



Volume 2, Number 4.

April, 2021

The Newsletter of the *Naturist Action Committee* and the *Naturist Education Foundation*

Assembled and published by Doug.Hickok@NaturistEducation.org. Mail: P.O. Box 132, Oshkosh, Wi., USA. 54903. Tel: (920) 415-2900

Naturist Education Foundation Gives New Life to Frank Cordelle's Century Project

The Naturist Education Foundation extends its sincere thanks and appreciation to Frank Cordelle, as well as his family, for entrusting us with his well-known published and exhibited legacy project, The Century Project. Bringing life to the important stories and imagery he curated over a 30-year period, this generous gift from Mr. Cordelle will become a featured part of the NEF collection. We are excited about this project since it will contribute to NEF's mission for greater body acceptance within our society.

We're dedicating this entire newsletter to announcing this acquisition, covering the highlights of its 30+ year history, conveying why The Century Project is the perfect exhibit for body acceptance, and laying out NEF's plans for the project to have real impact on the general public.



Christy, 21

By the Numbers

The collection that NEF currently has consists of:

- 42 gallery-ready framed prints (16x20)
- 208 exhibit-ready matted prints (16x20)
- 419 other work prints
- 8,753 negatives (frames)
 - (35mm to 8x10, but most are medium-format)
- 300 known subjects in total
- 305 unique model releases
- 128 of the subjects include stories
- Youngest participant: Cara, Minutes before birth
- Oldest participant: Mary, 94
- First photoshoot (oldest model release): August 1976
- Last photoshoot (newest model release): March 2012
- 2,172 Bodies & Souls books
 - (Books contain 98 photos with stories.)
- 43 Gigabytes (3,388 files) of scans, history, and data
- 255 news clippings, personal letters, and printed history

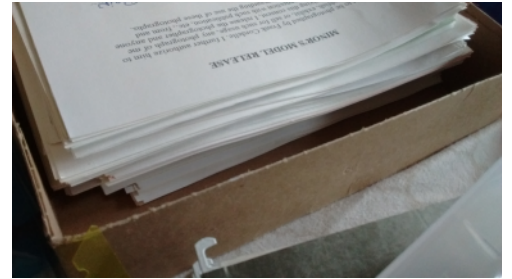
It's been a long transition...



Frank Cordelle and Doug Hickok [May 16, 2020]



Loaded up the van. [May 16, 2020]



Over 500 unsorted model releases



« Doing the same pose as Salima, 25, on the newly received mountain of Century books. [December 21, 2020] Special thanks to Paul Rapoport for keeping track of the books and to Stéphane Deschênes (Bare Oaks) for warehousing them all these years, and getting the international logistics in place to move them to NEFRL.



Sorting and cataloging 16x20 framed prints



Negatives came from Cordelle in boxes, unsorted, and many unlabeled. The book helped to identify many of them. Some were identified through other clues like jewelry, body markings, locations, or framed or matted prints with labels that aren't in the book. Some still remain unidentified.



Sorting and cataloging 16x20 matted prints

All negatives are protected in archival pages. Above are monochrome negatives. Below are color slide film. These medium-format frames are 4x larger than the 35mm negatives you may be used to. Each roll of 120 film has 12 frames when shot in square format.



Organized and cataloged: One hanging file for each person containing the model release, negatives, contact sheets, work prints (that fit), stories, and any other available information. One bin is for the printed history as well.

It took hundreds of volunteer hours to completely catalog the collection over the last year.

Project Introduction

**Written by Frank Cordelle,
later in the project.**

The Century Project is a chronological series of nude photographic portraits of women from the moment of birth through approximately one hundred years of age.

While the biological continuum is an important part of the project and provides a vital framework for other issues, this is much more than a mere developmental chronicle.

The photographs, for example, are accompanied by personal statements, usually written by the participants themselves. Sometimes funny, sometimes sad, sometimes shocking, they are often intensely moving and always highly revealing. The words and pictures together are a very powerful combination.

The subjects portrayed are, quite simply, real-life people, not stars or models. They represent a wide variety of ages, ethnicities, body types, and have a rich variety of experiences to draw upon, experiences which they share openly. Breathtakingly so, indeed.

The Century Project is about real women in real bodies, not the caricatures in the worlds of media and advertising.

Among the subjects covered are body image, eating disorders, cutting, the nudity/pornography "equation," cultural/societal/religious attitudes toward female bodies, media portrayals of women, rape, childhood sexual abuse, male attitudes, plastic surgery, maternity, menstruation, Caesarian sections, breast cancer, obesity, aging, and more.

The project's track record is that of art being able to bridge educational and therapeutic gaps, and perhaps most importantly, to be able to stimulate thought and discussion about subjects that are too often taboo in our society. This is an exhibit for the whole mind, not just the eyes. It is an experience.

Men and women often respond to these photographs in somewhat

different, gender-specific ways, though there is certainly a substantial commonality of feeling as well.

The comments I hear most often from women have to do with the healing impact of the photos. To be able to see others with all their "imperfections," to share their laughter or their pain, to understand how they have survived, and to admire the way a person accepts who she is, can be very empowering.

For many of the women who participated in this project, the act of being photographed in the nude has been an important therapeutic experience.

For men - who are often uncomfortable looking at pictures of nude women, and who often have a difficult time distinguishing between nudity and sexuality - the impact of seeing this collection of photographs is largely educational: they see women who are real human beings, as opposed to a series of impersonal toys in a sexual (and frequently violent) environment.

A primary goal of this project is to provide a healthy alternative to the way women are represented in the media.

The education of children and the re-education of adults are equally important.

To these ends, The Century Project has been exhibited nationally at colleges and universities, in galleries, and even in churches. The project also been used extensively for group and individual therapy by psychologists.

Among the impacts, in addition to the basic ideas of education and self-acceptance: a lot of women have gotten into therapy. Others have said they decided not to have breast implants after experiencing an exhibit. In two instances that I am aware of, it was said that lives were literally saved as a direct result of this exhibit.

I have never shown this work anywhere without having women I've never met come up to me in tears to offer a hug and say "thank you." Men too, occasionally.

Yes, it's controversial for some, but few if any photographic exhibits can claim such accomplishments.

Twenty-plus years in the making,

these startling images have been exhibited over sixty times on a national basis, usually on college campuses, sometimes in galleries. The college exhibits are generally at the invitation of staff therapists and/or women's studies faculty. The schools in question range from the Ivy League to the Bible Belt. The response on campus has been remarkably independent of a school's geographic location, and resumed political leanings.

Simply stated: the issues are quite universal and people respond accordingly.

Attendance typically averages a thousand or more for a mere five days. The exhibit draws excellent media attention, both print and broadcast, having been written up in many newspapers over the years, discussed on regional NPR stations, and been covered on the 6 o'clock news by several television stations. The Century Project has never been negatively reviewed.

Given a longer run, and the attendant publicity that would surely accompany it, it is clear from the project's track record that a gallery exhibit would be VERY well attended.



Sunshine, 50

Two examples from the project...



Mayé, 36

Being nude in front of others has always been difficult for me. It's a combination of feeling ashamed of my body, being totally vulnerable, and feeling humiliated that I'm opening myself up for exploitation. I wonder where those messages of shame and humiliation came from, so that even now, in my 26th year, I'm still uneasy with my nakedness. There always seems to be, for me, something bad, unclean, and sexual about nudity.

The picture I'm posing next to is a drawing I did this past summer. The woman in the drawing is very unhappy. Her body is dying and decaying, but she is resigned to it. There is a feeling of peaceful acceptance. There's a sense of letting go of the fight. There is an opening up to the inevitable; for there can be no change without expression and acceptance of her feelings and situation.

Posing with this picture was a way for me to confront this as well. For me there is no way of moving beyond my fears and pain other than confronting them and working through the emotions that arise; pushing myself to question, learn, and accept. I'm still uneasy about the pictures. However, I know it helped open a door for me and I'm still in the process of going through and exploring my new surroundings.

Reema was born and raised in Pakistan as a Muslim.

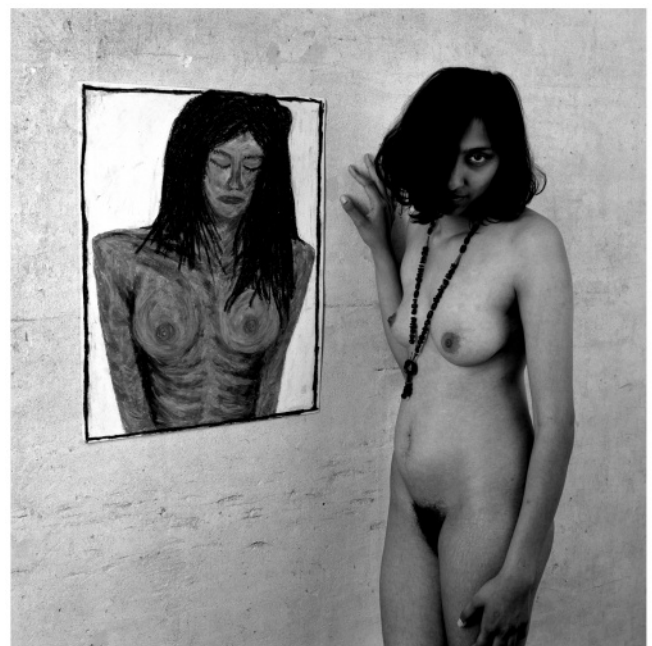
Yo soy artista.
I am an artist.
I see the human body
as a marvelous creation of nature,
full of every variety
of curves and contours
that lie within the skin
covering muscles and ligaments and bones.
This is our vessel.
Full of atoms of empty space,
it holds our essence, our spirit, our soul.
It contains my blood, my heart, and my nerves.

I am the creator of three outstanding sons.
They are my masterpieces,
they grew in my body,
kicked around and wiggled,
found their way out to the light.
My body housed their vessels.

I am not ashamed of my body.
Through it, I gave life; through it, I create.
It houses God energy, universal energy,
the christ, the light, the Buddha, the earth, the son, the manna of life,
our bodies,
the infinite variety of human beings,
expressions of a creative universal power.

It flows through me,
to my sons,
to my artwork,
to my hands.
In my cooking
and walking,
laughing and crying,
it flows through me in times of pain and anguish,
and it flows through you too.

My vessel, skin like the earth, houses a fire like the fireplace I stand next to.



Reema, 25

How the Century Project Began

Written by Frank Cordelle in 1993.

[Attached with a letter to Lee Baxandall on Sept. 9, 1993, this is what Cordelle had typed up for inclusion in the magazine. This describes, in his own words, how the Century Project was started. As editor, I've corrected a few typos, and added two paragraphs from newer versions of this story that I've marked with an asterisk ().]*

When I was around five or six years old, a friend of my family dropped by for the afternoon, bringing with her a daughter who was perhaps six months or so old; I don't remember exactly, but she was still crawling around on all fours. At some point during the visit, the little girl inevitably wet her diapers. This presented me with a glorious opportunity! I never had a sister, and had not ever seen what a girl looked like "down there." So with all my male childhood curiosity at full power, I was primed and ready for "the changing." The trouble was, my mother's friend insisted that I leave the room before she would take off her daughter's diapers!!!

"Gee, did I do something wrong here? Was there something really dirty in there that I must not see under any circumstances?" Needless to say, it took me a while (several years in fact) to figure out that it was Norma's problem, not mine.

Many years later, after graduating from college, I boarded a charter flight for Europe, and began a summer-long odyssey of experiencing other cultures. One Sunday, I wound up in a spa somewhere in Germany, propped up against a tree, reading the N.Y. Times. Wandering around me were various local denizens, reading, picnicking, playing, whatever. Around half of them weren't wearing anything... gender didn't matter, nor did age. Male, female; pubescent or senile; there they were. Absolutely nobody seemed to be paying any attention whatsoever. With, of course, one exception. Me. The American. Why? Because these were taboos walking so casually about me. I had never been permitted to satisfy THAT childhood curiosity. Nor, I realize now, had I been permitted to be comfortable with the bodies of others, probably not my own, for that matter.

That in itself is reason enough to begin a project like CENTURY, which is, superficially, a chronological sequence of nude female portraits from birth through age one hundred (or so). Yet there are several other reasons as well.

One that is very real to me personally, but that still doesn't get to the heart of the matter, has to do with the fact that I am by academic training a biologist/biochemist. At first glance, this sequence of photographs is nothing less than fascinating in purely scientific terms... the process of development/aging is simply mind-boggling!

But the really important issues go back to the problem within American society, alluded to above. While the age-continuum will always be a vital part of this project, some other aspects have grown to a point of prominence, and still other issues have emerged. Perhaps the most valuable of these is simply to stimulate thought and discussion about subjects that are often taboo in our society, namely nudity and sexuality, and our corresponding attitudes toward women in particular. It's certainly not much of a reach to make a connection between a society which says "that's wrong, and this is dirty," and a society which has epidemic levels of sexual abuse and violence.

People looking at these pictures often have two very different, gender-specific responses. Bravura notwithstanding, a lot of men are very uncomfortable looking at pictures of nude women. Showing my portfolio to various friends of mine, or to the boyfriends/husbands/fathers of women interested in being photographed has been an educational experience for me... sometimes it's humorous, though often in a sad sort of way. One guy actually flipped through a notebook containing around sixty or so pictures in less than three minutes! He never saw anything; his goal was simply to get the ordeal over with as soon as possible. Part of the problem may have been that I was there, as were (female) members of his family. After all, the guys who are into Playboy, etc., don't look at it with the kids in the living room after supper; they have to sneak away someplace.



I had an interesting example of how this might work educationally several years ago. Before I began working on CENTURY, I spent a couple of summers photographing physically handicapped athletes at various regional and national track & field meets. One afternoon a friend stopped by and asked if she could look at some of the pictures. I gave her an armload of prints and let her be for a while. In a half-hour or so, she reappeared with a rather pale, drawn look on her face. "What happened?" I asked. All she said by way of response was:

"These are real people."

As we pursued the way in which she reached this simple but often-difficult-to-attain position, it came out that she had had an experience as a child which is probably common for many of us: walking along somewhere with her parents, they were approached by someone in a wheelchair, possibly paraplegic, or, they could have been on crutches, missing a leg. No matter, the parental response was typically "Don't look at them, you'll make them feel self-conscious." Well, first of all, it is usually the "looker" who is self-conscious, not the "lookee." Secondly, the admonition not to look meant that no eye contact was made either, hence no societal contact at all. The handicapped became a non-person.

Continued on next page.

Continued from previous page.

In private, by herself in a room with a lapful of photographs, my friend looked for the first time at the atrophied legs of a person with a spinal injury, or even the absence of appendages to the body of someone whose mother inadvertently took Thalidomide when she was pregnant. Finally, her curiosity satisfied, she made eye contact with the human being in the photograph, and it was then that she reached her simple, but vital conclusion!



What was important for me was that for the first time in my life I had made a photograph about which it could legitimately be claimed had had a positive social impact.*

For men, the experience of looking at CENTURY has often been similarly educational: they see women who are real human beings, as opposed to a series of impersonal toys in a frequently violent environment. A lot of the guys who are into the “girlie” magazines have a pretty good recall of the “tits” on last June’s centerfold, though they never knew who she was. I would like to think that few of them will remember the bodies of the women I have photographed; with luck, their personalities, their histories, their humanity will have made an impression.

As a postscript, the wife of the man mentioned above who set a speed record for looking at my portfolio later told me that the two of them and their teen-age daughter spent the next few weeks in an on-going series of conversations together on various sexual/cultural issues; things she had been trying unsuccessfully for years to get on the table!

On the other hand, a comment I hear frequently from women who have looked at these photographs has to do with the healing aspect of the images. To be able to see others with their “imperfections,” to share their laughter or their pain, to observe the relationships other have with their bodies, often to admire the way a person accepts who she is... can be very empowering.

Among the several goals of this project, one of the most important is to provide a healthy alternative to the way in which women are presented in the media, be it nude, as in the men’s magazines, or even clothed, as in *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*, etc.

The women who model fashion, for example, diet and diet and diet. On the set they are attended to by make-up

people making hundreds or thousands of dollars per day; ditto the hair-stylist. After the photo session, the pictures themselves are often significantly retouched. The result is something no woman can relate to; nor should she be expected to. How many men out there want to compare their bodies to Schwarzenegger? How many would want to do steroids as he did in order to “build” such a body? The models in the media are far from healthy; they are caricatures, cartoons of what a human being is.

CENTURY is, quite simply, about real women in real bodies.

For that reason alone, exhibitions of these photographs have at times resembled group therapy sessions. While many men need to be alone in order to “see” comfortably, women are likely to draw strength from observations and feelings shared with others in a roomful of pictures. In fact, a woman who facilitates an on-going series of group therapy sessions in a local church asked me to put on an exhibit in the vestry to be used as one of the regular meetings for her group. Other women wound up being invited as well; there were close to one hundred there for the afternoon. I was the only man allowed. When was the last time a man was invited into a church to show nude photographs of women (as therapy, no less)? Has it ever happened? I don’t know, but it was both an honor and an experience!

Another therapist, the mother of a twelve year old girl I have photographed, deals specifically with women’s body issues (anorexia, bulimia, obesity, etc.), and has asked to borrow my portfolio to show to clients of hers as part of their therapy. When CENTURY is finally completed and published, she will keep a copy on her desk for just that purpose.

Going a step further, the very act of being photographed in the nude has often been an important therapeutic experience for the women who have chosen to be part of this project. There are a few examples of that on these pages. In each case, these women wanted to be part of CENTURY for two reasons. First they realized that it would be an important step for them as individuals. For a woman who had been raped, this might mean a first, emotionally vulnerable encounter with another man in a photography studio; the equivalent of getting back on a horse after being once thrown. For a bulimic who had kept her eating disorder a secret for years, it meant coming out of the closet and drawing a line in the sand, saying I am not going to do this anymore. (She hasn’t!) For a single-breasted woman following cancer surgery, it meant showing her body to a stranger for the first time.

The second reason is that all of these people understood that they would be able to help others as well. In effect, they offer themselves as real-life role models. In a similar vein, all the women I have photographed have volunteered in order to be part of what is really a group political statement, the point of which, on a variety of levels, is simply: “It’s OK.”

While there are certainly people who question my agenda, the overwhelming response of almost everyone had been phenomenal. Indeed, without it, I would have quit a long time ago. This is a long time to be working on one thing (!), and at times it has been very difficult for a variety of reasons. It is also the most formative and rewarding thing I’ve ever done.*



Jacquelyn, 38

Today I am wearing long and flowing purple without my false front and feeling stunning. What do I mean, *my false front*? My prosthesis that mimics that diseased part of my body that was cut away years ago to save my life. My fake boob, my rubber tit, my concession to society's denial that women lose breasts every day.

My bra goes along with the farce, holding my other breast high and firm like a 16-year-old's that has never seen battle. Well, my breast is not high and firm, it hangs from my chest and rolls when I walk. It has nourished and nurtured dozens of children and it smiles at the memory of those lips that have rested there. Tiny rosebud lips and grown men's lips, all there for the same thing, nourishment and nurturig.

There is a shooting-star shaped scar on my breast, a sickle, a half moon. There are crevices where the skin has stretched taut with passion and stretched full with milk, No, this is no 16-year-old nubile breast, it is the breast of a warrior woman, proud and regal.

Paula is a tad more than just another weekend "gym rat." At 19, she was the US National Teenage Body-Building Champion. Is she proud of her body? Of course! She is equally proud of being completely drug free - no steroids - just a lot of hard work. Yet there is a price one must seemingly pay in order to compete at this level: in the weeks leading up to major competitions, losing all weight that isn't muscle becomes a real priority. Paula's diet at those times is hardly healthy: she is on the edge of being eating disordered in spite of her magnificent physique.

That was the description I used with Paula's picture for over ten years. Then while poking around the Internet, I came across some other information which demands inclusion.

Paula left New Hampshire, where I met her, to pursue a career in southern California, where there was a bigger body-building community. She achieved some success as a competitive body-builder, including a first-place finish in the lightweight division at the 1990 North American Championships. Eventually she wound up in Las Vegas.

A writer in the on-line body-building media stated that she "would be a perfect figure or fitness model today if she were allowed to have that much muscle." Sadly, she continued to diet down to get thinner, never to compete again...

Two other body-builders went to a strip club in Vegas where by chance Paula worked as a waitress, among other things. They each paid her to do a lap dance on the other, and described her as "so bone skinny we feared she was anorexic."

On November 14th, 2001, Paula was found dead in her apartment. She was 33. The coroner said she died of "natural causes." The likely truth is that anorexia killed her.



Paula, 20

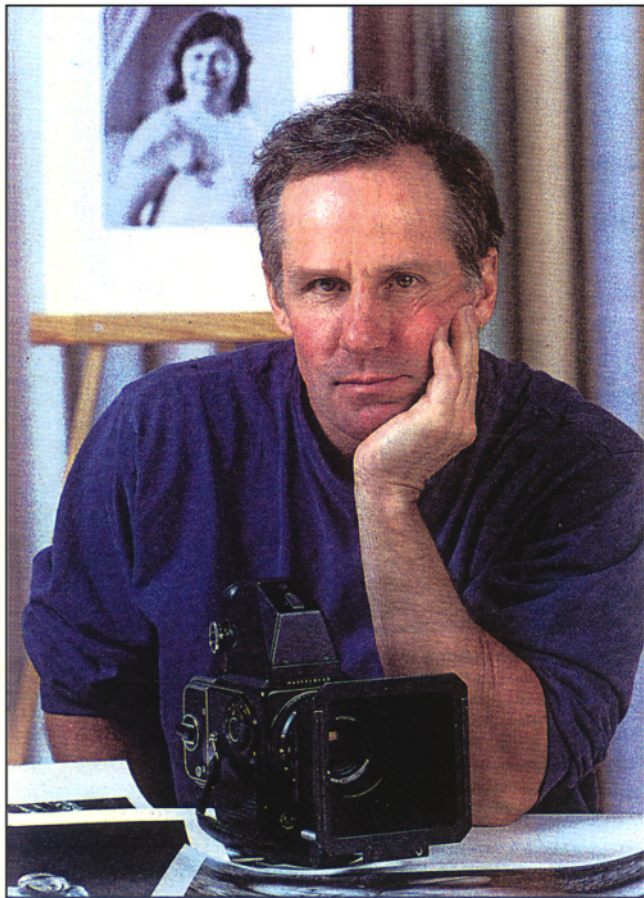
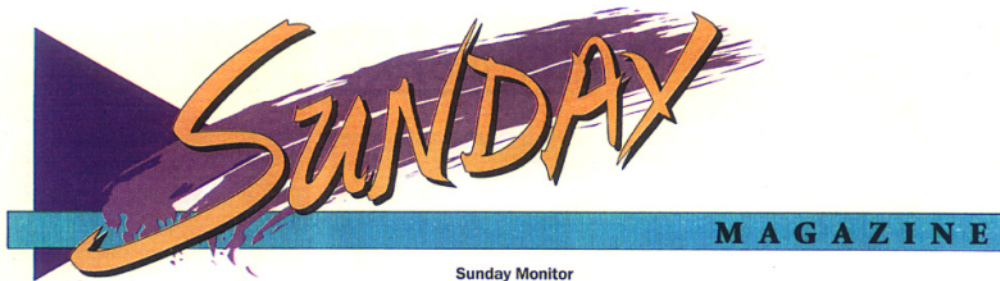
Early Days

In October of 1992, Cordelle evaluated his financial situation on the Century Project. After about 10 years of working the project, he estimated that he was 60% done. He needed about 45 more photos to complete a book, and at his rate of keeping about half, he needed to photograph 90 more women, which meant meeting with about 190 potential volunteers. Adding up everything, he estimated that he needed another \$75,000 to complete the project.

Based on the model releases that NEF has, and the dates in which they were signed, Cordelle had photographed about 100 women by October of 1992 and must've planned to include about 60

of those in the book. He photographed about 260 women by the time the book was published, keeping 98 of those in the book, and continued on for a while hoping for a second book. His early estimates of keeping about half were fairly accurate.

Although a book was the goal, the exhibit ended up being the focus. On November 14th, 1993, an article in the Sunday Telegraph advertising the Unitarian Church exhibit offers an interesting tidbit: "It was therapists who urged Cordelle to turn his portfolio into a traveling exhibit so other women can benefit from the work." Clearly he took this advice, and the exhibit took off!



Naked truth

A nude photo exhibit at New England College shows everything slick advertisements ignore

Page 3

List of Known Exhibits (79 pre-NEF)

[Exhibits from 1992 to early 2006 were listed in the "Bodies & Souls" book.]

1992

Sharon Arts Center: The Nude (group show)

Apr. 26 - May 17, Sharon, NH

Newburyport Center for Yoga and Health

Sept. 19 - Oct. 18, Newburyport, NH

1993

Unitarian Universalist Church
Apr. 18, Peterborough, NH

Saunders Gallery (group show)
May 5 - June 27, Portsmouth, NH

Unitarian Universalist Church
Nov. 18, Peterborough, NH

1994

Dartmouth College Women's Studies Department
Apr. 5, Hanover, NH

Women's Conference sponsored by the NH/VT Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
July 1, Walpole, NH

1995

TNS Midwinter Gathering
Feb. 18 - 19, West Palm Beach, FL

New England College Gallery
Feb. 27 - Apr. 8, Henniker, NH

1996

University of New Hampshire
Feb. 21 - 22, Durham, NH

Opening Scene Gallery
Aug. 24 - Sept. 13, Taos, NM

1997

Wheaton College
Mar. 3 - 5, Norton, MA

1998

Lupin Naturist Club
Apr. 5 - June 11, Los Gatos, CA

Continued on next page.

Puffin Foundation Awards Grant to Century

From about 1998 until 2004, Cordelle applied for a few different grants. In 2000, the Puffin Foundation awarded him a \$500 grant for the Century Project.

The brochure didn't feature Century specifically, but it's listed as a recipient towards the back. The brochure starts directly on the point: "We at the Puffin Foundation feel strongly that the influence of art and culture on the well-being of our society is critical." Thus, they felt Century provided some of this critical well-being.

The opening statement in the

brochure hits on another interesting topic, only because it foreshadowed other events in Cordelle's history. It states: "In this new century, the arts are more essential than ever to our growth and survival as a civilization. It is incumbent on all of us to continue to provide for and protect our rich and varied cultural life from those who seek to censor and restrict our freedom of expression."

The following year, Cordelle had to speak out against New Hampshire House Bill 437, which would've made the Century Project illegal. And later in the decade, another censorship fight was to take place as well.

Cordelle and NAC Fight HB-437

On February 12, 2001, NAC issued an alert about HB-437, encouraging naturists to show up and express opposition. The summary states the New Hampshire house was "considering a proposed new state law that could catastrophically affect the sale and distribution of family oriented naturist publications and other material in the state. House Bill 437, introduced by freshman state legislator Daniel Itse (R-Fremont), provides that 'any person engaged in the sale, publication, or distribution of a visual representation of an unclothed child which exposes such child's genitals, shall be guilty of felony child pornography.' The chilling effect on nudist and naturist publications is obvious."

Naturists weren't the only ones concerned about this bill. This was Cordelle's home state and he was clearly a target as well. The Monadnock Ledger ran a lengthy article on February 15th titled "Child nudity bill drawing concern - Display of pictures could mean jail." Century Project is discussed, along with the impact to bookstore owners and museum curators. As the bill sponsor, the article also mentions Itse's position: "Itse says it is psychologically detrimental for children to pose nude in front of adults, particularly if they aren't family members."

A majority of the article details some of the books that fall into the category, details Cordelle's work, and finally concludes that the bill probably

won't pass because it's far too broad. Included is a subset mini-article titled "Cordelle hopeful after hearing" that talks about how the committee hearing went. Cordelle, naturists, and the ACLU all spoke in opposition.

Included in NEF's historical materials are the packets that Cordelle assembled for this hearing. They include a cover letter, the mission statement, many pages of student responses, several articles about the exhibit, and letters of recommendation from some of the universities.

One of the packets has sample photos and statements. The first one is "Nora, 11." Nora's mother was cited for child pornography after photographing Nora in the bathtub at age 8 and having the negatives developed. This was a high-profile case that even turned into a book ("Framing Innocence" by Lynn Powell). The case was dismissed about a year later. Cordelle photographed Nora for the Century Project at age 11. Her story, in her own words: "I wanted to be in this project not because I want people to pity me, but because I want people to see how stupid it was for my mother and many others to be prosecuted. Look at my picture. Do I look abused to you? Or do I look like a happy child with wonderful parents whose only 'abuse' has come from those who have tried to take away our right to live the way we do."

Getting back to HB-437, the committee voted to kill it.

Continued from previous page.

St. Michael's College
Oct. 19 - 20, Winooski, VT

University of Vermont
Oct. 22 - 24, Burlington, VT

1999

New Life Gallery
Feb. 4 - 19, Charleston, SC

University of Akron
Feb. 22 - 24, Akron, OH

Cruise to Cozumel, Mexico, sponsored by TNS
March

Pace University
Apr. 14 - 15, Pleasantville, NY

TNS Eastern Gathering
June, Lenox MA

Keene State College
Oct. 26-28, Keene, NH

2000

McMaster University
Feb. 8-11, Hamilton, ON, Canada

Lehigh University
Feb. 15-16, Bethlehem, PA

University of South Florida / New College
Mar. 1 - 4, Sarasota, FL

University of Central Florida
Mar. 7 - 9, Orlando, FL

Texas A&M University
Mar. 17 - 18, Commerce, TX

Cornell University
Sep. 11 - 14, Ithaca, NY

University of North Carolina
Sep. 19 - 24, Chapel Hill, NC

University of Massachusetts
Nov. 8 - Dec. 6, Lowell, MA

2001

Rhodes College
Feb. 26 - Mar. 3, Memphis, TN

University of Kentucky
Mar. 5 - 8, Lexington, KY

Continued on next page.

Chasing a Book Deal

In early 1992, when Cordelle was first exhibiting his work, his long-term goal was landing a book deal. He hired a literary agent named Sandy to promote the project to as many book publishers as possible. Most was done through mail and phone calls, but she made at least one trip to New York City to meet with publishers in person.

In 1997, after five long years, she gave up: "I think it's time for me to acknowledge and accept the fact that I'm not going to be able to place CENTURY with a publisher. It is a deserving and admirable project, but after 28 unsuccessful attempts, I simply haven't known where else to go with it."

As part of the history NEF presently has, there are 10 of the original rejection letters. Prepare to cringe at some of these responses.

W. W. Norton & Company: "I'm afraid none of us can find a compelling reason to do the book. Nor do we think it will have a strong commercial life."

St. Martin's Press: "All of the SMP readers thought it was interesting, but none of us was sure enough of the size of the market to want to proceed. It is an unusual book." (Signed by a female Senior Editor.)

Verve Editions (fine art books): "I have reviewed the Century project, and I feel that the material is not particularly strong and somewhat derivative. While I appreciate your enthusiasm for the work, I do not think that it is of the quality that would stimulate my interest

sufficiently to be involved."

Crown Publishers: "You'd think there would be no problem finding a market for pictures of naked women, but of course the aim of this book is different. For me the problem is—given you're not selling to the readers of Penthouse—I'm just not sure who *will* buy it. I myself probably wouldn't. In short, I don't have enough of a feel for the audience to feel comfortable taking this on, though I will not be surprised if some house makes a great success of it."

So how did it get published in 2006? See "The Naturist Connection" later in this newsletter.

It's interesting how Cordelle's work falls between the cracks. Female nudes are big sellers, and Cordelle was shooting top-quality portraits to technical perfection on his professional Hasselblad camera and best film stocks available. The only problem was that they were not always "aesthetically pleasing" and were accompanied by stories that make the women starkly real.

Publishers also like to print stories with happy endings. For many of the Century stories, the ending is grounded in reality and may not end well. That's life.

Despite the big impact this book has on those who flip through the pages, publishers are driven by profits instead of changing lives. I'm curious how many other great high-impact projects have met this same fate.



Class discussion; note other viewers in background.

photo by Karen White

Continued from previous page.

University of Massachusetts
Mar. 26 - 30, Dartmouth, MA

2002

University of North Carolina -
Wilmington
Feb. 18 - 22, Wilmington, NC

Montclair State University
Feb. 24 - 28, Montclair, NJ

Oberlin College
Mar. 11 - 15, Oberlin, OH

Lehigh University
Mar. 18 - 22, Bethlehem, PA

University of South Florida / New
College
Apr. 1 - 5, Sarasota, FL

2003

College of St. Benedict
Feb. 17 - 21, St. Joseph, MN

Centre College
Feb. 24 - 28, Danville, KY

University of Akron
Mar. 10 - 14, Akron, OH

College of William and Mary
Mar. 17 - 21, Williamsburg, VA

Cornell University
Mar. 24 - 28, Ithaca, NY

Colgate University
Mar. 31 - Apr. 4, Hamilton, NY

2004

Montclair State University
Feb. 23 - 27, Montclair, NJ

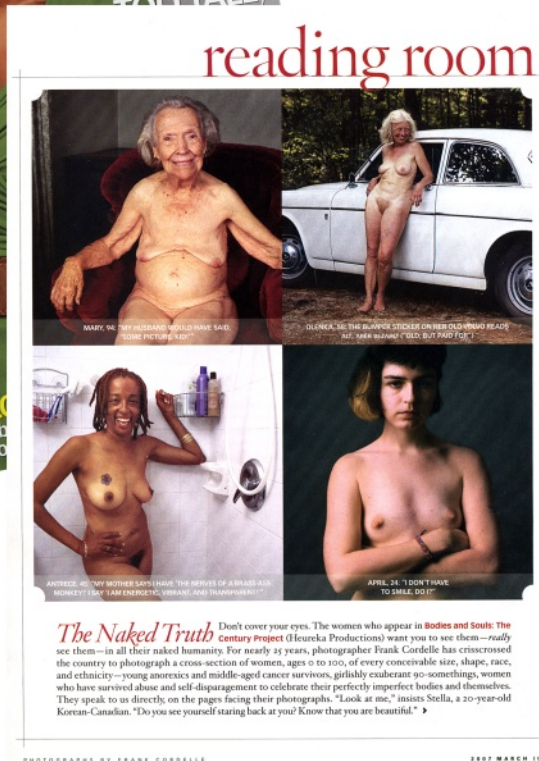
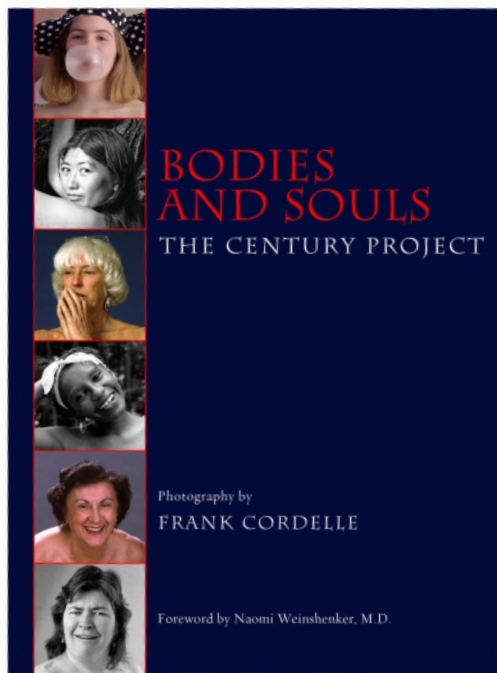
Keene State College
Mar. 1 - 5, Keene, NH

Radford University
Mar. 8 - 12, Radford, VA

College of St. Scholastica
Mar. 15 - 19, Duluth, MN

University of California
Apr. 12 - 18, Santa Cruz, CA

Continued on next page.



Continued from previous page.

2005

Cruise in the West Indies, sponsored by Bare Necessities
Feb. 7 - 15

College of St. Benedict
Feb. 28 - Mar. 6, St. Joseph, MN

East Stroudsburg University
Mar. 14 - 18, East Stroudsburg, PA

Lehigh University
Mar. 22 - 24, Bethlehem, PA

Goucher College
Mar. 28 - Apr. 1, Baltimore, MD

University of Vermont
Apr. 5 - 7, Burlington, VT

Texas Tech University
Apr. 18 - 22, Lubbock, TX

2006

The Pratt Institute
Feb. 27 - Mar. 3, Brooklyn, NY

Radford University
Mar. 6 - 11, Radford, VA

Harvest Moon Banquet Hall
Mar. 17 - 21, Hamilton, ON, Canada

Houston Community College
Apr. 3 - 7, Houston, TX

[Frank Cordelle's book, "Bodies & Souls: The Century Project" was published in 2006. With numerous positive reviews, including in *O, The Oprah Magazine*, one could call this a large nationwide exhibit.]

[The following exhibit in 2006 was only found because there's a CD of photos from the event.]

Lupin Naturist Club
Sep. - Dec., Los Gatos, CA

[Exhibits from 2007 to 2009 were listed in a file that Frank had burned to a CD in February 2010.]

2007

Colgate University
Feb. 19 - 23, Hamilton, NY

Continued on next page.

Continued from previous page.

wonderful occurrence.

On Tuesday, I got a volunteer response from a student, but didn't actually get to talk with her. The card she filled out detailed two rapes and the fact that she was newly pregnant from the second one. It was also obvious that she had no one to talk to and was in crisis. I emailed her that night from the motel and asked her to come back on Wednesday to talk. She did, but was unable to get so much as a sentence out without breaking down. I took her outside to get a little privacy, grabbing one of the campus counseling center brochures on the way. I told the young woman to call them right there and then. She couldn't get through, so I tried it and got a busy signal. "OK, where's the counseling center?" I asked. "Way across campus," she said. "Let's go," I replied, fully intending to walk her in the front door if need be. A hundred yards later I tried calling again and got through. I handed her my phone, and she got an appointment for an hour later, much to the credit of the counseling center there. I asked her to come back again on Thursday because I wanted to be sure she had followed through. She did and had! When she returned, she wore the smile of someone who knows they've finally made the right decision and are headed in the right direction. We talked about the obvious fact that she still has a lot of work to do, but she is clearly on the right track for a change. I declined to photograph her; she has enough on her plate right now.

I've always maintained that one of Century's greatest virtues is the ability to put awkward, personal and/or taboo issues on the table in such a way as to make it OK for others to open up and talk about them. QED! TCP likely saved her butt. Hmmm... Does this sound like it's dangerous to women? But I digress... Back to the exhibit.

Word-of-mouth was starting to kick in big time. Hundreds of people came on Thursday, and the museum staff capitulated by staying open until seven or so in the evening so as to accommodate everyone. Friday morning I taught three Gender Studies classes; when I got back to the museum the line to get into the exhibition space itself was almost an hour long. By mid-afternoon, they were holding over a hundred more people downstairs, as

there was no room on the second floor for them. Basically, no one was allowed up until someone came down. This went on until after suppertime (on a Friday, no less). I spoke with one woman who had been there for four and a half hours, counting the time it took her to go around and view everything. I asked someone else how they were doing: "Oh, not so hot, but I heard it's worth the wait!" was the reply.

We finished just shy of a thousand viewers for the four days. The museum staff told me they'd never seen anything like it!

Especially given the circumstances vis a vis my nemesis from the mid-west, it was one of the most satisfying exhibits I've ever had! Combined with the outcome at UNCW, it was a pretty amazing trip, and that's not even counting the other two schools I went to, one in Memphis and another in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada!

Continued from previous page.

[Exhibits after 2009 were found by web search and certainly may not be complete.]

2010

University of Louisville
Late Feb., Louisville, KY

2012

Tuska Center for Contemporary Art
Late Feb., Lexington, KY

[2020, NEF steps in to keep it going...]

2021

International Women's Day event at
Cypress Cove Nudist Resort
Mar. 5 - 7, Kissimmee, FL

...

Protecting the Legacy

By default, copyrights are passed along to the heirs of the estate. During our numerous phone calls, Frank Cordelle indicated that his family wouldn't know what to do with the collection. I asked the question while visiting: What would you guys do with this collection if I hadn't come along? The answer was startling at first, but then I understood.

"We'd have a bonfire."

I was briefly shocked, as a photographer myself, at the thought of my life's work going up in smoke. Their intent was genuine and not aimed at Frank -- they want to protect the women. The model releases have personal information, there's personal correspondence, and likely embarrassing pictures. Who knows where all that could end up? The women bared their souls for the project, and deserve to be well protected from any possible future abuse or embarrassment.

Naturally, Frank wanted his legacy to be preserved, and was very choosy when considering his options. A

significant part of the discussion was copyright, which he hadn't thought about until I brought it up.

If Frank had kept the copyright, NEF would be unable to make additional prints to replace any that get damaged. NEF would be limited in creating promotional materials for exhibits, and totally powerless if any copyright infringement happened. It still would've been possible to make use of the collection but with added difficulty. To obtain permission on anything, NEF would have needed to contact the family.

By signing over the copyright, Frank not only gave us the freedom to maintain the collection forever, but gave NEF the rights and responsibility to protect the women. Now, if copyright infringement happens, NEF has the legal authority to issue takedown notices and pursue justice.

The family is appreciative that NEF took on the liability and is continuing to protect the women while keeping Frank's project alive.

The Naturist Connection

Way back in 1988, one of Frank Cordelle's participants foreshadowed naturist interest. One of the first young girls photographed for the project was "Megan, 7" who appears in the Bodies & Souls book on page 18. She was shy at the time, but then proud until high school, shy again (Frank pulled the photo from the exhibit during these years), and finally proud again. Her mother "Heather, 38" also appears in the book on page 120. Their photo session was in 1987. Although her story in the book doesn't say it, she was shy too.

A private letter from Heather to Frank, dated a year after the shoot, requested that both of them be removed from the upcoming book. (She was open to having a conversation about it, and it's clear that she had changed her mind. A note stuck to the letter confirms this.)

From her letter: "I don't want people looking at me naked unless they are naked too and we are looking in each-other's eyes and are one on one. This way I can't get hurt. It's like in a war, in the midst of killing, if a person comes face to face with the enemy and they look each other straight in the eyes – there's a chance neither men will be able to pull the trigger. Too many people are quick to judge and hurt, unless 'they are naked too.' ... I think it should be a requirement that everyone looking at your book should be naked." Since this wasn't the case, she didn't want to be part of it at the time.

Her observation is interesting. Although it isn't "war," naturists certainly look each-other in the eyes and feel as if they are on equal ground. They aren't usually quick to judge or hurt either. Being naked and vulnerable among a clothed crowd is certainly a unique feeling, even for a naturist who has achieved body acceptance. Now imagine being an insecure woman in this scenario, as Heather describes: "I'll leave it up to less insecure women than I. ... Gosh – hearing myself – I realize a lot about myself." After writing this letter, and talking further with Frank, she must've acquired some body acceptance. In her photo she's covering her breasts with embarrassment, but her story (written years later) describes how much she loves them and wishes others would love their bodies more.

Lee Baxandall Goes "All In"

Widespread naturist support of Cordelle's project began with a letter from Lee Baxandall dated May 14, 1992: "A contributor to N magazine ... felt we'd find a kinship in your work. He mailed us the Keene Sentinel Magazine with your work. We're impressed and would like to explore publishing your work." Most significantly in this letter, Baxandall clearly states that "Body acceptance is equal with nude recreation in our purposes."

"Body acceptance is equal with nude recreation in our purposes."

20 pages of the magazine with 16 images printed on special high-quality photo paper.

In the numerous letters back and forth, Baxandall promises "We'll take special measures to do it right." He offered up around \$4,000 for it: "I'm thinking we could give up to 48 pages to the portfolio, plus cover; paying \$100 per page." In the end, the feature in N 13.2 wound up being

Continued on next page.



Continued from previous page.

Baxandall was already looking toward the future too: “Possibly N Editions might also be your book publisher or co-publisher when the project is completed... We’re that impressed with the importance of ‘Century’.”

In his introduction to N 13.2, Baxandall has nothing but praise and communicates the significance of the project. He states: “Body Acceptance is what Naturism is all about – every bit as much as we advocate a widened scope of nude recreation. ‘Century’ contributes indelible testimony to this cultural advance of body acceptance.”

Judging from this history, Baxandall would be extremely proud that NEF is keeping this project alive and well.

Other Naturists Too

There have been numerous exhibits at naturist gatherings and venues over the years. Not only that, but a non-trivial number of participants were naturists too. In general, naturists have always supported Cordelle’s project.

Even after Cordelle’s publicist gave up on securing a book deal after 28 rejections from every publishing company she could think of, it was a naturist who stepped in, created a publishing company, and finally published Cordelle’s *Bodies & Souls* book.

Cordelle’s work graced the cover a second time when N 26.1 announced the availability of this new book. In his 9-page

announcement, Paul Rapoport boldly claimed: “This is the climax (but not the end) of work that I believe has no parallel.”

Rapoport’s summary of the content is wonderful and worth quoting here: “The nudity here does not suggest degradation or immorality but embraces sincerity and valor. It represents both vulnerability and strength. The people in The Century Project may be funny or sad, placid or severe. Many reveal calm or exulting spirits, refusing to be embarrassed about their lives, refusing to be ashamed of their bodies.”

He also speaks to the legacy that Cordelle leaves in his wake. After 13 years since it was seen in N magazine, people were still talking about it. “Everywhere he goes, he leaves a permanent impression. But it’s not him as much as his work: The Century Project. The reactions leave no doubt about its significance. How would you like to produce work that set off this comment: ‘I never saw anything more compelling in my entire life.’ And that’s not unusual; it’s typical!”

As the new caretaker of the project, NEF can confirm the validity of that statement. Universities sometimes requested Cordelle to type up and provide the feedback from students, and there’s many pages of these. There’s also numerous comment cards filled out by attendees. There’s so much feedback that I haven’t even read it all yet. Just picking up a few randomly, you’ll quickly find comments akin to the one Rapoport quoted.

“Body Acceptance is what Naturism is all about.... ‘Century’ contributes indelible testimony to this cultural advance of body acceptance.”
– Lee Baxandall



Mary, 94

Life at its fullest at 94. A little naughty always. I love men and adore the naturist clubs that have rejuvenated me.

I posed so some old lady will not fear age, and some old men would know old women are not so strange. I loved the challenge of posing nude, such excitement!

My husband would have said, “Some picture, kid!”

A tiny sample of the exhibition comments received over the years...

" This is the most moving art exhibit I have ever seen... I was not expecting to sit down to write with tears in my eyes... "

" Powerful! A must see/read for anyone interested in humanity. "

" This should be required viewing - tremendously important work. "

" I saw your photos... and I was absolutely astounded. It's very difficult to admit this at my age (66), and particularly in light of the fact that I've been a mental health specialist for about 40 years, but I have never before been able to focus so incisively and compassionately on the lives of women. I am actually shaken by this since it pinpoints issues and feelings that have, at best, been only lightly glimpsed. "

" I have always struggled with the desire for breast implants. I see them as a form of vanity and so was angry with myself for wanting them. Thank you for sharing with me a collection of images and text that helped me begin to realize that I don't really want them. Very empowering and freeing! "

" I think you should have the Kleen-X boxes start earlier in the exhibit. ;-) I don't cry. Well, I do, but not in public. But I did. There are no words to describe this, yet I still have to try and tell you how this may be the most incredible exhibit I will ever see in my life. You present a STRENGTH to women, even during/after some of their "weakest" times. This I will never forget. "

" I think your pictures are what this society desperately needs. "

" I teach adolescent psychology and wish every one of my students could see this exhibit b/c it speaks a thousand words. "

" A very moving exhibit. It is art like yours that changes the world. "

" I am an artist, that being said I am usually dubious about shows that have a "message." ... I was truly moved, to the multiple extremes of my emotional spectrum by your show. I felt that you, as I do, both as artists and human beings have a duty to display the beauty and staggering ugliness of the world so sheltered people, like me, can appreciate what we have, instead of lamenting what we don't. "

" This is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. I am so filled with a thousand emotions, Thank you for this. I am going home and staring at my beautiful nekkid self in the mirror now. "

" Incredible. I am breathless, changed. And I want to run naked on the wind! God bless you! "

" Thank you very much. I don't know if I have the right words to describe how this exhibit has made me feel... but it is through work like yours that I can come closer to a better realization and acceptance of who I am. "

" The images and commentaries were one of the most powerful presentations I have ever seen. It touched and moved me in ways that I don't fully understand intellectually, but which liberated me emotionally. "

" Never have I been in a room with more beauty, more talent, more freedom. Never have I felt more in love with myself. Thank you! "

" Wow... that's all I can say. I am in such a good mood right now, I want to stand in the middle of the room and take all my clothes off, maybe run around in the snow. As someone who has struggled with my body image since the age of 15, I feel incredibly good about myself. I'm still trying to come to terms with my appearance and feel that this is a big boost for me. Thanks. "

" At first I was embarrassed, but to look in the eyes of these women was freeing. To see myself for the first time with no distractions... Amazing. "

" I don't know how to explain that this project is above and beyond spectacular... My only hope is that I can show this to my daughters, my Mom and my friends. This project should transcend time... It is a timeless work of art and profound display of beauty. "

" As a young woman who is currently experiencing the worry and uncertainty of finding a lump and having to have it removed, this exhibit showed me that should the need arise, cancer and the removal of a breast would never change who I am. "

" This touched me in a way nothing has in a very long time. What a beautiful, beautiful exhibit. "

" I am the Catholic Campus Minister here at Keene State, a divorced women, mother of eight. I can't thank you enough for what you have done and continue to do. You are an artist and healer of great proportions. I thank you for myself, my five daughters and three sons and for all the students who will be forever changed by this exhibit. "

" I was flooded with emotions. To see an image of a nude woman that is not sexual is rare. To see an image of a woman that is nude, old, proud, powerful, honest, and beautiful - this is amazing. I find the emotion welling up again as I write about it. As I looked through the rest of the photos, I always seem to find myself crying. I feel the pain that is kept hidden every day, the pain of being shamed since birth, as a female, as a person, by my perpetrators, my family, my religion. I feel the release that comes with having one's being honored and validated, and indeed every female is honored and validated by the images you have created. I feel anger at the people who still try and make us feel ashamed of our bodies because we are female. I feel the pain of the children who are currently being shamed and abused by the very people who are supposed to love and protect them. I feel hope that there are safe men in the world, if one could produce this. I feel joy that there are other people seeing these images, just as I am seeing them. I feel freedom; maybe most of all, I feel the freedom that comes with the realization that the wall we've been living behind is gone. Thank you, Frank Cordelle, for producing such precious work, and for sharing it with us. "

What is NEF Doing with the Century Project?

Changing society, of course!

It's clear that the Century Project is an extremely powerful exhibit to promote body acceptance.

Lee Baxandall's larger mission was body acceptance, with naturism being part of that.
The Naturist Education Foundation (NEF) shares Lee's mission.

NEF is no stranger to the issues and concerns surrounding nudity with all age groups,
and both NAC and NEF have strong successful histories dealing with them.

NEF has the Naturist Education Foundation Research Library (NEFRL),
which is able to properly archive the collection for a very long time.

The Century Project fits perfectly with the mission of the Naturist Education Foundation.

Here's what NEF is doing for the Century Project:

- ▶ NEF will continue exhibits at universities, colleges, trade schools, galleries, and other public venues. This includes budgeting for & promoting the project to prospective venues on an ongoing basis, and providing logistics & support on an as-needed basis. If you happen to know the right people, please contact NEF to help make an exhibit happen.
- ▶ NEF will get books to those in need. The first thought was to get the book into libraries, but libraries generally retain "the classics" and "the newest" in their collection. It's worth a try to see how it goes. The biggest early supporters of the project were therapists, so NEF will also try to get the books on therapists' shelves for lending to clients. This is perhaps the biggest impact we could possibly provide with the books. If you can help with this, let us know.

Here's what the Century Project does for NEF:

- ▶ Exhibits always have public announcements in the news, and sometimes articles about how the exhibit went. By connecting the exhibit to NEF, it's free publicity to the general public for both body acceptance and for naturism.
- ▶ Exhibits were typically at colleges and universities and mostly drew women of all ages. This is perhaps the most difficult demographic for naturism to reach, and these NEF exhibits may be their introduction point.
- ▶ Although naturism has always promoted body acceptance, Century is perhaps the first body acceptance project that will reciprocate by supporting naturism. It's likely NEF could see support even from non-naturists.

America has a huge problem with body shame, fear of the naked body, and a general lack of compassion for other human beings. Most attendees who experience the Century Project begin a personal journey toward body acceptance and a new understanding of humanity. Frank Cordelle, on his own, achieved a significant impact with his work over the last several decades. For everyone's benefit, it's important for NEF to continue our vital work in helping create a more enlightened, understanding, and accepting society.

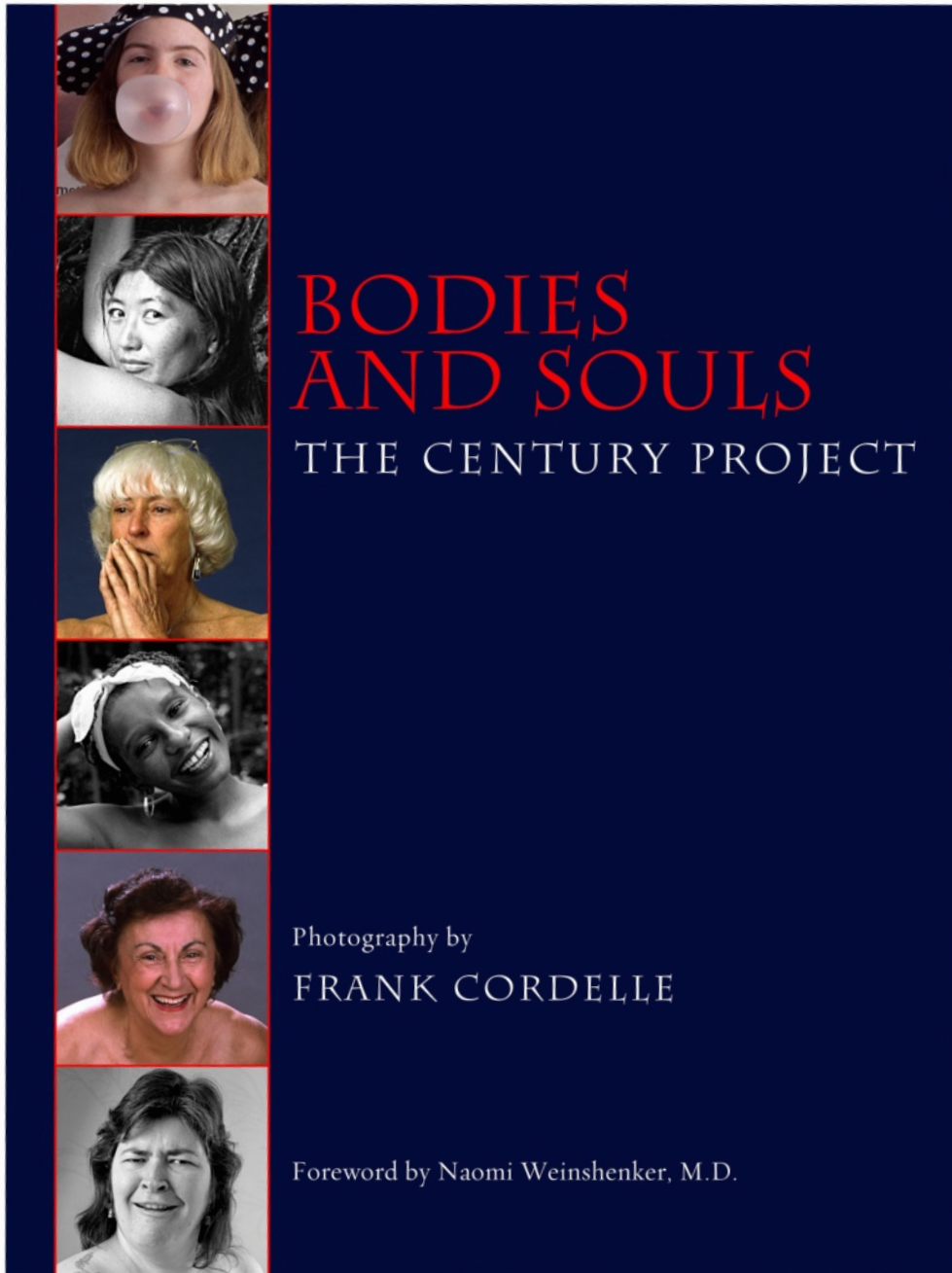
We can't do it alone, however. Stay tuned to future newsletters to see how you can help out.



Limited-Time Offer!

Support this effort and own a part of it!

Mail in a donation of \$25 or more and mention this newsletter, and we'll send you a free "Bodies & Souls: The Century Project" book as a thank you.



Limit of one book per household.
Offer valid if postmarked before
September 2021. Please allow up
to six weeks for delivery.

Like This Newsletter?

Sign up today and be notified each month!

Newsletters provide you with original content about:

- ▶ the activist efforts of the Naturist Action Committee,
- ▶ the educational & public outreach efforts of the Naturist Education Foundation, &
- ▶ the preservation of naturist history by the NEF Research Library.

Be in the loop with the **FREE** newsletter!

Sign up on the newsletter page:

<http://naturisteducation.org/library/newsletters.html>

By signing up, you'll also get occasional NAC Action Alerts, Advisories, and Updates too.



NAC is on Facebook and Twitter too!
<https://Facebook.com/NaturistAction/>
<https://Twitter.com/NaturistAction/>

Like Our Efforts?

Please support NAC with its mission of naturist activism set forth by Lee Baxandall.

NAC relies entirely on donations from generous naturists like you, now more than ever.

Donations are accepted online or by mail.

P.O. Box 132
Oshkosh, WI 54903

NaturistAction.org/donate



Please support NEF with its mission of naturist education and public outreach set forth by Lee Baxandall.

NEF is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and all donations to NEF are tax-deductible.

Donations are accepted online or by mail.

P.O. Box 132
Oshkosh, WI 54903

NaturistEducation.org/donate



Thank you for your support!

– The NAC and NEF Board