



Quaintance

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Physique painter as Renaissance man: The flamboyant life and forbidden art of George Quaintance

George Quaintance was an artist ahead of his time, a man who forged several successful careers, yet never enjoyed mainstream fame. Had he been born a few decades later, we might know him today as a multi-tasking celebrity stylist, as a coach on *Dancing with the Stars*, or perhaps as the fine artist he aspired to be.

But Quaintance, who died in 1957, lived and worked during an era when homosexuality was repressed, when his joyful paintings and physique photos could not depict a penis. In an era before Stonewall, the sexual revolution, gay rights and the AIDS crisis, Quaintance and his high-camp erotic art existed in a demi-monde of borderline legality.

Half a century on, the masculine fantasy world created by Quaintance, populated by Latin lovers, lusty cowboys and chiseled ranch hands, retains its seductive allure. His highly prized paintings—numbering just 55—rarely come to auction, instead selling privately for undisclosed sums. As the preeminent 'male physique' artist of the 1940s and early '50s, his work for *Physique Pictorial*, *Demi-Gods* and *Body Beautiful* inspired a generation of artists like **Tom of Finland**, **Harry Bush**, **Etienne**, and other, lesser stars in their constellation.

Raised on a farm in rural Virginia, Quaintance traveled a fascinating path of reinvention: at various points in his life he was a Vaudeville dancer, the favored portraitist of Washington's smart set, and a celebrity hair designer—though he never actually touched hair.

TASCHEN's *Quaintance* traces his remarkable life story and reintroduces his colorful, kitschy and culturally resonant paintings—works that made George Quaintance the most popular and successful physique artist of his time, and one of its most intriguing figures.

Text in English, French, and German

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