

INSPIRATION

Photographer Ben Larrabee shows love, joy for wife in new exhibit "The Artist's Muse"



Photographer Ben Larrabee will include this photo of his wife Trudie in his exhibit "The Artist's Muse," showing on Oct. 9 at Southport Galleries. This photo was taken in Napa, California in 2006.

by Melvin Mason
Times Reporter

In Ben Larrabee's eyes, his wife Trudie is a source of joy, love and artistic inspiration.

In other words, she is his muse.

In any given moment, Larrabee can look at his wife and find perspective as well as beauty.

"It's a tradition in the arts, the artist and the muse," he said. "The muse is the one who inspires you and often it's the artist's wife or husband and it's when I want to experiment with visual ideas, I turn to Trudie."

It's only right then that he show his inspiration to the world through his lens.

Larrabee will display his wife's beauty in a special show called "The Artist's Muse," a special pop-up gallery at the Southport Galleries.

Larrabee's photography encompasses the 25 years Ben and Trudie have been together.

Larrabee's art is as much of a tribute to the love of his life as it is homage to artists of the past, who have often painted, drawn or photographed those who inspire them. Larrabee's photographic heroes Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Weston and Harry Callahan

were also inspired to photograph their wives.

"Trudie happens to inspire me and there are many times when I look at the way Trudie is sitting or laying, she just seems to position herself naturally in certain ways that I find interesting," he said.

Some photos he's taken are of her sunbathing in the Netherlands, doing Pilates or just getting out of a lake with the sun shining and making the surface of the water sparkly.

"It's being in the artistic process together. It's exploring together," Ben says.

Most of the photos have Trudie naked, something that does not faze her as it might have in the past. Trudie has had Ben photograph her seated on a windowsill with hills in the background and leaning on a pillar on the empty 61st floor of the Empire State Building with dramatic light coming in.

"Ben said 'Go stand in front of that column,' so I walk over and I take my clothes off and quickly stashed them behind the column," she said.

Trudie said she was once concerned about how her body might be critiqued when Ben showed one of his nude Trudie photos at an arts show in Rowayton. Though she was once concerned, she was pleased as visitors complemented the Larrabees for

Trudie being natural and real.

"I thought, 'you know what? I want to show what's real,'" she said. "Because a lot of people don't know what's real because what they see in the media is so hyped up and retouched and not natural."

Trudie says she gets her husband's artistic eye and responds when she knows he sees something.

"When Ben tells me to take my clothes off, I should take my clothes off," Trudie says with a laugh. "It makes it much more interesting."

The photos of Trudie also give him ideas for when he works with client families, experimenting with light and angles.

While being photographed in a vulnerable state shown to the world might give many women pause, Trudie Larrabee enjoys it as much as she does being part of Ben's artistic process.

"For me, it's really easy and natural. I just get to do my stuff. I don't really have to do much. I just be and Ben sees it," she says.

The couple also plans to publish a book based on "The Artist's Muse."

More info: benlarrabee.com, southportgalleries.com

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