

WHAT IS PORNOGRAPHY? MY CAREER AND HOW I'VE BEEN CENSORED

TUPPY OWENS

*At a public meeting organised by **Feminists Against Censorship** in the Conway Hall, on Wednesday 12th February 1992, Tuppy Owens BSc DipHS gave a talk, of which this is the text:*

One of the reasons I've been asked to speak tonight is because they knew I'd bring along a bundle of porn for you to see. I did a similar talk a few months ago (which was far more cosy and no TV cameras etc.) and thought that there's not much point in talking about porn to people who may never have seen any. You can come and look at my books afterwards and I'll pass a few around the audience, so you can all get a close look. I'll be showing slides at the end. This talk is also available in writing if you would like to take it away. I'm also handing out copies of **WRITING SADO-MASOCHISTIC PORNOGRAPHY: A WOMAN'S DEFENCE** by Deborah Ryder (a **Libertarian Alliance** Pamphlet).

There's been heavy censorship and a yuppie disinterest in porn over the past 10-15 years. So many twenty year olds have NEVER seen any porn. But 20 years ago everyone had. As soon as **Denmark** decided to make porno legal (with the resultant drop in sex crimes, I should add) Britain was inundated with bacon lorries, parking down back alleys and off-loading frozen porn, or 'Scans' as they were called, to the porn merchants. The police were totally corrupt in those days, and were in on the trading, and everyone thought it was jolly good fun. It was rather like the dope situation today because the police didn't think there was anything wrong with porn and were on our side.

Miss goody two shoes here, though, was producing legal stuff and I actually decided to import some old Danish titles which I could sell legally here. Unfortunately, they sent later editions which were stronger and I got hauled up to **HM Customs & Excise** to discuss my import consignment. This really straight Customs official and I were sitting in an office discussing how erect cocks were in certain photos - if they were erect, they'd be illegal, if not I'd be OK. You can just imagine the scene!

I started off in the industry because I knew a printer who printed sex magazines and I thought they were tame and tacky. 'Five-Bob Arts' were being mass produced for sale in newsagents. They also pirated American kinky mags such as **CORPORAL** and **BIZARRE** and re-printed novels which came out over and over again with new titles.

I produced my own range of books such as **THE SUMMER HOLIDAY SEX MANUAL** and put Obscenity Wrappers round them, which was kind of exploiting the censorship situation. In America, they did even better and brought out an **ILLUSTRATED PRESIDENTIAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON OBSCENITY AND PORNOGRAPHY** - full of pornographic picks and selling like hot cakes.

The early 70s produced the best porn ever - there were lots of en-

thusiasts like me and **SUCK** published the **Family Issue** with the great photo of **Germaine Greer** in it, this came out of Holland but with international contributors such as **Bill Levy**, **Germaine Greer** and **Heathcote Williams**. I recently showed a bunch of young art college students my porn collection and **SUCK** was the favorite: it's hot and raunchy yet intelligent, produced by men and women for fun and exploration. The Germans produced beautiful books such as **LOVE LOVE**, **SOFT LOVE** etc. In the UK, **OZ** published it's school kids issue with an ad from **SUCK** containing an article on blow jobs and thus the famous trial.

In America, there was **LOVE**, and **FINGER** and **Annie Sprinkle** started her Salon producing her **NEWSLETTER DEVOTED TO PISS ART** etc.

As well as the good stuff, there were some hysterically crappy things being produced: **MASTURBATION IN MARRIAGE** is my favorite. But the big boys did produce some quality things too: **SEXUAL FREEDOM**, and **ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF MALE SEX DEVICES. PRIVATE**, the Swedish hard-core, reached an excellent quality. It always has two covers: the outer polite and the inner hard-core. Photo essays begin with the girl in her home surroundings - walking through her town or along a local lane. Then she strips and shows her parts and is joined by a man or two, who enter her and finish by coming over her face. The pictures are very sharp, well lit and realistic, the sex very hard. **Milton** has always written an essay on morals in his magazine which is still going, now produced in Spain, and controlled by his son.

As the police corruption was cleaned up here, and the indecent displays act came into play and sex shops suddenly had to be licensed (licenses costing almost £20,000 per year!) we have been seeing less and less porno. The **National Campaign Against The Obscene Publications Acts** (**NCROPA** for short - ed.) was set up by **David Webb**, and continues today to fight against sexual censorship.

You may think that all porn is controlled by men but you'd be wrong. **Beate Uhse** began an enormous porn empire when she started the first sex supermarkets in Germany and published millions of books and videos. They even took over a big British sex company last year. **Mistress Antoinette**, also a large empire, produces kinky magazines and videos in California, **Arabella Melville** produced **LIBERTINE** from Leicester in the 70's and **Lily Pond** produces **YELLOW SILK**, a very soft, poetic journal of erotic arts. A few years ago, **Leonie**, a kind of Dutch equivalent to **Fiona Pitt Keighley** produced four sex magazines for women called **BEV** and a group of women in San Francisco decided to produce sex stories and published **LADIES' HOME EROTICA**. **Paula Meadows** is a major contributor to **FESSE**, a British female submissive magazine. **Candida Royale**, who is in London this week promoting her sex videos for women, runs her own company, **Femme Productions**.

So, it's all happening, but despite the fact that some of us pornographers take our work seriously, the industry is not given any respect (nor has any consolidated self-respect). We don't have our own trade paper, and my best selling book **THE SEX MANIAC'S DIARY** is never listed in best selling lists because most book shops refuse to stock them.

The only British University that has been prepared to look seriously at the topic of porno is **Reading**, and its **Professor Christie Davies** described Britain as having **Double Porn**. On the continent, he says, they have good honest porn but we have porn posing as an attack. This is the tabloid press who print "**It's our duty to reveal the most disgusting this and that.**" He calls this Double Porn.

British hypocrisy is part of our lifestyle. You might be shocked to find a copy of **TEENAGE BAZOOMAS** in a little post office in the Cotswolds, but I know a Somerset postmaster who runs a porn video club. And the petrol station on the main road probably sells soft porn, but only what its owner decides is OK. **Mr Patel**, **WH Smith** and **John Menzies** control what we see. Mind you, I recently spoke to a young man who had spent a few month's working in his dad's newsagents in Stockport and he was amused that the husbands would go out in the morning, stop off to buy a girlie mag and then in the afternoon their wives would come in and complain about the same girlie mags being on the shelves. Smiths and Menzies even have a list of activities that may not be mentioned, the list is anti-gay, anti S/M, forbids erections etc., although many of these things appear in general interest magazines. This month's **TATLER**

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FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND PROPERTY

shows pictures of pornographic watches and a recent *CITY LIMITS* advertised a night club with a hard core image, even though the club isn't really sexy.

Britain isn't alone in having censorship problems - sexual freedom is having to be heavily defended in the USA. I read recently in an American article by **Carol Queen** in *SEXUAL SANITY*: "***We are a nation suffering from sexual schizophrenia.***"

Sexual pleasure is the most extreme form of pleasure we have. Love can be painful, bearing children can be painful and tiring but sex is always a delight. You'd have to have something radically wrong with you to not be curious to see a sex book. So why is it so difficult for us to do so? Because religions tell us it's bad. Who would go to church on Sundays if we could look at sex books instead? **David Sullivan** got it right bringing out *The Sunday Sport!* But there's something you should know about these soft pornographers and **Double Pornographers** of this world. They want to keep Britain's censorship laws because then they can carry on teasing and promising and pretending to the public instead of delivering the real stuff, hard core pornography.

I am so used to being censored that I hardly notice. My 8mm films were seized because they bore the director's name, **Lasse Braun**, a name the police equated with hard core, even though I'd had them cut to come within British law. My distributors insist that I take out all reference to anal sex and all the squirts in the drawings have to go because they are squeamish about such things! I have printers refusing to print my books - usually religious reasons, or they say "The women in the bindery would be shocked" or "right on" printers accuse my books of being sexist (which they aren't).

Fortunately, I've not suffered as much as colleagues from those anti-porn feminists but **Peter Webb**, author of *THE EROTIC ARTS* has had coffins sent to him and other horrid tricks and even the magazine *CUPIDO*, which takes great trouble to feature as many pics of men as women and aims at both genders, is attacked by them. Take care that many feminists who say something is sexist really mean that it's sexY. They just hate sex.

I can take most sexual censorship. It encourages me to be more creative and search for words such as "dingleberries". If people really want porno, they will find it. But what really upsets me is when censorship destroys people's lives. For example, when the denial of information puts people's lives at risk from HIV. We read about surveys being censored - one was not allowed to ask teenagers about oral sex. I was disgusted with the **British Health Education Council** who refused to let me print one of their HIV information ads in my *SAFER SEX MANIAC'S BIBLE* (which I was prepared to do free of charge) - "**We don't advertise in sex books**" they told me. Where, I ask, would be more appropriate?

What REALLY breaks my heart is the sexual censorship of disabled people. They are supposed to live lives beyond sex. Matrons, parents and society in general selfishly deny people with disabilities any chance of sex in any form. In some institutions the word must not even be mentioned. I founded a club called **The Outsiders** which helps people with social and physical disabilities gain confidence, fight prejudice and enjoy themselves more. Because we tackle the problem of sexual censorship, we get attacked both by the gutter press and radical groups. Even the **Greater London Association for Disabled People** decided to list us as a sex club, which of course, is the most destructive thing they could do to us because nobody would be allowed to join.

I'm going to show you some slides. They were made for sex therapy to help people become less fearful of sex. I've been selling these slides to the **NHS** for the past ten years but they contain images that you yourselves have been denied by British law.

The Slides

They begin very gently, introducing people to sexual images. **Dr Patricia Gillian** produced them with me and she had some choice of pictures. She chose the male pin ups for women: muscle man, beach boy, farm boy and glamour boy. One of the early pictures is a delicate painting by Patricia's husband, **Richard**, of a submissive woman on a bed with her hands tied behind her back with rope. We included many of the drawings by **Betty Dodson** who's beautiful book *LIBERATING MASTURBATION* has helped many women.

Her drawings help women who are worried that their vulvas are peculiar, showing us just how much women vary in shape and style. One picture shows a woman examining her vulva in a mirror. Many of the pictures come from the beautiful 70s porno books I've collected. There are pictures of women watching men masturbate, men alone with sex magazines on a bed, masturbating. Men looking at a vulva, sucking it and exploring it. There's a photo of cunnilingus which I took myself for one of my picture books and it shows the sex position but no tongue-pussy contact. The next slide in the series shows this contact, demonstrating the difference in value between soft core and hard core. There are stroking, massage, and sensuous photos, breast stimulation and some unusual sex practices such as nipple stimulation with the penis, cleavage stimulation of the penis and girl using a cucumber. There are close-up pictures of fingers which look very sexy, as if they are genitals. Patricia and I produced these slides simply to help people with therapy and any profits go to the **Outsiders Club**.

MY ANSWERS TO THE STANDARD QUESTIONS:

DOES PORNOGRAPHY LEAD TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

There's been raping and pillaging for centuries but porn has only been available to the masses for the past 30 years. Pornography, the writing of harlots, was originally told by story tellers during rituals that lead up to marriage. Danish research showed that legalising porno lead to less sexual violence.

DO PORNOGRAPHY USERS JUST WANT MORE AND MORE, AND MORE EXTREME STUFF?

In Denmark, everyone wanted to have a peep at everything and then they got bored and it was mostly tourists buying it. Good porno is extreme, as it is fantasy material and there's nothing wrong with that. Sadly, most porn is drearily the same and punters seem to want to see the same old stuff churned out over and over again.

IS THE PORNO TRADE MALE DOMINATED?

No more than most other industries, but many women run porno companies and magazines and video, e.g. **Beate Uhse** and **Candida Royale**. Nearly all porn is aimed at men because mostly men buy it, although most women in the trade usually try to encourage a female clientele.

DO GIRLS GET EXPLOITED?

Most porno stars enjoy their work although they usually find porn gets boring. They do get annoyed when they get booked to do a blue show and discover that the audience is a group of police men having a night of fun - maybe the same police who do porn and club busts.

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