

AYDEN

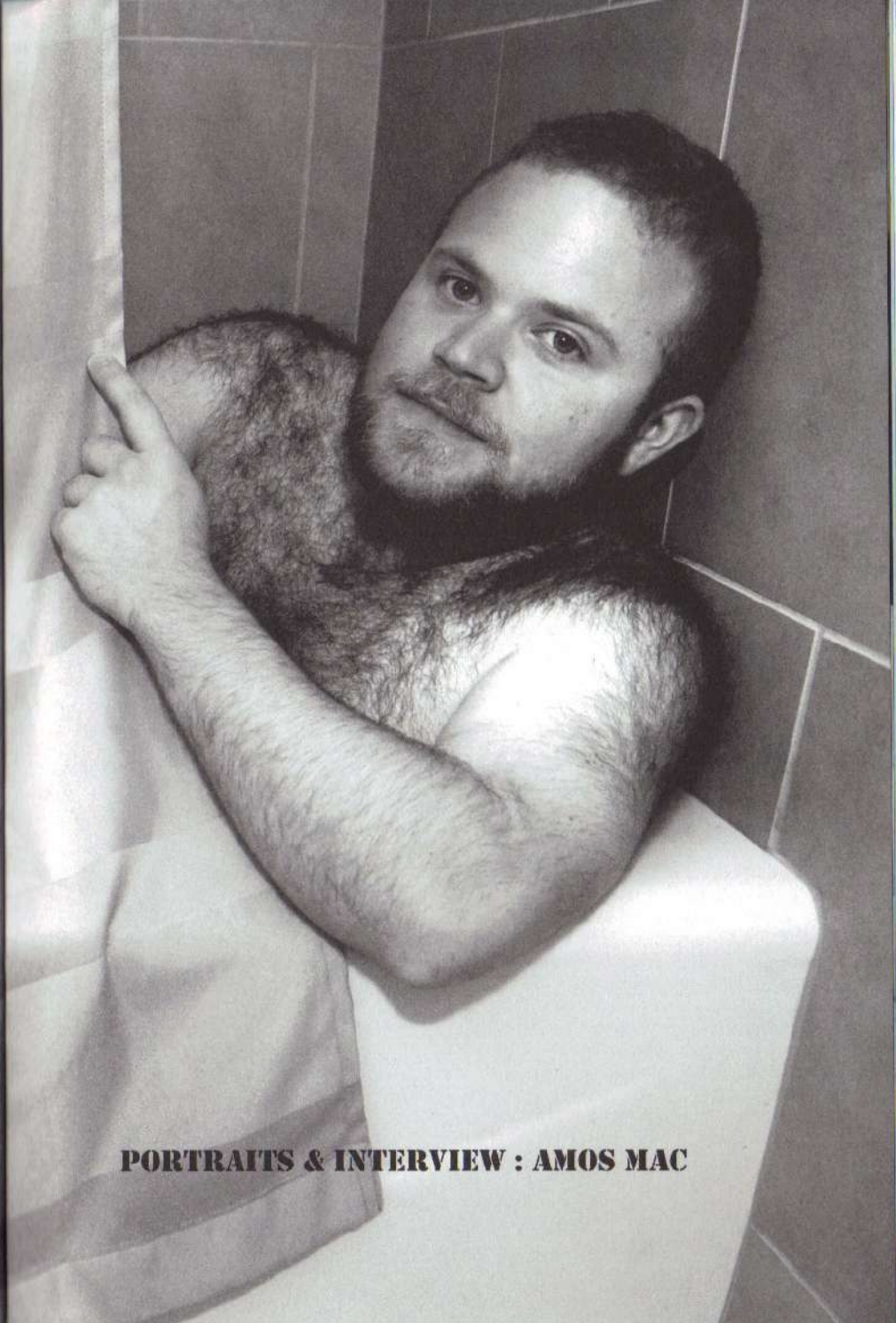
I met this Canadian Bear when he was on a family vacation in San Francisco. He invited me over to his nice clean hotel room while his parents were out sight-seeing and we took advantage of the fluffy pillows and had an impromptu pillow fight. After our aggression was released, we settled down and he told me all about “Beef Balls,” back rooms and his magical body hair.

Amos : How is it being a gay man of trans experience in Toronto?

Ayden : It's getting easier. I think this is an exciting time to be a gay trans man... it feels a bit like being on the cutting edge, but without being the only one or being totally misunderstood. More and more guys who I encounter have at least heard of trans men, even if only through Buck Angel and Thomas Beattie— then of course I have to explain that I don't necessarily want them to fuck my “pussy” and definitely don't want to have babies. I feel really indebted to those guys though, and to those less famous who have taken up space in the world (particularly other transitioned gay men) and made my life possible and intelligible to others. If I had to sum up what it's like, I'd say that I get laid enough but that it would be nice to be able to have completely random anonymous sex without having to talk and explain so much first.

Are you part of a specific community in Toronto?

Toronto has a really large and vibrant trans community, which I'm involved in professionally. On a personal note, I'm part of a few overlapping communities of gay and queer men (trans and non-trans) and Bears- but those who share my values, interests, and politics, not just because we all look the same or whatever. I do wish that I had more of a community of gay transitioned men. I can count all of the guys I know who only date men on one hand. Not that it's a pissing contest about who's gayer or whatever; it would just be nice to have more people around me who are in the same boat. Most of the trans guys I know tend to also date women or only date other trans men, because that's their preference or because of the challenges involved in dating non-trans gay men. I totally get that, but am sometimes left feeling like I don't have many role models or comrades. But I love my adventures with “gold star” gays, and feel like through taking risks and being involved in the broader gay men's community I am working to create the community I want, where trans men can claim our place as gay men without our trans histories being a big deal. It's a slow process though, and I know that my ability to feel so optimistic is because I am fairly accepted and desired as a gay man because I “pass” completely and fit into a particular white gay artsy bear aesthetic.



PORTRAITS & INTERVIEW : AMOS MAC



What's a "gold star" gay?

"Gold star" gays are guys who have never slept with women (or trans men, usually) before, so have never dealt with our, um, plumbing. They're my favorite because it's so much fun to watch them start all nervous and end up loving it and wanting more.

What do you like to do with your spare time?

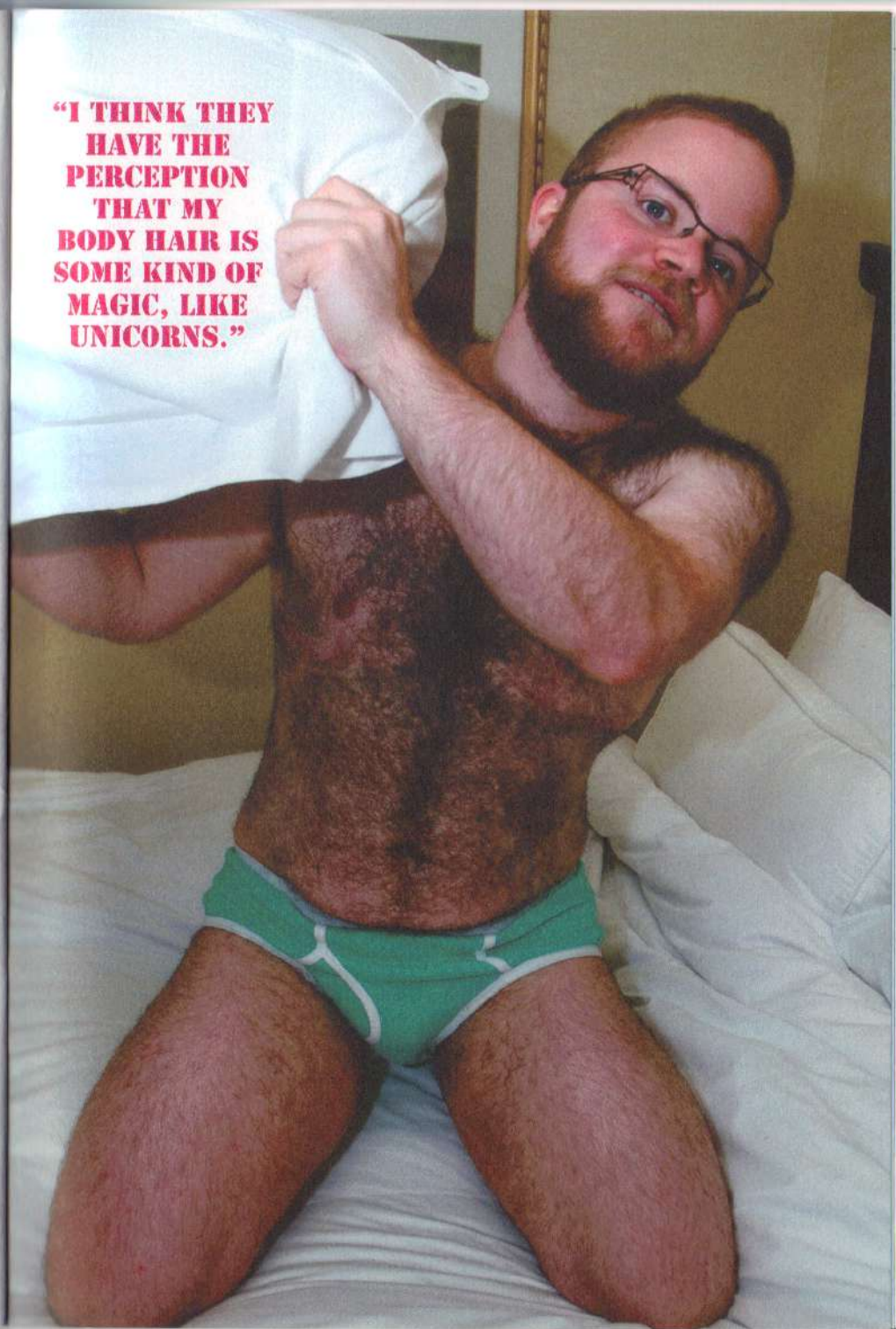
Spare time? Heh. I'm in school full time, I work part-time in a shelter and supportive housing program, do freelance sexual health work, and am co-chair of the board for a provincial queer youth organization. But when I find spare time, I love dancing all night to house and techno, reading non-fiction, learning about theoretical physics, and having Project Runway and Top Model viewing parties. I'm also a huge foodie, and love reading about, thinking about, learning about, preparing, and eating pretty much anything but apricots.

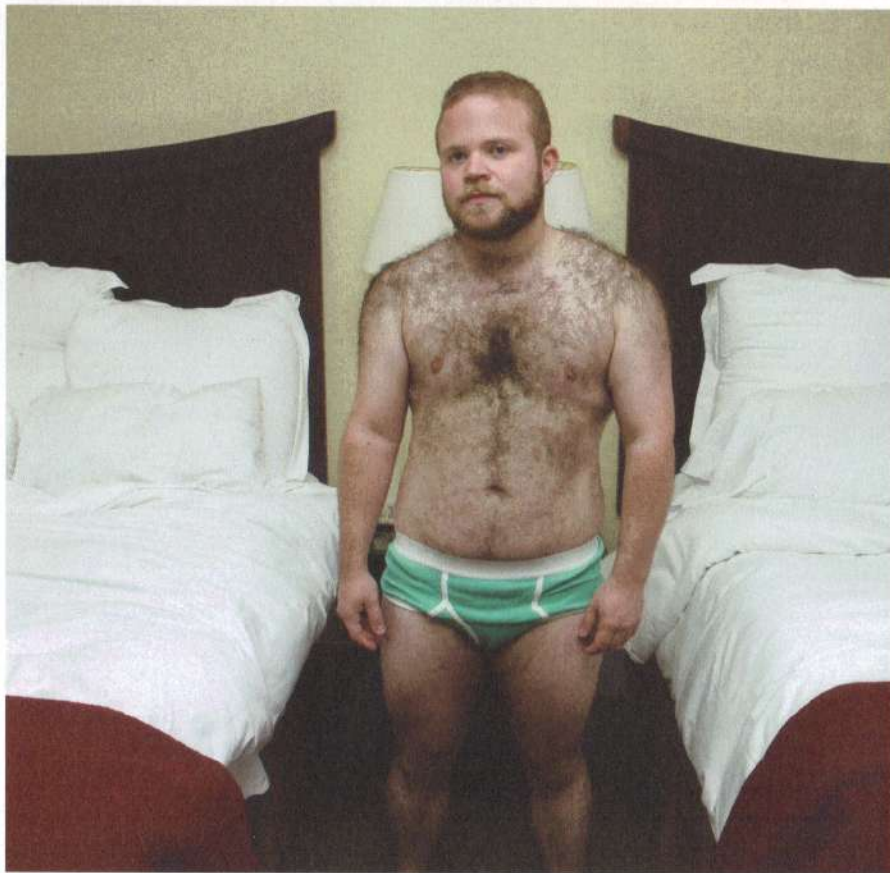
What on earth is so wrong with apricots?

Haha. Apricots are absolutely inedible. They taste like rotten cardboard and have the texture of baked shoe.

Please talk to me about Beef Balls! Not the food...

A Beef Ball is a few hundred hairy, big, half-naked guys in denim and leather getting all sweaty and dancing and sucking cock in the backroom. It's totally fun, if you don't think about it too hard. It's the kind of thing I would never have gone to until recently, it's definitely an intense place to be as a trans man. But I had a great time at the last one. I've been experimenting with back rooms and how to feel comfortable getting it on in them, especially in terms of actually getting off myself and not just giving head (not that there's anything wrong with that). My strategies worked quite well.





Care to share any of your back room strategies for those of us looking for tips?

I've come to the conclusion that I don't want to have anonymous sex where I can't disclose, because I deserve to cum also, you know? I love cocksucking just as much as the next faggot, but I'm greedy and want more than that. So I'm much more into finding guys who are okay with the trans thing (which I used to do in other social contexts but have begun to do with strangers on dance floors or at bars) and then go somewhere dark and talk with them. Then the fun part is trying not to give the whole back room a big tranny surprise (although that is something I want to try someday). So it's a lot of getting head through my fly. I want to find a guy who pretends to gag just right.

What kind of relationship do you have with your body hair?

I love it. I was pretty overwhelmed when it first started sprouting and just didn't seem to stop. But it's such a part of me now. It keeps me warm during the cold Canadian winters. Unfortunately, it also keeps me warm during the hot, humid summers.

Does anyone in your family have the amount of hair you have?

My father is fairly hairy, so I expected it somewhat. But my mother's side is hairless, so I thought it could go either way. Now I'm much hairier than my father.

You told me during our photo shoot that you create an invisible line between your chest hair, neck and beard! When did you start doing that?

I may have been kind of exaggerating about the line. I think that I naturally have a slight division between the end of my beard / neck hair and the beginning of my chest hair. But when I moved from chinstrap to full beard about three years ago, I quickly realized that if I didn't shave a good part of my neck, I'd look like a gorilla.

Any interesting stories about your hairy body relating to the Bear community? Comments others have made regarding your hair?

My hairy body is a very frequent topic of conversation amongst pretty much everybody. I've had hairdressers ask me if I'm interested in getting my back waxed (NO) and potential tricks ask if they can cover me in Nair or shave me (NO). I've also had many non-trans men with no or little body hair ask me how I got so hairy, how they can get hairier, or if taking testosterone will help them grow some. I think they have the perception that my body hair is some kind of magic, like unicorns. They're very disappointed when I say that the answer is "genes and testosterone levels within the normal male range." Bears tend to ask fewer stupid questions about my hair, but do frequently express surprise that a trans guy can be so hairy. Well, I suppose they often express surprise at how hairy I am even when they don't know what's in my pants. Overall, the hair gets me lots of positive attention from Bears, for sure. My chest and back get rubbed up by lots of dirty old men (my favorite kind).

Do you have any manscaping practices?

I do very little manscaping (well, from the waist up. I do believe in taking care of business before taking care of business, if you know what I mean). But I do take care of my body hair by washing it with shampoo and conditioner on occasion.

What kind of shampoo? Or are you the kind of guy who just takes whatever product from his roommate that he may find in the bathroom?

I'm not that picky about my head hair, I tend to use Head and Shoulders. For my body hair I use something more moisturizing, or finish with fancy organic mint conditioner stuff. My roommate and I can't use the same products because we have very different hair types. Wow, that answer just got exponentially more homosexual.