

# Starring | NYC

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## Let's talk about porn

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Visitors react to videos shown at the "Consent" art show on the opening night. Photo courtesy of Eat the Cake NYC.

Have you seen *Rezervoir Doggs*?

No, that's not a typo; that's the movie's exact title.

How about *Kung Fu Beauty*? *Truth, Dare or Bare*? *Fresh Flesh*? *Co-workers Gone Bad*? *Debbie Does Dallas*?

If any of those movie titles rings a bell, then you represent a part of **the multibillion-dollar enterprise** that is the adult entertainment industry. But chances are that you never spent much time thinking about what happened when the cameras stopped rolling, or what these actors feel when doing such explicit scenes. Despite the large number of people who enjoy it, porn remains a taboo topic.

But an art show in Tribeca is attempting to change just that. **Apexart**, a non-profit contemporary visual arts organization on Church Street, is showcasing "**Consent**," an exhibition comprising a series of video interviews the curator, **Lynsey G.**, has conducted with various performers, producers and enthusiasts of the American porn industry.

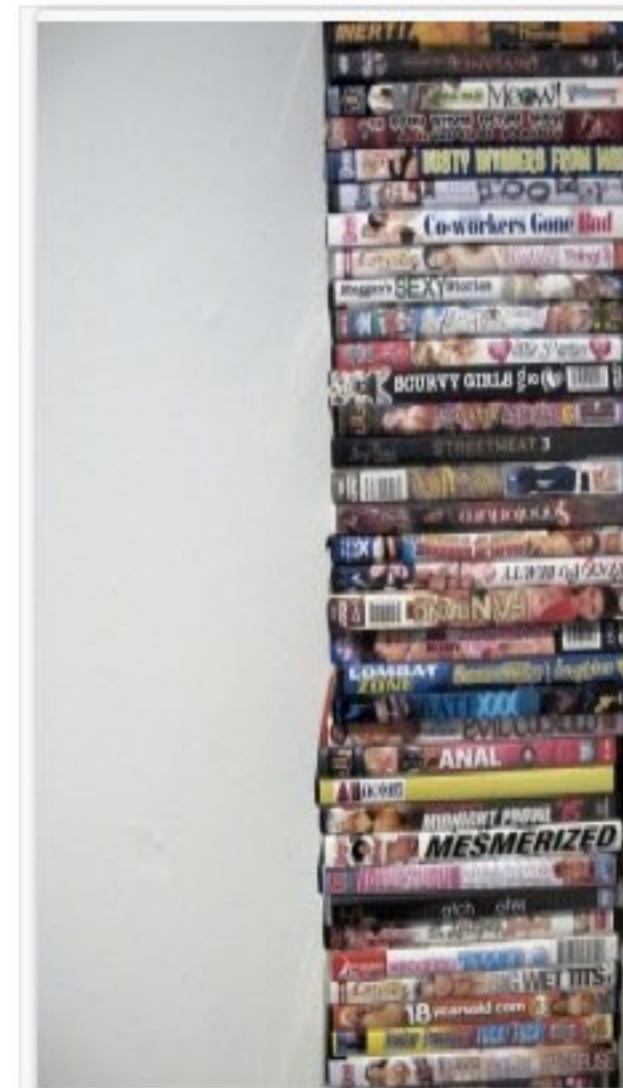
**Lynsey** got involved with the industry four years ago when, while looking for a writing job, she found work reviewing DVDs for a porn magazine. Despite her profession, Lynsey says that she still isn't very much into porn, although she's interested in its sociological aspects. "For me, porn is a serious topic that I critique, and it is also my field of study," she says.

Lynsey calls porn a distorted mirror of society, explaining that although porn isn't always what consumers want to see, it's what those who make it *think* people want to see. "People have never really been asked to talk about pornography and their own personal relationship to pornography. And I found out that when I asked people, it was like the floodgates had opened. People really, really wanted to talk," says Lynsey.

"Consent" occupies a rather bare space in the Apexart gallery, with four screens showing the different sections in the series on the themes of "Industry," "Society," "Morality" and "Reality." For each section, Lynsey has tried to get different perspectives on the business of porn by talking with both the "insiders" and "outsiders." As a result, the videos feature both **Nyomi Banxxx**, the 2011 winner of the Urban X Female Performer of the Year award, and Albert, the anonymous male porn consumer whose presence is indicated by a solitary lit lamp.

For instance, **April Flores**, an adult film star, decries the notion that porn degrades women. "I always say that I felt much more degraded as a receptionist than I did, ever, in porn," she says. **Kelly Shibari**, a Big Beautiful Woman (BBW) porn star, dismisses any emotional quotient in the sex she has in front of a camera. "It's sex, because there's actually penetration and because a guy ejaculates at the end," she says. "Besides that, it is so *not* sex."

Originally from Japan, Shibari is a fairly new entrant in the porn movie business, having been part of the industry for six years now. Billing herself as "the only Japanese BBW XXX performer in the United States," Shibari used to work in mainstream film and TV crews until she ventured into an "experimental" phase to work in adult entertainment, which eventually turned into a career. Shibari hopes "Consent" will make people become more open to both the porn industry and to performers like her.



A stacks of porn DVDs showcased at the "Consent" art show. Photo by Aby Sam Thomas.

"I honestly think that if society could see adult entertainment as that—entertainment—then other things could be more openly discussed as well," Shibari says. "Relationships, body image issues, being individual, not feeling like you have to conform because society tells you to—that sort of thing." The plus-sized Shibari has earned a following among fans of what she calls "chubby adult entertainment," and hopes that the visitors to "Consent" will realize that they don't have to be a size zero to be considered sexy.

Another show interviewee, **Brittany Andrews**, also wants to be perceived differently. Andrews, an adult film legend who has worked in the porn industry for more than 20 years, has been a staunch supporter of the Los Angeles campaign to enforce condom use when making adult films. Andrews says she hopes that "Consent" will spark more conversation on the rights of porn actors.

"Quite often people look at porn as a fantasy, and while that may seem all fine and dandy, it's not," Andrews says. "They are not just fantasy sexual objects. It's real people in front of those cameras doing real action, and they need real protection," Andrews says. "Performers should be able to protect themselves."

Shibari adds that she wants people to stop thinking of actors like her as "slutty whores 24/7." With the porn industry often portrayed as "this billion-dollar industry made up entirely of broken people," she says she thinks "Consent" will showcase a more accurate depiction of those who work in the industry.

"We're normal people," she says. "We just happen to be more open with our sexuality."

"Consent" runs at Apexart on 291 Church Street, New York from March 21 to May 12, 2012, Tuesdays to Sundays, 11 to 6pm. Free admission. For more details, see: <http://www.apexart.org/exhibitions/lynseyg.php>