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Book Review: Sublime Mutations

By One of the World's Most Controversial and Exploratory Photographers

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Sublime Mutations by Del La Grace Volcano

Sublime Mutations

by Del La Grace Volcano
Published by Janssen Verlag (2000)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 3887691356

This is a large book of photographs by Del, who throughout the past few decades, has been one of the world's most controversial and exploratory photographers of our time. As a book to live on your shelves it is truly a beautiful piece of art that explores the body and its pretence to sex and gender affiliation. As a prize-winning photographer Del La Grace, as he was known before his mutation, was a very well-respected female artist often exploring queer and women's imagery.

The book is a selection of his work over the past ten years, which records his fascination and documentation of tranz, meta tranz and intersex bodies' self-presentation. The photographs really are of the most exquisite technical quality and all pregnant with challenge and revelation. Those within are the lesbianboyz who are girl, transmen's faces and dicks, boldly naked dykes with cunts, babes and bottoms in stilettos, coquettish boys in underpants, the beatification of women with cancer after a bilateral mastectomy, psychedelic steel-studded cocks in the mouths of girls who get fucked for looking like boys. Del, who is confrontational by nature, by putting this collection together leaves the viewer

with little resistance to variation in sex and gender. He goes further by forcing us to question our sexuality as we can do nothing but lust over at least a few of his subjects' invitations to join their world as voyeurs or even participants. What was most delightfully surprising for me is that his sense of colour can be as seductive as his black and whites are mood-changing.

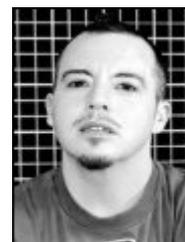
Nowadays Del describes himself as a hermaphrodyke or a female-to-male intersex person by design, but that is an ever-changing equation as he is unlikely to allow anyone to pigeonhole him for long. This is a picture book for lovers of beautiful people or a gift for someone you want to play mind-fuck games with, so you know it will reoccur in their dreams, come what may.

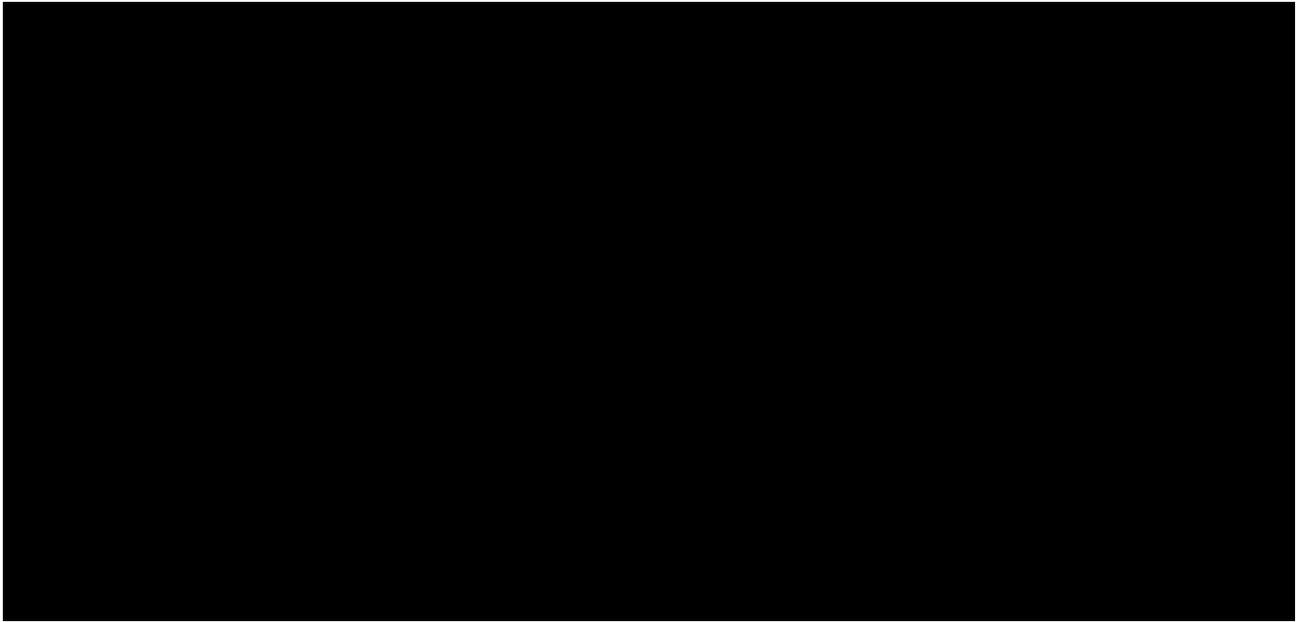
Del LaGrace Volcano

Edited from Wikipedia:  Del LaGrace Volcano is "one of the instigators of polymorphous perverse queer culture". A formally trained photographer, Del's work includes installation, performance and film, and interrogates the performance of gender on several levels, especially the performance of masculinity and femininity.

Born a female, Del lived the first thirty-seven years of his life as a woman, but since then has been living as both male and female (gender-queer). Del earned an Masters in Photographic Studies at University of Derby, U.K. in 1992 after studying photography at the San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco U.S.A. from 1979-81. Prior to Studying in San Francisco, Del attended Allan Hancock College as a student in the Visual Studies program from 1977-79. Volcano's work complicates understandings of both femininity and masculinity by depicting lesbian masculinity. In "The Feminine Principle" Volcano takes queer femininities as a focus. Included in this project is a portrait of Kate Bornstein. In "Lesbian Boyz and Other Inverts", Volcano's celebration of butch dykes, transsexual boys and other gender-queers, masculinity is shown as a tool of subversion.

Volcano's most recent photographs demonstrate how intersexed bodies can offer an entirely new perspective on the body. The "normal" body in relation to Volcano's photographs becomes queer. Volcano describes the bodies in his latest works as "sites of mutation, loss, and longing". In these newer works, Volcano takes on the loss of his friend, Kathy Acker and the transformation of his lover Simo Maronati's abled body into a disabled one. Here, Volcano illustrates the queerness of any body marked by illness or trauma. Read more about Del La Grace Volcano at [his website](#) .





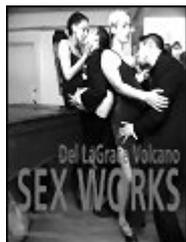
A 'show and tell' presentation that is as political as it is personal. Del LaGrace Volcano shares both process and the products from 30 years of real life experience, re-presenting images made in collaboration with queer subjects from the communities herm belongs to. Courtesy [TransSeminars](#) and [YouTube](#)



Femmes of Power: Exploding Queer Femininities
Author: [Ulrika Dahl \(Author\)](#) [Del LaGrace Volcano \(Photographer\)](#)
Published by: [Serpent's Tail \(2009\)](#)
I.S.B.N. -13 978-1846686641.

From Amazon Books: Going beyond identity politics, *Femmes of Power* is a photographic tribute to a diverse range of queerly feminine subjects whose powerful and intentional redress explodes the meaning of femme for the twenty-first century. Celebrating the growing femme presence, here you will meet members of Atlanta's Femme Mafia, San Francisco's Harlem Shake Burlesque, and Paris' Fem Menace. *Femmes of Power* features both everyday heroines and many queer feminist

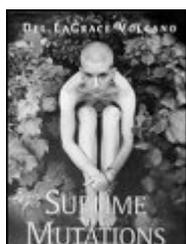
icons, including Michelle Tea, Virginie Despentes, Amber Hollibaugh, Marla Stewart, Lydia Lunch, Kate Bornstein, and Lois Weaver. The first book of its kind, *Femmes of Power* unsettles the objectifying male gaze on femininity and presents femmes as speaking subjects and high-heeled theorists. Look closer — these powerful, sexy, and sincerely ironic feminine figures are larger than life, bravely challenging femininity's negative connotations and replacing femme invisibility with a fresh new face for femme-inism.



Sex Works
Author: [Del LaGrace Volcano](#)
Published by: [Konkursbuch Verlag \(2006\)](#)
I.S.B.N. -13 978-3887693466.

From Amazon Books: This book features challenging images of non-normative sexual practices. Legendary alternative photographer and gender artist Del LaGrace Volcano returns with a photographic anthology exploring the world of L.G.B.T. sexual encounters. Del LaGrace Volcano documents queer and transgender sex practices in this remarkable collection of images. The result

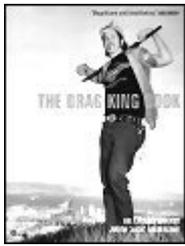
of years of active participation in - and documentation of - the dyke, queer, trans and intersexual scenes in and around London and San Francisco. *Sex Works* is a colourful, provocative and explicitly revealing look at a world in which appearances are often deceptive and the exploration of uncertain boundaries is the coin of common currency.



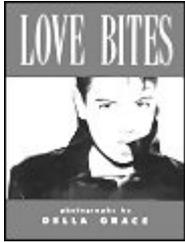
Sublime Mutations
Author: [Del LaGrace Volcano](#)
Published by: [Janssen Verlag \(2000\)](#)
I.S.B.N. -13 978-3887691356.

From Google Books: Del LaGrace Volcano broke onto the forefront of the queer avant-garde scene with the publication of *Love Bites*. Now, he goes one step further with *Sublime Mutations*, a unique and groundbreaking collection of work exploring new territory in the aesthetics of transgender studies and providing a crucial addition to the scant material available.

The Drag King Book
Author: [Judith "Jack" Halberstam \(Author\)](#) , [Del LaGrace Volcano \(Author, Photographer\)](#)
Published by: [Serpent's Tail \(1999\)](#)
I.S.B.N. -13 978-1852426071.



Del LaGrace Volcano's website: [📖](#) *The Drag King Book* explores the lives, communities and performances of many of the leading Drag Kings in mid to late 1990's New York, San Francisco, London, Berlin, Milan and Paris through photographs, text and interviews. In it's second printing and still going strong it remains the first and unfortunately only visual monograph of a drag king scene that has expanded exponentially throughout the world in the six years since publication.



Love Bites
Author: Del LaGrace Volcano
Published by: Gay Men's Press (1991)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0854491506.

Del LaGrace Volcano's website: [📖](#) Perhaps the first published photographic monograph of lesbian sexuality in the world made from an insider's perspective. In the early 1990's *Love Bites* generated a great deal of controversy and censorship in both the mainstream and lesbian/gay media. In the U.S.A. it was banned by Customs and Excise for two weeks. In Canada they cut the most "offensive" photographs out of the book before selling it. In England it was sold by mainstream booksellers but not in lesbian or gay bookshops who protested they couldn't take the risk or disagreed with the content. Although it has been out of print for over ten years it is still considered a queer classic.

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