

Trappings: Stories of women, power, and clothing by Sparta woman

SPARTA - Former Sparta resident Tiffany Ludwig cooperating with partner Renee Piechocki traveled the country conducting interviews for a sociological study that turned into a book: *Trappings: Stories of Women, Power, and Clothing*,

Ludwig and Piechocki, with the professional name "Two Girls Working," spent six years interviewing more than 500 women and girls, ages 4 through 92. They met a diverse group: office workers to drag-kings, stay-at-home moms to attorneys, fashion industry executives to elected officials, students to cowgirls. The book comes out this month from Rutgers University Press.

The project *Trappings* starts with interview sessions where women are asked to respond to the question: what do you wear that makes you feel powerful? *Two Girls Working* have produced more than 70 interview sessions, in 15 states. Sessions in Andover and Newton were held in churches, in women's living rooms, at artist studios, and businesses. During the interview sessions, the artists gathered groups of women together to respond to their single question. *Two Girls Working* selected the women featured in the book from the group of 500 women they have interviewed.

The book features portraits and interview texts by 61 women who have participated in *Trappings* interview sessions, including six from New Jersey: Anne Barry, Sheelagh Cabalda, Debra Carrion, France Garrido, Anna Marie

Ludwig, and Uruj Sheikh.

"The power is definitely all in me and coming from there. I still have the same power, and even if I'm wearing rags I can still call up the power and be who I need to be when I need to be it...I feel, you know, like I've come a long way, baby." - Anna Marie Ludwig, *Andover, 2006*

"I like to help people. If you're cold and I have a jacket, I'll give it to you, 'cause that's the way I am, you know? I'm trying to teach my kids how to be that, and thank God they are." - Debra Carrion, *Jersey City, 2004*

"I have to say frankly, when I first heard about your project, it totally turned me off because clothes mean nothing to me. And power, I don't think of feeling powerful. Power is an aftereffect of doing." - Anne Barry, *Jersey City, 2004*

Trappings is a book that began with a question about clothing and instead sparked a dialogue about a diverse range of issues women face related to power and identity, including what expectations and limitations are placed upon them by their affiliation with a specific gender, culture, race, class, or profession.

Complimented by 148 color and black-and-white photographs, the visual and written portraits in this book reveal much more than the contents of women's closets. Through the lens of clothing, Ludwig and Piechocki expose the very personal ways that power is sought, experienced, and projected by

women.

Tiffany Ludwig is an artist and media consultant. She received her BFA from Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University and currently lives in Glen Ridge. Renee Piechocki is an artist and public art consultant.

She received her BA from Hunter College of the City University of New York and currently lives in Pittsburgh, Pa. Together, they are known as the artist group *Two Girls Working*: Tiffany Ludwig and Renee Piechocki. They began collaborating in 2001.