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

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It occurred to me that people who ask me questions,tell me their fantasies request interviews, and send me movies for review 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 $70 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—let's be real—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 out the not-as-sexy bits; the distributors and websites consent to carry porn, or not, 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 years of my}-