



America Swings By Naomi Harris

Taschen, 256 pages, \$500
(autographed limited edition)

In his famed dissent in a 1964 ruling on obscenity, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart said of pornography: "I know it when I see it." It's not clear what Stewart would make of Naomi Harris's new photo book about the secret lives of American swingers. Harris considers it reportage. "I knew I had to start photographing this," she says in the book, "because no one would believe me when I told stories of what I'd seen."

A Toronto native who studied at the International Center of Photography, Harris first encountered—and joined—the nudist community at beaches in south Florida. "They were there for the love of being nude and not for anything sexual," she recalls. Later she discovered that "a good proportion of these nudists were also swingers" and began photographing them at parties nationwide, earning trust by always getting permission and keeping her distance from the action, yet wearing nothing but sneakers and a tool belt to hold her photo gear.

Harris's book is not about the world of commercial sex; these people would not be hired for their looks. "The media may not consider them sexy," she says, "but they consider themselves sexy, and because of that confidence they're having better sex than the rest of us." Many of Harris's subjects reside in those small towns that have been described by some political candidates as the "real America." That only adds to the significance of her undertaking.

—JACK CRAGER

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

