



Wild Zones: Pornography, Art

Kelly Ives

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WILD ZONES: PORNOGRAPHY, ART AND FEMINISM REVISED AND UPDATED, WITH NEW ILLUSTRATIONS Kelly Ives explores the world's sexual representation in art and pornography, from a feminist viewpoint. The book includes chapters on the depiction of sexuality in art, from contemporary art and pornography back through the Renaissance to prehistory; on the problematic relations between showing sexuality and censorship; the history of porn; and women's art and how women artists have depicted sexual acts and identities. Fully illustrated, with images from the history of representing sexuality from prehistory to the present day. Includes notes and bibliography. The book has been revised for this edition.

www.cmoon.com EXTRACT FROM THE INTRODUCTION: Firstly, there are as many definitions of art and pornography as there are people. Everyone has their own opinions, their own interests and realms to defend. There are the liberals who say that nothing should be censored, including pornography. Pornography is seen as part of artistic expression, and if people want to express themselves, they should, and if they want pornography, they should have it. This is the view of liberals such as Peter Webb, who campaigns for freedom of expression, and an art that should 'celebrate' eroticism. This is a familiar viewpoint, which we have heard made many times. In the (male) liberal view, sex is OK, so sexual art must be OK, so that much of pornography must be OK. The 'experts' on sex, the so-called 'sexologists' (Eduard Fuchs, Richard von Krafft-Ebbing, Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Reich) argue that sex is a normal part of life, so it is natural that it should abound in art. Fuchs wrote; '[a]rt has treated erotic themes at almost all periods... [it] lies at the root of all human life.' Everyone seems to have their cut-off points, however, their 'standards' of 'taste' and 'decency'. It's a very subjective business, the debates between art and pornography, and between pornography and censorship. As Wendy Moore writes: "[c]ensorship like freedom is an entirely subjective term'. What you like defines yourself. As Pierre Bourdieu put it: '[t]aste classifies, and it classifies the classifier.' Taste, choice, categorization and classification, then, defines the viewer, the reader, the consumer. Censorship, you might say, defines the culture. And 'sensitive' novelists are wary of writing 'sex scenes', because they know that what they write defines themselves. Yet sex is crucial to art, many artists say. As Gertrude Stein wrote: '[L]iterature - creative literature - unconnected with sex is inconceivable.' < What emerges from the liberal, patriarchal view of art and pornography is that censorship is largely political: it is not concerned so much with 'taste' and 'offending' people as with political control. The history of censorship bears this out. As Catherine Itzin writes: '[t]he purpose of censorship from beginning to end has been political: suppression.' Everyone who says anything about pornography and art and censorship usually states, either overtly or by implication, what they think is 'acceptable' and what is 'obscene' or 'unacceptable'. Steven Marcus offers a typical viewpoint: art is about 'the relations of human beings among themselves' while 'sex in pornography is sex without the emotions'. The view is that 'true' art (or 'high' art) is emotional, and therefore justifies its existence. Deep feelings or emotions in art connote aesthetic and philosophical authenticity. As one of the 'founders' of modern abstraction, Kasimir Malevich, has it: 'the significant thing is feeling... Feeling is the determining factor', while the prince of dreamy, escapist art, Odilon Redon, said: 'I speak to those who surrender themselves gently to the secret and mysterious laws of the emotions and the heart'.

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