

The images, such as they are, do have an effect on us
By Cait McKinney and Hazel Meyer

Folder "Porn" - Access Edition

This document describes the contents of a standard, letter-sized paper folder in order, flipping through pages from left to right.

[Page One]

A legal size, manila envelope, laid flat on a white surface. In the top-right corner, a selection of Canadian postage stamps from the 1980s. The recipient's address is written in the centre of the envelope in block printing, using black sharpie. It reads: VIVO Media Arts Centre, 2625 Kaslo Street, Vancouver BC, V5M 3G9. In the bottom left corner of the envelope, the word "ARCHIVE!" is stamped in red ink, in a hand-written font.

[Page Two]

The same manila envelope is now open, against the same white surface, and a lighter-coloured manila folder containing some papers is pulled partially out of the envelope. A yellow, plastic, archival-quality paper-clip is attached to the edge of the folder.

[Page Three]

Just the folder is pictured against the same white surface. Another green paperclip is now also visible, attached to the opposite edge of the folder from the yellow clip. The "name" field on the folder's filing tab is labeled with a white filing sticker that reads "Porn," which has been stuck over-top of the word "censorship" written directly on the folder. "Censorship" is discernible through the white "Porn" label. The "No." field on the filing tab is stamped in red ink with "06."

[Page Four]

The folder is opened, from left-to-right, like a book, to reveal the inside front cover and the first page of folder contents.

Clipped to the inside front cover, at the top of the folder, under the yellow paper clip, is a copy of a registration form for a conference called "The Heat is On! Women on Art on Sex." The form is approximately 4 by 4 inches, and black and white photocopy. The form reads, "a three-day conference November 29th – December 1st at Women in Focus, 456 Broadway, Vancouver. Speakers include Himani Banerjee, Varda Burstyn, Christine Conley, Sara Diamond, Pat Feindel, Sue Golding, Amber Hollibaugh, Caffyn Kelley, Anne Ramsden, and Lisa Steele." A rough schedule of general events follows, listing Friday evening as "screenings," Saturday daytime as "artists's presentations and panel discussions" and evening screenings. Sunday is a brunch, followed by artists' presentations and panel discussions, followed by a screening and presentation in the evening. The bottom of the form reads: "Daycare provided Saturday and Sunday days; Wheelchair Accessible; hosted by Women in Focus with the financial assistance of the Canada Council." On the right side of the form, there is a perforated line, and on the other side of that line is a registration form with basic contact information fields, to be completed and mailed to Women in Focus to register for the conference. The form includes costs for different components of the conference: "Full conference, excluding brunch: \$25 or \$18 un/underemployed; Saturday only: \$15; Sunday only \$15; Sunday brunch: \$5; Evening screenings \$3 payable at the door." The form also includes a place to indicate the number of children for which the registrant requires daycare. Instructions at the top of the perforation read, "To preregister, clip and send with cheque or money order payable to "Women in Focus."

Clipped to the bottom of the inside cover of the folder, under the green clip, is a borrowing slip inside the slip holder that is normally glued inside library books. It's from the Vancouver Public Library, for the book *Coming to Power* by Samois. The slip includes the call number HQ79 C65 1982. Two borrower's names are listed: Feb 15 2022 Hazel M and Dec 08 2023 Cait M. The slip holder is stamped with "Overdue fines .35 per day effective August 1st 1963 in black ink and an "OK" circular stamp in red ink.

On the right side of the folder, the first page of contents is visible and you can tell there are many more pages beneath. This first page is 8.5 X 11 inch and a peacock blue colour—it is oriented vertically, so hard to read. It shows a black ink line drawing of a plain, library-bound hardcover book laid down flat on a surface, with the spine open. Written on the spine is the book's title, *Coming to Power* and the library call number HQ79 C65 1982. The drawing is captioned in black, handwritten ink, in all caps: "*This copy is from Memorial University in Newfoundland. How strange to be in Banff and reading this book that travelled so far to get to me, when the two people it makes me think of are also so far away. Logi, did you hear back about the teaching job in Cornerbrook? Your mom would be so psyched to have you back! (I would be so happy for you, but also so sad). And KMS, I will see you soon! Though it feels longer than that word lets on. Regardless of time the fact is that I just scanned the pic with the amazing ~~pouch~~ patch and the leather and handcuffs and whips and clamps and will email it to you as soon as I put down this brush."

Clipped on top of the drawing is a 3" by 4" unlined, off-white index card, with a quote printed on white computer paper, cut out, and taped to the card. The quote reads: "In 1981, I had to walk through a line of candle-carrying protesters to hear Pat Califia speak in Seattle on sadomasochism in lesbian relationship, When I received a review copy of the lesbian s/, book *Coming to Power* friends scrambles to borrow it because of its unavailability in Vancouver. I followed the sex debates in the feminist press over the years and one of the questions I was curious about was who these sexual renegades were. Where had they come from and was there a common denominator amongst them?" - Cy-Thea Sand, "Concrete, material, life-saving sex," *Bi-line* May 1986, pg. 14–15.

[Page Five]

The drawing of the book cover described in detail on the previous page has been turned horizontally here, so that it is easier to read. It is laid across the open folder.

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The drawing of the book cover has been flipped over, turned vertically again, and placed on the left side of the folder, like a page that has been turned. On the right side of the folder an 8.5 by

11 inch printout on white computer paper shows a black and white scan of a pre-filled "Things to do today!" page, from a note-pad. The larger page is clipped in the top-right corner to other pages behind (which are not yet visible), using a plain metal paper-clip that has left rust stains on the page. The same handwritten font from the envelope address and Coming to Power book cover drawing is scrawled across the note-pad page, without following the lines of the pre-printed list. It reads: "We do not believe that government should have the right to control expression and that the difference between art and pornography is subjective and should not be determined by government. We have work in our film and video collection that deals with and explores sexuality; we have work that has lesbian content: we cannot support legislation that allows anybody to become the arbiter or artistic or sexual taste. Women in Focus Position Paper on Censorship." The top of the form is dated "Aug 86."

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The rusty paper clip has been removed and placed on the white surface, just above the folder. The page has been turned to show another 8.5 by 11 inch printout on white computer paper. This one is a photocopy of two 3 by 4 inch index cards, which have been written on in the same handwritten font. The first card reads: "Himani Bannerji, "Now You See Us, Now You Don't: On the visibility/invisibility of South Asian Women," Address at The Heat Is On: Women on Art & Sex, reprinted in *Kinesis* Dec/Jan 1985-6, pg. 19. Against the white wall of this Canadian society, we ourselves actually want one hundred percent invisibility in those times, we do not want to be visible. It's not good for us. We see visibility, then, not as a source of second level visual images for us. That is not even our problem, that we are represented visually terribly badly. But we see visibility as a device to create mental images..."

The second card continues the same quote: "... practical images, social images, in order to mark us out as a group, selected for exploitation and oppression." This is followed by "Emma Kivisild, "Women on Art & Sex!" *Kinesis* Dec/Jan 1985-6, pg. 13. Toronto poet Himani Banerjee (sic) was the only woman of colour to give a presentation at the conference, a bad situation exacerbated by the glaring scarcity of women of colour in the audience. As a consequence, the issues raised in her paper, important and power questions about racism, imagery, and sexual images of women colour, were not integrated into the general conference discussion."

[Page Eight]

The page has been turned to show another 8.5 by 11 inch printout on white computer paper. This one is a photocopy of a page from a desk calendar showing the number "8" in a very large font, above many pre-printed blank lines. On the page, in the same handwriting: "BC Civil Liberties Association Comments on Bill 30 The Motion Picture Act, May 26 1986. The prohibitions in Bill 30 are based on the government's view of what the community would find intolerable, and we find it repugnant to let some control what others can see and do, when that activity is not in itself injurious."

[Page Nine]

The page has been turned to show another 8.5 by 11 inch printout on white computer paper. This one is a photocopy of a page from an Orlando Magic notebook, featuring the team's logo and a basketball graphic at the top, and a small NBA logo in the bottom left corner. On the page, in the same handwriting: "The Heat is On," *Kinesis* 1985. We want to talk to the public, in both a visual and literary dialog, to open up, in a concrete way, what has been an abstract discussion on women's sexuality and culture. We didn't want a conference focused on the old debate on pornography which has become, essentially a pro-censorship or anti-censorship debate . Sara Diamond, organizer of The Heat is On."

[Page Ten]

The page has been turned to show a black and white photocopy of a poster advertising The Heat is On! Women on Art on Sex conference. The background of the poster is a grid of 12 close-up images of women's faces and body parts, often in such extreme close-up that they are abstracted. These background images are at about 50% opacity, so the poster text laid over them in black ink can be read. The poster reads:

The Heat is On! Women on ART on Sex.

A three-day conference

November 19th – December 1st

At Women in Focus

Suite 204 – 456 West Broadway

Friday November 29th

8:30pm: Sex Tapes I: Dealing with Desires: A Screening of Recent Video Work by Women Artists

Saturday November 30th

10:00am: Keynote Address: Setting the Context: The Debate on Sexuality Imagery, Sara Diamond

11:00am: Panel One: Coming Together or Coming Apart? The Social and Political Meanings of Sexual Images with Christine Conley, Pat Feindel, and Amber Hollibaugh

3:00pm: Panel Two: The Objecting Object: Women and the Art of Sex with Joan Borsa, Varda Burstyn, and Sue Golding

8:30pm: Sex Tapes II: New Propositions: A Screening of Recent Video Work by Women Artists

Sunday December 1st

10:30am: Brunch

Noon: Performance and Video Screening *In the Dark*, Lisa Steele and Kim Tomszak

1:30pm Panel Three: Kiss and Tell: Artists and Writers on Sexual Imagery with Himani Banerjee (sic), Caffyn Kelley, and Cindy Patton of Bad Attitude

4:30pm: Summary Discussion

8:30pm: Sex Tapes III: Manufacturing Romance, an evening of work by Anne Ramsden

For further information and registration phone Women in Focus, 872-2250

Daycare provided for all day sessions

Wheelchair accessible

Presented by Women in Focus with the financial assistance of the Canada Council

Full conference: \$35 employed; \$18 un/underemployed

Day pass: \$15

Evening screenings \$4 payable at the door

Printed by Press Gang, a feminist, worker controlled collective

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The page has been turned to show a black and white print-out of a computer-generated invoice, on 8.5 by 11 inch paper. In the bottom left of the page, there is a logo of the letter "V" made into a sky-scraper. In the middle of the invoice, the page has been stamped in red ink with the word

"Received." The invoice reads:

V Tape

Date: 11/21/1985

Invoice To:

"The Heat is On"
c/o Video Inn,
261 Powell St.,
Vancouver, B.C.
V6A 1G3

for the one time screening of the following tapes:

DESCRIPTION

Erotica Tapes #1: Question and Response by Janis Lundman..... \$50.00
Polkadots and Moonbeams by S Goldbacher..... 50.00
Escape by Phyliss Waugh..... 50.00 Erotica Text by Madelaine
Duff..... 50.00
Ecstasy Unlimited by Laura Kipnis..... 75.00
Framed youth by the Gay and Lesbian Youth Project..... 75.00

total owing.....\$350.00

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUE PAYABLE TO

V/tape
489 College Street
5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M6G 1A5
416 925-1961 total owing.....\$350.00

[Page Twelve]

The page has been turned to show a clipping from a newspaper that has been photocopied in black and white on an 8.5 by 11 inch piece of white paper. Only part of the article has been clipped. The Headline reads "Women on Art on Sex..." and at the bottom of the page, someone has handwritten "Bi-line Jan 86, p 16" to indicate where the clipping came from. The portion of the article that has been clipped and is legible reads:

Conference examines images of women in alternative media
By SHERRY LYNN

I had never been to a conference which explored women's sexuality and its relationships in an

artistic sense. As an aspiring artist myself, the Women on Art on Sex conference, opened up an area of exploration for me of my own sexuality, and led me to think about it in relation to my art as a possible outlet.

The conference, called The Heat Is On!, was held November 29 to December 1 at Women in Focus in Vancouver. It was a unique opportunity for the discussion of women's sexuality and its portrayal in work done by women artists and image-makers.

Sara Diamond set the context Saturday morning in a very detailed address. Providing a framework of why the conference was organized, she suggested what intent and outcomes were expected by the organizers. Her address included some key points on the anti-porn, anti-censorship, pro-sex controversies.

The aim of the conference was to examine images, not to have another round of the censorship debate. Undoubtedly, the need to push that discussion and debate on sexual images past its existing boundaries in Vancouver is long overdue. The conference provided an opportunity to look at and listen to the sexual images that women are producing, in particular, the alternative media images, as opposed to images produced for a commercial and mass circulation.

Saturday's workshops, titled Coming Together or Coming Apart, The Social and Political Meanings of Sexual Images and The Objecting Object; Women and the Art of Sex, included slide presentations and various speakers.

The first slide presentation by Christine Conley, an Edmonton art critic and feminist activist, explored classical paintings and advertising, showing how women have always, been, for the most part, exploited and seen through the eyes of the male viewer. We saw famous works of reclining nudes designed and positioned in passive and controlled positions, specifically for the enjoyment and titillation of the male viewer. I remember my art history teacher saying they were the first forms of pornography.

In the second workshop, Joan Borsa, a Saskatoon writer and professor, explored contemporary sexual images by women artists. These women establish their own sexuality by producing their own imagery that reverses the male gaze and shows that there is also the female gaze. They stamp out the myth that only the male is allowed to stare with the female as the object to be stared at.

Vancouver anti-porn activist Pat Feindel discussed sex as a commodity, pointing out that both culture and sex are marketed by a capitalist society. She called for sex education in schools as a way for women and artists working in education, art and mass media to try to break down the sexual taboos and create a language of sexuality and culture.

Amber Hollibaugh and Sue Golding brought their experiences in the lesbian feminist movement to the forefront. The pair ask some powerful questions relating to their feminism. Amber Hollibaugh, a New York television producer and sexual rights activist spoke of her experiences working in the feminist and gay political movement. She described her initial discoveries of power dynamics within sexual arousal, especially in relation to butch/femme lesbian relationships.

Sue Golding is a writer (for, among others, Toronto's *The Body Politic*) and sexual rights activist. She explored the close, sometimes almost inseparable, boundary between erotic and pornographic images, questioning whether we really understand, [rest is cut off by clipping]

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The page has been turned. On the left side of the folder is a pink 2 by 4 inch phone message slip, torn from a memo pad. It reads "To: Paul Wong, Date: 1984, Company: Vancouver Art Gallery, Message: Re: Confused Sexual Views." Circled on the prefilled form are "phoned" and "wants to see you." The memo slip is initialed by "HM." On the right side of the folder is a pink brochure. It's oriented vertically but printed horizontally, so hard to read (see next page for description). A square, 3 by 3 inch glossy, black and white photograph of two people sitting next

to each other on a couch is clipped to the brochure with a blue, plastic, archival-quality paper clip. The two people are reading a *Body Politic* Newspaper together, each holding one side of the opened paper. The cover story is "In Search of Lesbian Porn." They are middle aged, queer. The person on the left has long, straight hair, and a calm look on their face. The person on the right is more masc in appearance and has very short clipped hair, and a surprised expression on their face. They are both wearing glasses. In the foreground, part of a cat is visible walking across the frame, partially blocking our view of the newspaper.

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The brochure has now been turned horizontally and laid across both sides of the folder. The photograph has been detached from the brochure and laid to the right of the folder. The brochure is designed to be tri-folded from an 8.5 by 11 inch piece of paper, but it has not been folded and is laid flat here.

The first panel is the title page and reads "Visual Evidence, A Series of Video Screenings, Workshops and Multimedia Events About Sexuality and Sexual Images," above a black and white photograph of two queer people reading a newspaper together, that looks very similar to the photograph described on the previous page. The person on the left has short, curly hair, is wearing glasses, and has a calm expression on their face. The person on the right has short, straight hair, wears glasses, and has a shocked expression on their face. The newspaper is the *Toronto Sun* and the cover headline reads "GIRL SEX." The image is captioned: "*Frankly Shirley*, Marg Moores, 1987, Canada."

The second panel of the brochure is a large block of text that reads: This series is intended to promote the exhibition, criticism and creative production of works about sexuality and in doing so, to suggest an alternative to censorship. Speakers and productions will explore images addressing sexuality and sex itself. Some of the materials include sexually explicit sequences.

Visual Evidence is sponsored by the Vancouver Artist's League, a coalition of local non-profit artists' centres and individual artists and The Coalition For The Right to View, representing cultural, educational and other organizations and individuals Who are concerned about censorship. Panelists reflect their own views – they were chosen for their expertise not for their agreement with the CRTV or VAL.

Financial and material assistance for this project was provided by The Canada Council, the Pitt International Gallery, the Satellite Video Exchange Society (Video In), the Vancouver Gay and Lesbian Community Centre, Vancouver Women In Focus Society and the Western Front

Tickets are available at the door for all events except the constructing Identities workshop, May 18. For further information and pre-registration call Visual Evidence at 876-4786.

The series was curated and coordinated by Sara Diamond and Karen Knights. Meaghan Baxter curated In Formation, and Carol Allen and Richard Fung curated Double Jeopardies.

The third panel of the brochure features the heading "Constructing Identities: Gay and Lesbian Imagery, Friday May 15." Under this heading is a video-still featuring a close-up of a queer person with dark skin and chin-length dreadlocks, wearing glasses, the superimposed title "Jean" indicating their name. It is captioned "*Just Because of Who We Are*, Toni Dickerson, Abigail Norman, Robin Omata, Lydia Dean Pilcher, Afua Kafi-Afua, Daresha Kyi, 1986, USA." Beneath the image is information about the screening. It reads:

"8.00 p.m.

Pitt Internal Gallery

36 Powell Street

\$4.00/employed or non-members

\$3.00/unemployed, students or seniors or members of VAL, VAL organizations or VGLCC.

Highlighting work by lesbians and gay men, the screening will feature a compilation tape by lesbian erotica producers Blush Productions, *Jungle Boy* by John Greyson, *Crossing the 49th* by Mark Verbloff, *Frankly Shirley* by Marg Moores, *Just Because of Who We Are* (see photo), *Chinese Characters* by Richard Fund, *Wild Life* by John Goss, *Le Cage* Mark Paradis, excerpts from the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Film and Video festivals and other works. The screening will be followed by discussion with Blush producers Nan Kinney and Deborah Sundahl and John Greyson present.

Saturday May 16 8pm Special women-only screening of Blush tapes sponsored by the Vancouver Lesbian Centre. Location and other details to be determined. Artists present."

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A hand-written permission letter on white, lined foolscap, written in red ink cursive writing. The letter is dated May 23/87.

"To whom it may concern:

My daughter Alysha Seriani has my permission to watch sex education films.

Signed, M Seriani"

[Page Sixteen]

An off-white bookmark featuring the logo of the Coalition for the Right to View (CRTV) is laid horizontally across the folder. The bookmark features the organization's logo, which is the letters "C.R.T.V." in large, black block letters, struck through with a line that begins straight and goes wavy, looking like a visual measurement of audio wavelengths or a telecommunications signal. Under the large block letters in a small font: "Coalition for the Right to View C.R.T.V. P.O. Box 69376, Station K, Vancouver, B.C. V5K 4W6." The bookmark is laid on top of another document titled "Coalition for the Right to View," described on the next page.

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The bookmark has been flipped over to the verso and shifted to the right side of the folder. The back of the bookmark reads: "Original Logo by Joe Sarahan. Adapted from Coalition for the Right to View letterhead, 1985. Women in Focus Fonds, Box 5, Folder "Various Censorship Position Papers," Crista Dahl Media Library and Archive, VIVO." The word "Crista" was first printed with an "H" (Christa) but then the "H" was struck out with a red pen.

On the right side of the folder is a pre-printed off-white graph page, 8.5 by 11 inches, titled "SET/RESET WORKSHEET (64 X 32)." It looks to be a type of document used in a math or engineering application. It is a large grid of green lines that are numbered. Overtop of the grid,

in red ink, in the same handwritten font: "Coalition for the Right to View. As Residents of British Columbia, we are deeply concerned about the provincial government's proposal to institute the classification and censorship of video. We feel that this is the wrong solution to the complex problem of violence against women and pornography."

[Page Eighteen]

The page has been turned to an 8.5 by 11 inch piece of white paper, showing an ink and brush drawing of four VHS tapes in a stack. Each tape is labelled with the white, sticky, paper labels that come with blank VHS tapes. The drawing is oriented vertically, so the titles on the tape labels are difficult to read (see next page for description).

[Page Nineteen]

The drawing of the VHS tapes has been turned horizontally and laid across both sides of the folder. The titles on the tapes can now be read easily and they are "*Jungle Boy* – John Greyson; *Chinese Characters* Richard Fund; *Frankly, Shirley* – Margaret Moores; *Blush Productions Compilation*." The labels are written in the same handwritten font that has appeared throughout the folder. The labels include other pre-filled elements that have been hand-drawn such as "VHS," "FUJI" and "SONY."

Stapled to the inside back cover of the folder, in the top right corner, is a mostly transparent, wax paper envelope, containing two pre-printed "Admit One" tickets—the kind used in raffles or as drink tickets. Handwritten on one ticket, in the margin is "523-0122 xx."

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Another view of the inside back cover of the folder with ticket envelope, except the VHS drawing has been flipped over and is no longer in view.