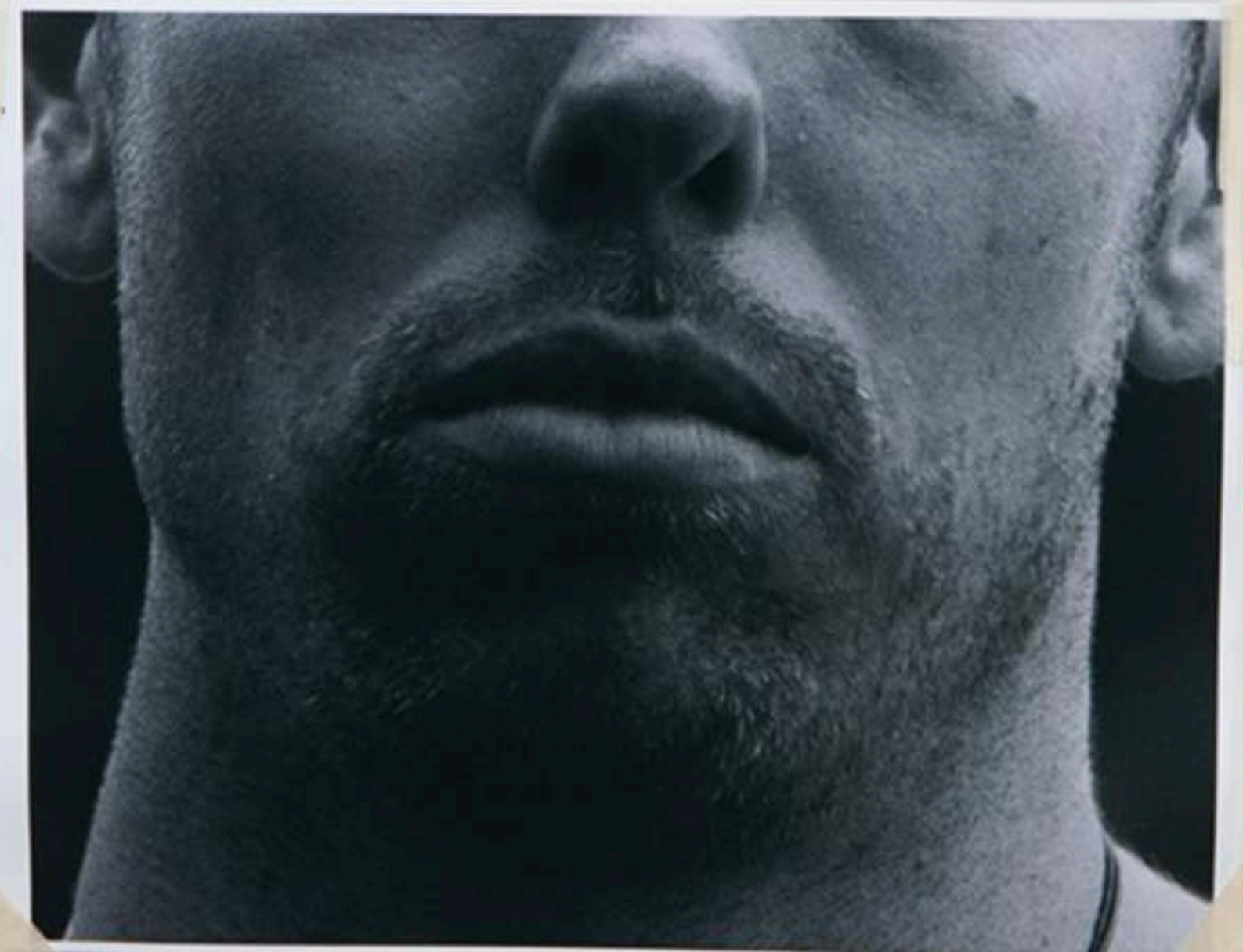
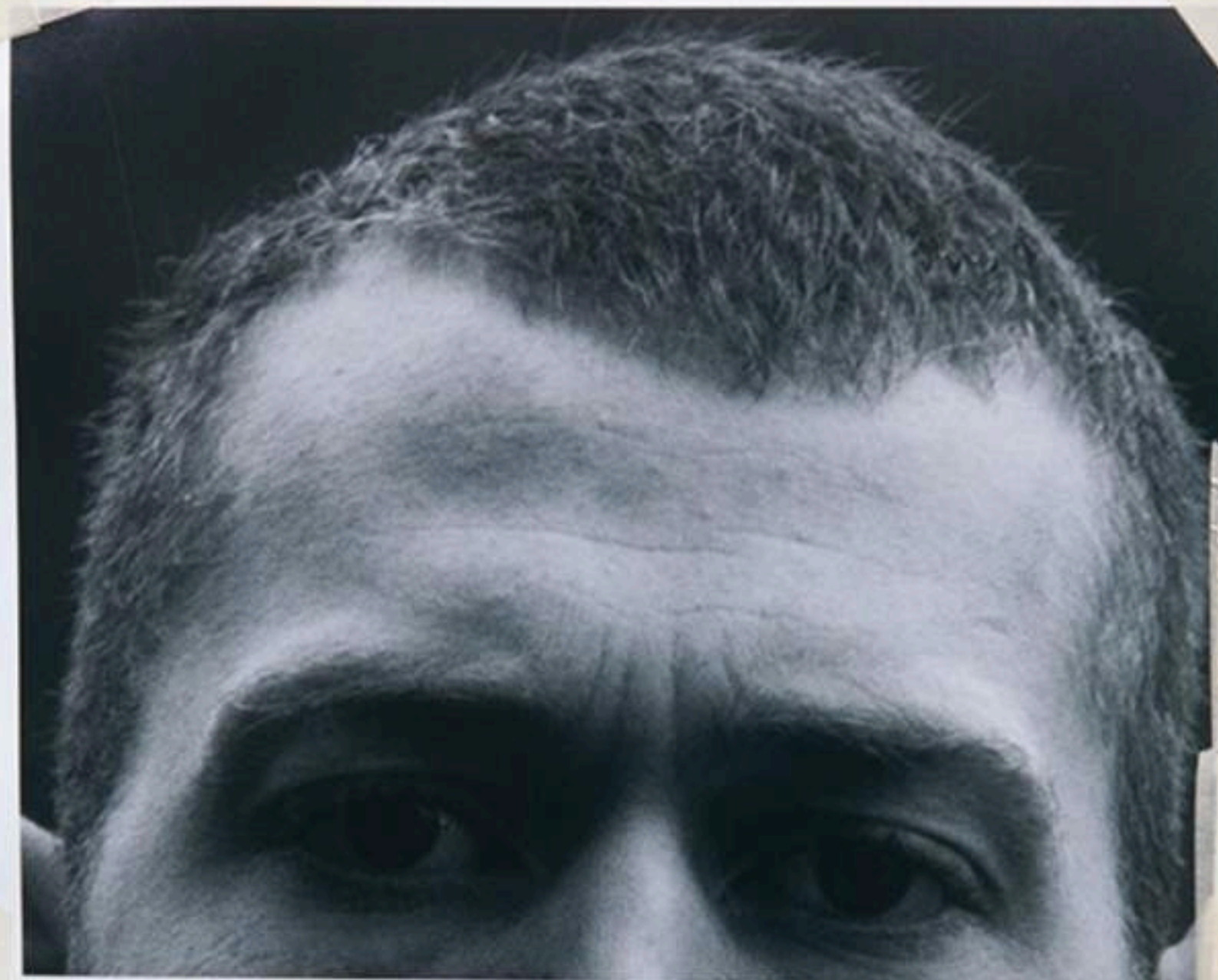
I grew up showing horses so there is a sense of freedom as I don't like to dress up and put gear on to ride. My interests and interactions with horses have changed but I can also say there is a false sense of romanticism in these photos and the idea of how they took place. Most of these self-portraits with horses were uncomfortable and physically challenging to do. All of them are premeditated ideas that are done for the specific purpose of creating images. I have no interest in running naked with horses for some personally satisfying or free-spirited journey into nature. I have been asked this quite a bit actually but nothing could be further from the experience or the purpose of the work. I consider this no different than setting up a studio shoot except this is much more raw and uncontrolled. I have gotten stepped on, kicked one time actually. In fact it's not very comfortable to be a man riding a horse naked or even sitting on him. So to answer your question there is definitely an idea of liberation but it is not the experience gained from actually doing this work.

Something else I think is very much part of the reasoning for these images is clothes place a social content onto the images. Immediately there is a social context and style and my interest lies with nature and man alone.

I lived in Greece as a child as well for a while and some of the first art I ever saw was Greek sculpture with the Greek stories about the gods and warriors. This is a huge influence on my eye and understanding nudity and its history. Part of this work has drawn from historical references to the Greeks and the male nude in that context. So understanding that part of my past, the idea of a man with horses to me was very much a part of what I remember as a young child in Greece looking at art and reading stories like the Homer's *Odyssey*, etc. In a way this work is a reconstruction of history.

Are you an exhibitionist?

No not at all.



*Man as animal
controllable*

I wanted to self-portrait, one of the first that never has the self of work

Have you always been connected not only with horses but with nature in general? Your images of bodies of water have a sense of humanity, or spirit, in their own right.

Yes, horses and the ocean are two hugely important elements in life for me. Now I spend more time on edges of land or in water as I surf and spend a lot of time chasing waves or storms around the world to photograph. The ocean, like horses, represents (even more than horses because of the companionship to man) the unbridled and natural power that you can actually see and feel in nature. I have an addiction to this sense of scale in nature and being in front or part of that energy is hugely therapeutic and important to understanding one's own place in nature. Keeps you humble, also forces you to understand how much bigger and more powerful the ecosystem is that we are part of. I am actually terrified of the ocean knowing what it is capable of, but I think being in or around it gives you something that we all need in society. It is the connection with the bigger system we live in that most of us don't get because all our connections are manmade like cars, computers, trains, planes, etc. I think getting some form of connection with nature, especially if it is being in the presence of its fury and power and to feel that, realigns your perspective. And because I think we are part of nature, not separate, and certainly not dominating it, this connection is hugely important to maintain on some level.

You capture your own body so beautifully. How do you achieve this technically?

A mixture of techniques. I have a remote I used for most of it. I also had an assistant help me a few times. For some of the more remote locations or less organized shoots I just did the best I could. There are usually hundreds of images often with the wrong timing or mis-framed or mis-focused and then just a few that actually work and everything came together. Many times I've tried shooting and used nothing because of this unpredictable way of working.

I see some Bruce Weber in your work, some Duane Michaels, some Steven Klein, but less fashiony and more earthy. Are there any influences I'm missing that are particularly strong in your mind as you work?

I like Weber's work from his books. I am big fan of art books and that is what I wish to create with this work actually. I tried shooting some fashion in the past. For a bit I actually shot women on horses

for some editorial. I always tried to include horses in shoots. But I wasn't a fashion photographer and after a while I realized the style and post-production and way of working are very unnatural and that's when I started trying to use myself in images instead of models. I really love and appreciate timeless photography.

Weber's and Michaels's and some of Klein's very early work are very much this style which I really enjoy, especially black and white images. It's hard to not like just really great photos that are of sterling quality. Less the trend of filters, Photoshop, and hipster colors that are so popular these days, timeless images will never go out of style as they have their place in history and art, and hopefully always will.

How do you achieve your collages, technically?

They are all real journal pages. None of it is digital. I have stacks of different sketchbooks, some finished, some worked on, and then I might travel and take a different one with me so there is often no real organized order in them. I lay out all the pages by hand. I have stacks of small prints around that I tape into the pages. Sometimes I have ink or paint. It's all very organic. I am not super organized with that work as it probably also looks fairly messy.

How did seeing early male physique photography, or even porn, affect your aesthetic?

Well, being straight, I actually can't say I look at much of that world. Growing up looking at so much Greek art and classical paintings, my influence comes from the history of the male nude far more than any contemporary vanity-based images. I think the context of the male nude especially in art today is often associated with that world especially if it's an athletic male, but my interest lies with personal examination not a vanity project. I think sexuality is a huge part of human nature, probably one of the most powerful instincts, but I believe the really important and good art has meaning and is purpose driven while still being executed in a way that is aesthetically beautiful. The only real influence I think I have from those worlds is to ensure I maintain the quality and context of my work even in images that could be considered provocative.

More of Nick Turner: nickturnerstudio.com and on Instagram @[nickturnerstudio](https://www.instagram.com/nickturnerstudio)

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