



ALL PICTURES © BEN LARRABEE

Trudie: A portrait

by Ben Larrabee

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Some 51 portraits of his wife are presented in the photobook *Trudie* by Ben Larrabee, photographed between 1997 and 2017. There's a well-established tradition of artists depicting their partners, think Stieglitz with O'Keeffe, Weston with Modotti and Wilson and perhaps most significantly for Larrabee, Harry Callahan with Eleanor. That lineage is the book's strength and its challenge: The work is situated in a rich artistic dialogue but raises questions about contemporary originality and relevance.

The photographs are undeniably tender. Larrabee's lens captures Trudie at home, on travels, sometimes clothed, others not, in moments that feel unscripted and intimate. His stated aim 'nudes of everyday life without pretense' delivers in many of the pictures. They eschew glamour or artifice in favour of quiet honesty. The work conveys affection, trust and a gradual deepening of collaboration between photographer and subject.

Yet, the premise of a husband

photographing his wife for decades carries risks. Though Trudie's own voice is included – she reflects candidly on body image and the value of authenticity – the dynamic remains one-sided: Larrabee as artist, Trudie the muse. Audiences attuned to questions of agency and gender may wonder whether the project replays rather than rethinks the historic trope of the male artist elevating his partner through photography.

Visually the book is polished. However, that refinement sometimes borders on over-familiarity. The compositions, while elegant, rarely surprise. At times, the pictures risk drifting into personal keepsakes rather than compelling artworks. Viewers may be left wanting a stronger sense of experimentation.

Overall, *Trudie* has a quiet integrity. It resists the hyper-retouched imagery of today's culture. Instead there's a consistent meditation on intimacy and daily life. As a love letter, it is heartfelt. As a contribution to photographic history, it's respectful rather than revolutionary. Whether that balance feels timeless or dated will depend on you.

Clockwise from left:

St. Regis Pond. 2006

Nude on Bed. 2004

Coastline, Maine. 1997

Arms Up, Nantucket. 2010

