

I am seeking: **an exhibition space** for

**vagina vérité®**—an unabashed exploration of the plain, ordinary, mysterious matter of vaginas  
It's a photo-documentary for women\*. So that we can see ourselves for ourselves.

## **Here is the story of vagina vérité® –**

by [Alexandra Jacoby](#)

Since Sept. 2000, I have been capturing a glimpse of women's most private selves. So private that most women have not seen their own, much less others. I've been making vagina portraits. I call them v-portraits.

The v-portraits are close-up documentary photographs. There are no stylists, no details about the model to set the mood for fantasy—just the **elusive faces of the vagina in plain view.**

I am not a vagina expert. I am a [painter and a photographer](#), and -

One day, out of the blue, a friend of mine asked me if I liked the way my vagina looked. Apropos nothing. *Did I like the way my vagina looked?* As I answered, I realized that I had never really taken a good look at my vagina, and that, other than a bit of porn, I hadn't actually seen any other women's vaginas.

While I was pretty sure that they were all different, I had no evidence to point to when talking with my friend, who clearly thought that there was something wrong with how hers looked.

I began asking around and found that most women had not seen other women's vaginas—nor necessarily seen their own. The conversations, which often began awkwardly, revealed how little we knew about our vaginas. Our gynecologists and lovers were on intimate terms with them, but not us.

Why and how did it come to be that the vagina, the gateway to life, would hold this lowly place in our collective consciousness?

[To explore this](#), I set about creating vulva portraits.

So far, I've made 83 v-portraits, each beautiful and strikingly unique. I plan to publish a book of the images, and to exhibit widely.

While the work is in progress, the v-portraits are installed on my living room walls, where I welcome viewers, hold salons, and produce preview exhibitions.

\* Please note that while this project is for and about women, men are warmly welcomed.

I am seeking ideas for a space where I can hold a preview exhibition this Fall, to which **you are invited!** [see next page]

## **You're invited to**

### ***The Subjectification of the Vagina: yOur Exhibition, Fall 2009***

*interactively created via audience participation*

We've all heard that a picture is worth a thousand words, right?  
This says a lot about the power of a photograph, and not so much about the power of words.

This photography exhibition seeks to explore the **words** as much as present the pictures.  
In particular, **your words**. It's a collaboration.

Here's how it works: **Our pictures + your words = yOur exhibition**

[Please note the capitalized "O" in yOur. It's not a typo. This experience is created by and about us!]

Hope to see you there!

–Alexandra

**Subjectification?** *It means I want us to talk about, think about, give consideration to: vaginas.*

## **Envision This –**

A large space, comfortably holding up to 100 people at a time, with 85 or so v-portraits installed on the walls. The v-portraits wrap around the space, such that you can start anywhere and follow them around. Below them are stations with pen and paper and receptacles. Questions are posted to get you started, and instruction signs tell you what to do.

We'll have an opening night reception, where everyone attending will have an opportunity to view the v-portraits, and add her/his words to the experience by writing them on small squares of paper.

We will incorporate the words and phrases contributed into the exhibition space, which in turn will incorporate them into the conversations among the next night's audience and into the next set of words that emerge. \*\*

Each evening, viewers will have the opportunity to contribute their words to our collective story. yOur exhibition will continue for a week. We'll keep adding to it daily.

At the end of the week, we'll have another reception to celebrate, read [and probably photograph] our work.

*\*\* If you're wondering how we'll incorporate the words into the installation, it may be that we'll install the squares of paper on the walls, or maybe we'll have people walking around with the words attached to their clothes, or maybe we'll record them and play them at different intervals throughout the following day's exhibitions. What we do will in part depend on the shape of the space we use.*

*And: if I've inspired you to envision a different version of an experience like this – maybe it's a one-day event, maybe the participation happens very differently – I'd LOVE to hear it!*

**For More on vagina vérité® go to [www.vaginaverite.com](http://www.vaginaverite.com)**

*The Subjectification of the Vagina: yOur Exhibition, Fall 2009: a welcoming, open-minded space for the exploration of personally uncomfortable and/or publicly taboo subjects brought to you by Alexandra Jacoby, [leave the castle](mailto:alexandra@leavethecastle.com) [alexandra@leavethecastle.com]*

## highlights of vagina vérité® exhibitions

artist/activist: Alexandra Jacoby

### **Wimodaughsis at Vagina Festival.** Sage Theater.

October 2008, NYC

vagina vérité® set the tone of the Vagina Festival visual art exhibition of paintings, photography, sculpture, print, and video, curated by Rose Merola. Wimodaughsis engaged viewers with a range of work that explored our bodies, sense of self, sexuality, and our relationships.

### **Red Tent Women's Project.** November 2007, NYC.

Vagina, vulva, pussy, cunt – and have you heard the latest celebrity darling: vajayjay? Why are there so many words and why do none of them seem right? Discussion explored these questions and our responses to the v-portraits.

### **visual art at Vagina Festival.** February 2007, NYC.

vagina vérité® inspired the creation of Vagina Festival, a visual and performance art experience, opening a space for conversations we don't usually get to have. Visual artists, performance artists, musicians, and speakers came together to raise awareness about the pervasiveness of violence against women, and raised money for V-Day.

### **The V-Factor: A Private Matter in the Public Eye.** November 2006, Montclair.

With over 60 v-portraits revealing what most women have not had a chance to see—the amazing diversity that unites us—our salon discussion explored the dynamic interplay between society's view on 'the -v' and our own evolving sense of self.

### **rated R for Random.** Agni Gallery. September 2006, NYC.

Jacoby presented the v-portraits in book form for the first time at Agni Gallery as part of the *rated R for Random* exhibition.

### **Society for Menstrual Cycle Research Conference.**

June 2005, Boulder.

An installation of 50 v-portraits and printed excerpts from [vaginaverite.com](http://vaginaverite.com) questionnaire-responses sparked health professionals and researchers in conversation about how our personal experiences of our bodies relate to health and well-being.

### **Love Your Tree.** ABC Carpet & Home. Dec 2004-Jan 2005, NYC.

*Spire* (a 6' 3" totem of eight v-portraits) was part of the *Love Your Tree* exhibition, curated by Paula Allen, of 16 photographers' work on women's relationships with their bodies. The *Love Your Tree* space was created as a companion to Eve Ensler's *The Good Body*—a place for women to gather, talk and listen.

### **Threat.** *A Gathering of the Tribes.* Oct-Nov, 2004, NYC.

As part of the *Threat* exhibition, a group show of paintings, photographs and assemblages, a wall of 41 v-portraits, unabashed, soft and proud, posed a challenge to the concept of power as domination.

### **Decoration & Handicraft: Re-visioning 1970's Feminist Art.** *Parson's School of Design.* April 2003, NYC.

With the v-portraits installed on the classroom blackboard, Jacoby presented the project and explored the complexities of representing female sexuality with students.

### **yOur Exhibition.** *Smithfield.* December 2002, NYC.

The first public exhibition of 30 v-portraits surprised and stimulated viewers at Smithfield, a bar on the lower east side of Manhattan. It was attended by 130 women, many of whom had heard much about the project, but still didn't know what to expect. Some were nervous about attending.