

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Photography Department

Topics class: For Real
an exploration of today's fetish for reality, in porn and elsewhere

Instructor: Sergio Messina
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This class was developed after a research on amateur pornography I've been conducting over the past 10 years, entitled "Realcore - the digital porno revolution". I'm an artist, not a scholar or academic. The purpose of this class is to present this research to the students, in order to analyze together this new phenomenon, its social, artistic and expressive implications and its historical roots. The students will be asked to produce material that will be reviewed and analyzed during the class. This can be art, but it isn't necessary. The purpose of this exercises is to become familiar with this language.

We will start by defining this new type of pornography, its forms and contents, also outlining the technical, formal and relational differences with mainstream pornography, both pre and post-digital. We will see photos, watch movies, visit websites and we will discuss this material.

We will then expand the discourse in various directions, looking for the roots of New Porn. In particular we will cover:

- A history of erotic photography. We will review an extensive digital collection of historical images, postcards and magazine covers starting from early 20th century (copies of all this material will be available for students, for personal use only).
- Erotic (non pornographic) and Lifestyle Exploitation movies and the rise of lifestyle eroticism/exoticism ("the charm of the unfamiliar"): sex and drugs, the rise of "youth lifestyle" in the 50s, the sexual revolution of the 60s.
- The dreamlands of western erotic dreams: Paris, North Africa, the Tropics, Sub-saharian Africa, Scandinavia.
- The rise of Hardcore porno, from the late 60s to its mainstream explosion in the 70s, the Pornstars era.
- Fetish pornography and niche porno; in particular we will take into consideration how sub-genres, like BDSM material, differ from mainstream material and how the fetishistic point-of-view has become very relevant in today's porno production, mainstream and otherwise.
- The News aesthetics of digital stills and video cameras: resolution vs realism, cold medium vs hot, the role of the camera: documentation vs participation. The role of the web: distribution, instigation, participation: the rise of Web 2.0.
- Reality as opposed to fiction. We will look for elements of realism in movies and pre hardcore pornography, as well as the latest reality mass-media trends,

including tv shows such as "Jackass", "Most Shocking" and "Cops", films like "Borat" and "Fahrenheit 9/11" and websites like Youtube (whose claim still is "broadcast yourself").

The students will be asked to produce still and moving images, reflecting the various aesthetics that will be analyzed in the class. Please note that it's not necessary to produce erotic or pornographic material (i.e. that includes nudity or sexual acts); students may choose to do so, but this element will not reflect in the evaluation of their work.

Bibliography:

Click Me - A Netporn Studies Reader

Edited by Katrien Jacobs, Matteo Pasquinelli, Marije Janssen

Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam 2007 (available in PDF: [http://](http://www.networkcultures.org/clickme/pdf/clickmeReader_9MB.pdf)

www.networkcultures.org/clickme/pdf/clickmeReader_9MB.pdf)

Netporn - DIY web culture and sexual politics

by Katrien Jacobs

Rowman & Littlefield 2007

Bound and Gagged - Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America

by Laura Kipnis

Duke University press 1996

You are expected to be present at all classes, to arrive on time, to produce the requested material and participate in the discussion. If you miss more than 6 sessions (considering morning and afternoon separate sessions) you will fail. Should someone not be able to attend a class, please contact me by email to let me know in advance.