

Francesco Macarone Palmieri aka Warbear

EMOPORN

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*Let the man go where he has never
been
Feel what he has never felt
Think what he never thought
Be what he has never been
We need to provoke this movement
and this crisis
Let's create astonishing objects.
Paul Nougé, René Magritte ou Les
images défendues, 1996
As with all I do,
I remain a pretender, an impostor, a
charlatan, a dissembler, a shyster, a
deluder,
a pharisee, defrauder, fast talker,
cheat, liar, prevaricator, simulator.
Barbara DeGenevieve, C'lick Me, 2007*

BACK WHEN PORN WAS A PLANET. QUEER EPISTEMOLOGIES

“BWPWAP” presents a colorful range of epistemological questions. From one side my interest is to reflect about Pluto as the object of the research: a queer entity, a planet which does not fit a proper categorization. It creates questions, a strange space, a hiatus. This brings me directly to the other side, to analyze and to discuss the solar system in which Pluto is contextualised and continuously shifted; therefore the platform signifying Pluto as the result of a scientific process. To analyse the relationship between subject, object and method, I start to wonder in terms of scientific discourse about how sure are we that Pluto wants to be defined. How sure are we that Pluto accepts the system in which it is continuously shifted as a planet or a star. Did we ever question Pluto's definition of the solar system? Did we ever question the method imposing Pluto a specific identity?

And following, what is the meaning of objectivity in the scientific method? What influence is produced by emotions as enemies of scientific “objectivity” in the representation of the “other”? Could they be used within the scientific method to produce a excentric and multiplied vision? Through this meteorites rain of questions my body of work emerges, bringing the “Netporn Studies” field to the surface.

PORN FRONT. FROM GENDER OPPRESSION TO BODIES' REVOLT

Porn is so safe; everything is inscribed in a master plan. Like a drug designed to consume entertainment and to be back to work in time, pornography allows you to be at ease in the corner of your world. Through masturbatory micro-rituals, it reaffirms all Western societies values. Back when Pluto was a planet, pushed by the advent of digital technology, a lightning ripped through the grey sky of this boredom valley. In the historical period between the nineties and the two-thousands, pushed by the possibilities of digital communication, a new body front emerged as theoretical and activist battleground, deconstructing the dogmatic anti-sexwork positions of historical feminism and LGBT[1]-identities. “Porn Studies” came out as an open, multidisciplinary field, mixing Queer Theory, Gender Studies, Media Studies, Cinema History and Performance Art. One of the main goals stands in the use of pornography as text, in which to read and to deconstruct identity boundaries where either heteronormative or LGBT-gentrifying politics produce a flat market space. The application of D.I.Y.-ethics[2] to “Porn Studies” moved the thought to a political and

activist level through the practices of self-representation and cultural individualization. Like a stroboscope, this momentary flash is now subsumed back by the squashing processes of information economies, where Cool Hunters are unchained to chase, spot, de-symbolise and sell the tendency; Suicide Girls[3] become mega-brand testimonials like MTV and academy goes to war to conquer the velvet goldmines of the last intellectual markets. Using the words of the situationist philosopher Raul Vaneigem:

As the philosophy of crisis that does not perish becomes an economy of crisis, [the act of] surviving the crisis of culture becomes a culture of crisis. (Vaneigem 20)

The meaning of this intervention is thus to appropriate and to enact this culture of crisis by producing knowledge fractures through politically incorrect narratives.

EMOPORN THOUGHT. FEAR AND JOY IN CLINICAL PERVERSIONS

Proceeding in order, I start with the definition of Barbara DeGenevieve's "Pornographic Sublime"-concept as the beginning of a socio-anthropological perspective of emotions[4] applied to pornography. Barbara DeGenevieve is a pioneer in netporn activism, an art historian and feminist, who had anti-porn positions until 1988; the year when she started to re-think pornography, arriving to produce her own. In her presentation "The hot bods of queer porn", performed at the conference "Arts and Politics of Netporn" in

Amsterdam in 2005, one of the most impressive and effective definitions of pornography is found:

Porn is made to get people off. In order to do this, bodies must not only be highly sexualized, but objectified, fetishized, eroticized and made to accommodate very particular individual kinks. Political correctness has become an intellectual prison within which an extremely limited dialogue can take place, and in fact where monologues and diatribes are usually the discursive practice. Embracing the need to objectify and be objectified, to fetishize and be fetishized, to play the willing victim as well as the victimizer, opens up a mine field that will be difficult to traverse, but it is a more intellectually provocative and honest terrain from which to understand who we are as complex sexual beings. (DeGenevieve, "Sssspread.com. The Hot Bods of Queer Porn" 56)

It's exactly this black-out between bodies and emotions, this absence of breath, this adrenaline of self-discovery as complex sexual beings that pushes DeGenevieve, apart from inscribing herself, to "write pornography". The emotional anthropology perspective[5] is clear in the point where Barbara DeGenevieve touches such visions as Clifford's "The predicament of culture: Twentieth-century ethnography, literature, and art" and Marcus' and Fisher's "Writing Cultures: the Poetics and the Politics of Ethnography". These texts represent the beginning of a critical anthropology which clarifies that culture as the object of anthropological analysis is not based on the "other", but on "ourselves as others"; hence the crisis of the representational authorial power in ethnographic writing as the tool of

knowledge-generation in the methodology and techniques of research. In 2001, www.ssspread.com[6] blossoms from this intellectual humus. It's a free website, where DeGenevieve publishes self-made porn videos. In this work, queer pornography traces a subtle line, distinguishing itself from heterosexual and gay/lesbian pornography. Bodies are battlegrounds; disobedient, wild, insubordinate, anarchic. No actor is a pro. Plots are made-up and performed in an immediatist way. Narratives are far from mainstream porn marketing rules. The most important accent is on the sexual arousal mechanisms and, specifically speaking, on how bodies identify themselves and communicate among each others via digital video technology, inside and outside the screen. DeGenevieve does not fit the perception of the "exciting" but the one of "uncanny", blasting a bomb on the construction of the self through the hydraulics of audience excitation in their objectifying inscriptions. The act of "in/scribing" unfastens the safety of the theoretician's seatbelt, hurling the subject into the experience crash. The black-box-rhetorics will be self-evident, showing you the "Whys". In such an epiphenomenal dialogic relationship between viewer, vision and seen, a crisis is produced. Here, a revelation of knowledge shines on through. DeGenevieve can be regarded as the first interpreter of the "emoporn"-thought, introducing and performing a theory of "indie porn" applied to the web. The closing part of her essay „The pornographic sublime“ underlines the "crisis" as method by saying:

Sex is an activity not well integrated into everyday life. This then is a philosophical inquiry into an order of experience within the sexual realm that makes evident the precarious border that has separated art and pornography, art and non-art, the beautiful and the grotesque, intellectual

contemplation and action, self and other. Pornography is the cultural temptation that moves us toward the verge of psychological dissolution [...] So here I am, trying to grasp the incomprehensible, trying to understand what makes me so interested in all of this, trying to decipher the distinctions we make between what's good and what's bad (whether it's art, writing, lecturing, performance, pornography, whatever). What I come up with is that there are no answers and it doesn't really matter because in the end, what it's all about is the challenge the questions present. That is the sublime – being in a constant state of disruption, having what and who I think I am provoked and disputed at every turn, because the answers will always change. Twenty years ago I knew what I thought and anyone who disagreed just wasn't reading the right theory. Today I question everything and prefer to put myself in situations in which the potential for either failure or censure is greatest (DeGenevieve, "The pornographic sublime" 13)

NETPORN. RISE AND FALL OF THE DIGITAL UTOPIA

The styleful losing as sense of pragmatic provocation is well described by Katrien Jakobs and psychologically enacted by her male alter ego, Doctor Jakobs. New Media and Performance Art professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Katrien Jakobs is a hyper-productive scholar grounding the "netporn study field". She co-produced such conferences as "The art and politics

of Netporn” (2005 Amsterdam), “C’lick Me: Netporn” (2007, Amsterdam)[7] and two texts entitled “Netporn, D.I.Y., webculture and sexual politics” and “C’Lick Me: A Netporn Studies Reader”, collecting the two years of conference presentations. Jakobs defines herself as a woman, teacher, artist and curator, who looks at pornography from her own individualising, multiple perspective, aroused by a huge range of pornographic genres. Her definition of pornography is strongly influenced by digital communication technologies. She moves the perspective on a networking level, where nomadism in instant information access and technical reproduction creates a game of micro-identitarian recalls taken by a female vision. The accent is posed on net-performative pornographies, digitally mediated by chat platforms, in which the normalities of bodies clash with a porn market’s gender stereotypes. Between this ruling dichotomy, a narrative of self-representation silently sprawls towards socio-sexual needs and desires in a dissolving porn palette. Starting from the daily human comedy of little computer people, Jacobs elaborates a concept of pornography divided in two bodies. The first is tied to a neo-medial construct, while the other accords to D.I.Y.-ethics. In the first case, she applies the Foucauldian concept of “heterotopia” to the definition of porn. This is intended as inter-zone, undefined entity, chaotic frontier, zonal production acted through the dissolving act of cruising. In these residuals, the online porn consumption explores, performs – and gets trapped in – emotional experiences. Katrien Jakobs develops then D.I.Y.-dimensions by applying the concept of subculture and counterculture to the online sex cultures. She works with the acronym “AltPorn” which stands for alternative porn. This pun is based on the prefix “Alt”, used in the early dawn of Internet to identify the “usenet”-discussion groups[8]. “AltPorn” is a

category with a profoundly independent profile as it distributes its contents, developing alternative distribution channels through and beyond the mainstream corporative pornography. There is a parallel with Nick Hebdige’s concepts of “subculture” and “counterculture”. If the self-production of pornography becomes political in-vitro by producing languages, identities and rhizomes through the access to technology, its consciousness enlightens the “countercultural” by producing digital bodies as a space for an information guerrilla. Joanna Angel’s “Burning Angels” website has ignited the firestarting countercultural spark for the “Suicide Girls” stylistic element, using sexwork as a joyful weapon and complexifying “sex” to destroy “work” with a subversive and neo-feminist perspective. A screaming pornography is here again centuries far from dominant standards. Dropouts act in absurd sets, with impossible sound tracks, a surreal photography and intervening fragments of outsider images to decontextualise the plot. Or pornography for digital sex workers with Xerox Art aesthetics[9], where independent music, political statements, private blogs and porn are self-published by girls in a riot. This pornography deconstructs arousal identification mechanics of the average consumer looking for macho men and submissive women, acting on a sterile couch or bed in a sequence of masturbation, fellatio, cunnilingus, vaginal penetration, sodomy, facial cumshot. As the NetPorn-society rises, oxymoronically speaking, the concept of authentic body is produced as the signifying playground for libertarian actions in a desymbolising process.

REAL TO THE CORE. FUCKING IN THE REALMS OF COR-PORN

If losing oneself is erotic and finding each other is pornographic, betraying the rules is ecstatic. In the centre of this illuminati triangle stands the core of Sergio Messina's theory. Messina is not just one of the founders of the Italian political Hip Hop-scene, but a true pornologist. Throughout an immense photographic research, he was able to develop a omnicomprehensive and playful theory, focusing on how "amateur" productions have been transformed in "AltPorn" through the impact of digital and information technology in the "Yahoo Groups" period.[10] This fluctuating data experience has a very compact definition: "RealCore". Messina's signification of "RealCore" adopts an emotional socio-anthropological perspective[11], affirming that the basis of this concept unfolds on the resolution of the digital divide in terms of videotextology and bandwidth as the infrastructure of image-based discussion groups. This gave the wider population the possibility and ability to self-produce online body narratives for the simple, joyful pleasure of doing it. In the "RealCore" imagery, you'll find the smile of the authentic body silently emerging between the moral pits of "SoftCore" and the repressive pendulum of "HardCore". "RealCore" is the wet flesh of a daily moment, where you sometimes shine, this uncontrolled fragment of passion that you just have to witness: to watch yourself in 16 million colours and to excite yourself by seeing what is the impact, what communicational process it unleashes in specific online-communities. It sets off a slide show of bold clerks and fat housewives, playing with each other's representations as much as some teenage guy publishing his first masturbations. But there's

more. On "RealCore's" paradigmatic horizon, the concept of "body" expands its boundaries towards the concept of "location". "RealCore" subjects mostly, enact their representations inside private, intimate spaces. You develop a "RealCore" eye when your excitation is stimulated not just by the fact that bodies are "daily", i.e. different from corporative porn stereotypes, but by the fact that you see rotten furniture, Christmas trees, the pictures of parents or children on the table, strollers and baby bottles, clothes, books, records and DVDs, a dirty kitchen. It's the background revenge making the deal. The "RealCore" body is a porn ecology where subjects enact as holographic synthesis. Undressing the private body in a public act becomes the joyful autopsy of dead corporative porn. The politicisation happens when the viewer becomes conscious of his or her own morbid eye. Conscious of the fact that it's exactly the little violence of invasion, outraging the sense of the private that puts the excitation on fire.

FAKE IS THE BEST- SELLING TRUTH. EMOPORN RISING

The "RealCore" concept defines the codes of the "authentic body", providing the basis of countercultural indie-porn production. Now, what happens if one claims that authenticity does not exist as an ontological value, but as a product? What, if one claims that the category of "authentic" becomes such, just according to its productive processes? "Authenticity" falls when Walter Benjamin declares the death of art through reproduction technologies. Its power dies with the death of the author. Authenticity is fake. And this is emphasized in the second

NetPorn-conference, "C'lick me. Net Porn". If the previous conference was focused on porn as a strategy to resist sexist assimilation and subvert misogynist and identitarian narratives of subjugation, the new questions were: Is indie porn becoming a new market niche and what are the possible strategies to produce new pornographies of liberation? Two positions clarified the dialectic. Audacia Rey, writer, film director and executive editor of the "Spread"-magazine represents the first pillar. In her paper "I am Woman, see me Nude: The Rise of Independent Women in Online Porn" she affirms that women's independency through pornography has to be valuable on a economic profit level. According to that, models have to be hyper-exposed to become popular, to be porn stars. It seems that in Rey's vision, the extreme commercialization of such websites as "Suicide Girls" is the path to freedom as self-affirmation in gender politics. The accent is put here on "professionalism" and "market" from a feminist perspective as warranty of political correctness. "Work" is the condition of the emancipation of women. Florian Cramer, Media Design professor at the Kooning Academy represents the second pillar, producing a conscious analysis of the indieporn gentrifying process through the sedimentation of subversive identities as niche-market simulacra. In his work "Indieporn: Loss of obscenity and imagination", he defines the concept of a pornographic "obscene" related to a previous work in another essay entitled "Sodom blogging. Alternative porn and aesthetic sensibility" commissioned by the German art magazine "Texte zur Kunst". He affirms that there are two historical intersecting processes applying the "obscene" as fetish. The first is the "obscene" used by empowering movements through pornography, while the second is depowering them by sell-out. Exemples of the first are the cross-fading operations between biker and gay

leather S/M cultures, satanism and fascist iconography in Kenneth Anger's filmography or in COUM Transmission performances, or again, in Lydia Lunch's and Kern's "Cinema of Transgression", or still, in Buttgereit's filmography. On the other side, we can see McLaren's and Westwood's punk desemantisation dressed up as easy situationism with their boutique "SEX", re-signifying fetish and porn as fashion design accessory. After this contextualisation, Kramer arrives at today's proclamations of an alternative pornographic culture by denouncing the dogmatic positions in need of taboo avoidance through politically correct narratives. Indieporn is a game without consequences, where power is not faced, but rationalised and repressed. An operation of replacement is done. The artificial mainstream pornographic rhetoric is replaced by the rhetoric of the authentic. A new standard follows a old standard, but are the fair values of a "good porn" questioning "bad porn" and advancing the emancipation of minorities and oppressed groups or is it just a neo-porn-liberal master plan taking form? Authentic porn becomes a niche-market of online pornography, reproducing micro-identifying niches functional to the new viral marketing strategies, pushing porntainment in Web 2.0-social networks. "User generated content" utopia becomes mere window dressing to organize the best-selling porn contents. An explicit example is www.xtube.com. [12] This huge online database is a porn shop in social network's clothing. The networking structure is comparable to a social network, with profiles, friendships and the possibility to upload porn contents in video and photo format. But to find "RealCore" contents is quite difficult, because every tag or searching key brings you back to the "X-Tube" porn productions. Every micro-niche generates commodified contents enhanced by the exponential growth of the network. No other promotional system is required as it is the same user becoming a

“door-to-door-salesperson” by producing relationships inside the social network frame. The authenticity reconstruction is legitimised by the self-published contents that proffers a “RealCore” aura as a selling strategy. The avatar becomes the guardian of authenticity as selling unit; a strategically marketed re-humanisation. “Xtube” assumingly tells us not to waste our money anymore on glittering porn where plastic stars produce frustrated expectations. It’s better to reflect ourselves in its mirrors, where our need of identification puts us at ease, touching the base of our daily life porn democracy; a simple world made of fat housewives and micro-penises in citizenships granted by the “user generated content”. Circuses, carnivals and freak shows had distorted mirrors that exposed the image of one’s self to the multiple grotesque of impossible genetics. Fear and fun were one, proposing the radical experience of alterity. The funfair market was a building process of different communities in loving menace. The concept of “exotism” was a queer weapon in a desymbolising process; from Coney Island to John Waters. Now monsters are well systematised in “RealCore” dungeons of the information economy, where experience is consumed online with a false idea of free access to information. And you gotta be fast if you want to cum for free, as the proposal is synthesized in a fifteen seconds teaser of paying films. The macro-emersion of the “Tube”-model as “video network of networks” promotes teasers of mainstream porn websites in a continuous platform eco. Gender stereotypes came back in a tag system, bringing you to the membership dead end. Solitude is the key. Consuming it with a PayPal-system is so historically post-modern. The compulsive research and consumption of online-sex based on the inability to perform our own “impossibility” is the porn digital platforms profits engine and in the same time a self-feeding viral marketing.

The online porn production becomes cause and effect, pathology and remedy, authenticity and reproduction in the same time. To penetrate inside this mechanism and enucleate its destructive sides, the “Emoporn” concept can be a way to perform what DeGenevieve defined as “Pornographic sublime” intended here as the conscious pleasure to lose control and make an interpretative model out of it. So the pornography of emotions is proposed in this frame as a white noise disturbance meta-language; the naked exposure of emotions producing the impossibility of a safe identification in the masturbative process. To shape the concept more, I rethink the theoretical horizons of George Devereux in the field of epistemology as a pioneering work to use emotions as methodology in human sciences. French ethnopsychiatrist of the mid-twentieth century, George Devereux wrote a seminal text entitled “De l’angoisse à la méthode dans le sciences du comportement” in which he carried an extreme epistemological thought. Such a theory puts into a crisis the power construction of scientific roles which defines a field of study. This happens by epistemologically deconstructing the objectification processes institutionalizing the vertical position between the “subject-scientist” and the “object of study”; hierarchy which certifies the subject’s auratic power to represent the object. Method-as-distance is the safe space between the first and the second. Any other approach is non-scientific has it menaces, more then scientific knowledge, the scientist status quo. Proximity is dangerous to the acquired power of the subject. For this purpose all the intervening variables have to be erased. Devereux subverts the perspective and gives methodological dignity to these variables, using them as a out-of-focus lens, not just to understand the “object” in a more complex way by giving him the status of “subject”, but by complexifying and criticising

the position of the subject as scientist. This is why a methodology of closeness has to be created in a dialogic scientific relationship with the objectification processes. The accent is posed on disgust, fear and desire of aggression that the scientist sublimates. With this interlude I reframe "Emoporn" as a concept that does not want to be a post-modern thought and it does not pretend to resolve the power relationships around the institutionalization processes through masturbation. "Emoporn" wants to open them by subverting, inverting and perverting. "Emoporn" wants to be a provoking and seductive thought; a thought of conflict and flirt, a thought of kiss and fist, A deeply impossible thought revealing how semantic mechanisms enact to produce a certain reality proposed as universal. So this is an invitation to enjoy the representation of your own fears as the compulsive desire of an assassin to mentally repeat his and her murder until the discovery of his and her own pleasures.

*Falling. Floating. Flying.
The dissolence between being and
becoming
in the space of compulsion.
How do you control your life
through the research of desire.
And how does your life control you
through compulsive behaviours.
And if repetition is a form of change,
can you unchain your obsessions
towards an emotional crash
where assassin and victim are always
one
in the crime scene.
A suspended garden of evil flowers,
obsessive thoughts,
sirens seducing your senses,
poisoning your mind,
abusing your organs,
dropping you out.
Where you can find yourself in a near
death apnea,
remembering futures
in your own
mute
film.*

Notes

- [1] Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual.
- [2] abbr.: Do It Yourself
- [3] Porn platform based on subcultural aesthetics.
- [4] An emotional anthropological perspective conceives the implication of emotions as intervening variables in the making of social sciences.
- [5] See footnote 4.
- [6] The website has ceased to operate.
- [7] “The art and politics of NetPorn” (2005 Amsterdam), “C’lick Me: NetPorn” (2007, Amsterdam). Conferences organized by Katrien Jacobs, Matteo Pasquinelli and Marie Jansen, which grounded the field of “NetPorn Studies”.
- [8] Thematized online forums.
- [9] Artistic language based on the photocopy aesthetics.
- [10] Discussion groups provided by Yahoo in the beginning of the 1990’s
- [11] Emotional sociological anthropology is here intended as the implication of emotions as intervening variable in the making of social sciences methodology.
- [12] <http://www.xtube.com> last retrieved 20th October 2012.

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(last retrieved 20th October 2012)

X tube

<http://www.xtube.com/>

(last retrieved 20th October 2012)

Youporn

<http://www.youporn.com/>

(last retrieved 20th October 2012)