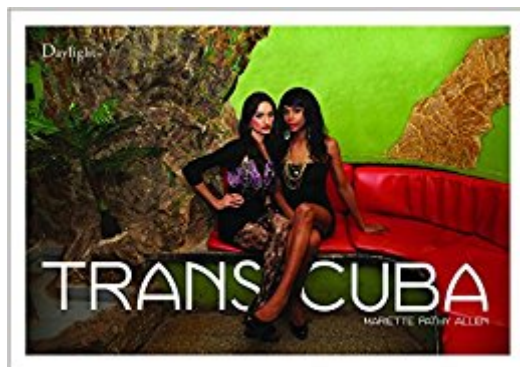


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# Transcuba



## Synopsis

Mariette Pathy Allen documents the transgender community of Cuba that is growing in visibility and acceptance. Under a slowly evolving model of communism, "the women [in Transcuba] are engaged in quiet, banal moments, or else are looking resolutely at the viewer . . . demanding to be seen on their own terms and turf."#151;The AdvocateMariette Pathy Allen has been photographing the transgender community for over 30 years. Through her artistic practice, she has been a pioneering force in gender consciousness, contributing to numerous cultural and academic publications about gender variance and lecturing throughout the globe. It won the 2004 Lambda Literary Award in the Transgender/Genderqueer category. Mariette's life's work is being archived by Duke University's Rare Book and Manuscripts Library, and the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's Studies. In addition to her work with gender, Mariette's background as a painter frequently leads her to photographic investigations of color, space, and cultural juxtapositions such as east/west, old/new, handmade/manufactured.

Mariela Castro Esp n (born July 27, 1962) is the director of the Cuban National Center for Sex Education in Havana and an activist for LGBT rights in Cuba. She is the daughter of current Cuban president Ra l Castro and feminist and revolutionary Vilma Esp n as well as the niece of former president Fidel Castro. She has a brother, Alejandro Castro Esp n. Her group campaigns for effective AIDS prevention as well as recognition and acceptance of LGBT human rights. In 2005 she proposed a project to allow transgender people to receive sex reassignment surgery and change their legal gender. The measure became law in June 2008 which allows sex change surgery for Cubans without charge.

Allen Frame lives in New York where he teaches photography at the School of Visual Arts, Pratt Institute, and the International Center of Photography. He has also taught photography workshops in Mexico and Russia. His book *Detour*, a compilation of his photographs over a decade, was published by Kehrer Verlag Heidelberg in 2001. He is represented by Gitterman Gallery in New York where he had a solo show in 2005 and will have another one in Sept, 2009. Recently, his work has been included in exhibitions at the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Fotomuseum in Winterthur, Switzerland, the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art in Mississippi, and as part of the 2009 Festival of Photography and Video in Korea. He has been the recipient of grants from the Penny McCall Foundation, the Peter Reed Foundation, Creative Time, Art Matters, CECArtslink and others. He co-founded the contemporary art center Delta Axis in Memphis in 1992 and has been a Contributing Editor of *artwurl* and *BOMB*. In 1990 he co-created *Electric Blanket*, an epic slide show about AIDS, which toured throughout the U.S. and to Norway, the U.K., Germany, Hungary, Japan, and in 2003, to Russia. He has been the curator of numerous exhibitions, including *Darrel Ellis* in 1996 and *In This Place at Art in General* in 2004. His

short films have been screened at various international film festivals. He was born in Mississippi in 1951 and graduated from Harvard University in 1974. Wendy Watriss is a photographer, curator, journalist, and writer. She is one of the founders of FotoFest, the internationally known photographic arts and education organization based in Houston, Texas. She has served as FotoFest's artistic director since 1991. Watriss began her professional career as a reporter and writer for national newspapers in the U.S. and later became a producer of news documentaries for national public television in New York. As curator and artistic director for FotoFest, Watriss has organized exhibits from Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the U.S.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Lambda Literary Award winner Mariette Pathy Allen has been telling the stories of her transgender subjects for 30 years. Her latest offering, featuring photos and interviews with Cuban transmen and transwomen, depicts a cultural sea change. (Alex Panisch OUT Magazine)

Excellent on several counts: 1. Great photographs, 2. Well organized and presented with touching stories, 3. Insight into cultural changes afoot in Cuba.

As a transwoman myself and as a professional investigator I found this work a fascinating introduction to the lives of personalities on the same gender spectrum with me but living in another society altogether. The photographs are simply beautiful: the colors are vivid, the compositions excellent and the faces of the subjects are looking right at you revealing both their exceptional

bravery and their vulnerability. The text is spare but informative and the quotations from the people photographed are very moving. At a time when transgender individuals are becoming more and more visible and active in society -- think of Kristen Beck, a 20-year veteran of the U.S. Navy Seals now running for Congress -- and the United States and Cuba are moving toward open and friendly relations, this book could not be more timely or relevant. It's one of those volumes that you'll keep in your bookcase on that shelf reserved for books you know you'll return to again and again.

TransCuba is not just a book of photographs. It's a work of art that you'll cherish. I recommend it without any reservations at all.

Once again artist Mariette Pathy Allen illuminates an aspect of transgender culture. Her photographs, interviews, and her two previous books, *Transformations: Crossdressers and Those Who Love Them* (1984) and *The Gender Frontier* (2003) are among the primary reasons transgender people have become a community and now a movement. Her latest contribution to society's understanding is *TransCuba*, a book that is as colorful and passionate as the country and peoples she documents. This is not the first time Mariette has traveled to another country and documented trans culture, but it is the first time she has devoted an entire book to one country. She is the *Margaret Mead* of the trans world enriching our own lives by according to her subjects the dignity and respect they deserve. That her subject in this book includes Cuba, itself, makes this work all the more enlightening.

This book is gorgeous! Mariette Pathy Allen skillfully and sensitively captures the intimate lives of this oft-marginalized community in a way that highlights them as being beautifully human. So frequently, transgender individuals are seen as freaks or sensationalized as spectacles, but here we are invited into their private spaces, privy to their family and intimate relationships and taken on a journey through the Cuban social and political landscape. Besides the formal beauty of the intimate portraits, rich landscapes and intricate still-lives, the importance of this book cannot be overstated, as it represents a specific moment in history that will be gone within the blink of an eye.

A gorgeous and glowing collection of portraits that captures the strength, beauty and variety of Cuban transwomen. I have used all of Allen's photography collections to teach transgender issues and literature because her talented eye engages students to see beyond sensationalized stereotypes to recognize a shared struggle and humanity. By pairing the portraits with autobiographical narratives, this book also provides a depth and variety unavailable in many other

texts or mediums; it would therefore be useful in many classroom settings, particularly those that also cover global LGBTQ or human rights.

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