

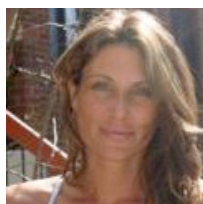


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Intimate Landscapes by

Melanie Skriabine /photography/

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Shoe Salespeople by the Nerve staff

Q: Sex with socks on: ever sexy?

A: I would call it, in certain situations, kinky.

Love Parade by Sarah

Hepola
Which member of Montreal's Wolf Parade gets the most girls? Dan, because he "[sigh] hates himself." /music/

I Did It For Science:

Princess Reform

Originally, the Porn Club came together because someone in the office had laid hands on the Pamela Anderson/Tommy Lee video. I worked in the field of educational children's television and shared a windowless space with two clean-cut boys whose job was to make miniature sculptures: teeny tiny little toasters fashioned out of clay, nanosized picture frames crafted from thin slices of balsa wood. My job was to make bigger versions of that same stuff. Half the show was animated, and the other half was live-action, so we needed both human- and camera-sized props.

My officemates and I didn't fraternize much. The boys were suspicious of my ability — sometimes my toasters came out looking like gray blobs — and offended, I thought, by my attitude: I didn't like my job and therefore wore a permanent scowl. I felt like an outcast among the just-out-of-school animators open to exploitation by Viacom. I was twenty-seven, practically ancient.

One day the younger one (twenty-three years old and already an art director!) produced this videotape from his cloth briefcase and presented it to the fresh-from-NYU animator chick with pigtails and thrift store plaid pants from down the hall. She announced that she would have folks over to her house to watch it. I was in the same room, I suppose, so they had to invite me.

That night, we ordered veggie burgers from the diner below the girl's house in Brooklyn Heights, and ate over our laps, on the floor in her living room. Ten of us — the director of

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Our favorite online video. This week: *The Shining*: A Cameron Crowe film.

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animation, his female assistant, the fellows from my room, and four other twentysomething animator boys — sat cross-legged on the floor, casually grumbling about our bosses and how we wished we were allowed to open the windows in the conference room. That's the sort of thing you dream about when you work in a skyscraper in Midtown Manhattan.

Then we turned the video on and watched Tommy steer a boat with his penis. It was a good-looking penis, I thought, and said as much: long, straight, full — whatever the criteria were, he seemed to be meeting them. There was raucous laughter, and as the video built toward the SUV oral sex scene, the room got quieter and quieter. Someone cleared his throat. Pam and Tommy groaned on the screen. For

Pigtails said, "That was so weird. We have to do it again!"

ten minutes there was utter silence. I kept my head frozen in the direction of the TV, careful not to turn around for fear of witnessing a stranger/colleague's erection. But as the video heated up, I became incredibly aware of myself — aware how my elbows were pressing against my ribs, aware of the diamond of empty space my crossed legs had created, and the insistent throbbing at one point in the diamond.

This was a strange experience. Not only was I getting aroused to Pam and Tommy, I was getting aroused to Pam and Tommy in a roomful of strangers. Tension and discomfort thickened the air. None of my colleagues looked any more attractive — possibly less so, next to all the glossy glam of Tommy and Pam — and there was no danger of an orgy. We were each having a very private experience in a public setting, and the bizarreness of this was part of its attraction. And I wasn't the only one who thought so. When the video ended, everyone was silent for a long moment, and then Pigtails said, "That was so weird. We have to do it again!"

And we did. We met semi-regularly, usually once a month, to take in the greatest hits of porn: *Behind the Green Door*, *Deep Throat*. Pigtails organized things by casually slipping into each person's office and letting us know the time and date. We met at her house. When Cinema Village showed *Disco Dolls in Hot Skin* in 3-D, we took a field trip. I had moved to New York just as Forty-Second Street was transforming — half the movie houses were still-operating porn theaters, half were art installations. By the time we were watching porn in an art cinema in the Village, Forty-Second Street had been thoroughly Disneyfied. This would be our only chance to view porn in public.

During the movie, I had a very, very uncomfortable moment during a lesbian three-way. A rumbling between my legs was verging dangerously close to orgasm, and I was sitting next to my sort-of friend from work on one side, and some pimply-faced NYU student on the other side, with whom I'd bantered a little before the lights went down.

The experience illuminated something I was already beginning to understand: when you get hot and bothered in front of people you barely know, the uneasiness that arises adds to the experience. It makes things hotter and more bothersome. Perhaps this is how people feel when they slip off to hump in a Bloomingdale's dressing room or jerk off in a dark corner of the subway. But for us it was not about danger, the closeness to committing a crime. By 1998, we'd already crossed so many boundaries as a culture that this was one of few left. At the office, we still just nodded at one another as we passed in the hall, but at Porn Club there was tacit acknowledgement of our communal trailblazing.

It reminded me of reading sections of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* with my girlfriend Leah at age nine, or when our bathroom was being renovated the summer before seventh grade and we had to take showers at the neighbor's house. This neighbor was the first on the block to have a magical device known as a Betamax; not only that, but he had what looked like a big plastic cassette tape marked *Star Wars* that was actually a video of a woman in a nurse's uniform being fucked rapidly on a copy machine as it made dittos of her ass. I watched this one Sunday morning with a bunch of neighborhood kids. We were supposedly taking in an episode of *Scooby-Doo* while the neighbor was at church.

And this is what Porn Club invoked, this innocent gathering of mild wrongdoers, until one of the members showed us a video from his private collection.

This video starred purebred black Labradors whose penises, when descended upon by glossy-eyed young women, erupted into what looked like long pink lipsticks. The dogs were having a fine time, and the women wore shallow smiles on their faces. This prompted Jerry, the purveyor



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It was an innocent gathering of mild wrongdoers, until . . .



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of the animal porn, to offer this theory: This was so far outside the realm of normal, that the women really had to enjoy it. Nothing, Jerry said, could make a woman suck doggie cock if she weren't into it.

Normally, I am one of those humans who cares much more for animals than members of my own species. But in this case, I could see the dogs were happy: the giant pink penises shooting from their loins were enough to convince me of their satisfaction. But the women, the women were not happy. Their smiles were false. They were googly-eyed monsters in human bodies. They were, I felt certain, on drugs, and the hunger for drugs could easily make a woman do this even if she weren't "into it," and I said so to the group. At that point, the members of Porn Club realized that it had indeed been a bad idea to invite the weird girl from the art department, the girl they never talked to at work anyway. There was quite a bit of eye-rolling in my direction.

The members of Porn Club realized it had been a bad idea to invite the weird girl from the art department.

As I gathered my stuff to go, a woman was jerking off a horse into a giant condom. Then the horse came into the condom, and the woman dumped the horse semen over her head.

"That's it," I said. "We're done."

I never thought they'd listen to me. There was so much left to see, a whole world of porn yet to be discovered. After all, we had only watched a few minutes of the *Land of the Lost*-style porno, which depicted Claymation dinosaurs fucking.

A month later, I saw Pigtails by the coffee machine. I asked what Porn Club had been watching.

"Nothing," she said. "You dissolved it, remember?"

"Oh," I replied. Instantly, I felt more embarrassed than I ever had at Porn Club. "That's it? Just because I said it was dissolved?"

Yes, she told me. Just because I said so, it was dissolved. I had exposed something, somehow. None of us acknowledged in the office that we, who spent our days fashioning and animating little clay-and-construction-paper creatures, spent our evenings communally watching men and women, or men and women and animals, fuck. My objection called attention to it. I'd burst the bubble.

Then she and I talked about what we'd seen and heard. Did men really fuck sheep, or was that a myth? "I think men fuck way more animals than we know about," she said. "I think they'll fuck anything — sheep, children. It's just part of who they are."

Of course, no male members of Porn Club were around to defend themselves, or their gender for that matter. But this post-mortem opened some door that could not be unlocked in the setting of Porn Club. And even if I inadvertently destroyed a pleasurable social pastime for a number of people in the field of educational children's television, I found, standing there in the coffee room, at this very office where I'd already been working for two years, an actual friend.

And though Porn Club never met again, Pigtails and I did sneak out of a staff meeting once and slip into one of the last remaining video peep booths in Times Square, trying to cross the line again before it disappeared forever. n°

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