

Henning von Berg and the Alpha Males

What do we mean by Alpha males? The origin of the expression was to indicate the male leader of a group, be it a pride of lions, a pack of dogs, or a tribe of humans. The alpha male was the leader of the pack, in our time to be boiled down to describe personalities like Frank Sinatra, President Kennedy, Sylvester Stallone and more contemporarily, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, soccer player David Beckham, tennis star Roger Federer and others who are handsome and strong and leaders of men.

In the gay world it has the added connotation of having a large penis. So the symbol has become simplified. One might say almost into a cartoon. Does Alpha male then only mean a man with large muscles and an equally large endowment? Henning von Berg doesn't think so. In this fascinating and beautifully photographed book there is an exploration all over the world for what Alpha male might mean. And not only for physical types, but in greater depth into personality, vulnerability, and humanity.

Here, Henning von Berg has discovered for us that men should not be locked into over-simplified ideas about how they should look, how they should behave, and how they should present themselves for the world to see. A giant bodybuilder can contrast his ebony skin with a fragile ballet tutu. Groups of men can just take it all off and appear in public naked; to break the barriers between what is all right to do and what is not all right to do. Heroic poses tell us that there is more to a man and more to life than a pose.

The models of Henning von Berg show us that being an Alpha male doesn't mean just looking strong but also being strong in our rapidly changing world. This is a new grown-up way of thinking about leadership. It is not just how you look. It is also who you are. As we enter a new century, we have to thank Henning von Berg for helping to show us the way.

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A leading expert in male nude photography, David Leddick (* 1934) is the author of several award-winning anthologies on the subject. He also has written 5 novels, a biographical study of George Platt Lynes, Paul Caddmus, and Lincoln Kistein. Leddick lives in Paris and Miami Beach.