

# ANETA BARTOS INTERVIEW

*Provocative, Confronting*

**P**hotographer Aneta Bartos grew up in a small town in Poland, emigrating to the United States in her teenage years. Based in New York, she creates imagery that transports the viewer to a dreamlike, erotic and confronting world. Aneta was nice enough to speak with us about her new series 'Spider Monkeys' and what drives her powerful work.

**MC:** *I read that you started as a fashion photographer; what sparked the move to fine art photography?*

**AB:** I actually started with fine arts, majoring in photography at the School of Visual Arts. There, while developing portfolios and learning the skill, I was able to have few exhibits in NY as well as in Poland. But soon after graduating, I was encouraged to shoot model's portfolios for some cash and quickly got drawn to fashion. However, working in the industry for about 6 years and having little interest in commerce, I decided to go back to my roots and concentrate on my personal projects.

**MC:** *What do you get from art photography that you don't from fashion?*

**AB:** In my experience there are no boundaries in art photography. It's a lot more intimate and personal expression of inner and sometimes darker reflections of the subconscious. Art allows me to go deeper within myself where I can confront and learn about my fears and desires.

**MC:** *Your work is provocative and confronting, do you set out to shock the viewer?*

**AB:** I am still surprised that at this age, my work can be viewed as shocking...! Provoking and confronting, yes, but shocking...?

**MC:** *Given that your work is uncompromisingly erotic, how do you go about finding or choosing your subjects/models?*

**AB:** People that appear in my personal projects are my friends. Trust and respect is extremely important for both sides. Sometimes it takes a long time before those doors open.

**MC:** *What are your thoughts on voyeurism and the male gaze and are they concepts you explore in your work?*

**AB:** I am exploring voyeurism and the female gaze. I am a female and a gazer, and I am looking through my own unabashed female perspective at men as well as women rather than through 'the eyes of heterosexual men'. Male gaze suggests that women can be made to view the world and themselves through the eyes of men, and the woman is expected to be the gazed-upon, not the gazer. It is a very well established male-power phenomenon, where women only recently began to face and challenge. In projects '4 Sale' and 'Spider Monkeys' I have ignored that concept, creating the world of self-sufficient, powerful and flirtatiously dangerous females, completely independent of men. As for the viewer, I wanted him to realize that my world was not created for his enjoyment but rather for an awareness.

As my brother perfectly put: "This seductive quality of an erotic dream tempts me to enter, but suddenly discouraged by an uncomfortable sensation I stop myself in fear of losing something that makes me a man...a penis perhaps..."

In 'Boys' however, I try to challenge the look at what is visually and expressively 'accepted' as beauty when sexuality is owned by a female. I strongly ignore male/religious taboo to champion what I see to be beauty in male condition.



**MC:** *I really admire artists/photographers that put themselves out there just as much as their subjects. You posed nude yourself in 4Sale didn't you, have you always been that fearless?*

**AB:** I will take the credit for being fearless...haha, I simply don't like to be in front of the camera, especially other than my own, so it was definitely a challenge at the time.

**MC:** *What is it about polaroid as a medium that fascinates you? How does the medium effect the meaning of your images?*

**AB:** It is it's atmosphere, color, anticipation and surprises...lots of surprises. Each image develops for about a minute and a half after exposure, and I am never quite sure what I'm going to get. I find it thrilling. The quality of the polaroid fits the dreamlike quality of the world I'm trying to create, a distilled mood of anxiety and sexuality, perfect mixture of beauty, eros and fear.

**MC:** *What are you working on at the moment? You are traveling around a lot aren't you?*

**AB:** I have been working on a series called 'Spider Monkeys', which in Mayan Society meant sexual deviants: adulterers and promiscuous people who were depicted in the arts as half human half animal. I just came back from a trip from LA where I shot a friend for it who is 8 months pregnant. Two weeks prior I shot another friend in Costa Rica. So much fun!! Also, I have started my first video and stills about vanity, aging, mortality, existence and death: probably the most challenging project I have ever worked on to date.

**MC:** *Finally, what is a strong woman to you?*

**AB:** Someone who doesn't give into the patriarchal society!

*Artwork:*

1. Expectant, 2012
2. Piss, 2010
3. Together, 2011
4. Rob, 2011
5. Corner, 2010
6. Embrace, 2010
7. Tom, 2010
8. Creature, 2011

*Megan Christiansen*

