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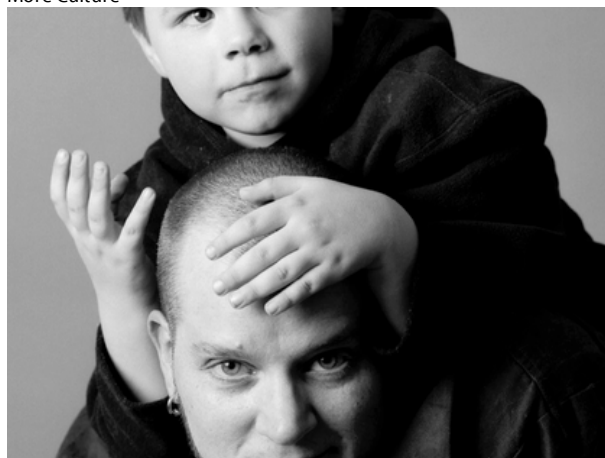
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Matt and son Blake - Photo by Jana Marcus

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Transgender Tapestry

dot429's Greg Archer explores photographer Jana Marcus' riveting new book *Transfigurations*, and this weekend's transgender conference *Gender Odyssey*.

What *is* a man? What *is* a woman?

These were the questions Marcus asked herself—and others—six years ago when she plunged creatively into the then-underexplored world of transgender men and women.

The result was a photography exhibit dubbed “*Transfigurations*,” an illuminating body of work that explored (and exposed) the journey of transgenders through vivid photographs and commentary from its subjects. The work was critically praised and went on to shine at various galleries around the United States.

“My goal in the work was to really normalize the transgender community and give them a face and a voice that they never really had before as a group of people,” says Marcus.

Now, “*Transfigurations*” has morphed into book form—oversized and wonderfully coffee-table like—and Marcus is suddenly finding herself and her trans subjects in the spotlight once again, beginning with this weekend's transgender conference *Gender Odyssey*, August 5-7 in Seattle. Marcus, who resides in Santa Cruz County, is one of several high-profile keynote speakers at the conference, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year.

Founded by Aidan Key in 2001, the international event is lauded for its focus on transgender interests. A slew of workshops, forums, and discussions are on the roster, as well as Chaz Bono (*Becoming Chaz*), who's slated to speak. In addition to Marcus, illuminatis such as Dean Spade, Gene Tagaban and Cheryl Kilodavis (her book *My Princess Boy* is turning heads) should be big draws.

For Marcus, the “*Transfigurations*” journey has been loaded with surprises and insights. Her attempts to publish the work as a book were thwarted when the publishing industry lost its old-school mojo. She finally opted to self-publish and *Gender Odyssey* officials jumped at the chance to have the official book launch at the conference. The book's formal release will be at the end of August.

Separated into three parts—texts/portraits, transitions, and post-surgery nudes—the book is downright captivating.

“The power of the photographs, along with the words, really brought people to a form of awareness that they had around transgender people, and what their struggles are to become whole,” says Marcus.

“I really learned that gender is both real and illusory and it's constructed and it's natural -- it's all of those things. I also think that transgender people are amazing and have so much to offer us to understand male and female relationships. They have so much to teach us because they've seen the world -- from both perspectives.”

Learn more about *Transfigurations* here.
Explore the *Gender Odyssey* conference here.

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