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TUESDAY OCTOBER 11, 2011

LOCAL - LIFESTYLE - SPORTS

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With 'Transfigurations', photographer Jana Marcus helps us see something that might otherwise be ignored, or worse yet, misunderstood.

BOOK SIGNING

'Transfigurations' illuminates transgender community

Photographer Jana Marcus honored as Community Activist of the Year

By TOVIN LAPAN

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SANTA CRUZ — In the foreword to photographer Jana Marcus' book of portraits of transgender people, "Transfigurations," Bay Area activist for gay, lesbian, bisexual and gender-variant people Jamison Green discusses the struggles the

transgender community faces in coming to terms with their feelings toward their own gender and sexuality, and the pains the rest of the population goes through to both label and understand them.

"The fact remains: we are here," Green wrote. "And we are learning about ourselves and talking to each other more than ever before. Historically, we have

been isolated and frightened, but with modern media and communication capabilities, we have increasingly found support and information from those who have gone before us, and from those who are our contemporaries."

Marcus' book, which she will discuss

SEE MARCUS ON B3

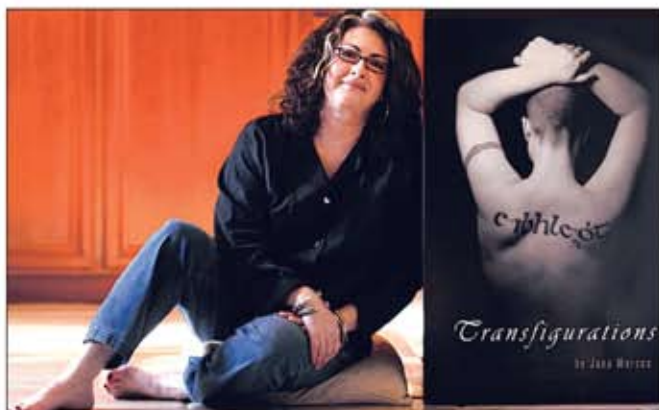
MARCUS

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along with Green at Bookshop Santa Cruz on Thursday, and the exhibit that led to it, offers that support by showing transgendered men and women of every age, income-level, race and ethnicity.

The project started in 2003 when Marcus was searching for a thesis topic for her studies at San Jose State. A student at UC Santa Cruz who was renting a room in her house revealed to her that he was a transgendered man. At first she had a hard time finding subjects. She would hand out her card at support-group meetings for transgendered individuals and only receive blank stares in return. Once she convinced a few subjects to pose for portraits, however, the word spread and people started contacting her to be included in the project.

"Lyle, one of the people in the book, told me he wasn't seeing transgender African-Americans in the media," she



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After showing her 'Transfigurations' photographs in galleries around the county, Jana Marcus hopes to bring her work to a larger audience with the publication of her book.

said. "And that was one of the reasons he wanted to participate."

The 58-piece exhibit toured the country from 2004 to 2010 and won numerous awards. Still, when Marcus decided it was time to turn the project into a book, her agent said he would not take it to publishers because of the subject matter.

Marcus turned to kickstarter.com, a website that matches people with a creative idea with others who might want

to offer funding. In 10 days, she raised the \$20,000 necessary to produce 2,000 copies of the book.

"The whole thing is miraculous," she said. "The best thing about it was that I didn't even know 90 percent of the people who donated."

In September, Marcus was chosen for the Community Activist of the Year award by the Bay Area Municipal Elections Committee, a political action committee for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgen-

der issues.

"I was very flattered, and very humbled by the award," she said. "I don't necessarily see myself as an activist, but they say documentary photography is social change in action."

All the portraits are done in black and white in a studio, with nothing in the way of props or background that distracts the viewer from the subject. In some cases Marcus shows several portraits of a single person to show how surgeries and hormones have transformed them. Each portrait is accompanied by words from the subject discussing how they see their gender and sexual identities.

After the company that makes the film she was using went out of business, she stocked up and squirreled away about 400 rolls. The project, that has now spanned seven years, may need an update in a few more years with fresh photos of the same subjects.

"I think the transgender movement is the next civil rights movement," Marcus said.

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RDP's
Andy is experienced in the tax preparation of community property splitting that conforms with IRS Publication 555 (revised December 2010). This also applies to filing amended returns for tax years that are still to come!