



These Powerful Photos Redefine Masculinity

Photographer Jess T. Dugan's 'Every Breath We Drew' Project Challenges Assumptions About Gender And Sexuality



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Photographer Jess T. Dugan just released the 62-page photo book [Every Breath We Drew](#), and the striking series is already gaining traction for its exploration of what Dugan calls “gentle masculinity.” A [visual meditation on gender identity and sexuality](#), the photo series challenges preconceptions and assumptions — patterns of thought which often lead to confusion, conflict, and repression. The timing of the series couldn’t be more apropos. Two weeks ago, an emotional [Jeffrey Tambor stood on the stage at the 2015 Golden Globe Awards](#) and dedicated his win for *Transgender* to the trans community, saying, “Thank you for letting us be a part of the change.” Just last week, the [hashtag #MasculinitySoFragile](#) began trending in an attempt to bring attention to the intrinsic damage of strictly adhering to toxic masculinity. And Dugan’s work easily furthers the dialogue surrounding traditionally held notions of masculinity.

“I began making these photographs in 2011 after relocating from Boston to Chicago,” Dugan told *The Huffington Post* about [the inception of the series](#). “My previous work had focused on issues of gender and sexuality, specifically within the female-to-male transgender community, and I was thinking a lot about the idea of masculinity on both a personal and cultural level. The more

Masculinity, she counters, isn't the extreme end of a spectrum — even if that's the way it is often represented in the media and even interpersonally . A cursory scan of the #MasculinitySoFragile hashtag underscores this sentiment, with bottling emotion and perpetuating "toughness" among the tropes of masculinity being illuminated on the thread.



So Dugan chose to photograph subjects intimately and as they are to capture the dichotomy of hard and soft, strong and beautiful in each of us.

"The people I was drawn to photograph embody a gentle kind of masculinity, whether they are male or female, gay or straight," said Dugan. "I am interested in a version of masculinity that is more expansive, and more vulnerable, than the kind often represented in mainstream culture."

It's a kind of masculinity that isn't toxic in the slightest — and it is one that we should definitely celebrate.