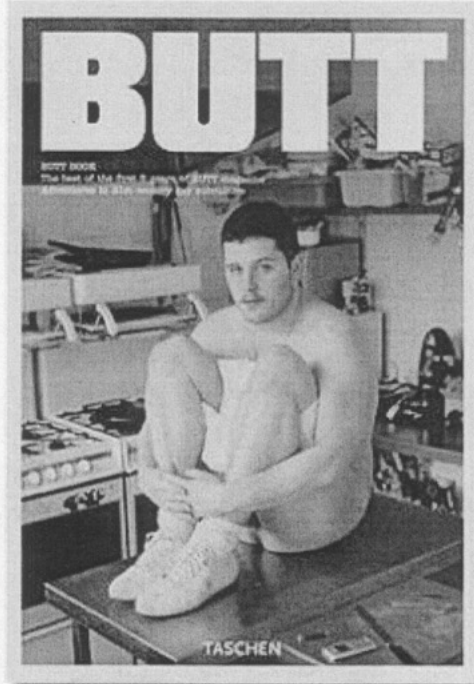


## Are you a BUTT man?



BUTT BOOK - cover. Julian Ganio photographed by Wolfgang Tillmans

*by Mark James*

OK, how many of you guys cruising Gay.com right now would be happy to hook up with a tight, sexy and undeniably pink package of pleasure?

Wait -- did I mention that though it might be a little package, it packs quite a punch? Within its smallish, unassuming marshmallow exterior lie unimaginable pleasures. Sounds like an exaggeration, I know, but we are talking about BUTT here -- BUTT magazine that is, which bills itself as a "Fantastic Magazine for Homosexuals."

Founded by Dutch boys Jop Van Bennekom and Gert Jonkers, the publication strives to make being gay subversive and fun again by featuring a diverse collective of characters -- from twink porno stars to the 66-year-old queer author Edmund White, to a gay trash collector. Both the famous and the ordinary have casual conversations and share their photos within BUTT's amazing pages.

In case you're not already completely intrigued, Taschen, a German publisher of coffee table art books, has compiled a collection of BUTT's images and articles from the magazine's first five years. Its title? "BUTT Book: The Best of BUTT Magazine."

Jop and Gert, the publication's staff of two, sat down with Gay.com in their spacious but spare Amsterdam studio to talk about the "hole" BUTT magazine fills, the photos even they wouldn't publish, and more.

**In the introduction to "BUTT Book," Bruce LaBruce says that your magazine "fills a hole."**

Jop: I think there was the need for something a little more spontaneous in gay media -- something a bit more honest, a bit more diverse. That's the hole. We felt the need for gay media that would represent us. The magazine is simple. It's about people we would like to meet and people we would like to interview. We love the idea of Bruce LaBruce interviewing Gus Van Sant, because no other magazine is doing that. We very much follow our own interests.

**You have an amazing group of people who have conducted interviews or have been the subject of interviews. Noted photographers have also shot for you. How have you sparked so much interest?**

Gert: Most of the people we have met we met through BUTT. It's been an amazing door opener. The magazine is always a bit under the radar, but so many people who read it would not mind being interviewed for it.

Somehow the magazine invites people to participate. We get lots of submissions from our readers. We get lots of stuff that is extremely useless. We might think, "Oh, we would never publish that, but I find it charming and fascinating in a way that people see themselves in the magazine, that it touches them.

**I think the magazine is inviting because you don't have to be famous to appear in BUTT.**

Jop: Yes, it has created its own audience -- a network of contributors. The interviewers are sometimes models, the models are sometimes photographers. In the context of BUTT, a shitty photograph can look great, and a casual conversation can make a great interview.

**BUTT has a very open submission policy. Have you had any standouts that ultimately you decided not to use?**

Jop: So many pictures of naked guys with perfect bodies, or Spanish drag queens or a series of glory holes!

Gert: And everyone takes their camera into the shower these days.

Jop: Yes, we see so many of the same pictures. Everybody has a digital camera or a camera on his mobile phone, so everyone is capable of taking photos, and they really send them to us. So about two years ago, we started a readers' section in the back of the ma**Why did you decide to put the book together?**

Gert: The party side of me said, "Well it's been five years," and the practical side said we get so many requests for our early issues, but we have sold all of the early issues. We've featured so many great interviews: Michael Stipe, Casey Spooner, Marc Jacobs and so on.

**So you guys have added a connection portion to your Web site called "BUTT HEADS." Has any romance ever come of it?**

Gert: Absolutely!

Jop: Not for us; we never have sex.

Gert: But it's not really a hookup site. It does not mention many details -- just your name, location and e-mail.

You have the choice of posting a photo of your butt or your head. To set an example -- so we did not only get head shots -- I posted my butt. Two or three times, I've gotten an e-mail that says "Nice ass." At first I think its spam or something, and then I remember.

**Nice BUTT, indeed. "BUTT Book" hits stores this December, and you can find BUTT magazine at your local independent bookstore and at all American Apparel stores.**