

## **Bodies and Souls**

The Century Project

2006 by Frank Cordelle

Heureka Productions, 224 Pages, SC, ISBN 0-9730270-3-7

Make no mistake—*Bodies and Souls* is an immensely powerful book of photographs. Why is it immensely powerful? Because it contains photographs of women—nude women—literally from birth to old age. From the first plate of a head crowning in the birth canal, our entrance to this world, to the wizened face of a smiling ninety-four-year-old, we see this power displayed in naked honesty.

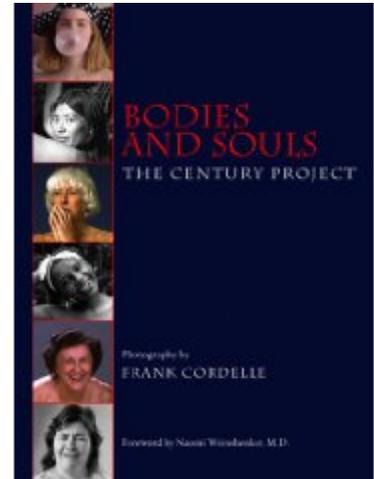
Women are powerful in their own right, not necessarily because they can break down walls and bend steel in their bare hands—that’s a male definition of power—but because women are capable of the most amazing things. They can come through the most horrendous of life experiences and still find life worth living (See Desiree, pg. 52 & Calista, pg. 94), or accomplish things that would humble most men (See Gertie, pg. 188). This is the ultimate power of a woman—a power akin to that of a plant, struggling to break through hard ground, or the subtle power of water, making the ruggedness of a rock smooth over time—immense power made all the more awe-inspiring through its subtlety.

All photographers, when approaching their work, seek to create a vision that is uniquely theirs. Frank Cordelle is no exception. Since beginning the Century Project, he has done what some would call the impossible—he’s broken new ground. To my way of thinking, this is THE most significant book of nude photography of women ever done—bar none. I congratulate Heureka Productions for publishing *Bodies and Souls* when so many other publishing houses had turned it down. Their loss. I’m sure Heureka’s founder, Paul Rapoport, considers himself privileged that Frank gave him the opportunity. I know I would in his place.

*Bodies and Souls* is not a book to you thumb through. A friend of mine did that and I wanted to stop his hand and shout, “Slow down!” He was missing *so much*. You need to sit and look at each photograph separately, and read the accompanying description, most written by the women themselves, to get the full impact. It is then that you realize you’re not simply viewing a photograph of a nude woman—you’re seeing a person, a *life*. Many of the women tell of how they wanted to pose for Frank when they saw how powerful his photographs were. What’s contained within this book’s covers changed lives—even saved some of them.

There are gaps in the ages. Reading the title, one would naturally assume Frank included every age from birth to one hundred but, even after twenty-five years, Frank couldn’t manage that. A few of the photographs are of the same model twice, at different ages. Even so, there is a good span of ages in *Bodies and Souls*. Frank, in the section “Behind the Century Project,” admits that he intends to do a second book, indicating that this project is still a work-in-progress.

Even though it’s a soft-cover book, Heureka has presented *Bodies and Souls* well. The cover has a rich finish, and has the European-style cover flaps, which protect the corners from fraying, as do cut edges. As far as I’m concerned, publishers should do ALL soft-cover books in this manner—at least those worthy of enshrining in one’s library. The interior pages are semi-glossy and on archival paper stock. It should hold up well through repeated thumbings.



Take the time to absorb what's inside *Bodies and Souls*. Allow its message to sink in. Look at the women who so bravely bared all, for a myriad of reasons, so we could *really* see who they are. Allow yourself to smile, to laugh, to feel anger, to cry. Allow its power to touch your soul. Then...rejoice...rejoice over the fact that Frank Cordelle thought up The Century Project in the first place, then was able to find the women he needed to make it happen. DO NOT fail to get this book. It will be the best money you ever spent.