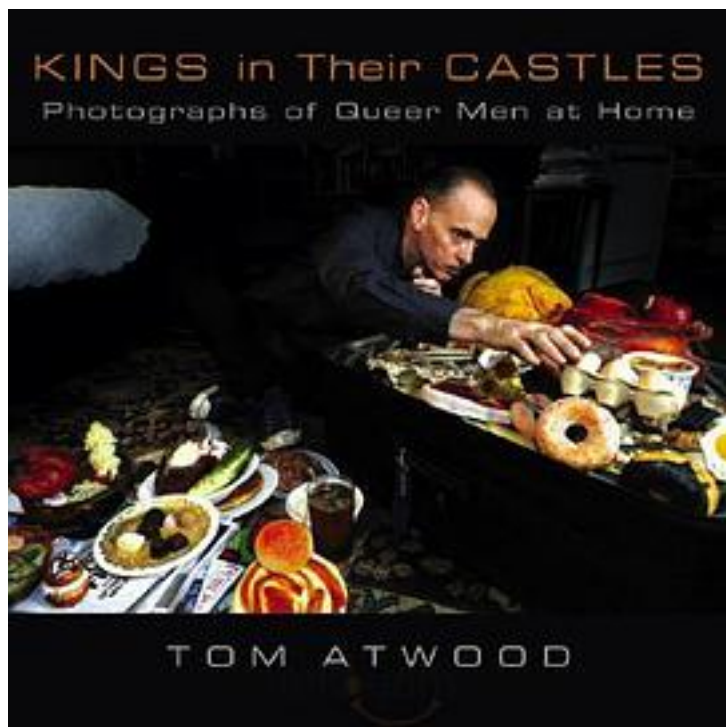


Kings in Their Castles



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From Publishers Weekly

This collective portrait of gay urban artists, writers, musicians and designers suggests "gay men are actually more interesting with their clothes on"-an invigorating perspective, especially considering that bookstore shelves are practically buckling under the weight of gay-themed photo collections that focus on the sculpted, semi-nude male form. Atwood's photographs are portals into the everyday existence of gay men within "their own carefully constructed spaces" (read: their homes); whether it's writer Michael Cunningham biting his nail, deep in conversational thought, artist

Ross Bleckner yawning in his studio or DJ Junior Vasquez contemplating garbage on his rooftop, Atwood documents the rare, capricious moments that transform his famous subjects into the familiar and the accessible. In the foreword, author Charles Keiser (Gay Metropolis) acknowledges that Atwood, at times, "arranges" his subjects, as with the photo of filmmaker John Waters packing fake food in a suitcase, but the point of his work is not to "imitate life, but to clarify it, by making it more vivid." Shot primarily on 35 mm with minimal cropping, the 71 portraits included here often include both floor and ceiling to give the viewer as much of the subject's environment as possible. The technique challenges the eye without sacrificing balance, particularly in the shot of drag queen Hedda Lettuce-backed by her wall of wigs- fending off her dog as she is about to leave for a performance. Atwood's subjects rarely look at the camera, and yet even the portraits of lesser known performers and artists shimmer with emotion and intimacy.

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