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Talking About Porn With the People Who Make It

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"If you're not paying for porn, you're going to get what you're not paying for." So said [Madison Young](#), kinky feminist porn performer, director, and producer, at a panel discussion last night at Apexart gallery as part of their exhibition [Consent](#). Curated by [Lynsey G.](#), the exhibit is primarily a video installation that explores the personal relationships porn actors, producers, and consumers have with porn. It's up till May 12! Go see it!



The question put to the panel—which was comprised of director/performer [Sinnamon Love](#), performer [Tina Horn](#), ex-producer [Dan Reilly](#), Museum of Sex curator [Sarah Forbes](#), creator of [Make Love Not Porn Cindy Gallop](#), the aforementioned Madison Young and moderated by [Lynsey G.](#)—was whether porn's job was to entertain or educate, or neither or both. The panel fairly unanimously agreed that though most porn is not created with the intent to be an educational tool, it often served that purpose.

Cindy Gallop cited a study done by an ISP that the average kid these days sees their first pornographic images at age 8, but often receive no context for what they're seeing. Makers of porn can not be expected to make what is meant to be a consumer product for adults also be a way of teaching young people how to have great sex, yet porn sex is often the only instructive sex they see. The issues at hand were ones that seem to shape our national problems with sex and sexuality: a lack of comprehensive sex ed, the unwillingness of most parents to have the kinds of conversations about sex that would be truly instructive for kids, a cultural unwillingness to talk about sex and porn openly. But what struck me as the most interesting part of the discussion was the money stuff.

Porn producers are having trouble making money these days. "That's why I got out of the business, I couldn't make money any more," said Dan Reilly. Between piracy and the free tube sites, spending \$20,000 on a production just wasn't financially feasible.

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Sinamon Love explained that piracy was such a problem that clips she would upload to her site would be grabbed and put on a tube site even before they went live. That, she explained, was why porn was moving in the direction of live-streaming. Of course it's possible to grab the feed and make it available later but, as she said, "you can't steal live."

Piracy is a problem not just because it undercuts the performers and producers, but also, she contended, in terms of what kind of porn people are exposed to. Porn, like any form of expression, is not a monolith. Madison Young described porn as a medium, like photography or painting—some is good, some is bad, some is art, some is high quality, some is low quality, some is disgusting, some is educational, some is entertaining. There is lots of amazing, feminist, kinky, exciting, authentic porn being made. But, Sinamon Love said, if you have a generation of kids who think porn is free, should be free, if they're raised on what you can get for free by googling, you have a group of people who think porn is only the crappy pirated clips people put on free sites. They don't realize what is out there, and they also don't respect performers, don't see them as real people and don't think they deserve to be well paid for their work. Madison Young, again, "If you're not paying for porn, you're going to get what you're not paying for."

The most easily googlable porn isn't the porn that is made with care. When asked to define feminist porn, Madison Young said it was porn particularly centered on the desires and pleasure of the performer, where it is clear the performer is choosing to do what they're doing. "Don't do a foot fetish film if you don't have a foot fetish," she said. "There's a huge difference between filming two people having sex and two people performing sex, and the audience can really tell," said Dan Reilly.

The issue, then, was how you connect a group of people who habitually consume the free, mainstream, "performing sex" porn with the good stuff? How do you even make people aware of the fact that there is more out there than the rote blowjob/penetration/anal/come shot films, when discussion of enjoying porn is still taboo, despite the fact that we all watch it? How do we convince a nation of secret porn consumers that it's worth paying for porn where the performers are actually enjoying themselves? The panelists had lots of suggestions: education, outreach, better sex ed, better conversations with kids, better SEO. But mostly, by talking about it. Hey, here we are!

If you're convinced it's time to expand your porn consumption repertoire, some resources last night's panelists suggested:

[Smitten Kitten](#)

[The Feminist Porn Awards](#)

[Good Vibrations](#)

[Babeland](#)

[Madison Young's bondage site](#)

[Tina Horn's Queerporn.tv](#)