BEAUTIFULLY OBSCENE

THE HISTORY OF THE EROTIC PRINT

A Studio 3 Gallery Exhibition
Kent Print Collection 6th Exhibition
15 May - 12 June 2015

University of Kent | School of Arts

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Studio 3 Gallery, Jarman Building
University of Kent, Canterbury

Catalogue designed and edited by:

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Curators' Introduction

Elizabeth Simmons and
Mariam Sudzhadinova

Beautifully Obscene: The History of The Erotic Print is an exhibition that aims to challenge, subvert and engage the viewer by exploring the aesthetics of the human form, sexuality and its manifestation in erotic art throughout history. In doing so, the exhibition addresses certain preconceptions we hold towards sexual representation in the visual arts.

In order to explore these cultural preconceptions, we aim to acknowledge the distinction between the socially acceptable 'nude' and the socially pejorative 'naked' body. The exhibition will explore how artists have represented the body in the medium of print. The viewer will witness the development of the erotic print throughout the history of printmaking, from Jan de Bisschop's mythological nude *Medici Venus* (after 1668) to Tracey Emin's *The Beginning Of Me* (2012), an example of the 'naked' body.

Beautifully Obscene seeks to explore the relationship between the erotic subject and the print medium, focusing on specific themes in erotic art that have been consistent throughout centuries of representation. Mythology, erotica, voyeurism, composition of the body and harmonizing color schemes are brought to light on the walls of Studio 3 Gallery. We hope that the viewer will be able to find subtle similarities between the prints, many of which have been canonical throughout art history and may not necessarily be fully evident at first viewing.

The theme of the 'erotic' in the less sexually explicit works may be easily overlooked, especially in mythological scenes such as Pietro Santi Bartoli's *Hylas and the Nymphs* (*c.* 1680). We hope to educate and provide our visitors with the capacity to read into the iconography of the past in order to explore their implicit eroticism and their relevance throughout print history.

Many erotic prints featured in the exhibition often accompanied literature, sometimes even illustrating specific sections. Artists such as Amandine Doré and Monika Beisner illustrated erotic poetry and these are reflected by our inclusion of book-bound prints.

Since this is a genre often dominated by male artists, the exhibition also aims to highlight the work of female artists and other lesser known artists. By displaying them alongside works by recognizable names such as Pablo Picasso, William Hogarth and Félicien Rops, we see this as an opportunity to recognize their importance as valuable contributions to the history of art, if not superseding their contemporaries.

Japanese *shunga* prints – generously lent to us by an anonymous donor – are a vital component of our exhibition as they incorporate early Eastern ideas and systems of representing erotic and sexual subjects in art, some of which are paralleled in the Western tradition. The woodblock prints are very early forms of Japanese pornography and played an important role in the history of the erotic print, hence our decision to dedicate an entire wall to displaying this significant collection. These prints create a pivotal link with many other prints on display, and demonstrate the early stages of the development of the Japanese erotic print. By including them, we hope to provide viewers with a chance to engage with a subject that is new, bold and breathtaking.

As a curatorial team our understanding of erotic prints and subject matter are partially due to academic study on the subject as part of our degree, furthered by individual research interests. We explored the complex relationship between the interconnected concepts of erotic art and pornography, and how they have been embedded into the canon of art history. As a group we have developed a positive and open-minded approach to erotic material and sexually explicit subject matter, given their relevance in contemporary culture, largely in the form of advertisements. We would like to invite the audience to challenge their preconceived notions

of what they believe to be 'erotic', 'sexually explicit' and 'pornographic' by experiencing first-hand one of the main driving forces behind erotic art as a significant artistic genre.

By inviting our audience to view a wide variety of erotic prints, ranging from the academic nude to the sexually explicit, we hope to trigger a response similar to that which we experienced ourselves after viewing the prints. In doing so, we also aim to showcase a wide range of printmaking techniques over a period of five hundred years, and explore a large number of artists, some famous for their erotic endeavors, some perhaps less prominent in art history as we know it.

It is inarguably up to the viewer to decide what is offensive to their sensibilities and why they deem it so, but it is up to us to showcase that the obscenity of the artwork does not in any way invalidate their legibility or quality. Rather, in *Beautifully Obscene* we wish to emphasize the notion that these works form a transhistorical celebration of sexuality and the human body, regardless of their perceived obscenity. We hope the exhibition will help viewers to open their minds and result in a revelation that beauty can, in fact, be found in the obscene.

Mizuno Toshikata
Peeping woman masturbating, Late 19th/early 20th century.
Colour woodblock print. 22.3 x 28.3 cm.
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia.

Taking Liberties

Neil Philip

Erotica has been a vital component of art since the earliest rock engravings, as we are reminded by Ian Hamilton Finlay's breathtaking screenprint, *Venus of the Hours*. In the history of printmaking, the first significant erotica consists of sixteen engravings by Marcantonio Raimondi after drawings by Giulio Romano in 1524, entitled *I Modi (The Postures)*.[1] These explicit depictions of lovemaking caused outrage. Pope Clement VII ordered the prints to be burned, and Marcantonio was flung into jail.

The authoritarian desire to censor and repress the erotic is a consistent theme to this day. But so too is the desire of human beings to view and possess such images. Despite the threat of death to anyone who reprinted them, *I Modi* were quickly republished, with freshly written sonnets by Pietro Aretino to accompany the images. This edition too was suppressed, to be followed by various counterfeit editions, with anonymous woodcuts after the original engravings.[2]

It may be thought that in the case of *I Modi* the censors won, for no copies of the first two editions survive, and of the subsequent counterfeit versions there exists only a single copy. Of the engravings only three impressions of a single plate exist in Paris, Vienna, and London, together with nine fragments in the British Museum. But in another sense it was the libertarians who won, because from the collaboration of Giulio Romano, Marcantonio Raimondi and Pietro Aretino stems the whole subsequent history of western erotic and pornographic art and writing.[3]

In some cultures, notably in Japan and India, the explicit depiction of sexuality activity has been an integral part of artistic activity. In the modern west, scenes of lovemaking (with the exception of stylized depictions of classical mythology) have been taboo. Prints of such subjects were published under the counter, and their circulation and enjoyment was generally for the private delectation of upper-class males. This sequestration of the erotic on the basis of class and gender has been a powerful force in determining both the market for erotic art and even its themes and aesthetics. Erotica produced for an educated Frenchman might well take the life of the brothel as its theme; that aimed at an educated Englishman might well be tinged with sadomasochism.[4]

In the late nineteenth century, clandestine publishers such as Leonard Smithers, who commissioned Aubrey Beardsley's erotic work, or Charles Carrington, whose illustrator of choice was to be Martin van Maele, catered to this recherché market with well-targeted under-the-counter publications. In the world of fine art, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Félicien Rops pushed the limits of acceptability. Lautrec's lithographic portfolio *Elles* caused a stir in 1896, while many of Rops' more explicit etchings were unpublishable in any conventional channel; nine of these saw the light of day in 1909 in the book *Die Lesbierinnen*, privately published for subscribers only.[5]

At around the same time, a portfolio of explicit lithographs by the Fauve painter and printmaker Albert Marquet appeared, in an edition of 325 copies. Entitled *L'Académie des Dames: Vingt Attitudes*, it was published by Éditions des Quatres-Chemins Editart, Paris, with the insouciant and misleading publication details, "New York: Sixty-ninth avenue." This lively and expressive early work by Marquet is a case study in the difficulty of dating such clandestine publications, as they were not submitted to national libraries and were often given fictitious dates and places of publication. I have seen it dated to 1910-1914, 1925, and even (implausibly) 1950. The catalogue of the 2002 exhibition *Le dessin fauve: 1900-1908* reproduces two drawings by Marquet that are clearly studies for these lithographs, showing the same models in similar poses; grouped with them is a stylistically similar lewd drawing by Marquet, dated 1905, of the painter Charles Camoin with a nude model, in an attitude that suggests the young Fauves were enjoying a period of sexual freedom and louche behaviour at this time of artistic and personal self-discovery.[6] So a publication date somewhere in the years prior to the Great War seems likely, especially as Marquet was unlikely to publish such a work after his marriage to

Marcelle Matinet in 1923. The daring *Académie des Dames* lithographs, with their lithe, supple line and their tender sense of shared intimacy, remain perhaps our best chance to get to know the respectable, buttoned-up artist we see in photographs—sitting, for instance, in the beautiful light studio at 19, quai Saint-Michel that he took over from Matisse—as a passionate, young, unmarried man.[7]

After the horrors of WWI, there was an immediate relaxation of attitudes towards the erotic in art across mainland Europe, though not in Britain. Expressionist printmakers such as George Grosz, Max Beckmann, and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner took sexuality as one of their central themes. In Germany, publishers such as Fritz Gurlitt and Bruno Wollbrück openly published portfolios of erotic prints by artists such as Felix Meseck and Walther Klemm. The revue *Eros*, published from 1919 by Frisch & Co. of Vienna and Leipzig, commissioned new erotic prints from artists such as Eugen Sturm-Skrla, though after the first six issues the publisher's stock was apparently seized by the authorities.

In France such works were likely to be published "au dépens d'un groupe d'amateurs", without publisher and with the artist unnamed though usually easily guessable. So a printmaker such as Louis-André Berthommé de Saint-André would present a lightly-erotic face to the public in legitimate publications such as his edition of Maupassant's *La Maison Tellier*, and a much more explicit side of his art under the cloak of anonymity in a work such as his edition of *Gamiani* (a work often attributed to Alfred de Musset). In the thriving trade of under-the-counter publishing, the same works were illustrated again and again. In particular the erotic writings of Pierre Louÿs, ranging from the mildly naughty *Bilitis* to the wildly licentious *Trois filles de leur mère* kept a phalanx of publishers, printers, booksellers, and artists in bread and butter. The printmakers involved range from minor figures such as Berthommé or André Provot to artists such as Jules Pascin or Marcel Vertès.
Vertès made his mark with privately published limited editon portfolios of erotic etchings, the first of which, *L'heure exquise*, dates from 1920. The young Hungarian was immediately taken up by the author Pierre Mac Orlan, who was a vital link between artists such as Vertès and Pascin and the world of clandestine publishing. Mac Orlan is a fascinating figure, who amusingly chose to publish his legitimate works under a pseudonym, and his pornographic writings under his real name, Pierre Dumarchey. Mac Orlan's extensive knowledge of the Parisian underworld, in particular its brothels, provided lively texts for artists such as Vertès, Gustave Assire, and Luc-Albert Moreau. Though they were only following in the footsteps of Toulouse-Lautrec, it's a wonder, in fact, that there was any room for clients in the brothels of 1920s Paris, such was the stream of writers and artists populating them for purposes of research.

Artists such as these were to be superceded by the Surrealists, whose interest in the workings of the unconscious mind inevitably turned on sexual themes. Both Man Ray and Max Ernst fearlessly confronted their subconscious desires, and the same frankness can be seen in the "erotomagic"[8] of Lucien Coutaud, the disturbingly sexualized sphinxes of Léonor Fini and the contorted lovers of Dorothea Tanning.

So far I have discussed erotic art as if it is always an expression of the male gaze. But as the examples of Fini and Tanning suggest, since at least the beginning the twentieth century women artists have been exploring eroticism and sensuality for themselves. One of the first to regularly depict the nude was Angèle Delasalle, whose tally of 28 etchings includes four nudes. Critics immediately recognized the freshness in her approach to this familiar subject. Raymond Escholier wrote of her nude studies, in the prestigious *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, "Ils sont autant des déshabillés que de nus"; they are naked rather than nude. He writes, "She simply paints the woman who is in front of her eyes."[9] Delasalle's etching *Le Déjeuner* deliberately disrupts the male gaze by showing the nude model not in a provocative pose but relaxing, enjoying a well-earned break. She is shown from the back, cup and saucer in hand. This is the model as a working girl, not as eye-candy. The etchings *Étude de nu* and *Le Repos* show another kind of working girl. In the first, Delasalle's bored beauty is relining on the kind

of circular sofa found in the salon of a French maison close, or brothel; the shocking subject matter is disguised behind the blandest of titles, *Nude Study*. *Le Repos* also plays with the taboo of female recognition of the role that prostitution played in French society. The model's pose is evidently based on Manet's scandalous *Olympia*, but where the model's frank gaze back at the viewer seemed shocking and provocative in Manet, here it seems perfectly natural, even though Delasalle's model is not, like Manet's, coyly covering her pudendum with her hand.

Today it does not seem strange to find women artists depicting the female nude, and they generally do so with a matter-of-factness that is a far cry from the lubricious voyeurism of the under-the-counter prints by artists such as Vertès that gave rise to the expression "Come up and see my etchings." Tracey Emin's vulnerable *Out Cold* may superficially recall Albert Marquet's lesbian lovers, but it is felt from inside, not observed from outside. Anita Klein's *Angel Stretching Her Arms* and Emma Bradford's *Pink Torso on Blue* both show a cheerful confidence in the simplicity of the body.

A more ambiguous attitude to the erotic can be found in the exquisitely etched exlibris bookplates of Patricia Nik-Dad. This French artist, of Persian origins, specialises in erotic bookplates, usually for male clients. The characters in her exquisitely detailed works seem to inhabit an enchanted erotic wonderland. But we are, once again, onlookers, just like the adolescent boy peeking through the window blind at the back of *Le Train*. In Carolina Liebling's study of "l'ex-eroticis féminin", *Eros au Féminin* (*Women and Eros*), Nik-Dad says that she enjoys making these works: "c'est ma façon d'exprimer ma liberté"; it's my way of expressing my freedom.[10]

At the moment we live in a climate where it is possible to stage an exhibition such as this, and where artists can express their freedom to explore themes of sexuality. There have been previous times where erotica has flourished reasonably openly. In Georgian England, for instance, the erotic engravings of Thomas Rowlandson appear to have circulated relatively freely. Equally there have been times, and no doubt will be again, when erotic has been severely repressed. But there has never been a time when erotica has not been produced.

The author and poet Neil Philip runs the online print gallery Idbury Prints, specializing in original prints from Impressionism to Pop Art. He also writes the blog 'Adventures in the Print Trade'. Neil is the author of numerous books, including 'The Penguin Book of English Folktales', 'The Cinderella Story', and 'Mythology' (with Philip Wilkinson).

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5 For the late nineteenth-century figure of the femme fatale see: Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-siècle Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

6 *Le dessin fauve 1900-1908: Quelque chose de plus que la couleur* (Marseille: Musée Cantini, 2002), pp. 130-131.

7 For comparable erotic drawings by the young Picasso, see: John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso. Volume I: 1881-1906* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p. 280.

8 Christophe Dauphin, *Lucien Coutaud, le peintre de l'Éroticomagie* (Cordes-sur-Ciel: Éditions Rafael de Surtis, 2009).

9 Raymond Escholier, "Peintres-graveurs contemporains—Angèle Delasalle", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1912, pp. 319-332.

10 Carolina Liebling, *Eros au Féminin: Premier livre consacré à l'ex-eroticis féminin* (Lausanne: Éditions Humus, 2006), p. 67.

Mediating Desires

Jan Annoot

"And having rooms in several locations furnished with couches for sleeping, in each room he ordered small pictures to be hung, in which were depicted many extravagant postures to take during the libidinous act [...]"[1]

The final report of the Meese Commission (1986) noted "sexuality has been a subject of human cultural expression almost since the beginning of recorded history".[2] No great surprise. The existence of sexualised imagery throughout history and certainly its proliferation within contemporary culture is not in question. What perhaps is, concerns the range of competing cultural motivations and intentions, political, personal and social agendas that these depictions serve. Sex may be the subject, but sexual arousal is not always the intention. In the current context, it will, therefore, be important to consider briefly not only prints' pivotal role in the popularisation, transmission and reception of sexualised imagery, but also the transmutable nature of the definitions employed to discuss and police that imagery. As will some consideration of modernist, postmodernist and twenty-first century developments, especially in terms of the artistic avant-garde and a limited number of featured contemporary practitioners.

Sex: within Abrahamic cultures few subjects provoke such heated response as the erotic, the sexual. Also rooted in the mind-body dichotomies promulgated through early Christian metaphysics, sexually graphic materials not only possess the power to arouse or to shame, but also to stimulate acrimonious public debate and provoke church- and state-sponsored programmes of censorship. Indeed, traditionally the stability of the social hierarchy has in part depended upon the restriction of 'dangerous' modes of knowledge to a dominant patriarchal elite for fear of corrupting an ill-educated, underprivileged majority. Due to its elitist nature, officially regulating such material was, nonetheless, comparatively unproblematic up until the early modern period when an emergent print culture promised the democratisation of all knowledge. This revolutionary proto-modern capability to reproduce printed material bred counter-cultural print industries devoted to the dissemination of imagery both seditious and lascivious. The sexually-explicit engravings circulated by Marcantonio Raimondi known as the *I Modi*, exemplify the power unleashed by nascent *cinquecento* print technology. During the early 1520s Giulio Romano, creator of highly sexualised frescos, produced drawings depicting sexual positions that 'explored those that were the most forbidden, showing women on top and men penetrating their women from behind'.[3] These drawings were, however, for private consumption by a patriarchal elite, thus provoking no official condemnation. This was not the case with Raimondi's 1524 printed version of Romano's designs. As an instant bestseller Raimondi's *I Modi* provoked Pope Clement VII to order the eradication of all copies. Given the mass- market for such imagery, it is no surprise that when Raimondi's engravings went again into that market place, now accompanied by lascivious and seditious sonnets by Pietro Aretino, they were popular, seized and destroyed, with the death penalty awaiting those foolish enough to publish new editions.[4] Although *cinquecento* proto-pornography such as the *I Modi* was aimed chiefly at an educated male audience, print technologies encouraged the unregulatable dissemination of pictured sexuality, creating a mass market for the erotic, the forbidden. As such, the period witnessed the opening of floodgates onto a mass market economy distributing visualised sexual secrets, the appetite for which is, even in this post-sexual revolution, (post-) postmodern capitalist society, insatiable.

Debates over inclusion and exclusion, morality and immorality, public and private, freedom of expression and censorship have traditionally dogged the reception, circulation and consumption of sexualised material. A less obvious debate does, nevertheless, rage quietly on: the issue of definition. Although it is presupposed that the terms eroticism, obscenity and pornography are interchangeable and, therefore, synonymous with each other, this is not the case. Indeed, pornography

"need not be erotic (i.e. arousing); eroticism need not be pornographic and obscenity, of course, need have nothing to do with sex at all".[5] With the enactment of the 1857 Obscene Publications Act, the British establishment endeavoured to produce workable definitions for pornography and obscenity; the former expressed in terms of the culturally taboo, the latter defined as a legal offence - in opposition to the pure creation of art.[6]

"Artistic nudes make no promises, erotic nudes make a few, and obscene or pornographic works so completely fulfil them all that many viewers find them offensive, rather than exciting."[7]

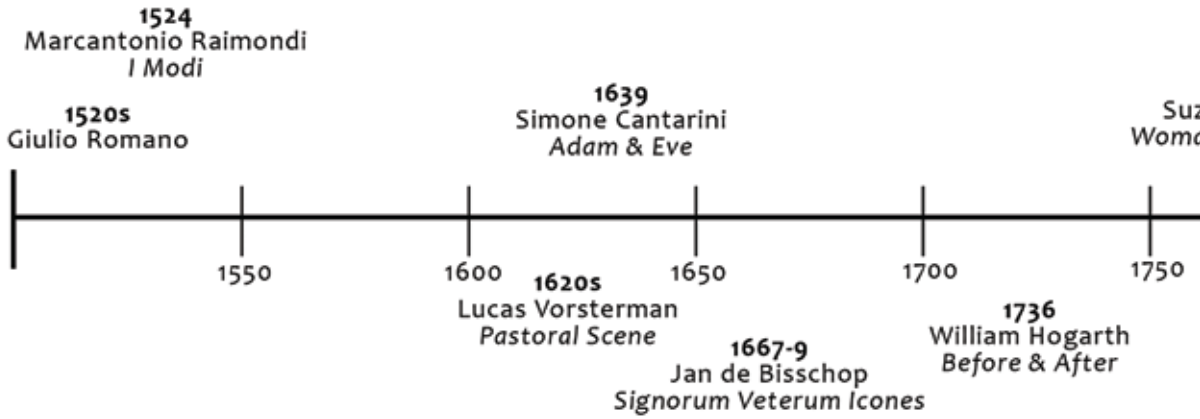
Yet, the etymology of the word 'obscene' is vague. A popular dictionary derivation proposes the Latin *obscenus* (perhaps related to caenum filth), and the French *obscène*, meaning from or with filth, ill-omened or abominable.[8] Other ancient sources are also advocated: Latin *obscena* or Greek *ob skene* – literally off, or to one side of the stage: subject matter beyond representation; a derivation that chimes with legal definitions.[9] Given the proliferation of sexualised art, particularly in recent times, obscene (off- scene) material has become thoroughly on-scene and, thus, obscenity (off-scenity) might be replaced with the more fitting on-scenity; as "Such a term at least suggests that these representations can no longer be conveniently placed beyond all understanding".[10]

Whether imagery is classified as beyond understanding or not, whether designated pornographic or obscene, filthy or dirty or, even, erotic depends largely on the society, culture, epoch, individual doing the classifying. As with beauty, pornography, erotica and obscenity depend on the eye of the beholder; orders of things that are recognised, but difficult to describe. In other words, Bernard Arcand's so-called, 'Sophism of the Elephant'. The notion of the 'dirty picture' is a subjective one. When differentiating between pornography and erotica, distinctions not only remain capricious, but 'elitist, and subjective';[11] and, perhaps, also gender-centric. The perceived interchangeability of the terms obscene, pornographic and erotic, clearly muddy the waters. Further to which, works that were once condemned as transgressive or obscene or pornographic and consequently banned, censored or locked away, may now be considered simply erotic or, perhaps only 'sexy.' The terms erotic, eroticism and erotica have undergone substantial revision in recent years, not least through feminist interventions and postmodern discourse producing competing meanings. Writing in 1983, the American feminist activist Gloria Steinem equated pornography with sex and eroticism with love. Only two years earlier, Ellen Willis, a noted radical left-wing feminist, wrote about this "goody-goody concept of eroticism" that "is not feminist, but feminine".[12] These competing views not only highlight the inherent dichotomy of 1980s feminist discourse, a discourse that at its extremes embraced 'porn war' arch-protagonists Andrea Dworkin and Annie Sprinkle, but is in stark contrast to how Georges Bataille discussed eroticism less than thirty years earlier. Probing Sadean sexuality, Bataille mused:

"As unbearable as some aspects of his work may be, he certainly recognized that eroticism – and the horrors contained within the depths of erotic desire – put the human being as a whole in question. [...] when we speak of the erotic we are discussing the most difficult of all questions [...]"[13]

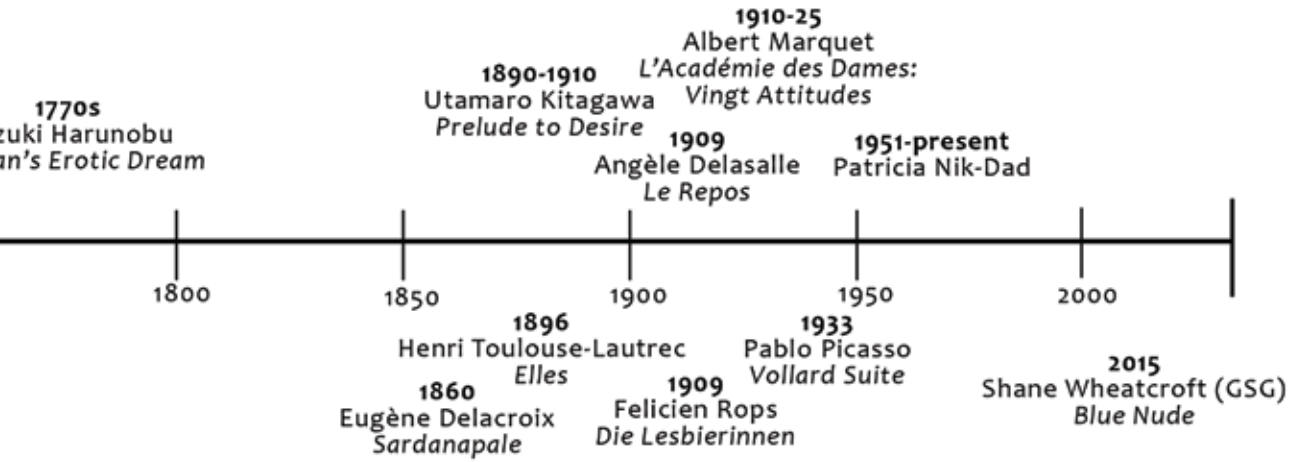
Continuing: "The erotic opens up an abyss" and "while it is certainly the most horrible of all things, it is also the most sacred."

As a central figure within the intellectual and artistic milieu of mid-twentieth century France, the philosopher and writer of penetratingly pornographic scenes of sex and death, Bataille and his discussion of the erotic may sit uneasily with 1980s American feminist discourse centring on definitions of eroticism. Despite the incongruity, connections can be made. Bataille was instrumental in shaping French postmodern philosophy, being particularly influential on the work of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard. Further to which, he mixed with and was influenced by the artistic avant-garde of the 1930s, 40s and 50s, especially the surrealists (an obvious influence in his transgressive narrative fictions). Arising from and concomitantly shaping the counter-



cultural, rebellious days of the 1960s and 70s, alongside other heterogeneous tendencies such as kitschness, (re)appropriation and parody, feminism is symptomatic of postmodernity; in terms of the socio- cultural, equality-seeking movement and its artistic avant-garde manifestation. The radical feminist project of central core imagery, did, after all emerge during this period. The artistic avant-garde of both eras were quite besotted with the portrayal and construction of normative and transgressive sexualities, gender roles and eroticism. Writing in 1957, Bataille talks of a sexual revolution having taken place, after which people differed drastically from those who came before. The term sexual revolution, however, refers today to those bra-burning decades of 'free love,' the contraceptive pill, Woodstock and hippy/ youth culture that arrived in the wake of modernism's death; the 1960s and 70s era of mass production, pop art, popular culture and cinematic pornography. This was, indeed, a period in which sex, pornography and eroticism played a central role in the avant-garde project. The early decades of the nineteenth century saw the seditious character of pornography virtually disappear; a disappearance accelerated by photography's asset-stripping takeover of the visualisation of sex. Despite this hostile nineteenth- century photographic annexation, by at least the early years of the twentieth century artists, particularly those aligned with the artistic avant-garde had begun to re- take and re-frame sexuality and use sexuality to once again challenge the status quo. Reflecting the mood of the late nineteenth, twentieth and fledgling twenty-first centuries, these printed works provide insights into the zeitgeist of an era, be that avant-garde, modernist or postmodernist, socialist, anti-capitalist, feminist or simply pornographic in origin and intent. Indeed, through layers of meaning and intent, picturing and exploring the intricacies and intimacies of the human condition, sexually graphic imagery plays many roles.

Themes, motifs and styles do, however, echo down the decades. Shane Wheatcroft's (a.k.a. GSG) postmodernesque, pop art overlaying of Matisse's iconic blue nude motif onto a 'Page 3' type topless beauty, for example, is a critique of popular culture, celebrity, the press and politics in silkscreen form.[14] Tracey Emin's self-consciously clumsy, masturbatory self-portraits might be said to mimic the simple, but utterly compelling early twentieth-century lithographic erotica of Albert Marquet. From a feminist perspective these lesbian sex scenes are undoubtedly problematic simply because a man made them for an assumed male audience; unlike Emin's (deliberately) less accomplished, but wholly democratic, female-sexuality affirming renderings. It might even be justifiable to draw parallels between Emin's confessional, candid self-portraits and the project of central core imagery



explored by the feminist avant-garde during the 1970s and 80s. While not as autobiographically confessional as Emin's drawings, but still said to signify the feminine identity of the artist, Sarah Hardacre's work draws on ideas of a modernist utopia, a male dominated environment and sexual revolution. Akin to Wheatcroft's postmodern appropriations, Hardacre's nostalgia for a world of non-Photoshopped, fake tan and plastic surgery-free-female beauty juxtaposes natural curves and sexuality with the brutalist concrete of Salford's post-industrial landscape.[15] The history of picturing the erotic, the obscene, the pornographic and forbidden in print presents an abundance of arousing opportunities to experience works equivocating between the hedonistic and the aesthetic, the subversive and culturally ambivalent, to the satiric and lampooned. As substitutes for the actual experience some have argued that at their heart these pictures aim to make erotic fantasy real. "Sometimes the pleasure of looking can become so intense that just watching becomes sexually satisfying as an end in itself".[16] It might be maintained, however, that this is a flawed, simplistic and frankly rather naïve view. It is, indeed, problematic to categorise these images as so one-dimensional or innocent, if that is the appropriate word to use in this context. In fact it might be said that in actuality these beautiful, sensual, comic, controversial, grotesque, fascinating and arousing images act to demystify aspects of the human condition.

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15 Paul Stolper, 'Sarah Hardacre', *Grabado Y Edición*, 39, July 2013, pp. 34–39.
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Hokusai (Katsushika Hokusai)
Man with two women and a pipe, Late 18th/early 19th century.
Colour woodblock print; book illustration. 25.1 x 34 cm.
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia.

Lucas Vorsterman

Ben Thomas

This engraving of a pastoral scene reproduces in reverse a carefully finished pen and ink drawing by the Emilian artist Francesco Parmigianino from c. 1530-39 now in the Kunsthalle in Hamburg (no. 21267). The drawing has a provenance to the collection of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, and it was presumably while he was working for that great patron of the arts in London from 1623-28 that Lucas Vorsterman engraved it, along with other works in the Arundel Collection.[1] The print carries an inscription dedicating it to Jacob Roland, and a Latin verse, whose source has not been identified, which suggests that the elder of the two men in the image is inspiring the younger by his blandishments to earn the garland of honour through the melody of his reed pipes ('*Exstimulat senior blandae ad modulamina cannae; Accendit iuvenem dulce, Corona, decus*'). In this context Parmigianino's stylish design served as an index of the Italianate and antique tastes of a leading figure in Caroline court culture.

The meaning of the original drawing, however, seems to be obviously homoerotic. As David Franklin has put it: 'The main lines of the narrative seem clear, even in the absence of a precise identification of the subject. The mortal youth who holds a flute in his right hand receives from the bearded god an offer or immortality in the form of a laurel wreath, which he reaches to take in exchange for sexual favours'.[2] Whether the two nude men, one bearded and mature, the other a youth, are a god and a mortal, or simply two goatherds, their encounter is subtly sexual with the prized wreath - held out of reach by the older man - being connected through complementary gestures with the phallic pipes held caressingly by the youth (a similar phallic allusion can be found in the rustic pipe which is the focus of attention for a pair of heterosexual lovers in Valentin Lefèvre's late seventeenth-century etching, after Titian's *Three Ages of Man* landscape in Edinburgh, which is also exhibited here). The mood of the scene resembles the yearning eroticism of the pastoral poetry of Virgil's *Eclogues* – for example, Corydon's love for Alexis in the second Eclogue – or of the *Idylls* of Theocritus. Same sex love was a frequent topic in the poetry and mythology of antiquity – a natural part of a metamorphic universe in which the transformative power of desire prevailed ('Omnia vincit Amor'). The gods and heroes of antiquity took both male and female lovers, for example, Apollo loved both Hyacinth and Daphne, among many others, while Hercules had both Omphale and Hylas as sexual partners (see, for example, the print of *Hylas and the Nymphs* by Pietro Santi Bartoli after a design by Giulio Romano, also exhibited here, where the male lover of Hercules is abducted by water nymphs). That Parmigianino's design represented homosexual love has been 'overlooked' previously, and the print has even been catalogued as *Adam and Eve* or a *Faun with a Nymph*.[3] Similarly, the eroticism of Parmigianino's drawings has often been censored by collectors, particularly in order to remove the signs of male arousal (e.g. the doctored drawing of *Priapus and Lotis* in the British Museum where the unfortunate god's defining characteristic has been carefully removed). At least one other drawing by Parmigianino depicts homosexual desire: a pen and ink drawing in the Louvre of two headless nude men where one is stroking the other's erect penis.[4] David Ekserdjian has shown that the artist's drawings provide evidence of Parmigianino's awareness of the notorious *I Modi* prints engraved by Marcantonio Raimondi after Giulio Romano's designs, which may account for his wariness about publishing such designs as prints given the punishment meted out by the church authorities to Marcantonio the printmaker.[5]

Social attitudes towards homosexual desire appear to have been relatively accepting in Renaissance Italy, although manuals for confessors continued to define sodomy as 'the gravest of all sexual sins because it violates nature and denies procreation' and there were periodic campaigns of juridical enforcement against sexual acts that could theoretically carry the death penalty.[6] It was wise therefore to overlay the expression of homosexual desire with allegorical, philosophical or poetic allusions – as Michelangelo did in addressing poems and drawings to his beloved Tommaso de' Cavalieri.[7] When the sculptor Baccio Bandinelli accused the goldsmith Benvenuto

Cellini of being a 'soddomitaccio' in front of Florence's Duke Cosimo in a violent argument over the aesthetic merits of an antique statue of Ganymede, Cellini defused the shock of this accusation by referring to mythology: "Yet would to God that I understood so noble an art as you allude to; they say that Jove used it with Ganymede in paradise [...]"[8] Cellini recalled the shouts of laughter provoked by his witticism from the Duke and his courtiers during a period of four years of house arrest following a conviction for sodomy in 1556 during which he began to write his autobiography.

Lucas Vorsterman
Pastoral Scene (Two Nude Goatherds), after Parmigianino, 1620s.
Engraving.
21 x 15.5 cm. Kindly on loan from Dr. Ben Thomas.

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Simone Cantarini

Allegra Baggio-Corradi

In classical antiquity, as much as in the Renaissance, the representation of the nude in art responded to the desire of delineating an ideal form. The translation of aesthetic principles into pictorial means was regulated by philosophical and religious precepts. The latter imposed the veiling of eroticism under literary and mythological disguises thus inducing artists to recur to metaphorical and allegorical depictions of the human body in the form of deity or animal.

It is nonetheless relevant to distinguish between the concept of 'naked' and 'nude'. The latter is intended by Kenneth Clark as a manifestation of the desire for perfect form rather than mere visual pleasure or aesthetic enjoyment.[1] According to the critic, during the Renaissance nudity conformed to ideals of philosophical and theological truth which needed a pictorial representation in order to be envisaged.[2] This is in accordance with Aristotle's belief that "art completes what nature cannot bring to a finish. The artist gives us knowledge of nature's unrealised ends."[3] The need for naturalism in the depiction of the nude nonetheless needed to comply with the representational regulations of Classicism and the theological restrictions on nudity. The binomial man-nature was hence mirrored in art through the spiritual and carnal communion of body and soul preached by Neo-Platonist thinkers. In fact in the Renaissance, eroticism entered the realm of art inasmuch as passion was conceived of as a way to redemption, a passage preceding death, a rational outlet of reason, a metamorphic process of regeneration. Whereas Classicism disdained the forces of sensation in favour of sobriety and feared everything which was not everlasting, Neo-Platonism envisaged nudity as a disclosure of the human soul through the form of an idealised physicality.

Although active in the 17th century, Simone Cantarini was sensitive to the Renaissance conception of the nude intended as a visual repository of philosophical and theological meanings. As evident in *Adam and Eve* nudity coheres with the economy of the composition inasmuch as the absence of costumes – typical of baroque angels and deities inhabiting the celestial spheres- emphasises the mortality of the body in opposition to the immortality of the soul. Cantarini depicts the two characters as profoundly bound by a psychological and physical connection echoing the domestic intimacy he so frequently explored in the *Rest after the Flight to Egypt*.[4] The pose of the two lovers is in fact reinforced by the repetition of shape and attitude of the two horses in the background, thus espousing the idea of humanity and nature as cognate universes, different yet related. The gesture of Eve, offering an

Simone Cantarini
Adam and Eve, c. 1639. Etching.
19.7 x 17 cm.
Kindly on loan from Dr. Ben Thomas.

apple to Adam with her left hand indicates the sinister nature of her act whilst amplifying the metaphorical character of the composition. The naturalistic elements of the landscape are counterpointed by contrived symbols of theological value. The scene depicted does not merely describe the fall of humanity caused by moral corruption, but it also discloses the anatomy of the body, its physical immanence and animal nature.

The uniform source of light irradiating the scene has both a theologico-philosophical and a pictorial nature. Such duplicity is reinforced by the peculiar etching technique adopted by Cantarini based on the principle of the multiple corrosive actions of the mordent that differentiated the perspectival planes by graduating their chromatic intensity. The horses in the background are in fact muffled, almost transparent whereas the foreground is sharp and incisive. The landscape is a metaphor of naturalism with its serene and diaphanous sky echoing Adam's melancholy and the succession of declivities and hills evoking Eve's sensuous and rounded forms. Nudity is thus transformed into an element of communion between the mortal nature of man and the eternity of the divine. Elements of illusion and allusion, nudity is here of a spiritual kind, inscribed in the classical tradition and departing from the bombastic excesses of the Baroque.
By looking at Cantarini's print it seems possible to hear the exhortation Pico della Mirandola imagined God addressing to Adam: "for that place, that aspect, those prerogatives that you will yearn for, everything according to your decision and advice be realised and preserved. I did not create you as celestial or terrestrial, mortal or immortal so that you could be the free and sovereign artifex of yourself, so that you could sculpt yourself into the form you desired".[5] In order to reveal Adam and Eve's unrestrained nature of self-determining individuals Cantarini chose to carve them in the nude body of two classical sculptures. The human and the natural are thus interpenetrated, microcosm and macroanthropos, terrestrial and divine become one.

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Jan de Bisschop

Nigel Ip

Jan de Bisschop (1628-71), also known as Johannes Episcopius, was a Dutch lawyer and printmaker.[1] He likely received drawing lessons from Bartholomeus Breenbergh (c. 1598 – c. 1657), a Dutch painter specialising in Italianate landscapes whose style is prominent in de Bisschop's landscape drawings. De Bisschop was also a founding member of the Confrerie Pictura in 1656, a club of artists in The Hague, The Netherlands.

This print belongs to a series of 101 etchings known as the *Signorum Veterum Icones*, first published by Nicolaes Visscher in two separate volumes in 1668 and 1669.[2] These were subsequently issued together in later impressions, of which this particular print may have originated due to the later inclusion of de Bisschop's monogram ('JB. f.'), the abbreviated draughtsman's name ('Bac.d.'), and the plate number ('48'). Together with the 57 etchings in the *Paradigmata Graphices Variorum Artificum*, these series of prints served as drawing-books that provided artists with examples from different masters to enhance and instruct their artistic development, principally by copying works from antiquity and earlier artists by drawing. They were also sources for models when a living one was unavailable. The Icones comprised of reproductive etchings of well-known Greco-Roman sculptures, whereas the *Paradigmata* reproduced paintings and sculptures by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian and Dutch artists. However, the volumes were never intended to be published together.

This etching was made after a drawing by Adriaen Backer (c. 1635 – 1684), a Dutch portrait painter in Amsterdam. It depicts one of four different views of the *Venus de' Medici* (*Icones* nos. 47-50) after the Greek sculptor Praxiteles.[3] The *Venus de' Medici* was a variant to the Capitoline Venus in Rome, with principal differences being the putti riding on a dolphin in the former. Both sculptures adopt the Venus pudica pose, often referred to as the 'modest Venus', and was a development from the more 'offensive' stance of its predecessor, the *Aphrodite of Cnidus*, rumoured to have been inspired by a courtesan named Phryne.[4] Pliny the Elder even recalled a story that "a man once fell in love with it and hiding by night embraced it, and that a stain betrays this lustful

Jan de Bisschop (Episcopius)
Signorum Veterum Icones 48 (Second View of Medici Venus), after a drawing by Adriaen Backer, after 1668. Etching. 22.9 x 8.1 cm. Kindly on loan from Dr. Ben Thomas.

act."[5] The *Venus pudica* is typically characterised by a female figure covering her pubis with her hand, with later variants depicted also covering the breasts.[6]

"To be naked", according to Kenneth Clark, "is to be deprived of our clothes and the word implies some of the embarrassment which most of us feel in that condition."[7] On the other hand, "The word nude[…] carries[…]no uncomfortable overtone."[8] Clark's distinction between these two paradigms was based upon the stylistic developments of classical sculpture and contemporary attitudes from antiquity to the early twentieth century. Whereas the nude in paganism was a celebration of physical beauty, the Church saw it as a symbol of humility and associated it with the Fall of Man:

"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."[9]

Despite the moral views of the church, the *Venus pudica* was reinforced in the Renaissance by the *Venus de' Medici* and the pose was adopted in subsequent idealised representations of the goddess in Western Art, largely deriving from Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* (1510).[10] The sculpture itself was also frequently copied and reproduced in plaster casts and prints.

The use of the pose was a defining moment in history that associated female sexuality with passivity, vulnerability and shame, evident in representations of the Biblical story of Susanna and the Elders. This remained unchallenged until the nineteenth century when Édouard Manet exhibited his *Olympia* (1863) at the 1865 Paris Salon where it received much criticism.[11] Although the painting was modelled on Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538), the controversy was directed towards the realism of Manet's prostitute, identifying her as a real naked figure as opposed to the mythologised nude of Titian's painting. These conservative attitudes were also supported by contemporary neoclassical tastes for academic art, which reinforced the erotic and submissive qualities of the female figure in works of the time.

The *Venus pudica* has since fallen out of fashion, with displays of female sexuality becoming more active and explicit in an attempt to reclaim female dominance and challenge existing cultural norms.

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William Hogarth
Left: *Before*, 1736. Etching and engraving, first state.
43 x 33 cm. Michael Finney Antique Books & Prints, London.
Image © Trustees of the British Museum.

Right: *After*, 1736. Etching and engraving, first state.
43 x 33 cm. Michael Finney Antique Books & Prints, London
Image © Trustees of the British Museum.

Attributed to Masanobu Okumura
Diver with three octopi, Late 17th/early 18th century.
Woodblock print; book illustration. 21.5 x 27.5 cm.
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia.

Shunga: sexually explicit Japanese art

Louise Boyd

Shunga is a collective term used to refer to sexually explicit woodblock prints, paintings and woodblock-printed illustrated books, created in Japan during the Edo period (c.1603-1868).[1] There is an attempt in *Beautifully Obscene* to offer an understanding of what *shunga* is and how it shows an important, but often suppressed, aspect of human experience.[2]

While there are rare examples from other artistic schools, *shunga* was most commonly produced by *ukiyo-e* (pictures of the floating world) artists. Almost all of the leading *ukiyo-e* artists, including Hishikawa Moronobu (1618-1694), Suzuki Harunobu (1725-1770), Kitagawa Utamaro (1753?-1806), Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), and Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861), produced *shunga* as well as the pictures of beautiful women, actors, and landscapes they are known for.

The artists who produced *shunga* were male; there were very few female artists in the Edo period and no known female *shunga* artists.[3] Although, the possibility has been raised that Hokusai's daughter Katsushika Ōi (active c.1818–after 1854) may have produced or contributed to *shunga* as an artist in her father's workshop.

There was little differentiation between the creation and distribution of *shunga* and other *ukiyo-e*: *shunga* prints and books were drawn by the same artists, cut by the same carvers, commissioned by the same publishers and sold by the same sellers to the same audience, albeit slightly more discreetly than other prints. This discretion was because *shunga* was made nominally illegal, along with other luxury goods, in 1722 as part of the Kyoho reforms. The extent to which these laws were enforced varied over time, with similar edicts reissued in the 1790s and 1830s, resulting in temporary dips in production. In general, the production and dissemination of *shunga* was tolerated by the government, until the 1850s onwards when, largely due to foreign disapproval, depictions of sex became a sensitive subject and gradually disappeared from Japanese art.

Shunga, whether produced as a set or album of prints, illustrated book (*shunpon*) or scroll painting, usually consisted of a series of unconnected scenes. They often include one or two *abuna-e* (literally 'danger pictures'), which are mildly risqué. In contrast to *shunga*, where the genitals are frequently exaggerated and depicted in graphic detail, *abuna-e* are not explicit but reminiscent of the milder eroticism associated with the nude in European art.

The nude as an artistic genre did not exist in Edo Japan and, due to the lack of religious judgement of sex and a tradition of communal bathing, nudity was seen as a natural state and not considered shameful or erotic in and of itself.[4] Artists tended to depict figures in *shunga* partially clothed. Eroticism occurs not from the baring of skin but from concealment, with vibrant colour combinations and lavish patterns being more visually engaging and tantalising for viewers. Clothing also acted as a framing device, emphasising faces and genitals.
Shunga often gives viewers context in a way that other sex art does not through the integration of text within the images. Text can reveal information about the participants, such as showing the level of intimacy and engagement between the couple, or it can directly give a voice to the lovers to articulate their subjectivity and express their pleasure through onomatopoeic noises, 'dirty talk' and witty remarks.

An apparent equality between men and women and a focus on their mutual pleasure are considered characteristic of *shunga*. In *shunga*, women are shown as equal and active participants and their enjoyment is signified through curled toes, closed eyes, head thrown back, dishevelled hair, the emission of sexual fluids and cries of pleasure. This focus on the emotional aspects of a physical act allows viewers to connect with the participants and helps reduce objectification of them. In *shunga*, identification is encouraged and subjectivity is emphasised, with the emotional experience of the

Utamaro Kitagawa
Prelude to Desire – P, from *The Prelude to Desire (Negai no Itoguchi)* series, 1799; c. 1890-1910 printing from re-carved block-set. Colour woodblock print. 25.1 x 35.9 cm. Kent Print Collection, Canterbury.

participants conveyed through the focus on their faces and gestures of pleasure, and through the portrayal of people as individualised human beings rather than as gods or allegories like in European sex art. Indeed, *shunga* portrays all kinds of people, including domestic scenes with husbands and wives, insatiable widowers, adulterers, young or old lovers, *chonin* (townspeople), ladies-in-waiting, and even foreigners. Edoites loved novelty and, in order to satisfy them, artists depicted a variety of combinations of participants, locations, situations and sexual positions.

Shunga had a wide-ranging audience: it was viewed by men and women, young and old, from all classes of society, either alone or with a partner.[5] Since *shunga* were produced by male artists, and used as pornography, it is sometimes assumed that they were for a male audience. However, there are contemporary visual and textual sources that support the current scholarly consensus that *shunga* were viewed by both men and women. Gerstle suggests that certain *shunga* books may have been aimed at a female audience, as they parody well-known women's educational textbooks.[6] Some men preferred male-female relationships and others male-male (*nanshoku* or male love), but in the Edo period these were not considered mutually exclusive and there was a fluidity of sexuality that allowed for participation in both. It was not uncommon to include one or two *nanshoku* scenes (always of an active older man with a submissive younger man) amidst the male-female couples in a *shunga* print series or book. There was no term for female same sex

relationships and such depictions in *shunga* are rare. *Shunga* includes a wide range of works that have been grouped together due to their sexual content, but this obscures the multiplicity of functions and uses that *shunga* had. The term '*shunga*' is now used internationally for the sake of clarity and simplicity, but there were several words used in the Edo period to refer to sexually explicit art, some of which reflect the variety of roles that *shunga* could fulfil.

Shunga literally translates as 'spring pictures' and comes from *chunhua* or *chungong hua* (Spring Palace pictures), the name given to Chinese sexually explicit art. But as a euphemism, it calls to mind the new life and new growth associated with spring. In this way, the term 'spring pictures' helps to situate sex as a natural part of life. In English, *shunga* is referred to as 'erotic' art. However, 'erotic' is somewhat coy and does not necessarily reflect the explicitness of *shunga*. Timon Screech was the first to acknowledge openly that, as well as being art, *shunga* was used as pornography.[7] The term *warai-e* (laughing pictures) may indicate the humorous aspects of *shunga*, but *warai* was also a euphemism for masturbation. Edo (modern-day Tokyo) was sometimes referred to as the city of bachelors due to the higher proportion of men. Although prostitution was legal within licensed areas, the so-called pleasure quarters, for most it was unaffordable and they had to make do with compensatory images. As pornography, *shunga* could be an outlet for sexual frustrations. *Makura-e* (pillow book pictures), an alternative name for *shunga*, indicates its use in the bedroom. As well as *shunga* being used for solitary masturbation, it could also used by couples as a source of arousal, to revive flagging sexual appetites, or as a means of seduction, since marriages were frequently arranged for political, economic or business reasons rather than chosen for love, and concubines and affairs were not uncommon.

Shunga were created by the leading *ukiyo-e* artists and can be as aesthetically pleasing as any other subject. That they depict sex is no reason to assume that *shunga* cannot be viewed, appreciated, and treated as art.[8] *Shunga* can be a feast for the eyes, with luxurious prints featuring mica (metallic pigment), blind embossing or exquisitely detailed carving. Artists sometimes included artwork on screens within the image in other artistic styles to show off their talents.

As artworks, *shunga* can provide a window into another world, one that the viewer may otherwise never be able to see or experience. They could express, and potentially evoke, a whole gamut of moods and emotions including pleasure, passion, amusement, anger, and tenderness. Sexual desires that perhaps could not be satisfied in actuality could be represented in *shunga*. For example, voyeurism, as in Harunobu's popular *Mane'emon* series, was a common trope.

Intellectual stimulation is another aspect of *shunga* as art beyond the obvious aesthetic element. Although prints and illustrated books were relatively cheap, they should not be dismissed as 'low class'; many *shunga* works require a literate, knowledgeable viewer to be able to enjoy the intertextuality, word play, puns, symbolism, and witty references that are common features of *ukiyo-e*.

Warai-e (pictures for laughing) may refer to the humour that was a familiar feature of *shunga*, including word play, comical situations and *mitate*, juxtapositions which produce a subtle form of humour. There were shunga parody versions of many popular plays and novels including *Genji monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*). Parodies offer viewers the pleasures of recognition and of being in on the joke. Furthermore, laughter is a way of relieving stress and frustration, both political and sexual. For instance, Gerstle and Preston argue that the humour in *shunga* could have been used as social and political commentary as a way of getting around censorship edicts which forbade governmental criticism and the depiction of current events.[9]

Shunga was included in a bride's trousseau, ostensibly to educate the young newlywed, but this claim is subject to scepticism. In fact, the sentiment that *shunga* should not be taken seriously as a guide is present in popular culture of the time, including this oft-quoted *senryū* (comic poem): "The stupid couple

Unknown artist
Man and youth with two voyeurs at a window, c. 18th century.
Woodblock print; book illustration. 13.9 x 38 cm.
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia.

Try doing it as in *shunga* And sprain their hands".[10] There are several ways that *shunga* fulfilled an economic function: as a form of advertising (for sex toys, lubricant and 'long-life' medicine), as a product to make money for artists and publishers, and as a way to stimulate spending in related areas such as other *ukiyo-e* or in brothels.
Higa (hidden pictures) is another name for *shunga*, and it was claimed to be for protection against fire in the home or injury in battle, if carried in a soldier's helmet, but the veracity of these claims has been questioned.[11]

Shunga is an important part of *ukiyo*-e, which is only relatively recently getting the attention it deserves. As well as being art, there are many other uses of *shunga* which vary over time and from viewer to viewer, due to factors such as gender, status, sexuality, experience or mood. Although *shunga* shares much with sexually explicit or erotic art of other cultures and time periods, the combination of high aesthetic values, integration of text, use of gentle humour, and apparent equality in the way it depicts women, set it apart. For these reasons, *shunga* is a strong case in point against arguments of sexual explicitness precluding a work from being art. Regardless of whether *shunga* is defined as erotic or pornographic, in depicting sex, *shunga* engages with sensitive and complex issues related to fundamental human experiences and allows for a range of responses from viewers, which must surely be key concepts in any definition of art.

Louise Boyd is a PhD candidate at the University of Glasgow researching the history and reception of shunga (sexually explicit Japanese art) through museum collections and exhibitions. She has an M.A in Japanese art history from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. She has assisted with Japanese art related projects at the British Museum and National Museums Scotland. In 2012, she guest curated an exhibition on Japan and South West Scotland for Dumfries Museum. Her research interests include Japanese art, ukiyo-e, Kitagawa Utamaro, female artists, definitions, collecting, and issues relating to gender and sexuality.

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10 Screech 1999, p. 41.
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Achille Sirouy
Sardanapale, after Eugène Delacroix, 1861.
Lithograph. 42.9 x 53.8 cm.
Kindly on loan from Dr. Ben Thomas. Image © Trustees of the British Museum.

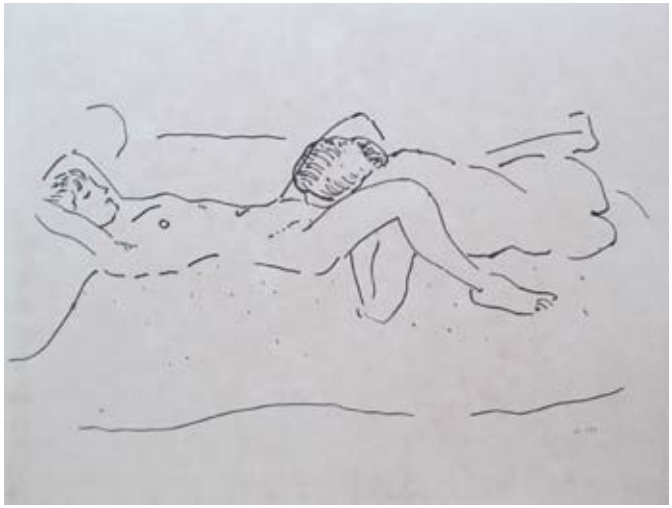
Albert Marquet

Caroline Kjaer

The two chosen Marquet lithographs are a part of a collection titled *L'Academie des Dames: Vingt Attitudes*. The prints featured in this collection all share the motif of women in sexually explicit positions or situations. The specific sexual nature of the exhibited lithographs depicts two women engaging in sexual activities of masturbation and cunnilingus. In regards to the theme of taboo present in the exhibition, the two exemplified lithographs are greatly demonstrative.

The first lithograph print shows a woman sexually pleasing herself. By covering her face with her arm, we become focused on her genitals, which are also placed in the centre of the print thus drawing our attention to that area. When considering both the Marquet artworks featured in the exhibition, it is important, as well as necessary, to consider the role the time period plays in terms of the theme of taboo material. The publication of the collection of prints has been estimated to be circa 1905. Within this era, the idea of a female masturbating, therefore achieving sexual pleasure without the presence or aid of a male, would be perceived as taboo by the members of society at the time. What's more, this lithograph also presents the female depicted in complete control of the situation. The taboo of this factor stems from the understanding of the social norms and perception of gender roles at the estimated period of time.

Sexuality is a dominating element of the second lithograph print, as we see two women engaging in a sexual act. With this depiction Albert Marquet could be considered greatly ahead of his time, as same sex couples used to be considered taboo for many years even subsequent to the release of these lithographs. In many parts of the world,



Albert Marquet
Left: *Woman masturbating*, c. 1905. Lithograph.
18 x 31 cm. Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds.
Right: *Lesbian couple XIV*, c. 1905. Lithograph.
14 x 23 cm. Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds.

homosexual relationships were not properly recognized for many years and are still to this day not given their full rights and respect. Lynda Nead focuses on this aspect of same sex relationships and sexual acts in her book *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*. Nead's main point is the unfair obscenity placed upon artworks that feature homosexual elements or portrayals of sexual acts between individuals of the same gender.[1] Both the activities illustrated in the prints could further be considered taboo due to the fact that they are typically performed in private. By putting these private and sexual acts in various prints in a collection, Marquet is removing the privacy aspect and presenting sexuality for all to see. Additionally, the fact that the females are nude as well as performing acts considered by some to be provocative, could further contribute to the way in which the lithographs could be considered taboo. Due to the fact that nude women are presented in sexually explicit situations, results in a possibly pornographic interpretation, which leads to the theme of the taboo being reiterated considering the era in which they were published.

In an article by Edith Hoffmann on an Albert Marquet exhibition at the Museé de l'Orangerie, the topic of Japanese influences in his art is discussed. According to Hoffmann, the influence of Japanese works on Marquet's art, which she also refers to as being of an "obvious" nature, is particularly grounded in the element of perspective.[2] With this in mind, one could consider the possibility of the influence of *shunga* art on the sketches presented throughout *L'Academie des Dames: Vingt Attitudes*. The carvings and prints within the *shunga* art genre are of a similar nature in subject matter and have also been considered taboo due to their provocative and pornographic nature as well as their traditionally secretive distribution.

As an artist Albert Marquet was deeply involved in and associated with the Fauvist art movement, working closely with artists such as Henri Matisse. The establishing elements of Fauvism were the liberty to use colour freely as well as depicting representation in a naturalistic manner.[3] Throughout his career, Marquet produced a number of artworks presenting nude females in various poses. Throughout all these various nudes, Marquet would remain constant in his natural as well as simple representation of the female body; presenting it in its pure natural form, as resonates with his association to the Fauvism era. Moreover, this also demonstrates Marquet's appreciation of the female body.

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Félicien Rops
Soixante-neuf, 1909. Etching.
10.5 x 7.5 cm. Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds.

Othon Friesz
Seated Man, 1948. Lithograph.
20 x 18.5 cm. Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds.

Angèle Delasalle

Samantha Scott

Angèle Delasalle, (1867 – c. 1941), was a bold figure within a society that limited her opportunities as a female painter and printmaker. Although, like many female artists, her name has faded almost into obscurity today, Delasalle achieved recognition at the *Salon des Artistes Français* (winning several medals and a travel bursary), regularly exhibited at the *Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts* and was a member of the *Salon d'Automne*. This culminated in 1926 when she was made a *Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur*.[1] Delasalle was best known as an accomplished portraitist but also investigated other genres. She was particularly known for her boldness in addressing a variety of subject matters with a practical approach without adhering to expectations of female stereotypes. As B. Dufernex wrote, "[h]er characteristic energy is such that her sex cannot be detected in her work; in fact, she was made the first and only woman member of the International Association of Painters under the impression that her pictures [...] were the work of a man".[2]

Le Repos was published by the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* and is perhaps most interesting of Delasalle's works in the way that she references Édouard Manet's famous 1863 painting *Olympia*. Both models are in similar poses but whilst Manet depicts a prostitute frankly addressing the viewer, Delasalle provides a more naturalistic depiction of a woman at rest. Manet's work caused much controversy in both unashamedly depicting a prostitute in a provocative manner, and in an artistic style that denies the ideal with its lack of modelling.[3] Delasalle's nude has less complications; the model is not directly addressing the viewer and the offset gaze appears unconcerned and even unaware of the viewer's presence.

As remarked by Rosemary Betterton, Delasalle was working in a period where "a reconfiguration occurred, both politically and artistically, in female embodiment"

Angèle Delasalle
Le Repos, 1909. Etching.
13.5 x 20 cm.
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds.

that for the first time allowed Western women to study from naked female models.[4] As such, in the very act of being a female artist depicting a female nude, Delasalle's work is just as provocative and bold as Manet's, especially in the frank and unquestioning attitude towards the nude. Whilst the position of Delasalle's model is more open than in *Olympia*, more implicit sexual references are made in the latter with the hand covering the genitalia. Delasalle's older model, perhaps implying a greater wisdom, has no such provocative attitude, despite being at first sight less concerned with any idea of modesty. Yet whilst the woman is unconcerned with the viewer, she is not passive. This is shown in the implied movement of the resting hands and the intense preoccupation with private thoughts. Despite focusing solely on a resting model, the image is an active one through the model's ownership of her own body and the expressive mark-making used.

The concept of allowing "women artists to take possession of the body in representation"[5] is a sentiment that can be seen clearly in Delasalle's strong and confident figure that challenges the traditional male gaze. Rather than a submissive and docile stance, Delasalle allows her model complete ownership of her own body. In this and working as a female painter, Delasalle is boldly re-evaluating artistic traditions. The modern action of a female painter portraying a female nude allows for empowerment of the female form. For Frances Borzello, the "reclining nude is never a picture of reality. It is an artistic genre in which the live model is transformed into a carrier of meanings".[6] In relation to *Le Repos*, this is proved true. Although the model is deftly executed, it is the boldness in depicting a naturalistic woman at that time for which Delasalle is most noted. In transgressing expectations, Delasalle makes the female nude a mark of personal power and ownership, rather than of classical beauty or vulnerability.

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Henri Matisse

Lauren Harrison

Standing Blue Nude (1952) by Henri Matisse depicts the silhouetted, standing figure of a nude woman, shown only through disjointed sections of vibrant blue on a background of white. There are no facial features or identifiable features of any kind to suggest a particular model, however, this would suggest that the depiction of a particular woman was not the intention, rather a depiction of women in Matisse's refined eroticism.

This particular image, possibly made in 1954, is a lithographic reproduction of Matisse's earlier and significantly larger gouache paper cut-out of the same name in 1952.[1] He originally used cut-out paper shapes to compose his paintings. However, this quickly became a method for creating original works of art during the last seventeen years of his life. They were akin to "drawing with scissors on sheets of paper colored in advance, one movement linking line with color, contour with surface."[2] The lithograph was printed by Atelier Mourlot in Paris and subsequently published by Tériade in 1958 in a special double issue of the art review *Verve* dedicated to the late work of the artist.[3] Matisse oversaw the first proofs for the publication in 1954. Tériade was also responsible for publishing *Jazz* in 1947, a book replicating a set of twenty cut-outs made between 1943 and 1946. The cut-out *Standing Blue Nude* was reinterpreted by the Mourlot artists and set directly onto lithographic stone. This technique gave far better responses to variations in tone and line density, therefore producing very skilful images. The chemicals applied to the non-treated parts of the stone prevent ink from taking to it so when the ink is applied and the paper is pressed onto it, only the drawn into sections appear to create the image on the paper. Lithography was initially successful thanks to its longevity and unique aesthetic, and has

Henri Matisse

Standing Blue Nude, 1952. Lithographic reproduction, 1954.
26.5 x 35.5 cm. Lilford Gallery, Canterbury.

been used by many print artists throughout its long tenure in the history of art since the late nineteenth century.[4]

One can see throughout Matisse's figurative work a central interest in the female form, and the influence gained from his early sculptural work.[5] However, his choice of colour for his nudes play a bigger role than their formal qualities. The colour blue is used subversively in many erotic works, almost as if to mask the explicitness of the content with the pure connotations of the colour. In Shane Wheatcroft's *Blue Nude 1* (2011) the colour blue is used to create this mask both literally and figuratively, specifically by super-imposing Matisse's cut-out of the same name to cover a photograph of a typical 'page 3' model via the process of layered screenprinting. This creates a direct contrast with pornographic imagery which serves to highlight the non-visual complexities of Matisse's work. The colour blue also features in erotic prints by controversial artist Sarah Hardacre and, much earlier, in the 1920 *Sous Bois* etching by Marcel Vertès. In *Standing Blue Nude* Matisse has gone a step further and used only bold sections of this colour, emphasising its symbolic nature and the form of the woman in such a way so as to force us to gaze longer and try to understand her physicality as depicted by the artist:

"From La Joie de vivre *– I was 35 then – to this cut-out – I'm 82 – I have not changed… because all that time I have looked for the same things which I have perhaps realised by different means […]"*[6]

There is a sense that Matisse was always very focused on similar aims in the depiction of the female form, from the *Blue Nude* painting of 1907 through to the paper cut-outs in 1952. The erotic representation is at times complex, but the more simplistic attempts such as *Nu Bleu X* are arguably the most successful as they achieve a complexity which transcends the visual and shows an artist striving for harmony.

Matisse's late cut-out nudes are the culmination – and subtle disruption – of traditions of Arcadian imagery and the nude within Western art. One can see a development throughout the history of erotic art and printmaking from the traditional depictions by Eugène Delacroix – modulating within Cezanne – and cultivating in the sophisticated erotic depictions that we see in the work of Matisse.

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Roland Delcol

Georgia Kelly

The Ankle Strap is part of a series of twelve lithographs by Belgian hyper-realist Roland Delcol. Born in 1942, Delcol studied at the *Académie des Beaux-Arts de Saint-Gilles* from 1965 to 1971 after three years at the University of Brussels. During his time at art school, he studied lithography in Milan before returning to this technique at Paris' *Atelier Jobin* in 1975, the year that *The Ankle Strap* was printed. Whilst photo-realist in style, this print is rooted in the surrealist tradition of the artists who influenced him: René Magritte (1898-1967) and Paul Delvaux (1897-1994). Delcol's depiction of the female body, however, moves beyond the work of these artists in furthering surrealist eroticism and using a postmodern approach.

The Ankle Strap's series of lithographs were intended to accompany the erotic novel *Emmanuelle* by Emmanuelle Arsan which explores the love/lust dualism by contrasting a woman's series of anonymous erotic encounters with her desire for love in her sexual relationships. The print's relationship to an erotic novel is not unprecedented in surrealism: Salvador Dali made a series of prints to accompany Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's sado-masochistic novella *Venus in Furs* and Pauline Réage' erotic *Story of O* inspired prints by Leonor Fini.[1] Indeed, as explored by Neil Philip earlier in this publication, many Surrealist artists created works immersed in sexual themes.

Delcol heightens the eroticism in his print by itemising parts of the female body whilst working in a realist style. Much of *The Ankle Strap* has been left unprinted or shaded in very light tones, heightening the impact of the solid black of the shoe strap and the pubic hair as focal points of the image. Highlighted is the play on the traditional connotations of a woman revealing her ankle, a suggestion not only referenced but turned upside-down as the woman's ankles are the only clothed part of her body. The second highlight, the woman's genitalia, works alongside the photo-realism to suggest an explicit depiction of a woman more life-like than the sketchy nudes of Dali and Fini. By removing the woman's head from the picture, Delcol follows the "precedent of surrealist paintings of women cut up or disassembled".[2] Robin Adèle Greeley argues that in works like *Le Viol* (1935), which depicts a woman's eyes and mouth replaced with her breasts and genitals, Magritte depicts the woman's speech as competing with her sexuality.[3] This tradition extends from Gustave Courbet's *L'Origine du monde* (1866) and Marcel Duchamp's *Etant donnés 1. La chute d'eau 2. Le gaz d'eclairage* (1946-66) where women are shown only through the depiction of their genitalia. These fetishist images also relate to the French *blason* tradition where only part of the subject is revealed. Delcol's cropping of the image silences his subject, replacing her words and identity with an eroticism both explicit and suggested.

The Ankle Strap's anonymity and relationship to an erotic novel develops Delcol's work beyond surrealism not only in terms of eroticism but also in the context of Michel Foucault's essay *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*.[4] Writing about Magritte's painting *The Treachery of Images* (1928-9) that depicts a pipe with the latter phrase below it, Foucault distinguishes the concepts of 'resemblance', when a signifier imitates a primary referent, and 'similitude', when the referent of the signifier is itself another signifier leading to a chain of displaced meaning. Foucault argues for similitude being characteristic of Magritte's work and exemplified in *The Treachery of Images*. Delcol, however, exaggerates this similitude beyond that of Magritte.

Firstly, Delcol's unbound lithographs are presented separately from the novel's text, removing any clear connection between the prints and the passages of text they might illustrate. The lithographs allude to the text but what they signify is unclear. As the text itself is a signifier to ideas, concepts and characters, the relationship of *The Ankle Strap* to a work of literature sets Delcol's prints in a chain of signifiers, the end of which we are prevented from reaching. Secondly, Delcol's photo-realism increases the length of this chain of referents. Delcol's lithographs are not invisible; the images are so close to being

Roland Delcol
Left: *The Ankle Strap*, 1975. Lithograph.
55 x 44 cm. Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Right: *L'Origine du monde*, 1975. Lithograph.
55 x 44 cm. Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds.

photographic that the large spaces of unmarked paper and the texture of the paper betrayed by the moments where the black ink is disturbed, strike us with an awareness that the image is based on a photograph but is not one.[5] This photograph adds an additional signifier to the chain, distancing us from this woman whose identity, as we have seen, has been cropped out of the image, ending this chain of reference in mystery.

Under Surrealism's influence, Delcol's print accompanies an erotic novel and depicts an anonymous woman whose identity has been replaced by her sexuality. The photo-realism in his work builds on these surrealist foundations, making the work more explicitly erotic, and further distancing us from the ultimate reference and meaning of the work. Delcol exaggerates the distance between our understanding of this woman as a sexual being and as a person, and we find ourselves, like Emmanuelle, with love both separated from lust and out of reach.

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Monika Beisner

Alice Jones

Monika Beisner is a German artist born in 1942. She studied the art of painting in Braunschweig and the German artistic centre of Berlin later continuing her artistic education in New York and London, where she now resides. The paintings she creates are later turned into giclée prints. Beisner has an established career producing and illustrating children's books. She has also branched out to create a portfolio of work for more mature audiences with series of prints depicting illustrations from literary influences such as her recently published works for Dante's *Divine Comedy*.[1] As well as an artist, Beisner is a storyteller; she weaves intricate details of fables and myths into the fabric of her works.

Beisner's recent offerings focus on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; this is a Latin narrative poem consisting of fifteen separate books and over 250 myths. They explore the metamorphoses of mythological characters including Jupiter, Narcissus, Hermaphroditus and more. The giclée prints featured in this exhibition are derived from this collection with each depicting a different tale. Themes of sexuality, reproduction and gender roles are rife within Ovid's mythology, with many stories telling of the lineage of several infamous mythological characters. The prints, reminiscent of Georgia O'Keefe's imagery, have a cleverly manipulated aesthetic appearance that leads the audience to view the work, at a primary glance, as a sexual depiction of genitalia. Yet on deeper inspection Beisner has concealed a profound meaning as to the origins of the use of such imagery in revealing Ovid's tales of the Greek myths.

Beisner plays on the child in the viewer, using bold colours and simple shapes to convey narratives that not only depict these myths but also play on intrinsic human passions. The prints presented here are inspired by myths that, at their core, are focused on human sexuality and pleasure. The first, *Tiresias* (2010), tells the story of Tiresias, who, when stumbling upon a pair of mating snakes, struck one dead. Hera angered by this turned Tiresias into a woman which he lived as for several years before stumbling on another

set of mating snakes and being returned back to his masculine state. Due to having lived as both genders, Tiresias is brought into an argument between Juno and Jupiter regarding which gender receives more pleasure in love. Tiresias reveals the answer to be women and Juno, angered by being proved wrong, strikes him blind. Jupiter, feeling sympathy for the now blinded man gives him the gift of prophecy, thus Tiresias becomes the first blind seer.[2]

The second print, *Peleus and Thetis* (2010), re-imagines the tale of Peleus and Thetis and therefore the conception of Achilles. The myth recounts the story of Jupiter's love for Thetis but his fear over the fable of her son being born stronger than his father, Jupiter did not want someone on earth being stronger than him and therefore asked his grandson Peleus, a twice-exiled man, to marry Thetis. Thetis, however, was reluctant to mate with Peleus and used her skills of transformation to deter his advances. A seer, Proteus, witnessing his struggles spoke to Peleus:

"Son of Aeacus, you will have the bride you desire if you bind her unawares with nooses and tight cords whilst she is lulled asleep in the rocky cave. Though she deceives you with a hundred counterfeit shapes, hold her to you, whatever she becomes, until she is again what she was before."[3]

This is the moment Beisner has chosen to depict, the moment in which Thetis transforms from a bird, to a tree, to a tigress and eventually giving up back into her true form. Peleus did this until Thetis was forced to give in and consummate their relation. The scenes of Thetis' struggle are those depicted, a challenging and dark subject matter that is twisted into a happy appearance through the use of bright colours.

Mythology and its figures have long been a focal point in works of erotic art; it was a longstanding method for Renaissance artists to convey erotic scenes. Artists such as Titian utilised this idea to paint such works as his famous nude, the *Venus of Urbino* (1538). Traditionally mythological figures were seen as sexually liberated, stories featured nude goddesses and scenes depicting sexual relations.[4]

Monika Beisner
Above: *Tiresias*, 2010. Giclée print.
54.6 x 42.2 cm. Pratt Contemporary, Sevenoaks.
Below: *Peleus and Thetis*, 2010. Giclée print.
54.6 x 42.2 cm. Pratt Contemporary, Sevenoaks.
Images © Monika Beisner 2010.

It would seem that Beisner reflects on this idea, again displaying something sexualised and using mythology as a way of disguising this. However her use of the imagery of genitalia are intentionally provocative and relevant to the stories they contain. In the case of Tiresias, the use of the female genitalia is a reference to his life as a woman; he is cocooned within a symbol of his entrapment in the female body. When viewed from the side the image can also resemble an eye, which can reveal another narrative element of the myth, reflecting on his life as a seer. In the case of Peleus and Thetis, the story concealed within the phallic imagery is a reference not only to the theme of reproduction within the myth but also to the idea of male empowerment.

The mythology behind the prints has a strong relation to the erotic and the representation of sexuality and gender roles even within modern society. The theme of mythology in general is intrinsic to the history of the erotic and these prints cleverly bring together the traditional themes of the past with the modern techniques of today. Beisner's prints address sexuality, gender roles and reproduction through the use of mythology in the same way the old masters did. Her clever use of colours and storybook style enchant the viewer, reigniting their child-like fascination with mythology and fairytales. Yet her sexual subject matters present a clever twist on the original storytelling techniques playing on the viewer's intrinsic fascination with simplistic styles and weaving a deeper and darker narrative on closer inspection.

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2 K. M. Coleman, 'Tiresias the Judge: Ovid, Metamorphoses 3.322-38', *The Classical Quarterly*, 40.2 (1990), 571–77.
3 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. by E. J. Kenney, trans. by A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xi. 221-65.
4 Paola Tinagli, 'Female nudes in Renaissance Art', in Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 121-54.

Tracey Emin

Graham Knight

You either love her, or hate her; Tracey Emin almost certainly inspires that Marmite moment within both the public and art critics alike. She is arguably one of the most influential and feted artists of her generation. However, it is subject matter, predominantly all too biographical, in all its overtly sexual content that predominates both the perception of the work and the headlines which inevitably follow. But what marks her out from many of her contemporaries is her consummate storytelling and the way that she draws you in by bridging that gap with the viewer. She explores the universal emotions that lay open her innermost thoughts, feelings and, above all, her ultimate vulnerability.

The Beginning of Me (2012) is certainly no different in this respect; typically brash, extremely open and a highly graphic evocation of the fecundity encoded within her confessional narrative: there appears to be very little mediation in conveying her most intimate and embarrassing moments. However, it is the artwork itself, as an embodiment of her life, which mediates these events, which paradoxically portray a very public evocation of her private life: therefore, what is key to gaining an understanding of her work is to realise that her art is her life, and her life is her art.

There is a poignancy about this work, a watershed in her life, where her younger self, the sexually active and ultimately fertile ground for her work is now looked upon by her as a time past never to be regained. Many might perceive her as a narcissist, questioning her presentation of her troubled life as *truth*, and might well perceive her content as merely her 'shock in trade', but this is the core ethos which is central to her canon of work and very much the driver of this body of work from which this piece derives. *The Beginning of Me* originated from a series of drawings made in 2006 from a time that she now finds somewhat difficult to look back upon. The print itself mediates between where she is now and her younger self. Despite her cathartic openness within her work she has found it

Tracey Emin
Above: *Out Cold*, 2014. Polymer gravure. 37.5 x 40 cm. Nigel Ip.
Below: *The Beginning Of Me*, 2012. Colour screenprint on cotton fabric. 59 x 65 cm. Lilford Gallery, Canterbury.

difficult looking back at these drawings and accepting how open and vulnerable she felt within these studies.

"I made the original drawing about six years ago, but always felt slightly embarrassed by its openness, almost like an invitation. But now I see it as something from my past, a place and a feeling I will never go back to – a snapshot of something long gone which part of me still wants to remember as real, not imagined. That's why I gave myself a face."[1]

The work is therefore significant that she has clearly identified herself within its narrative, whereas within her most iconic pieces, *My Bed* (1998) and *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963-1995* (1995), these are merely signifiers of the self, a testament to a life lived no matter how unbridled by social conventions or sexual etiquette.[2] But here we have the physicality her body complete with its facial features, whereas in so many other works the body remains anonymous and feels only represented by the detritus of her being, the messages, the dishevelled sheets, the discarded condoms and underwear. Within a form of self-portraiture narrative, a retro *'selfie'*, which, although implied within virtually all of her other work, is rarely, so clearly delineated with her own facial features so clearly defined. She regards the bed and tent as her seminal pieces and feels that they give her licence to experiment freely within her work without the pressure felt by so many of her contemporaries.[3]

The Beginning of Me resonates not just with a clever use of language but also with a past that allowed her a mode of expression that had so long eluded when initially denied the conventional route into art education. Her practice connects to a working class feminist aesthetic that asserts a power to be recognised as sexually independent, liberated and free from the double standards often imposed upon women, their thoughts, actions and expression within society and their opportunities as artists. Emin saw her body and her sexuality as representative of her sense of self, and she spares no reservations when it comes to translating this into her art and her resultant public image.

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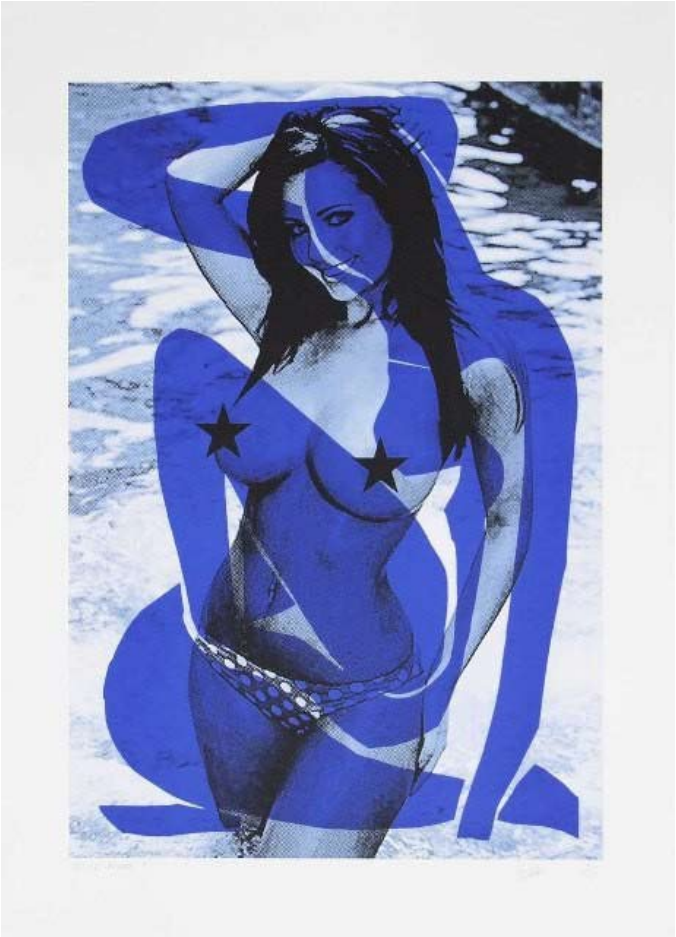
3 Mike Wade, 'Tracey Emin Tells Edinburgh She Rejected £1m Offer to Recreate Tent', *The Times*, 2 August 2008 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/scotland/article4446285.ece>.



Shane Wheatcroft (GSG)
Blue Nude 1, 2011. Screenprint.
50 x 70 cm. Lilford Gallery, Canterbury.
Image © Shane Wheatcroft 2011.

Emma Bradford
Pink torso on blue, 2007.
Linocut.
21 x 15 cm. Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds.
Image © Emma Bradford 2007.

Sarah Hardacre

Kiira Laurikka

Heaven With The Gates Off (2012), a print series by British artist Sarah Hardacre, consists of a range of hand-pulled screenprints and works on canvas. It brings together two different visual worlds; that of Salford Local History Archive and images of women from second-hand gentlemen's magazines. The overtly eroticised female bodies are superimposed upon and juxtaposed with the phallic-like structures of functional and brutalist architecture. Using manipulation and montage, Hardacre creates an interruption similar to the Brechtian alienation effect. The superimposed element creates a disruption to the context in which it is inserted. Here the female forms are the interruption, superimposed into a context traditionally hostile to their existence.[1]

However, the series should not be regarded solely as a feminist critique. Many of the pieces have a strong biographical element, reflecting Hardacre's preoccupation with the architectural surroundings of her own home and the dehumanising effect she felt they had caused. There is a strong link between concrete and social class in post-war Britain that Hardacre evokes and critiques using the juxtaposition of human sensuality against the bleak landscape.[2]

These landscapes were originally inspired by the promise of larger social change, from the newly revitalised economy and growing youth movements to the goals of woman's liberation. However, the optimism subsided after the structures, originally designed to induce collectivism, left a legacy of alienation. Women were lacking the power to shape their collective future under a new kind of marginalisation. The social engineering of urban regeneration and housing redevelopment schemes shaped how public and private spaces are used and occupied. Against this the explicitly eroticised female bodies could be seen as drawing a parallel with the exploitation of communities who were

Sarah Hardacre
The Chastity Thieves, 2012.
Colour screenprint.
50 x 70 cm. Paul Stolper, London
Image © Sarah Hardacre 2012.

denied any autonomy by the politics of city-planning.

The three-colour screenprint *Chastity Thieves* fits into this backdrop perfectly. The print displays two female figures in an old Victorian style house. Through the windows you can see concrete tower blocks and what appears to be industrial wasteland. The women are undressed apart from sparkling three-hole balaclavas and one seems to be wearing a modern version of a medieval chastity belt. The added Swarovski crystal details in the masks bring new glamour and beauty to the rugged visual environment. The covered faces also create an illusion of anonymity. The impression created is of a world of individuals with freedom but no autonomy, living in a controlled society where even deviant sexuality is produced by a web of power relations.

The objective of the unarmed women is left unexplained as is the subject of the theft. Their overtly eroticised bodies could be seen as a threat to chastity itself. In many Christian traditions, the word chastity is used interchangeably with the idea of sexual purity. In Catholic morality, chastity is classified as one of seven virtues and placed in opposition to the deadly sin of lust. There is a sense in which the figures are creating new challenges for maintaining chastity by evoking lust, yet one of the figures seems to be equipped with a chastity belt. This anti-rape device was used in the 15th century to protect women from unwanted sexual advances but also to control the behaviour of women and their partners and protect them from sexual temptation in order to maintain their chastity. The belt symbolises sexual abstinence, a discreet link to the Victorian roots of modern British society.

An element of subjectivity emerges from the picture despite the covered faces. As they were originally from erotic magazines the images of the women are a product of the commodification of the female form for a male audience. The subjectivity emerges when they are ripped out of this context, modified and encoded with new meaning in Hardacre's work. In this sense the use of nudity is closer in substance to the use of nudity by women's rights groups than the original commercial use. The Ukrainian movement FEMEN aimed to use nudity in this way, to draw attention to the politics of the body and reclaim the power of the nude female form.

However ambiguous the original intention behind *The Chastity Thieves*, the juxtaposition of old and new, chastity and promiscuity and the personal and historical is clearly important. The overall message may not be straightforwardly feminist, but the objective of empowering women is evident.

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2 'Sarah Hardacre: Artist Interview', *Artrepublic.com* <http://www.artrepublic.com/articles/450-sarah-hardacre-artist-interview.html>.

List of exhibited works

* All measurements refer to *image* sizes, with the exception of those marked with an asterisk.

Pietro Aquila
Procession of Bacchus, after Annibale Carracci
1674
Etching
41 x 70.7 cm
Kent Print Collection, Canterbury

Pietro Santi Bartoli
Hylas and the Nymphs, after Giulio Romano
c. 1680
Etching
31.5 x 53.9 cm
Kent Print Collection, Canterbury

Monika Beisner
Peleus and Thetis
2010
Giclée print
54.6 x 42.2 cm
Pratt Contemporary, Sevenoaks

Monika Beisner
Tiresias
2010
Giclée print
54.6 x 42.2 cm
Pratt Contemporary, Sevenoaks

Jan de Bisschop (Episcopius)
Signorum Veterum Icones 48 (Second View of Medici Venus), after a drawing by Adriaen Backer
After 1668
Etching
22.9 x 8.1 cm
Kindly on loan from Dr. Ben Thomas

Emma Bradford
Pink torso on blue
2007
Linocut
21 x 15 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Simone Cantarini
Adam and Eve
c. 1639
Etching
19.7 x 17 cm
Kindly on loan from Dr. Ben Thomas

Stephen Chambers
Reputation, from the *Casanova* series
2014
Etching
21 x 16 cm
Paupers Press, London

Stephen Chambers
Union, from the *Casanova* series
2014
Etching
21 x 16 cm
Paupers Press, London

Marianne Clouzot
Leda and the Swan
1948
Etching
12 x 8.5 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Gabriel Dauchot
Lovers
1961
Lithograph
18 x 29 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Angèle Delasalle
Le Repos
1909
Etching
13.5 x 20 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Roland Delcol
**L'Origine du monde*
1975
Lithograph
55 x 44 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Roland Delcol
**The Ankle Strap*
1975
Lithograph
55 x 44 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Amandine Doré
Douche
1966
Drypoint
26 x 19 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Amandine Doré
Lovers (Woman on top)
1961
Drypoint
19 x 14 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Amandine Doré
Trio of lovers
1966
Drypoint
26 x 19 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Keisai Eisen
**Diagrams of sexual positions*
Late 18th/early 19th century
Colour woodblock print
39.2 x 26 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Attributed to Keisai Eisen
**Lovers groping*
Late 18th/early 19th century
Colour woodblock print
22.3 x 31.1 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Tracey Emin
Out Cold
2014
Polymer gravure
37.5 x 40 cm
Kindly on loan from Nigel Ip

Tracey Emin
The Beginning of Me
2012
Screenprint on cotton fabric
59 x 65 cm
Lilford Gallery, Canterbury

Brad Faine
Nude Not Naked
2013
Digital print with glazes
83 x 60.7 cm
CCA Galleries, London

Henri Fantin-Latour
Sara La Baigneuse
1894
Lithograph
23.7 x 15.1 cm
Kent Print Collection, Canterbury

Ian Hamilton Finlay
Venus of the Hours
1975
Screenprint on paper
29.5 x 14.5 cm
On loan to Kent Print Collection, Canterbury

Othon Friesz
Male nude
1948
Lithograph
26 x 14 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Othon Friesz
Seated man
1948
Lithograph
20 x 18.5 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

List of exhibited works (cont.)

Frans de Geetere
Lassitude
1925
Etching
24 x 19 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Paul Guiramand
Couple making love
1963
Lithograph
26 x 20 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Sarah Hardacre
The Chastity Thieves
2012
Colour screenprint
50 x 70 cm
Paul Stolper, London

William Hogarth
After
1736
Etching and engraving, first state
43 x 33 cm
Michael Finney Antique Books & Prints, London

William Hogarth
Before
1736
Etching and engraving, first state
43 x 33 cm
Michael Finney Antique Books & Prints, London

Hokusai (Katsushika Hokusai)
***Man with two women and a pipe*
Late 18th/early 19th century
Colour woodblock print; book illustration
25.1 x 34 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Terukata Ikeda
***Orgy scenes*, after Hokusai
Late 19th/early 20th century
Set of 12 colour woodblock prints
25.1 x 34 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Koryūsai Isoda
***Lovers reading*
Late 18th century
Colour woodblock print
14.1 x 15.5 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Koryūsai Isoda
***Woman chuckling to a phallic puppet*
Late 18th century
Colour woodblock print
14 x 15.5 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Utamaro Kitagawa
***Lovers with an incense pot*
Late 18th century
Colour woodblock print
25.1 x 39.2 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Utamaro Kitagawa
***Prelude to Desire – P*, from *The Prelude to Desire (Negai no Itoguchi)* series
1799; *c.* 1890-1910 printing from re-carved block-set
Colour woodblock print
25.1 x 35.9 cm
Kent Print Collection, Canterbury

Anita Klein
Angel Stretching her Arms
2006
Carborundum print
35 x 42.5 cm
Lilford Gallery, Canterbury

Rudolf Koch
Adam und Eva
1969
Etching
13.5 x 6.5 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Antonio Lafrery (publisher)
Colossal Hercules, after a drawing by Enea Vico after the statue by Bartolomeo Ammannati
1553
Engraving
53.5 x 41.5 cm
Kindly on loan from Dr. Ben Thomas

Valentin Lefèvre
The Three Ages of Man, after Titian
1682
Etching
22.5 x 34.3 cm
Kindly on loan from Dr. Ben Thomas

Martin van Maele
Lovers in a barn
1925
Etching
14.2 x 9 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Albert Marquet
Lesbian couple XIV
c. 1905
Lithograph
18 x 31 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Albert Marquet
Woman masturbating
c. 1905
Lithograph
14 x 23 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Henri Matisse
Standing Blue Nude
1952
Lithographic reproduction, 1954
26.5 x 35.5 cm
Lilford Gallery, Canterbury

Patricia Nik-Dad
Ex libris Graham Read, Opus 10 (Le Train)
1997
Etching
12 x 10 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Patricia Nik-Dad
Ex libris Murray Rosen, Opus 94
2003
Etching
11 x 12.5 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Attributed to Masanobu Okumura
***Diver with three octopi*
Late 17th/early 18th century
Woodblock print; book illustration
21.5 x 27.5 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Pablo Picasso
Au Théâtre: Vieil Homme Couronné de Fleurs par des Femmes et des Fées
1966
Etching and aquatint
32.5 x 47.5 cm
Osbourne Samuel, London

List of exhibited works (cont.)

André Provot
Lesbian couple VI
1940s
Lithograph
21.5 x 16 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Félicien Rops
Soixante-neuf
1909
Etching
10.5 x 7.5 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Berthommé de Saint-André
**Two women with dildos*
c. 1948
Lithograph
24.5 x 19 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Berthommé de Saint-André
**Woman with strap-on*
c. 1948
Lithograph
24.5 x 19 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Achille Sirouy
Sardanapale, after Eugène Delacroix
1861
Lithograph
42.9 x 53.8 cm
Kindly on loan from Dr. Ben Thomas

Mizuno Toshikata
**Man with nurse*
Late 19th/early 20th century
Colour woodblock print
19.5 x 26.7 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Mizuno Toshikata
**Peeping woman masturbating*
Late 19th/early 20th century
Colour woodblock print
22.3 x 28.3 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Toyokuni I (Toyokuni Utagawa)
**Man and woman with hand gestures*
Late 18th/early 19th century
Colour woodblock print
22.7 x 26.7 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Toyokuni I (Toyokuni Utagawa)
**Man with three women*
Late 18th/early 19th century
Colour woodblock print
19.1 x 26.5 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Kōgyo Tsukioka
**Lovers at the beach*
Late 19th/early 20th century
Colour woodblock print
12.5 x 17.8 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Unknown artist
**Man and youth with two voyeurs at a window*
c. 18th century
Woodblock print; book illustration
13.9 x 38 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Kunisada Utagawa
**Lesbian scene with dildo*
c. 19th century
Colour woodblock print; book illustration
17.3 x 21.5 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Utagawa School
**Lovers kissing*
19th century
Colour woodblock print
10.6 x 28.5 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Utagawa School
**Page of details of female genitalia*
19th century
Woodblock print; book illustration
17.9 x 22.9 cm
Kindly on loan from Kirill Danelia

Alex Varenne
Couple 2
Date unknown
Serigraph/silkscreen
18.2 x 19.4 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Marcel Vertès
Sous bois
1920
Etching
8.5 x 13.5 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Denis Volx
Leçon 4
1921
Etching
16.5 x 10 cm
Idbury Prints, The Cotswolds

Lucas Vorsterman
Pastoral Scene (Two Nude Goatherds), after Parmigianino
1620s
Engraving
21 x 15.5 cm
Kindly on loan from Dr. Ben Thomas

Shane Wheatcroft (GSG)
Blue Nude 1
2011
Screenprint
50 x 70 cm
Lilford Gallery, Canterbury

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