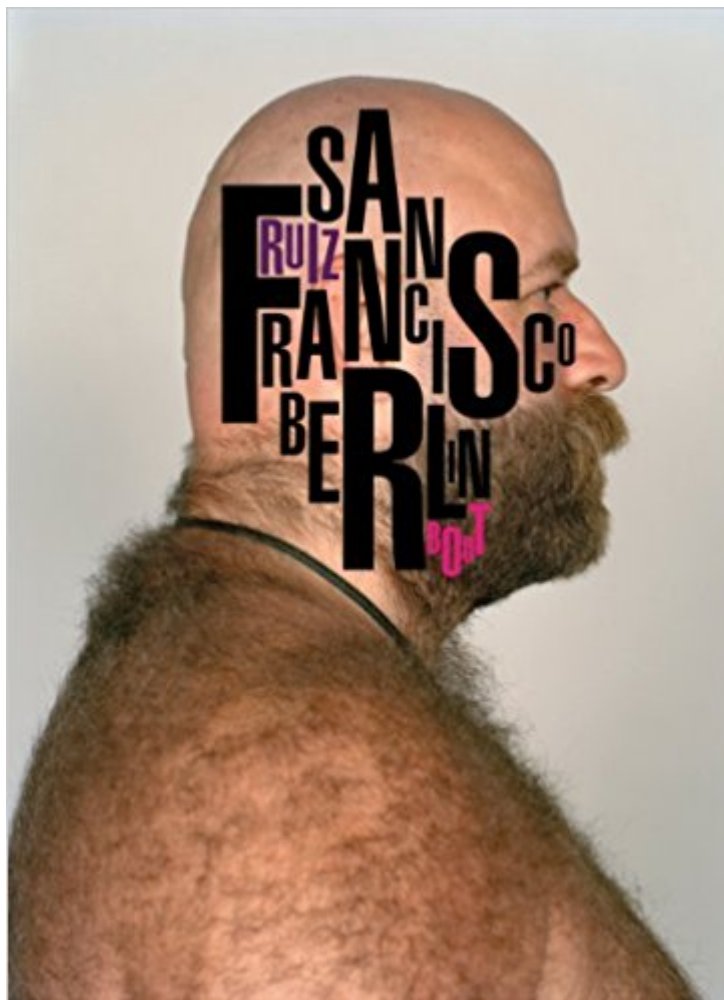


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Stefan Ruiz: San Francisco Berlin



Synopsis

In photographer Stefan Ruiz's San Francisco Berlin series, large-format portraits depict gay men dressed up for fetish-themed events in two cities that have played pivotal roles in defining gay male aesthetics. Shot in an improvised street studio, Ruiz's pictures are documentary in feel, their subjects captured against blank backgrounds, leveling steady, implacable gazes at the viewer. Some pictures fulfill expectations of fetish sexuality, as in the shot of a dour-faced, tattooed man who is nude except for a thick metal chain sashing his torso and a black leather strap fastened around his genitals. Other subjects' accoutrements are more playful--sleek black leather wrist cuffs abound, and one man sports a Batman face mask, complete with bat ears. With texts drawn from interviews with some of the subjects, and an introduction by Chris Boot (who curated the "Gay Men Play" exhibition for the New York Photo Festival in 2009), San Francisco Berlin is both a document of extreme fashion and a serious consideration of contemporary gay sexual identity.

Book Information

Hardcover: 96 pages

Publisher: Chris Boot (September 30, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1905712197

ISBN-13: 978-1905712199

Product Dimensions: 10.9 x 0.7 x 14.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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