

# We Are...

## Portrait of a Community

by Morrie Camhi

Among those things I don't know is the answer to a pertinent question.

Why are humanist photographers consistently given less attention by galleries, museums, collectors and publishers?

It seems inconsistent with our own definition "as humans" for this to be so. No fundamental concern for our species will be forthcoming if we do not provide it for ourselves. After a lifetime of philosophic inquiry and construction, Jean Paul Sartre announced his deathbed discovery: *the meaning of life is our experience of each other.*

Humanism is certainly centered on human nature and activity. But there is a small undercurrent of additional meaning that filters into the word. It is the implication that one of the important things we do, as humans, is to architect *ideals.*

There have been waves of pessimism in the photography of people. The photographer's preoccupation has centered on the unfortunate, the impoverished, the unscrupulous, the brutal, the ugly or the bizarre. Even those photographers concerned with social commentary often reduce their subjects to the cliché of the pathetic.

A small minority of positivism has persisted. These are photographers who would "rather light a candle than curse the darkness." There is the impish hedonism of Lartigue, the understated embrace of Alinder's America, the poetic shadow-people of De Carava or the partisan handshake of Dotter.

There are too few others.

Now, added to this small group, is Lisa Kanemoto's heartfelt, totally open and accepting look at the homosexual community.

Her subjects apparently trust her presence. They respond to her camera with naturalness.

For a subject so often treated sensationally, with exploitation, with preordained scenarios of myth or forbidden fantasy — Kanemoto's approach is refreshing.

The photographs are neither pretentious or erudite.

We meet these people as Lisa Kanemoto does, in the common manner of day-to-day life. They share themselves *twice*: once through the observations of Kanemoto's camera and again when they write for us on the facing page.

For those who have already been determined to know this important, dynamic section of our society, there are probably no new discoveries or insights in the Kanemoto essay.

*This does not diminish its importance.* Anyone who has purchased a case of wine has voted for the value of repeated savorings. Is the second bottle diminished merely because it wasn't the first?

Today, more than ever, warm embraces need repeating.

— Morrie Camhi



"And together we re-create each other." (*Kaddish Symphony*. From Kabbalistic literature)

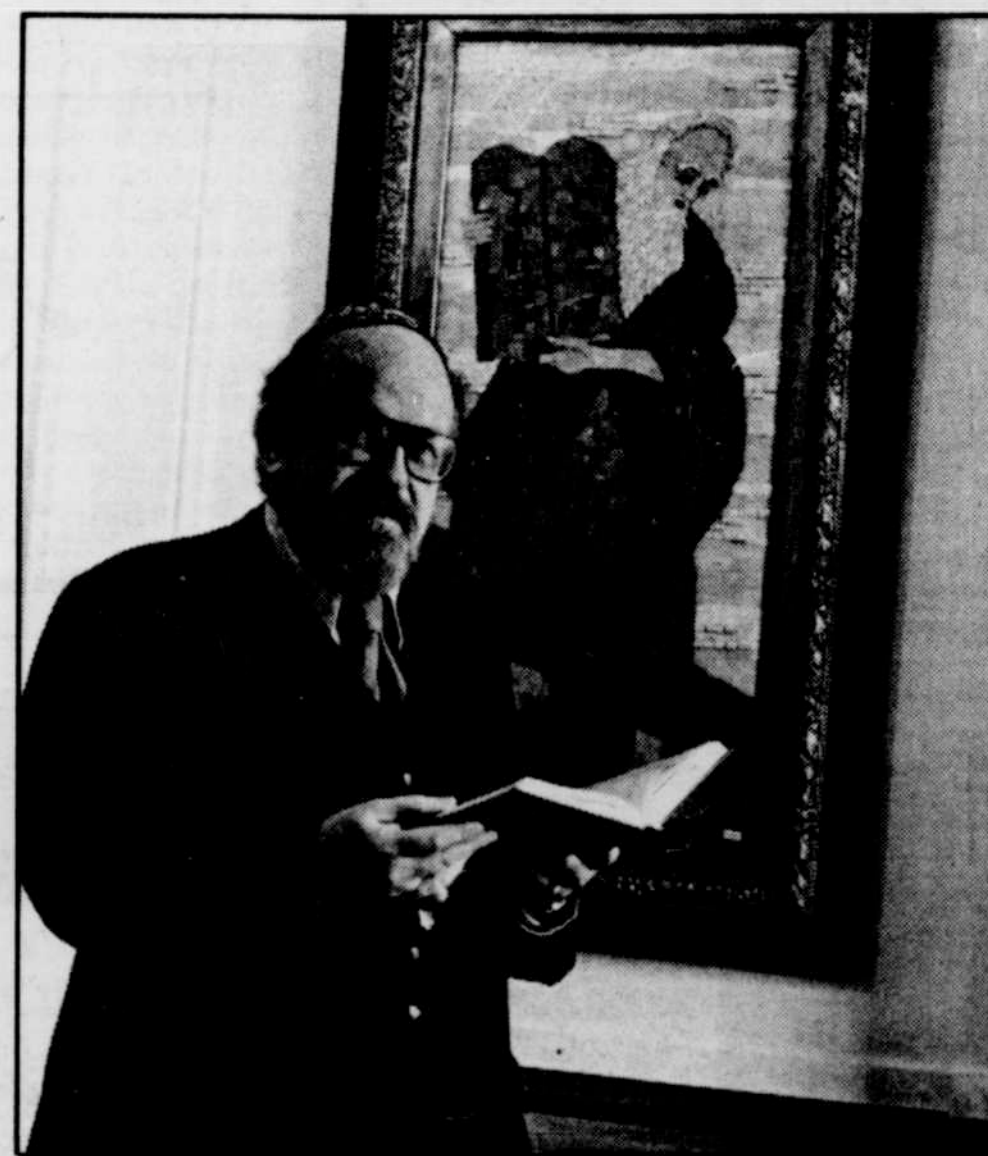
Copyright Lisa Kanemoto. Used by permission.

Introduction to We Are by Morrie Camhi.



Those who are full of resentment have a harder adjustment to make.

- Genie M. McAfee, Telephone Craft Person; and son Ken



I take my calling as a rabbi, psychologist and pastoral counselor with great seriousness. It was necessary for me to undergo treatment and full psychoanalysis to adjust to marriage and children. The psychoanalytic process continued to enable me to adjust to what was my lifestyle. My belief in a creator gave me my key: for as his creation, my desires and needs could be perceived and are natural. Thus I can live honestly as a gay person.

- Dr. Benjamin Marcus, Rabbi