# Lost Worlds

Two gorgeous art books revisit a pre-AIDS Fire Island.

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Throughout the 1960s and ’70s—and arguably even today—two beach communities on a sliver of land called Fire Island, New York, offered a refuge from a world hostile to gays and lesbians. As such, the Pines and Cherry Grove became a Shangri-la on the sand, offering community, friendships, culture and sex. Fire Island Modernist: Horace Gifford and the Architecture of Seduction, with text by Christopher Bascom Rawlins, captures many of the 78 modernist homes—mostly cedar-and-glass beach houses—Gifford designed before 1981. (Openly gay, Gifford died of AIDS complications in 1992, at age 59.) As Rawlins explains: “His exuberant post-Stonewall, pre-AIDS masterpieces orchestrated bacchanals of liberation.”

To catch an intimate glimpse of some of the people who inhabited these spaces, check out Tom Bianchi: Fire Island Pines, a collection of the photographer’s Polaroids from 1975 to 1983. “I could not have imagined then that my Polaroids would so suddenly become a record of a lost world—my box of pictures a mausoleum, too painful to visit,” Bianchi writes. “When I reopened the box decades later, I found friends and lovers playing and smiling. Alive again.”

The Pines revival continued this summer, when filming began on HBO’s movie of Larry Kramer’s AIDS play The Normal Heart. One scene, shot on location, re-created a White Party circa 1981 on Fire Island.

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