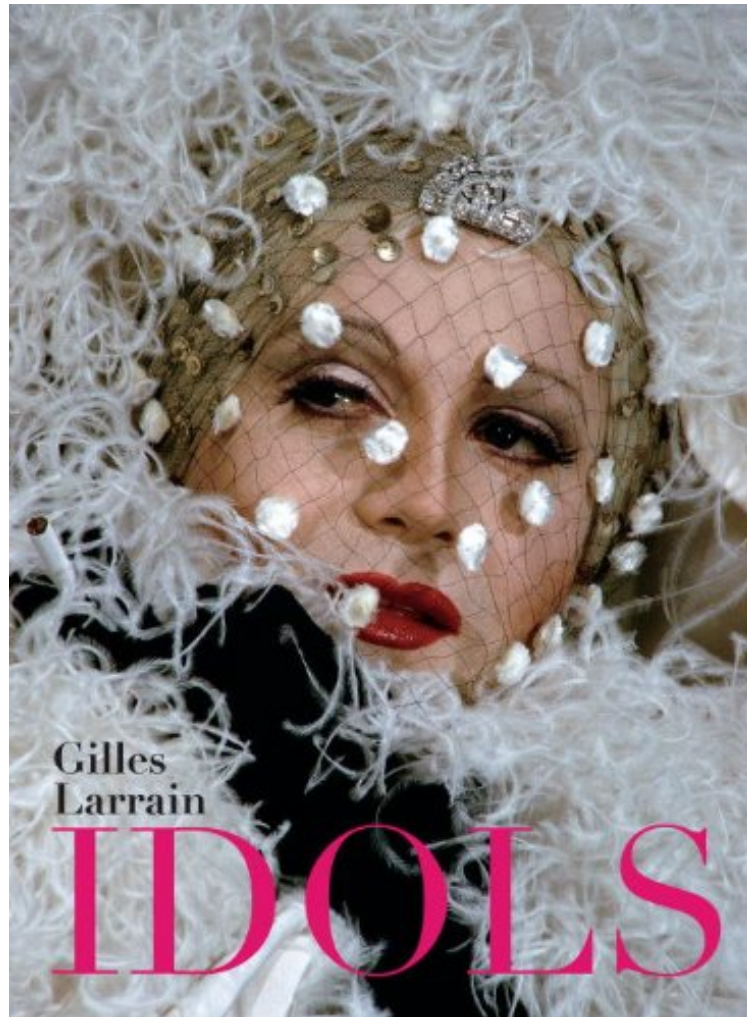


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Idols

Gilles Larrain

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Gilles Larrain : Idols before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Idols:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. This "Idols" is not the same "Idols" by blubberella I was very happy to discover that "Idols" by Gilles Larrain had been reissued, as original copies had become scarce and expensive. You can have a look at the original version as it was laid out here: [...] I was happy to finally get my hands on an affordable copy. However, I was very confused as my (new) copy is missing many of the original photos, with different photos in their place. There is no mention in the product description or review or the book itself that this is a NEW Idols, or that this is NOT a faithful reprint. The photos are compelling and great -- but many of the original photos are dearly missed. I wish that the publisher had been clear and upfront about this. That is why I give this only 4 stars. Read the above review for another perspective on what is wrong with this book. I don't understand about why Ryan McGinley

was given the task of writing the intro, either. Very happy to see it, very confused about what is going on with this publication. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Cover IDOL reviews IDOLS By Anne Welles-Burke ALEXIS DEL LAGO AND BEAUREGARD, FEATURED IN IDOLS, REVIEW THE NEW EDITION Beauregard Houston-Montgomery: I was delighted when, after decades, photographer Gilles Larrain called me to say his photo book *Idols*, originally published in 1973, was being re-edited and re-published. I thought how great that this rarefied compilation of portraits was being given a second viewing, in what I assumed was a more evolved context. At the time of its original release, *Idols*' gender bender imagery was at best mistaken for unflattering portraits of drag queens; at worst, as marginalized images of weirdos and freaks. Almost forty years later, some still don't comprehend that *Idols* remains a revolutionary celebration of androgyny. Gilles insisted that I pay him a visit to view a retrospective of his work. My impression was that he was on a mission to establish a niche in the annals of photography. Captive, if not necessarily captivated, it was fun to see the photos from *Idols*, most of which were new to me. Gilles, who never paid anyone for posing, had also never been generous with viewing the photos he took, much less giving anyone a decent signed print. This was probably pragmatic on his part, as the reaction from many of his subjects at seeing their images was negative. Gilles' blatant promises of glorification were far removed from his actual vision, which upon *Idols*' original release at least one reviewer deemed hostile. Eventually Gilles sent me a PDF of the new *Idols* (I had to purchase the book on), with an introduction written by someone named Ryan McGinley. I never heard of him, (fame is relative, to quote Mary McCarthy), however Gilles firmly insisted this individual would bring him reflected glory beyond the wildest imagination. And what an imagination Mr. McGinley has! I was aghast as I read the introduction, apparently concocted to credit Gilles with being the Svengali of drag queens, weirdos and freaks! This irrelevant rambling had nothing to do with what actually went on during the shooting of the book, and without any context of the time *Idols* was produced. It was all about Ryan McGinley, including what I found to be completely idiotic assumptions about those integral in creating the images that Gilles' photographed - "*Idols* represented the drag scene in New York in the late 60s and early 70s... otherwise invisible... Gilles... made these people into the people they wanted to be... Gilles... had boxes of props and clothes in his studio and everyone would come over and hang out and play dress-up... he is effortlessly able to glamorize his subjects and make them look like the most fascinating people in the world... They didn't have makeup artists and stylists; they did it all themselves, probably while drunk and stoned and having a wild party... I like to think that it's cheap makeup shoplifted from a drugstore... I wanted to be around the art crowd and the weirdos and the freaks, high on drugs and hanging out, and here was a full-on book of them..." I arrived in Manhattan in April, 1970, a few months after the Stonewall riots, which had rendered the whole concept of drag queens obsolete. Pre-Stonewall, drag queens had to pass as women - or risk going to jail. Post-Stonewall, the old school was delightfully deconstructed by, most notably, the Warhol triumvirate of Jackie Curtis, Holly Woodlawn, and Candy Darling, Off-Broadway's Charles Ludlam, and Baltimore's Divine. Pre-Stonewall camp icon Barbra Streisand was, post-Stonewall, impersonated by "illusionists", who were as passe' as pinky rings. Viewed with suspicion bordering on violence in the USA, androgyny blossomed in the 1960's in Europe and the U.K., with the Beatles and Twiggy irresistibly illustrating that blurred was beautiful. By 1970, Manhattan was an epicenter of androgyny. It was here that I instinctively joined a loosely linked, highly visible web of incredibly diverse individuals. Prescient to the next decade's Post-Modernism, we reclassified the past in order to redefine the present. This was reflected by our attire, which went clear through the looking glass, combining ethnic, vintage, blue and white collar, military and circus styles. The street was our studio. The sidewalk was our runway. We were at once vilified and deified. For better or for worse, we were hardly invisible and never ignored. My reason for posing for Gilles Larrain was to subvert Madison Avenue's hardcore, soft-focus "pink is for girls, blue is for boys" fascism. Innately in touch with my forbidden pink side, I never had any desire to either disguise myself, or self-mutilate. Never mind that these prescribed lives of not-so-quiet desperation came at way too high a price - no closet was ever large enough to contain me. Presented with the lowest of expectations, why should I hide in a hair shirt when I could run around New York City in high fashion? With the right photographers, lighting, hair, make-up, and clothing, I could transform myself into an enigmatic epicene, insouciantly posing as a transcendent goddess. Gilles was one of many photographers I worked with. While hardly a stranger to complimentary booze and dope, I experienced no parties going on at Gilles Larrain's studio. The shootings that I experienced did not go on after wild nights at Max's Kansas City, and resembled in no way the "salons" he now throws for money. If it hadn't been for Gilles' beautiful, aristocratic French wife Christine, you couldn't even get a tepid glass of tap water during any of our collaborations. I wasn't there to get drunk and stoned. Gilles' made one look bad enough. As for Gilles' "boxes of props and clothes", no one would go near them. We all brought exquisite props and clothes of our own, and used them with expertise. We weren't hanging out or playing dress up at Gilles' studio. We were working like slaves to create art. With the possible exception of the unfortunate Cockettes, (who Truman Capote enticed from San Francisco, then dumped into the not so glittering gutter when he came to the conclusion they were hotter messes than he was), none of us were living on the streets, or stealing make-up from drugstores. I had been a "Laszlo girl" since now legendary Dr. Erno Laszlo eradicated my pubescent acne. While Dr. Laszlo helped me (and Greta Garbo and Audrey Hepburn) look our best, Gilles Larrain most certainly did not. Everyone looked fascinating in *Idols* because we were fascinating. For better and for worse,

Gilles Larrain was our Margaret Meade. This is reflected in the photographs, which are astounding. The introduction, to put it diplomatically, is a self-serving fantasy on the part of the author and the photographer, and an insult to everyone pictured in the book. ALEXIS DEL LAGO: We were not drag queens. What kind of limited mentality would think because you put on make-up and glitter that you must be a drag queen? Drag queen is a tiresome, demeaning, low class, vulgar term. We were performing artists. We were into self-expression and individuality. We came from all kinds of backgrounds and every side of life - rich, middle-class, black, white. This was a pansexual group that blossomed in New York City in the late 1960's and early 1970's. It was not about being gay or straight. What mattered was the expression of our selves, our souls, and OUR CLOTHES! I wasn't interested in politics, or who was going to be the Mayor, or that the city was bankrupt. I didn't notice the filth all over the street. I had my mind on my creativity. I was busy picking up a bolt of vintage fabric from Bogie's and turning it into the most beautiful bias-cut gown you ever saw. Being a Parsons design graduate, I knew what I was doing. We would all gather, by the hundreds, at the Bethesda Fountain in Central Park every Sunday afternoon. Everybody looked fantastic. There would be music, and the crowd would continuously circle the fountain like a scene from Alice In Wonderland. It was surreal. By 1975 it was over and out. It was like a strange bloom - you touch it and it disappears. Gilles Larrain came to see a play I wrote and starred in, "Shanghai's Loco", at The 13th Street Playhouse. He asked me to bring the cast to his studio in SoHo to pose for him. I was accustomed to posing for many of the great photographers of New York City, and when we arrived I was not impressed with Gilles' dingy building or us having to carry all our props and wardrobe up the endless narrow stairs. Gilles was very persistent that we prepare and start posing, and, in an unguarded moment, that is what we did; without looking at his work first. When I finally saw what kind of photographs he took I cried, "OH MY GOD YOU MADE US LOOK SO UGLY!" I never even wanted copies, not that he ever offered. I made myself who I wanted to be. Gilles never even heard of Pola Negri or many of my other role-models, like my namesake Alexandra Del Lago from Tennessee Williams "Sweet Bird of Youth." The subjects in Idols were the most fascinating people in the world at that moment, and New York City was our stage. Gilles photographed us but he did not create us. We created ourselves like nothing before or since. That is why he insisted on taking our picture. It was always a struggle to perform, not to mention the hard work involved just dressing up in the first place. I never profited from any of my work. Gilles did profit from us, however. Time has spoken. The most interesting work Gilles ever did was photographing us. Gilles distorted our work in Idols to conform to his own limited vision. Our innocence survives in the photographs, despite Gilles' efforts to hide it. Some people today look at Idols and find an excuse for their bad display of self. The people I knew who posed for Idols were not desperate-for-attention bargain store thieves. (Ok, Holly Lola WAS arrested once for shoplifting at Saks Fifth Avenue...a terrible misunderstanding I'm certain!) I still get attention wherever I go. Like the divine Garbo, I want to be left alone by idiots who say hateful things out of jealousy and ignorance. These hateful things have nothing to do with the people in Idols. We were artists, and we were FABULOUS. Save your money and buy a book about Marlene Dietrich. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. comments on Idols By a. b. I am a photographer who has dealt with the street and bar scene in Baltimore for the last 30 years. I was fascinated to read all the enlightening comments by Alexis Del Lago and Beauregard. For me the two editions are still incredible documents. I am also glad to see someone voice these opinions on Ryan McGinley. I would like to add many of my own.

I can't remember when I first saw the book Idols by Gilles Larrain. All I know is that ever since I got it, it's been a huge influence on me. Idols is one of the best photographic books I've ever seen. It was published in 1973 and is a collection of studio portraits of transies, gender-benders, and just generally awesome looking people in New York City. It's an incredible time capsule. There are Warhol people, like Taylor Mead and Holly Woodlawn, and members of the San Francisco-based psychedelic drag queen performance troupe the Cockettes. There's a photo of the artist Al Hansen, (a.k.a. Becks grandfather), covered in silvery paint and dressed up like some kind of Roman soldier, and an unrecognizable, teenage Harvey Fierstein, looking like a young, pretty Jewish lady (well, almost). Most important, these people all had the best style. The greatest fashion always originates with drag queens. The outfit you're wearing today was probably invented by a drag queen ten years ago. Ryan McGinley, Vice Magazine, New York City 2010 Idols, an authentic compendium of 1970s New York style and attitude, and a confirmed masterpiece, began with an awestruck Larrain visiting Max's Kansas City in the explosively liberating early years of the gay rights movement, and befriending Taylor Mead and John Noble. Once they came to be photographed, the rest followed. Idols represents a generation of New York's most talented, outrageous, glamorous, and mostly gay personalities, after spending hours applying original makeup and costumes to pose for Gilles in his now legendary SoHo studio.

His photos highlight the beautiful decadence of an era without ignoring the undercurrent of gritty desperation that propelled it forward. Out Gilles Larrain captured the fabulousness of New York City's gay liberation movement in vibrant Kodachrome for his 1973 collection of studio portraits Advocate: Hot Sheet "Audacious and glamorous, Larrain's book unfolds as a retrospective of 1970s New York style and attitude. Larrain's photographs document countless hours spent in his SoHo studio, and offer an intimate view of those part of the early years of the gay-rights

movement. Interview About the Author Gilles Larrain was born in Da Lat, Vietnam in 1938 to a diplomat/painter father and a pianist/painter mother. He traveled the world at a young age while growing up in the midst of Jesuit boarding schools in Chile, Argentina, Canada, and France. Gilles attended the Lyce Franais in New York and he later attended LEcole des Beaux Arts in Paris where he studied architecture and city planning. A trip to Oaxaca, Mexico in 1963 to document the sites of Monte Alban and Mitla opened the door to a burgeoning love of photography. Gilles moved back to New York City in 1965 and settled into his artistic life, mixing sculpture, inflatable structures, neon, painting, and photography. He currently resides and continues to make artwork in New York City. Ryan McGinley is a New York based photographer raised in New Jersey. After moving to New York in 1998, he began extensively photographing his downtown environs. He received a BFA in graphic design from Parsons School of Design in 2000. In 2003, at the age of 25, McGinley was the youngest artist to have a solo show at the Whitney Museum of American Art. His work has appeared in galleries and museums worldwide, on the covers of magazines and albums, and has been collected in five monographs, most recently in *Life Adjustment Center* (Dashwood, 2010).