

Richard Cassidy
23025681
Fine Art BA Hons
Art Context 2
Art & The Body
Penny McCarthy

Question

Why do we continue to be fascinated by representations of the body? Does the contemporary climate alter our response to images of the body? You may use examples from art history and/or theoretical debates as well as images from contemporary art practice to build your discussion.

In contemporary society, people have arguably developed their own individuality in which they have their own outlook, their own thoughts and their own feelings. Using this ideology and theories developed by Foucault and other social constructionist thinkers, we could argue that every person's fascination with the body is subjective, depending on their individual perspective¹. In addition, there could be a diverse number of explanations for our societies' fascination of the body; for example; aesthetic, gender, desire, body modification, sex or self-identification. Ruth Barcan, in her book *Nudity: a cultural anatomy* made the statement that 'The mental association between nudity and sex is almost automatic for contemporary Westerners'²; suggesting, we unconsciously associate the body and sex with one another, as arguably we can't help but create a connection between the two. This puts forward the argument that our fascination with the body is implicit to a parallel fascination with sex. The following essay will look briefly at examples from history and three contemporary artists; Nobuyoshi Araki, Nan Goldin and Jeff Koons, in support of the argument put forward. Through examining the work of the above mentioned artists and using sociological theorists such as Michel Foucault and Anthony Giddens, this essay will attempt to discuss contemporary societies' fascination of sex and the body.

Sex isn't something new to the human race we have been engaging in sexual activity since the dawn of time. For without sex we would not be able to reproduce and therefore continue the human race.³ It is not therefore surprising that we see fascinations with sex in its many forms; eroticism, pornography, sexuality, nudity, intercourse, portrayed in art over the ages. By only going back a few hundred years from the likes of Da Vinci and Michelangelo, we can see western societies' artists have never shed their underlying fascinations with the naked body and its sexual proficiencies. We must however always bear in mind each bygone era comes with its own discourses around sex and the body.

What is discourse? Michel Foucault proclaimed that discourses are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak'.⁴ Discourse in effect, constructs reality, it shapes the way we perceive the world and it can arguably constrain and guide our beliefs. They define what is 'normal' and as individuals we internalise this and socially interact by what is acceptable.⁵ Across all periods of history in western society a discourse has been consciously or unconsciously applied to the body

¹ S. Markovic and University of Belgrade, Department of Psychology 'Basic dimensions of subjective experience of beauty', vol. 13, no. 9, 2013, p. 52. Available from Journal of Vision, (Accessed 10 March 2015)

² R. Barcan, *Nudity: a cultural anatomy*, Berg, Oxford, 2004, p. 113.

³ H. Fisher, 'Mansome', dir Morgan Spurlock, USA, 2012, [Netflix] (accessed 27 February 2015)

⁴ M. Foucault, 'The Archaeology of Knowledge', London, Tavistock Publications, 1972, p. 49.

⁵ V. Heaslip and J. Ryden, 'Understanding Vulnerability: A Nursing and Healthcare Approach', Chichester, West Sussex, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, pp. 5-6.

and sex. For example, in medieval society sex wasn't like it is today, we had very little restraint over our bodies; if you had the urge for sex, you just went ahead and did it.⁶ Whether this is true or not we would have to question? However, Elias argued that it is through the civilising process and the growing power of monarchies, which gradually started to exert power and control over the body.⁷ Sex started to move into the private sphere of the home and the bedroom; the discourse around sex became a 'privatisation of passion'. Thusly, natural functions such as sex happened back stage, if we had the urge for sex we would control it until appropriate.⁸

An example of this theory would be when Queen Victoria saw a replica of Michelangelo's 'David' in 1857. 'On her first encounter with the cast of 'David', Queen Victoria was so shocked by the nudity that a proportionally accurate fig leaf was commissioned' to cover his genitals.⁹ Whereas at the time of 'Davids' creation in 1504, the high renaissance government in charge had deemed the sculpture to be too beautiful to be placed in its originally intended position; high atop Florence's 'Duomo' Cathedral. They instead decided to position it for all to see; in the square outside the main government building of Florence.¹⁰ Using this information we can justifiably say that the discourses in our fascination towards the body and sex had changed dramatically over a 353 year period. The Victorian discourse believed human genitalia to be obscene, pornographic and offensive. Whereas the high renaissance culture in florence showed an accepting attitude towards nudity deeming the naked human form beautiful and something to be given prominence, not shamefully covered and hidden from view.¹¹

The different viewpoints of both historic periods rely on their own discourses surrounding the nude body and sex. The Victorians deemed nudity to be directly sexual and the period of the High Renaissance did not. There is an argument that by covering the body we are sexualising it more making it seem like there is something to hide. In addition we should mention gender discrimination. Feminists argued with the discourse, that women were perceived to be 'at the mercy

⁶ N. Elias and E. Jephcott, *The Civilizing process: The History of Manners*, 1978, in J. Low, and C. Malacrida, *Sociology of the body: a reader*, Don Mills, Oxford University Press, 2008, ch. 4.

⁷ N. Elias and E. Jephcott, *The Civilizing process: The History of Manners*, 1978, in J. Low, and C. Malacrida, *Sociology of the body: a reader*, Don Mills, Oxford University Press, 2008, ch. 4.

⁸ A. Giddens, *The Transformation of intimacy: sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*, Cambridge, Cambridge Polity Press, 1992, pp 157-173

⁹ 'David's fig leaf', Victoria and Albert Museum, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/d/davids-fig-leaf/> (accessed 1 March 2015)

¹⁰ Dr. S. Zucker, Dr. B. Harris, 'Michelangelo, David, marble, 1501-04 (Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence)', Smarthistory, Art History at Khan Academy, [online video], 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oXAekrYytA>, (accessed 1 March 2015).

¹¹ R. Barcan, *Nudity: a cultural anatomy*, Berg, Oxford, 2004, pp. 1-24.

of their reproductive system'¹² and men on the other hand have the natural urge to 'spread their seed'.¹³ The female body was denied sexual freedom, the discourse made sex demeaning for women but for men it enhanced masculine identity. Men were allowed to sexually experiment and pleasure themselves whereas for women this was taboo, and not socially acceptable. These norms and discourses around sex were based on essentialist scientific notions which informed individuals on how sex should happen, women were in other words oppressed from sex.¹⁴ This may explain the renaissance governments adoration and fascination of 'David' as he may have been used as a symbol for male virility, dominance, and power over the people of Florence.¹⁵

The discourses around sex and sexuality have changed again to a certain extent as we shift into our 'civilised' contemporary society. Women have gained their sexual freedom in that they are no longer expected to participate in sex solely for the purpose of reproduction.¹⁶

'The body in relation to sex has been released from its link with procreation and is now a part of intimacy and the emotional communication between equal partners in democratic relationships'.¹⁷

Although while we have seen that it is possible to resist and even alter discourses and taboos; as we have just discussed females are now able to openly gain pleasure from sex. We still see modern society accepting other socially constructed taboos as normality. This could be due to the fact that as a species we find it inherently difficult to change our long standing dogmatic beliefs, even if we do not know the origin of why something is taboo. An example of this is still the subject sex; we continue to be unable to view or discuss sex with others, without some feeling of discomfort.¹⁸ To take this further it could be argued that we struggle, even more still, to talk about homosexual sex than heterosexual sex, this is even by the supposedly accepting standards of today's society. Foucault

¹² B. Skeggs, *Formations of class and gender*, London, Sage, 1997, ch. 3.

¹³ M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, London, Penguin books, 1987, pp. 190-191.

¹⁴ M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, London, Penguin Books, 1979, pp. 17-35.

¹⁵ Dr. S. Zucker, Dr. B. Harris, 'Michelangelo, David, marble, 1501-04 (Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence)', Smarthistory, Art History at Khan Academy, [online video], 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oXAekrYytA>, (accessed 1 March 2015).

¹⁶ P. Webb, *The Erotic arts*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1975, p. 174-178.

¹⁷ C. Shilling and P.A. Mellor, 'Embodiment, *Structuration Theory and Modernity: Mind/Body Dualism and the Repression of Sensuality*', *Body & Society*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1996, pp. 1-15.

¹⁸ M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, London, Penguin books, 1987, pp. 220-221.

describes this as a ‘silence on gay sex’.¹⁹ We must understand however, that it is only in the last couple of years that we have really seen steps towards a wider acceptance of homosexuality; shown in the legality of gay marriage for example. But we still have a long way to go in terms of a discussion involving sex between same sex partners. This is why Foucault's statement is still relevant today. Another subject on the incomprehensibly long list of taboo subjects revolving around sex, is pornography, pushed far into the private sphere, porn ‘has been described as' books you read with one hand.’²⁰ This statement infers towards the viewing of porn would thereby result in masturbation; another sex related taboo in its own right.²¹ Again with porn we can see differences in acceptance across genders. although a taboo placed on porn has pushed it into the realms of privacy, It is the commonly accepted the ‘norm’ that men should watch porn. On the other hand the discourse would show a woman to be ‘abnormal’ if she admitted to viewing it.²² Humans have a profound ability to create taboos, religion is at the centre of this, creating a ‘catalogue of them tailored to every persons desire.’²³ Much like the example of Queen Victoria and Michelangelo’s ‘David' we still utilise clothing as a means of regulating or controlling desire.’²⁴ In contemporary society we see artists directly taking on these taboo subjects and resisting their social discourses.

‘sexual re-evaluation and revolution have constantly been linked with their artistic counterparts. This is still a characteristic attitude today: art which deals with sexual matters is *ipso facto* considered ‘advanced’ – provocative and uncompromised by the demands of society. Artists continue to capitalise on this reaction in order to make major reputations for themselves, without the need to embark on drastic stylistic upheavals.’²⁵

We could consider then that social fascinations with sex and the body are linked to an individuals need for being considered more ‘advanced’ than others in society. This is an indication that an individuals resistance to social discourse is merely the competition of the most audacious. An individuals fascination is consequently also based on that same competition.

¹⁹ M. Foucault, ‘The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure, London, Penguin books, 1987, pp. 190-191.

²⁰ P. Webb, *The Erotic arts*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1975, p. 1.

²¹ M. Foucault, ‘*The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*’, London, Penguin Books, 1979, pp. 28-29.

²² K. Cheree, 'Sex drive: differences between men and women', *Sofeminine*, 2007, (accessed 5 March 2015)

²³ P. Webb, *The Erotic arts*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1975, p. 14.

²⁴ P. Webb, *The Erotic arts*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1975, p. 14.

²⁵ E. Lucie-Smith, *Sexuality in Western Art*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1991, p. 261.

A prime example of this statement is Jeff Koons; he made a series of work from 1989 to 1991 called 'Made In Heaven', featuring himself and his soon to be, but now ex-wife Ilona Staller (also known by her Italian porn star name La Cicciolina).²⁶ The pair are shown engaging in 'a variety of sexual acts and scenes typical of pornographic representation: several positions of intercourse, oral sex, post-coital ejaculation, and so on.'²⁷ The work is shown through a range of mediums including large oil-ink silk-screens on canvas, life-size ceramic sculptures, and a Murano Glasswork sculptures.²⁸ Koons further breaks the barriers of social discourse in his apparent discussions regarding his work. Jerry Saltz describes how Koons opened an uncomfortable conversation with him by saying "Jerry, don't you think that Ilona's asshole is the center of the universe?"²⁹(see appendix Fig 1). We could therefore say that this entire series of work resisted common social discourses towards the viewing of, and the open discussion of sex. Marianne Karabelnik describes in her book *Stripped bare: the body revealed in contemporary art*, That in the making of 'Made in Heaven' series Koons try to undertake a 're-contextualisation of the porno industry in the framework of the culture industry'³⁰. This subject of poronography has been so heavily criticised as, even provoking the question of 'is it even art?'³¹ D.M. Field describes such an image to be 'merely a pretty picture, produced by good craftsmanship which aims to arouse a feeling sexual desire.'³² Due to the 'Made in Heaven' series outspoken resistance to common social discourses around sex, it caused a meteoric wave of coverage from the media, Marianne Karabelnik further explains;

'The lower the level of discourse, the higher the agency to which it appeals. The same goes for pornography, which appeals, however implicitly, to the universal a priori, to ideal object-ness and eidetics of pure experience without admitting its relation to them.'³³

²⁶ E. Lucie-Smith, *Sexuality in Western Art*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1991, p. 261.

²⁷ Strom, K., 'Made in Heaven: Politics, Art and Pornography', *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1998 pp. 54-62.

²⁸ K, Miller, 'Nudity In Art: Beauty, Eroticism, or Pornography?', Two Old Liberals, [web blog], 13 July 2013, <https://twooldliberals.wordpress.com/2013/07/13/nudity-in-art-beauty-eroticism-or-pornography/>, (accessed 5 March 2015)

²⁹ J. Saltz, Vulture, 'Taking in Jeff Koons, Creator and Destroyer of Worlds', <http://www.vulture.com/2014/06/jeff-koons-creator-and-destroyer-of-worlds.html>, 2014, (accessed 1 March 2015)

³⁰ M. Karabelnik, *Stripped bare: the body revealed in contemporary art*, London, Merrell, 2004, pp. 38-40.

³¹ D.M. Field, *The Nude in Art*, London, Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1981, p. 115.

³² D.M. Field, *The Nude in Art*, London, Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1981, p. 115.

³³ M. Karabelnik, *Stripped bare: the body revealed in contemporary art*, London, Merrell, 2004, pp. 40.

Furthermore the reviews of the 'Made in Heaven' series portrayed a plethora of opinions revolving around the question, whether the work was simply pornography, with no artistic 'intellect or emotional content'³⁴, or Erotic art. Art critic Jerry Saltz sits firmly in the camp that Koons work is porn stating;

Koons had found a point in taste lower than pornography. Koons had gone too far. Rosalind Krauss called him "repulsive"; Yve-Alain Bois went with "crude"; Benjamin Buchloh wrote that Koons is among the "neurasthenic victims of opportunistic assimilation". The local art writer John Yau later sniffed that he boycotted a Koons work because "some things you shouldn't do".³⁵

Among the reviews condemning Koons, I did find a some that described, 'once you got past the sex, the love and caring between these two is unmatched'.³⁶ This visual love connection between Koons and Staller could allow for arguments that the work is erotic art, rather than pornography. On one hand, some people may find a pornography erotic, most people however associate eroticism with love, and not sex alone.³⁷ Consequently we could argue that love plays no part in pornography, and if it does then it is not actually pornography at all.

This love connection between Koons and Staller has however also come under scrutiny from critics. Kirsten Strom described in her journal article titled '*Made in Heaven: Politics, Art and Pornography*' that a cunningly devised performance was used to deceive the viewer into believing that we were view the real intimate sex lives of the couple.³⁸ She goes on to explain how it is not just the artificial scenery that is fake but their pairs 'own expressions' as well.³⁹ She makes her case that the expression on Koons face is 'overly sincere' while Staller's 'stock expression of ecstasy' is 'virtually identical in nearly all the images, suggests that she is indeed 'faking it'.⁴⁰

³⁴ D.M. Field, '*The Nude in Art*', London, Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1981, p. 115.

³⁵ J. Saltz, Vulture, 'Taking in Jeff Koons, Creator and Destroyer of Worlds', <http://www.vulture.com/2014/06/jeff-koons-creator-and-destroyer-of-worlds.html>, 2014, (accessed 1 March 2015)

³⁶ The Worlds Best Ever, 'INSTALLATION VIEW: JEFF KOONS "MADE IN HEAVEN" SERIES (XXX)', <http://www.theworldsbestever.com/2010/10/14/installation-view-jeff-koons-made-in-heaven-series-major-paintings/>, 2010, (accessed 5 March 2015)

³⁷ P. Webb, *The Erotic arts*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1975, p. 2.

³⁸ K. Strom,, '*Made in Heaven: Politics, Art and Pornography*', *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1998 pp. 54-62.

³⁹ K. Strom,, '*Made in Heaven: Politics, Art and Pornography*', *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1998 pp. 54-62.

⁴⁰ K. Strom,, '*Made in Heaven: Politics, Art and Pornography*', *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1998 pp. 54-62.

To take it further still, Roberta Smith writing for 'The New York Times' proclaims the entire show was simply a staged documentation of sex, 'a cross between a scaled-up centrefold and a downsized billboard advertising underwear.' She also draws into question the validity of the couples love by making the argument that 'Koons's face is never visible within images that feature his supposed erection',⁴¹ which if found to true would strengthen the argument that the 'Made in Heaven' series is simply pornographic documentation involving two people with no loving connection.

Therefore, we can deduce, if we can determine that the love and connection between Koons and Staller is genuine, which needless to say is debatable; we should then define the 'Made in Heaven' series as erotic art and not pornography. Unfortunately for Koons this verdict relies on the viewers own judgement. Which depends on there definition of love, eroticism, pornography and obscenity.

'Nobuyoshi Araki thinks that without obscenities our cities are dreary worlds indeed.'⁴²

A photographer by trade, Nobuyoshi Araki has been creating work since around 1959.⁴³ Araki is noted for photographing the underground societies of Japan specifically focusing his attention to Tokyo's 'working girls'. Much like Koons, through his resistance to social discourse, Araki has made a name for himself drawing 'critical attention' from both 'home and abroad.'⁴⁴ His own book even describes him as Japan's most controversial photographer, due to his persistence in challenging 'social taboos surrounding sex'.⁴⁵

Araki's work sensationalises his 'treatment of sexual mores, bondage, nudes and enlarged genitalia'⁴⁶. It has been described that the most 'controversial aspect of Araki's work, is the

⁴¹ R. Smith, 'That Was No Lady, That Was My Wife', *The New York Times*, 13 October 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/14/arts/design/14koons.html>, (accessed 3 March 2015).

⁴² M. Karabelnik, *Stripped bare: the body revealed in contemporary art*, London, Merrell, 2004, pp. 140-141.

⁴³ N. Araki, *Biography*, Nobuyoshi Araki Official Website, <http://www.arakinobuyoshi.com/profile/1940-1963.html>, 2006, (accessed 7 March 2015) [google translation]

⁴⁴ A. Miki, Y. Isshiki, T. Sato, and Barbican Art Gallery, '*Araki: Nobuyoshi Araki - Self. Life. Death*', London, Phaidon Press, 2005, p. 1.

⁴⁵ A. Miki, Y. Isshiki, T. Sato, and Barbican Art Gallery, '*Araki: Nobuyoshi Araki - Self. Life. Death*', London, Phaidon Press, 2005, p. 1.

⁴⁶ A. Miki, Y. Isshiki, T. Sato, and Barbican Art Gallery, '*Araki: Nobuyoshi Araki - Self. Life. Death*', London, Phaidon Press, 2005, p. 14.

depiction of female genitalia⁴⁷ (See appendix Fig 2). Araki believes however, ‘the genitalia are synonymous with his ontological beginnings and an entrance to a mysterious of the world.’⁴⁸ The connections Araki makes between the female genitalia and his being born bares the classic hallmarks of the fundamentals in Freudian theory⁴⁹. Marianne Karabelnik critiques his work as ‘disturbing, shameless, deliberately taboo-breaking portraits of women reduce human relations to sexuality.’⁵⁰ Araki resists social discourse by openly inviting society to enjoy the voyeuristic attraction of his work. He even broken discourse further by divulging that his photographs have sexually aroused him.⁵¹ Again like Koons, Araki has come under criticism for his quasi-pornographic imagery.⁵² However, his heaviest criticism comes from Feminists condemning his work due to its supposed ‘objectification and fetishisation of women’⁵³. It is argued however, that Araki develops personal relationships with the women he photographs; this has allowed him to gain their trust. The women can then make their own decisions on what they show Araki of their personal lives.⁵⁴

‘He is their voice transformed into pictures. His photographs record their bodies for a brief eternity. His is the only gaze that has remained to them from among the many that have rested on them.’⁵⁵

Araki argues that he aims to enlighten the public to ‘everything society has chosen to conceal’. He wishes to ‘liberate us from our repression’, and ‘revolt against the repressive nature of Japan's

⁴⁷ A. Miki, Y. Isshiki, T. Sato, and Barbican Art Gallery, ‘*Araki: Nobuyoshi Araki - Self. Life. Death*’, London, Phaidon Press, 2005, p. 15.

⁴⁸ A. Miki, Y. Isshiki, T. Sato, and Barbican Art Gallery, ‘*Araki: Nobuyoshi Araki - Self. Life. Death*’, London, Phaidon Press, 2005, p. 15.

⁴⁹ R. Barcan, *Nudity: a cultural anatomy*, Berg, Oxford, 2004, pp. 57-58.

⁵⁰ M. Karabelnik, *Stripped bare: the body revealed in contemporary art*, London, Merrell, 2004, pp. 140-141.

⁵¹ A. Miki, Y. Isshiki, T. Sato, and Barbican Art Gallery, ‘*Araki: Nobuyoshi Araki - Self. Life. Death*’, London, Phaidon Press, 2005, p. 253.

⁵² A. Miki, Y. Isshiki, T. Sato, and Barbican Art Gallery, ‘*Araki: Nobuyoshi Araki - Self. Life. Death*’, London, Phaidon Press, 2005, p. 259.

⁵³ A. Miki, Y. Isshiki, T. Sato, and Barbican Art Gallery, ‘*Araki: Nobuyoshi Araki - Self. Life. Death*’, London, Phaidon Press, 2005, p. 14.

⁵⁴ M. Karabelnik, *Stripped bare: the body revealed in contemporary art*, London, Merrell, 2004, pp. 140-141.

⁵⁵ M. Karabelnik, *Stripped bare: the body revealed in contemporary art*, London, Merrell, 2004, pp. 140-141.

regimented society'⁵⁶. These statements could be read as showing self-belief in his own overt resistance to social discourse and a hope that his photographs should one day incite change.

Like Araki, Nan Goldin has been described as working with 'minority groups on fringes of society'.⁵⁷ Over her career Goldin has made several series of work that openly discuss the tabooed subject of sex. 'The Ballad of Sexual Dependency' being her first major work; the series consists of photographs taken by Goldin between 1979 and 1985⁵⁸; it was first exhibited as slide show in 1985 and in 1986 it was published as a book. Goldin describes 'The Ballad' and her subsequent works as her 'visual diary'⁵⁹; a visual documentation of her relationships and experiences over her lifespan. 'The Ballad' documents Goldin's life as she loses herself in New York's underground scene of sex drugs and homosexuality.⁶⁰

Although, some have described her work as 'voyeuristic', especially the images that depict friends, lovers or, similarly to Koons, herself engaging in sexual activity.⁶¹ Goldin proclaims that she photographs directly from her life, and that her images are derived not from observation but her relationships.⁶² Just like Koons and Araki, Goldin's work manages to resist and openly discuss, socially taboo discourses. Once again however, this has caused the taboo laden work to be labeled as pornographic, obscene or offensive;

⁵⁶ A. Miki, Y. Isshiki, T. Sato, and Barbican Art Gallery, '*Araki: Nobuyoshi Araki - Self. Life. Death*', London, Phaidon Press, 2005, p. 15.

⁵⁷ N. Goldin, and N. Araki, '*Tokyo Love: Spring Fever 1994*', Berlin, Scalo, 1995, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁸ D. Beyfus, 'Nan Goldin: unafraid of the dark', The Telegraph, 26 Jun 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/photography/5648658/Nan-Goldin-unafraid-of-the-dark.html>, (accessed 27 February 2015).

⁵⁹ M. Bracewell, '*LANDMARKS IN THE ASCENT OF NAN*', The Independent, 14 November 1999, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/landmarks-in-the-ascent-of-nan-1125943.html>, (accessed 27 FEBRUARY 2015)

⁶⁰ Goldin, N., M. Heiferman, M. Holborn and S. Fletcher, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, New York, Aperture, 2012.

⁶¹ S. O'Hagan, 'Nan Goldin: "I wanted to get high from a really early age"', The Guardian, 23 March 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/mar/23/nan-goldin-photographer-wanted-get-high-early-age>, (accessed 27 February 2015)

⁶² Goldin, N., M. Heiferman, M. Holborn and S. Fletcher, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, New York, Aperture, 2012.

‘The Baltic arts centre in Gateshead called in the police, concerned that one of her pictures, *Klara and Edda belly-dancing*, might breach child pornography laws.’⁶³ (See appendix Fig 3)

Although The Crown Prosecution Service later ‘deemed that the work was not indecent.’⁶⁴ This kind of negative publicity inevitably sparked a furore of morbid fascination and negative criticism from the public.⁶⁵ Although she denies it herself, Goldin has never been far from controversy in 1997, even ‘US president, Bill Clinton, made a statement in which accused "Goldin" of promoting heroin.’⁶⁶

On the other hand, it is noted that Goldin achieves ‘personal and sensitive connectivity’ by immersing herself in the lives of the people she photographs.⁶⁷ In an interview with Nan Goldin, Steven Westfall describes how Goldin’s photographs are mostly un-staged snapshots of ‘realism’ allowing the viewer to peer into her life; they are taken in a way that makes the viewer almost feel like they are part of this world themselves.⁶⁸ A society with which Goldin has continuously integrated and built ‘relationships’ is the homosexual community, her most prevalent example being her series title ‘*Sweat, Jens and Clemens*’ (See Appendix Fig 4). As we have discussed earlier the discourse surrounding homosexual sex is a taboo subject more so than heterosexual practice.

⁶³ D. Beyfus, ‘Nan Goldin: unafraid of the dark’, The Telegraph, 26 Jun 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/photography/5648658/Nan-Goldin-unafraid-of-the-dark.html>, (accessed 27 February 2015).

⁶⁴ D. Beyfus, ‘Nan Goldin: unafraid of the dark’, The Telegraph, 26 Jun 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/photography/5648658/Nan-Goldin-unafraid-of-the-dark.html>, (accessed 27 February 2015).

⁶⁵ D. Beyfus, ‘Nan Goldin: unafraid of the dark’, The Telegraph, 26 Jun 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/photography/5648658/Nan-Goldin-unafraid-of-the-dark.html>, (accessed 27 February 2015).

⁶⁶ S. O’Hagan, ‘*Nan Goldin: “I wanted to get high from a really early age”*’, The Guardian, 23 March 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/mar/23/nan-goldin-photographer-wanted-get-high-early-age>, (accessed 27 February 2015)

⁶⁷ Goldin, N., Armstrong, D., Holzwarth, H.W., Fenton, J., Heiferman, M., Hoberman, J., Keller, W., Mueller, C., Pinckney, D., Sante, L., Sartorius, J., Wojnarowicz, D., and Sussman, E. ‘*Nan Goldin: I’ll be your mirror*’, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Scalo, 1996, pp. 319-324.

⁶⁸ S. Westfall, ‘*Interview with Nan Goldin*’, Artists in Conversation, BOMB Magazine, 1991, <http://bombmagazine.org/article/1476/>, (accessed 27 February 2015)

Described by Foucault as a 'silence on gay sex'.⁶⁹ Goldin has resisted discourse by capturing these homosexual scenes,, and opening a discussion by showing them to a world.

Unlike Koons, both Nobuyoshi Araki and Nan Goldin are perceived to photograph someone that is deemed as 'The Other'⁷⁰; minority groups, the outcast on the fringes of society. Through the medium of photography they give these outcast groups a 'voice' to be recognised to be pushed to the forefront of awareness, not just dismissed and cast aside⁷¹.

In conclusion, we have seen that the change in social discourse underpinning sex and the body has fluctuated over time, arguably unconsciously influencing our fascination with the body in relation to sex. However, our fascination with the body in contemporary society can be for a variety of different reasons, for example; as we saw with Koons, 'Love' was a possible reason his fascinations with Staller's body. A Fascination with Love could be closely linked to another credible fascination through 'Desire'. Not only found in the artist but also in the viewer; any person viewing the body and sex with a 'lustful gaze' could be fascinated due to sexual desire. Furthermore, if either artist or viewer gains pleasure from representations of the body and sex, a fascination could develop as the individual could seek feel that pleasure again. A fascination with Beauty was the reason for the society of Florence to display 'David' so proudly during the High Renaissance. In addition, we have seen 'Reproduction' has possibly been an unconscious fascination with the body and sex across all time periods, as a means to continue the human race.

'Curiosity' is a personality trait that could affect the fascinations of both artist and viewer, both are resisting the social discourse by creating or viewing the body in relation to sex; An individual fascinated due to their curiosity cant help but be intrigued due to their lack of understanding or knowledge; these people wish to understand more for purposes of self-gratification. Closely linked however, is in my opinion the scariest of all the fascinations, the pursuit of 'Power'. This fascination is based on narcissistic tendencies to be considered by 'the other' as advanced. The people who use this fascination believe knowledge is power and by increasing that knowledge they will gain power. The currently taboo subject matter of sex and the body has provided society with a multitude of fascinations throughout history. Although sex is not the only facet of body fascination, it is certainly one of the oldest, and there seems to be no sign of it disappearing in the near future.

⁶⁹ M. Foucault, 'The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure, London, Penguin books, 1987, pp. 190-191.

⁷⁰ P. McCarthy, 'The Other', 'Art and the Body Lecture Series', [digitally recorded], 23 of October 2014

⁷¹ M. Karabelnik, Stripped bare: the body revealed in contemporary art, London, Merrell, 2004, p. 141.

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Appendix



(Fig 1)⁷²

⁷² J. Koons, '*Ilona's Asshole*', 'Made in Heaven', 1989-1991 [online photograph]http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/jones/pop-life10-1-09_detail.asp?picnum=12, (accessed 6 March 2015)

two portraits by Man Ray — *Noire et blanche* [1926, p. 31] and *Lee Miller* [early 1930s, p. 27] — raise the question of trust in the representation of the nude body. The beauty of the exotic black mask is no less than that of the white face, shoulder and hand.

Nobuyoshi Araki
Untitled, from the series *The Parts of a Love*, 1987
Gelatin silver print, 66.5 x 50.2 cm



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(Fig 2)⁷³

⁷³ N. Araki, 'Untitled', 'The Parts of a Love' [scanned image] M. Karabelnik, *Stripped bare: the body revealed in contemporary art*, London, Merrell, 2004, p. 28.



(Fig 3)⁷⁴

⁷⁴ N. Goldin, '*Klara and Edda belly-dancing*', 'Thanks giving', 1998 [online photograph] <http://www.thefileroom.org/documents/dyn/DisplayCase.cfm/id/1310> (accessed 6 March 2015)



(Fig 4)⁷⁵

⁷⁵ N. Goldin, and J. Jenkinson, *Jens and Clemens Kissing, 'Sweat' series, Paris, 2001*, Nan Goldin: the Devil's playground, London, Phaidon, 2003, pp. 342-343.