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Cover image: April Flores and Hoodman in *ArtCore*, directed by C. Batts Fly.

Photo of Lynsey G by Winston O. Thompson Jr.

"One thing I've learned is that there's no such thing as a strange sexual fetish. They're all strange, which makes them all normal." —Albert, porn consumer



Mar 21-May 12, 2012

CONSENT

Curated by
Lynsey G

Lux Alptraum
Brittany Andrews
Nyomi Banxxx
April Flores
Cindy Gallop
Sinnamon Love
Mr. Marcus

Daniel Reilly
Kelly Shibari
Oriana Small
Natasha Starr
Danny Wylde
Madison Young

"It can be really, really difficult to negotiate ethics when orgasms are concerned.... Your orgasm is not concerned with whether or not someone got paid for that day."
—Lux Alptraum, CEO of Fleshbot.com

When apexart approached me about curating an art show on the topic of pornography, it struck me that porn is a difficult thing around which to structure an intelligent dialogue, especially from an art standpoint. Not because art and porn have nothing in common, but because they have so *much* in common. Whereas "true" art exists in a context of nearly constant conversation, porn exists in a veritable cultural vacuum, considered purely utilitarian and thus—somehow—without artistic merit. But the mediums gain access to their audiences in similar ways: art can slip past our rational systems of logic and language, sending an aesthetic impression right to our guts, upon which we are encouraged to reflect. Likewise, porn skips our systems of reason, but rather than lodging in our viscera and moving up to our brains, porn settles—hot and heavy—in our crotches. Adult entertainment takes advantage of our evolutionary inability to tell the difference between real sex and sexual imagery, and dives into our groins, demanding we take action. In this way, porn is utilitarian, and because we are taught not to speak openly of the utility to which we put it, pornography can hit our naughty bits



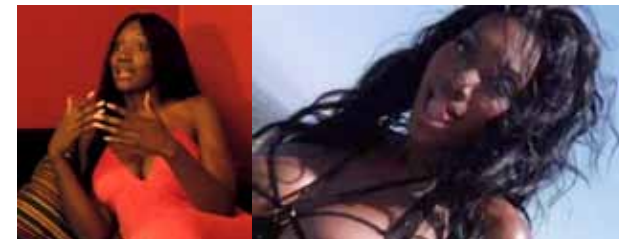
Brittany Andrews in conversation and in *Night Nurses* by Toni English. "If I'm going to be in this business, I'm going to do things MY way.... You're not a police officer. You suck cock for a living."



April Flores in *Tristan Taormino's Rough Sex 2*, courtesy of Vivid.com, and in conversation. "I got tired of reading and hearing that porn degrades women, because I've never felt degraded in this field. I always say that I felt much more degraded as a receptionist than I did, ever, in porn."

without doing much else, aside from tugging on our heartstrings with the shame, anger, and revulsion that cultural stigmas bring to the party.

So pornography goes undiscussed, unlike its cousin art. Most of us don't *want* to discuss it, much less see a need for discussion. We just *feel* it (and ourselves), neglecting to open it up to dialogue, analysis, criticism... the things that give the "high arts" their cultural *oomph*. This lack of dialogue allows the space where conversation could take place to instead remain vacant, echoing with the hysterical cries of pro- and anti-porn zealots who take advantage of the lack of critical context to promote



Nyomi Banxxx in conversation and in *Hardcore* by L T at Elegant Angel. "Everything I do, I am comfortable with. And I love it.... We're like the punching bag. Porn is what ruins the world."

their antithetical messages, though most of us know that the truth is somewhere between black and white. Porn is a huge grey area, a murky patch of swamp that's easier to enjoy when left alone. So most of us keep quiet about what we really think, if we think at all, shrugging, "Who cares? It's just porn."

In a way, that's accurate. Porn isn't usually *trying* to make a statement in the way that art is. But that doesn't mean a statement isn't being made. Let's be honest: for many of us—myself included—porn is a companion during some very vulnerable moments; it sees us in all our pared-down perversity, naked, trembling, wide-eyed, and alone. We show it our most hidden

sensibilities and allow it to fill in the blanks of our fantasies. We are sometimes more honest with pornography than with our intimate partners: we tell it what we really desire without fear of judgment. And that is a powerful connection; the accommodating offerings of smut that we watch during our defenseless moments must have *some* impact on our ideas about ourselves,



"I managed to masturbate, successfully, in this movie theater to this film, without my friend being remotely aware of it." —Cindy Gallop, founder of MakeLoveNotPorn.tv (left); Anton, porn consumer (right)

our bodies, and our sex. But we let its impact go unremarked upon more often than not. It is difficult for us to think on the matter seriously because, unlike other forms of erotic entertainment, porn involves *real* people performing real sex acts. It is a difficult subject matter. Pornography is fake but it is also genuine, and it brings all the issues inherent in sex, industry, entertainment, and fantasy to a head in one place. It is far simpler to ignore the complicated realities or the impact it has on us than to address it. We tend to hold pornography at a distance—cleaning up and returning to our own reality, for which we put on a face markedly different from what was reflected in our computer or TV screens moments before.

I am an advocate for pornography, and I spend a huge amount of time writing, thinking, and talking about it, but I also include



Danny Wylde in conversation and in *Writers and Rockstars*, courtesy Madison Young. "It's very emotionally draining to fail a porn scene. Not a lot of people understand that, because they don't show that."

myself in the silent "we" of porn consumption. For each of us, the internal space between private moments and public face is different: some distance themselves from porn by joking about it in public; others over-glamorize the industry; many demonize it; still others pretend to know nothing about it (though their internet browsers know better). For me, porn is a serious topic that I critique, and it is also my field of study. I focus on the academic details in my columns, reviews, interviews, and blogs. Not on the sex or the way it makes me feel. What I do alone when watching it for pleasure is very different from what I include in my reviews.

Though the media informs us that adult entertainment is "mainstream" and that our culture is becoming "pornified," the topic of personal relationships to porn is still taboo. The space that yawns between what we do and what we say is so empty and quiet that other spaces have opened around it. There is the space between what consumers think about porn stars and what porn stars are really like, the expanse between pornographic sex and private sex, the distance between porn bodies and "real" bodies, the divide between what we think of as the "typical" porn user (indubitably male, balding, overweight) and a real porn user (you, your family,



"The people that work in the industry, the ones that really thrive? They're a different breed." —Daniel Reilly, former writer and producer (left); Michelle, porn consumer (right)

your coworkers), the long corridor we imagine stretching between performers and consumers. All of these spaces are virtually empty of honest discussion. They are dark, and, as dark places often are, they are scary.

I sensed that there was something about my particular situation in all of this that was compelling, some reason that I was the one people kept turning to with questions and ideas. Though I am hesitant to step into the center of all those creepy, dark spaces and call for attention, I have realized in thinking about this that I am already *here*. With one foot in and one foot out of the porn industry as a journalist, I turn one way to chat with porn insiders,

but I turn the other way to answer friends' questions about the logistics of DPs. I am solidly in the dim space between sides, and it is because I occupy this chasm that people gravitate to me with questions, concerns, stories, and ideas—like this show.



Kelly Shibari in conversation and in action, courtesy of CJ Wright. "It's sex because there's actually penetration and because a guy ejaculates at the end. Besides that, it is so not sex."

It occurred to me that people who ask me questions, tell me their fantasies, request interviews, and send me movies for review are all looking at me because they see me as the middle ground I occupy. I can, they hope, translate their fears and desires across a great distance to the "other side." But there *is* no other side. We are all tangled up together in our one common thread: the consent we give to being part of pornography. Whether we make porn, watch porn, love porn, or hate porn, we are all enmeshed in it. An industry that makes billions more than America's largest sports industries, that has produced an estimated 370 million videos that now exist on the internet, that dominates a solid quarter of our web searches, surely ties us together more tightly than religion, politics, activism, or—it's true—art. The sheer numbers tell the story of our involvement. More of us watch porn than any other form of entertainment, and we are all taking something away from it, whether it be orgasm or our entire understanding of sex. Everyone who takes part has given consent in so doing. The performers consent to do the things you watch them do; the directors consent to film them; the crew consents to get in there with cameras and lights; the editors consent to chop



Mr. Marcus in *Oral Consumption* by Khan Tusion and in conversation. "I found my calling...[If I wasn't doing porn] I would be fucking a lot of girls, but not everyone else would be, too."

out the not-as-sexy bits; the distributors and websites consent to carry the material; and you, dear consumer, consent to watch it, and to wank to it. Lots of people along the way got off on it. Not everyone enjoyed it. But we all *did* it. And the tie that binds us is our knowing, willing *consent* in taking part in the whole cycle. So now, let's consent to *thinking* about it—unraveling some of the knots we have tied and take a look around our common ground.

Consent is my attempt to turn up the lights in the space I occupy by documenting and presenting what the world looks like from my point of view. I've brought together conversations with the "insiders" and the "outsiders," footage from the movies I've reviewed, images of my friends and colleagues in the industry, and my very own porn collection, sourced from my years of



Sinnamon Love in *Tristan Taormino's Rough Sex 2*, courtesy of Vivid.com, and in conversation. "I never actually saw porn until I was in porn."

being given review material. I want to show you what my empty space is like, and invite everyone to join me in here. It's really not so scary. We *are* all in this together, to get our rocks off somehow, and by reading this essay or wandering through this exhibit, you're more a part of it than ever.

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Lynsey G (aka Miss Lagslot, in some circles), a copywriter, reviewer, interviewer, columnist, and blogger writing for and about porn since 2007, has one foot in and one foot out of the adult entertainment industry. As something of a middle-man between porn insiders and consumers, she has spent years talking, thinking, and writing about porn with friends, foes, performers, directors, and everyone in between.

