



LYNNE ANDERSON

**'YOU HAVE TO LOOK THEM IN THE EYES.'** Photographer Lynne Anderson brilliantly captures local trans women in her photography exhibition at La Petite Mort Gallery, which is partnering with the Transgress Festival, Oct 19.

# LOOK INTO MY EYES

*Lynne Anderson gets very personal with trans*

## TRANSGRESS FEST

Jessica Ruano

**“PRESENT, FOR YOUR** consideration, these women. Each of them was born with the genetics of male gender, but each expresses themselves, to different degrees, as females” says artist Lynne Anderson, describing her newest love affair: a photography project. For her latest artistic venture titled *fe.male*, Anderson, a 30-something divorcee and mother of two, has been photographing eight transgender women members of Gender Mosaic. The group provides a safe environment for its 80 members to get together and be comfortable in each other’s company. Anderson’s work is being displayed Oct 20 at La Petite Mort Gallery as part of

Transgress Festival, an annual event put on by Capital Xtra and James Moran as part of the Ottawa International Writer’s Festival

Guy Bérubé, owner of La Petite Mort (which, as I was reminded, is that gorgeous euphemism for orgasm!), attempts to understand the notion of coming to terms with this very difficult struggle for identity.

“Imagine living with that feeling! Their minds and bodies are telling them: this is who you are; you have no choice but to follow that.”

Bérubé is especially fond of this project because Anderson’s work reminds him of US photographer Diane Arbus, famous for her portraits of people on the fringes of society.

“Her biography was heartwrenching! When she killed herself, I thought ‘What the fuck was that?’ But she was never

afraid to follow what she wanted to do: she discovered characters, slept with them....”

Also, funny story: years ago in New York, Bérubé bought an Arbus photograph, and later he sold the print to purchase his gallery. That is precisely why, Bérubé says, he feels such a strong connection with Anderson. He also has a deep admiration for her work because of its sheer passion and originality and her willingness to push boundaries.

“For the longest time, I wanted to photograph people who don’t get noticed,” says Anderson, who, amazingly, has only been doing this professionally for three years. “Apathy is the worst: I want people to go, ‘Oh my god, I love it’ or ‘Oh my god, I hate it.’ Just seeing them pass by with indifference is the worst thing.”

## Look into my eyes

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There is very little chance that the average viewer could possibly feel indifferent to Anderson’s work — just look at her choice of subject matter! She is now shooting a series of fine art erotica, including a giant masturbation piece. Another current project is a collection of photographs featuring road kill.

“She actually took the time to take the body back to the studio and photograph it! Even scarier, she also takes photos onsite. People think she must be drunk and either want to gang-bang her or arrest her,” says Bérubé.

“Well, I was lying on the ground with a dead animal beside me,” reasons Anderson.

She brings the same rapt attention to her work with trans women. Attempting to accurately reflect the variety in the transgender community, Anderson’s featured models range from women very shy about their new identity, to those comfortable yet conservative, to flamboyant drag queens who love

showing off their newest fashion item — either on camera or just casually walking down the street.

“Zelda [one of the drag queens] loves to wear extra lipstick with dark liner. It’s very sexy!” beams Anderson.

Indeed, there is sexiness oozing from each of the models captured in these headshots. Just look at those shining ringlets, those gorgeous lips, that stunning jewellery. But then — look at their faces: none of these women are smiling. Now, look into their eyes: there is a sensitive person revealing herself.

“When you pass a transgender person in the street, you are not looking in their eyes,” explains Anderson. “You are looking at everything else: clothes, hair, makeup. Are those fake nails? Fake breasts? Are those high heels or more comfortable shoes? You want to prove to yourself that you’re right — that yes, they’re different. With these photographs, now you *have* to look them in the eyes.

“It isn’t about what they’re wearing, or their nails, or their voice. It’s what is inside them, inside their eyes that makes them a woman,” says Anderson, displaying the passion that shines so clearly in her work.

**FE.MALE.**  
Photographs by Lynne Anderson.  
Oct 20, 7-10pm.