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Cover collage by Timothy Bogart & Mistress CiXi
 Rose & AnnaKissed Bomb illustrations by Lucy Valkyrie
 FlowerBomber by Banksy
 All text, edit, & layout by Mistress CiXi.

LOR@X ARTS production



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INTRODUCTION:

What is the AnnaKissed Collective?

The AnnaKissed Collective is based in Brooklyn, NYC. We are a consensus-based anarchafeminist association that consists of:

- A safe space for pros of all sexualities to support and empower each other through consciously fighting internalized stigma. We respect sexual and economic choice, and encourage one another to express and trust in our own experiences and ideas.
- We create a network for mutual aid in health care, legal and financial services, education, housing, childcare, and access to media and capital.
- We are a trade union that promotes independent and collectively-run sexual businesses, such as cooperatively-owned dungeons and clubs, and alternative pornography. We blacklist unjust, non-transparent, and/or discriminatory businesses that exploit workers. We raise consciousness of ethical sex consumerism and empowered sex work.
- We outreach to sex workers in various industries in New York City, providing anonymous information and support.
- We believe in the decriminalization of consensual sex whether paid or unpaid. We organize against the prosecution of victimless crimes by the NYPD Vice Squad. We demand that the city instead channel its resources towards targeting non-consensual sex to prevent the acts of rape and sexual assault that go unpunished every day.
- We organize with other sex worker organizations on a national and international level to build a greater AnnaKissed movement, which fights for gender equality, human rights, sexual choice, and alternatives to government-enforced definitions of the monogamous family. We work with human rights organizations against sex slavery and human trafficking to fight nonconsensual sex, which is antithetical to our free sexual self-empowerment.
- We provide a forum and art space for sex worker self-expression through independent publishing, venues for presenting visual and performing arts, and opportunities to expand gender and sexuality theory.
- We recognize that the conditions of sex work differs greatly between different classes, trades, venues, geographical locations, and nations. Our collective seeks equal representation of rent-boys, LGBTQ, and alternative sexualities across diverse class, racial, ethnic, national, and geographical

CHAPTER ONE:

How Can the Sex Worker be an AnarchaFeminist?

The “oldest profession” exists outside of law, on the fringes of American society. It has always existed this way throughout history, underground and persecuted, yet not completely eliminated. Lawmakers systematically turn a blind eye towards the industry, profiting from it when it is useful, shutting it down when it becomes a threat, seeing it as inevitable and thus acknowledging that it serves a necessary purpose in society, yet forcing it to exist in a constant state of oppression: sex workers are threatened by social stigma and criminality, subjected to the worst conditions and abuse from both civil society and police.

Monogamous Marriage: Social Control and Gender Oppression

Anarcha-feminists recognize monogamous marriage as a form of state control over human relationships between the sexes. Marriage in a patriarchal society historically evolved as a primarily economic institution that ensures that a man's property is passed onto his genetic heirs, thus the wife's fidelity must be enforced for the proper regulation of wealth and land distribution from generation to generation (Engels). Yet modern biology has shown that human beings and most other animals on Earth are not naturally monogamous; rather our oxytocin-induced feelings of love last for an average of seven years, enough time to raise a Neanderthal child to an age where he or she can take care of himself and join the tribe (Barasch PhD and Lipton MD). The timing of the fading of chemistry concurs with the infamous “seven year itch,” at which time it is said husbands begin to have an “uncontrollable” urge to cheat on their wives.

Perhaps in a tribal society where there is no private property or land ownership, couples would naturally dissolve after chemistry disappears. However, in a civilization that is built on organized distribution of property, and systematic reproduction of social classes with specific roles, it is important for sexual and reproductive partnerships between men and women to last a lifetime so as to keep material society orderly. Contrary to biological inclinations, marriage in modern Western society is a life-long affair that requires a lot of social coercion to stay in place: it is enforced by government, sanctioned by religion, and mystified by fairy tales and popular media: held as the most sacred ritual of our society. Yet even with all of these systems of control, monogamy is tenuous at best, and steadily increasing divorce rates indicate increasing difficulty for traditional systems of social control to monitor sexual behavior. Extra-marital sexual relations and women's sexual liberation are inherently destructive to a patriarchal civilization of property/class

inheritance. That is why Eve's temptation is the original sin; why the fall of every Chinese kingdom is attributed to the fox demon (hulijing), a sexually powerful woman who corrupts the emperor. The sexual liberation of women from the oppressive institution of marriage is the most fearful threat for civilization.

Domestic and Sexual Enslavement of Wives, Mothers, and Maids

Anarcha-feminists see the unequal division of domestic labor within the traditional family as being exploitative of women. The realm of “women's work”: domestic housework, reproduction, sex, and childcare, are essential sources of labor that are fundamental to the successful functioning of society, yet this labor has always been unpaid and unacknowledged in the capitalist national accounting of production. Women have been traditionally kept within the home where they are treated like children, dependent on the care of fathers and husbands, and subservient to the needs of the men in their lives. Women's domestic labor expectations have not decreased with the liberation of women in professional life. The pressure for women to be all at once perfect career-women, housekeepers, mothers, and attractive sexual partners creates an oppressive and unequal work load that leads to increasing anxiety and illness.

Traditional patriarchal attitudes towards the “ideal woman” as beautiful and chaste objects of sexual attraction before marriage, and self-sacrificing and loyal wives and mothers after marriage, continues to coerce women into underappreciated and oppressive roles as sex objects and domestic servants. Thus, attitudes towards women's beauty, chastity, and motherhood, are ways of social control, which bind women to an institution of marriage that is inherently unjust in its labor division, and that perpetuates the oppressive gender binary and heterosexual orthodoxy.

Women are expected to be more family-oriented than men, and men are socially permitted to take on less responsibility than women in looking after their children and households. In many societies, it is accepted and expected that women must nag men to contribute financially to the family (and not waste money on alcohol or other diversions); that wives must nag men to stay loyal to them “against their natures” while wives would never be allowed the same promiscuities as their husbands. The myth of the naturally brutish, horny, and irresponsible man is used to justify men's irresponsibility in the home. Women are often given the task of having to pressure their husbands to spend quality time with children, and if laws permit, to pay child support when all else fails and the marriage ends in divorce. The burden of family maintenance is placed disproportionately on women, who are held responsible for unpaid domestic work, while also having to manipulate husbands to keep to their end of the deal. Meanwhile, men have been afforded the social recognition and free sexual enjoyment that their wives have historically been denied.

The Oppression of Men Under the Gender Binary

Though women have suffered heavier discrimination and social disenfranchisement due to gender, men are also oppressed by the gender binary. Feminism and issues of the family are not merely “women’s issues,” but universal human issues that affect all people, and they should not be dismissed as identity politics pertaining only to a minority, or dismissed in favor of addressing more “legitimate” economic or political problems.

Men suffer just as much as women do from confining gender roles. In fact, in modern American society, the expectations of “being men” are often stricter and more confining than that of “being women,” and men who break away from the macho, masculine image pay a heavy, physical price for their deviance.

How many “sissy” boys were beat up during gym class in high school? And how many of them become beer-drinking, pussy-swearing frat boys in college, perpetuating their own oppression?

American men, who are afraid of wearing short shorts, afraid to cry or express any emotional vulnerability, afraid to hug other men, afraid of appearing “gay” in any way, are afraid because the price of being weak is very high in our competitive, testosterone-driven society. Boys who can’t compete in dodge ball and in the business world are ostracized, made to feel worthless. American men are deeply afraid of being perceived as “pussies,” of being woman-like, yet they are forced to channel their insecurities and inadequacies physically, violently, towards others or themselves, since that is the only acceptable, “masculine” way of expressing discomfort and fear.

Traditional masculinity is burdensome, and the burden is placed on people without free choice or consent, based on biological sex rather than chosen gender. Men are expected to be tough, to be successful breadwinners, to ask for dates and pay for them too, to be the leaders of their families, to make a lot of money and find a pretty wife, and to buy a fancy house and raise their children in a good environment so they can engage in the same rat race. These social expectations, which boys deal with every day while growing up, lead to strong feelings of anxiety and inadequacy, which translate to enormous pain. But men aren’t allowed to express their pain outright; instead, it is more acceptable for men who feel pressure to succeed, or who fail to provide for their families, to numb their pain in a grand, macho way, through alcohol and drugs, and by turning to the “darker worlds” of bars and sex venues, which have always existed in every society for the emotional release of failing, ailing men.

When men feel they can not express their feelings of inadequacy to their wives, who expect them to be strong breadwinners, nor to their buddies who loathe vulnerability in other men as much as they loathe it in themselves; when they can’t express their anxieties in emotionally direct (effeminate) terms, they will instead often express their feelings sexually, with great macho thrust.

Thus, prostitutes have always been men’s greatest psychotherapists.

Insecure men find security through exaggerated masculinity and participation in violent gangs and hashing brotherhoods. Notions of masculinity are used to prod men into competitive and combative behavior on a personal and global scale, leading to ethics of compulsive competition, accumulation, hierarchy, and militarism, rather than “effeminate” cooperation, peace, and environmental sustainability. Gender expectations lead to destructive and ineffective emotional regulation that fails to address men and mankind’s underlying problems, and only brings on more problems.

In a socially libertarian society devoid of confining gender roles, men would be allowed to be stay-at-home dads and househusbands without fear of social stigma; and both men and women would be allowed to choose the work that best suits their passions for the net benefit of all. Male homemakers are stigmatized and regarded as unnatural because society associates certain human traits with being male or female. Caring, nurturing, compassion, and cleanliness are socially defined as female traits. Aggression, competitiveness, rationality, and efficiency devoid of emotion are socially defined as male traits. Though biology plays a role in promoting the expression of these traits, men are just as capable of being compassionate and clean as women, and a woman can be just as aggressive and cut-throat as any man; the classification of these traits as male or female is due more to nurture/culture than nature/biology, and society’s insistence that people act according to sexually defined biological tendencies is limiting and unjust.

Negative Consequences of Gender Inequality On World Governance

There is a hierarchy in the evaluation of male and female traits. Since the 17th Century Enlightenment, Western society has strongly valued reason over emotion. We want our leaders to be strong and aggressive, not compassionate and cooperative. We continually place “male traits” above “female traits.” A man who chooses to give up his male breadwinner job to take on female roles in the household is seen as “debasing” himself somehow. Men who are weak are called “sissies”; and becoming more like a woman is to be a weaker man. Thus, losing masculinity by gaining femininity is perceived as a net loss.

In our current global political situation, where we are threatened on all sides by climate change and environmental destruction, as well as nuclear warfare and economic collapse, perhaps traditional “male traits” are not best for governance. The problems of the 21st Century require international cooperation. Our greatest problem, the Tragedy of the Commons, in which each nation is trying to spend and consume as much as possible, pollute as much as they can get away with, and use as many resources as possible, to the devastation of all, is a problem that requires the “female traits” of compassion

and mutual compromise to solve. When we continually devalue “female traits” in leadership, we are slowly ensuring the death of the entire human race.

Gender attitudes make it costly for national leaders to exhibit “feminine” behavior by capitulating to the demands of the other party; thus warfare and nuclear proliferation has always had a lot to do with male psychology. Furthermore, masculinity is used in combat to manipulate the enemy. When the U.S. wanted to manipulate Saddam Hussein into staying in Kuwait, President Bush challenged his masculinity, and announced publically he would “kick Saddam’s ass” if he did not get out of the country by a certain date, thus ensuring that if Saddam wanted to keep his face in front of his people, he would have to stay in the country – a suicidal move. (Birkeland, “Ecofeminism”).

On an everyday level, men are also being manipulated and prodded with ideologies of “masculinity” to compete harder and be more cut-throat with one another. In traditional patriarchal society, men are encouraged to accumulate wealth and bear more children to show off their success. Empowering women’s positions in the family through education and professional work lowers the birth rate and is shown to be one of the most effective ways to counter the global overpopulation crisis. In addition, changing social attitudes towards female sexuality allows women to claim control over their sexual identities outside the Patriarchal family and generally empowers women.

In an increasingly globalized world with ever-diminishing natural resources, traditional militaristic strategies of intimidation and international competition is insanity and suicide, and our continual devaluation of “feminine traits” will lead to our demise and the destruction of many other life forms on Earth. What we need is a complete perspective change from one of “masculine” militarism and competition to “feminine” peace, environmental sustainability, and cooperation. We need to change from an anthropocentric and instrumental evaluation of nature to one that values ecology for its own sake and seeks to exist in cooperation with other lifeforms; from a perspective of hierarchy and control to an “ethic of reciprocity” (Birkeland); and from “heroic ethics” of bomb, destroy, and rescue, to “holistic ethics” of peace, nurturance, and preservation of the interconnected Greater Good (Kheel).

Under a patriarchal system where “feminine” traits of cooperation are devalued in favor of “masculine” traits of combat, compulsive competition and wasteful accumulation will continue to make us all sick. Our capitalist economy runs on the basest of human emotions, the feelings of inadequacy and scarcity, the silent but deadly classism, and the cut-throat desire to be better than our neighbors. This individualism and work ethic, though it provides a good motivation for production and consumption, has been taken to a deadly extreme where we are hurting each other and the environment for senseless consumption that does not make us feel fulfilled or truly happy.

It is not a question of whether men or women have an easier time in this social order. Rather, we would all be better off if we recognized how gender plays a crucial role in our own enslavement to unfulfilling work. Sex, sexual relations, and sex drive have been appropriated as the main drivers for people to work hard and senselessly: men do it for the money, so they can buy the cars, so they can get the girls. Girls torture themselves so they can be the ones chosen at the end of the race, the princesses rescued by the shining prince. We are all tricked by advertising that capitalizes on our sex drives and gender identities.

Sex Industry and Gender Injustice

To the despair of the wife, men have often turned to mistresses and prostitutes to channel their emotional energies. This has always been implicitly tolerated by society, and the whores who answer men’s demands have been stigmatized more than the men who employ them. The sexual double standard that labels a promiscuous woman a dirty slut and a promiscuous man a stud and enviable Casanova, creates very different consequences for sexual experimentation for men and women. In our society, men are encouraged to be more sexually active than women, as justified by their “biological nature,” (rather than social conditioning.) Men are led to believe that they can’t help but express their horny, brutish urges, and it is the job of women to limit access to sex because men can’t control themselves. This places the entire responsibility of sexual engagement on women, requiring the woman to place a premium on her own sexual inexperience so as to remain attractive to the right man who will provide a long-term economic service to her as husband. This attitude that excuses men for their “biological” sexual brutishness also justifies an extremely oppressive logic for rape: that it is the woman’s fault if she is sexually assaulted by a man because she “provoked it” by improperly attracting his sexual attention, which is beyond his control.

The sex industry as it exists in our patriarchal society is a source of inherent gender injustice. The sex and pornography industries are overwhelmingly catered towards straight and gay men. Men can experiment with sexual services such as strip clubs or prostitution at some point in their lives with no permanent repercussions to their social standing, whereas any woman who turns to sex work is degraded and alienated from society for the rest of her life, as she has often effectively forfeited her right to long-term economic care from a man in the form of marriage, in exchange for short-term payoffs. Traditionally, prostitutes have lived outside the family economy, and the ones who are fortunate enough to have control over their own finances and material conditions have enjoyed a certain level of freedom at the cost of social stigma and physical violence. Others, the great majority in history, who have been forced into their work against their will, have been some of the

most exploited members of society: denied their bodies, their identities, their self-esteem, and the respect of society for someone else's profit.

However, the tragic plight of the prostitute, the "fallen woman" who chooses an "immoral" line of work, is considered by most people as natural and just. Society wants to see the downtrodden whore be punished for her "wayward ways." The reason why the prostitute is treated so poorly is because she is seen as the home-wrecker, a threat to marriage and the nuclear family, which is the foundation of our property-inheriting civilization. Thus, a sexually liberated woman is inherently a danger to society. And self-empowered prostitutes, who highlight the crack in the biologically unnatural institution of coerced lifelong monogamy, are the greatest threat to patriarchy.

Anarcha-feminists of AnnaKissd persuasion do not criticize the sex worker for her or his labor choice. Though the institutions of sex work create conditions for the sexual objectification of women, anarchafeminists recognize that the women and men who participate in the sex industry did not create these unjust conditions and social structures, and their so-called "Uncle Tom" (McKinnon) participation in sex work is not the reason gender injustice is enabled or perpetuated, so sex workers can not be blamed for the unfair conditions they work under because as divided, individual laborers, they have little power over the management of the sex industry.

Furthermore, wherever the institution of marriage has existed, men have turned to "the other woman" to tend to unmet needs and escape domestic responsibilities. Prostitutes and wives alike should realize that both live within a system that values a woman based on her ability to tend to the needs of men: that traditionally, marriage is essentially a longer sell than prostitution, but both systems have made women instruments, and even property, to men. The moralistic attitudes towards female sexual propriety are vestiges of this patriarchal system of gender relations, which remains strong in modern society in spite of the recent liberalization of cultural attitudes towards sex in the 1960's. We live in a half-way revolution, where material and social structures have changed significantly but cultural attitudes are still evolving; and we have a long way to go.

The feminist movement is held at a gridlock with regard to the controversial issue of sex work, with some feminists asserting that a woman's sexual choices must be supported, while others argue that sex work is inherently degrading towards women, that sex work and pornography fundamentally undermines feminism, and that the sex industry exists within an unjust economic and gender power dynamic that makes true free choice impossible. The anarchafeminist of AnnaKissd persuasion believes that these other feminists who emphasize the victim natures of sex workers and assume sex workers to be incapable of free choice and self-representation are effectively silencing and infantilizing the sex worker, and unknowingly perpetuating the values of female sexual propriety which serve as the keystone

foundations of patriarchy.

The AnnaKissd Manifesta is a call for self-empowerment among sex workers and their allies to unite in mutual aid to combat the oppressive attitudes of sexual stigma that are internalized by sex workers and all members of society. We unite to create safer, collectively-owned and consensus-run work spaces with access to healthcare, legal and financial representation, housing, childcare, education, and media self-representation.

We believe that privileged sex workers in the first world who have the ability to exercise free choice in their involvement in the sex industry have an ethical responsibility to serve as advocates for sex workers who are coerced into the profession against their will; that conscious sex workers should unite as human rights activists against sexual assault, human trafficking, and sex slavery; and that all feminists, male and female, sex workers, housewives, and domestic workers, of all sexualities and family structures, should unite in world-wide solidarity for conscious and free sexual, economic, and family choice.

We do not and can not know whether or not sex work would exist in an utopian "post-revolutionary" society, and we choose to take an ambivalent stance towards the larger philosophical ethics of sex work itself so as not to be bogged down by ideological stalemate. However, we believe whole-heartedly that no person should be legally punished or socially stigmatized for consensual sex, whether it be paid or unpaid, and we support an individual's freedom to choose for his or her own body. We know that regardless of platonic moral debate, a highly unjust sex industry currently exists and has always existed, and the AnnaKissd mission is to actively build better alternatives to the existing exploitative structures within patriarchal capitalism.

AnnaKissd anarchafeminists know that changing social attitudes towards sex work, gender, and family radically destabilizes patriarchy. We believe in roses not bombs. We know that in fact, a rose can be just as explosive as a bomb, and we are prepared for direct action.



Whore's rights are women's rights.
Women's rights are human rights.

**Free the Caged Madonna
by Raising Up the Whore.**

CHAPTER TWO:

The AnnaKissed Body: Resisting Beauty Tyranny

The following chapter aims to show how notions of feminine beauty are inherently oppressive. Through a mix of informal theory and personal writing, I seek to demonstrate various ways in which the female body is used as a political battleground, and interpret resulting implications on sex work and family structure.

How does ideology penetrate the body? How does it feel embodied? How does a woman in 2009 juggle the beauty tyranny of media and advertising with the fragmented protests of post-feminism and the physical and material realities of sex work in New York City? They say beauty is in the eye of the beholder. So the beautiful "I" is forever beholden to the Eye. And all women, who are constantly judged based on standards of beauty, are always experiencing their power and identity indirectly.

Women's bodies are used to sell everything: from cars and liquor, to entertainment and fashion, to food and household appliances. Images of ideal female beauty saturate the mental space of every person in this advertisement-driven society. In addition, women's sexuality is sold directly in the form of pornography, erotic dance, and sex work, and men are the main managers and profiteers of these sales: the majority of big corporate CEO's, the moguls in entertainment and fashion, the biggest pornographers and strip club owners, and the king pins of the international sex trade.

If women's bodies are getting commodified and exploited anyway, why **shouldn't** we get our fair share of the profits?

Instead, women suffer more than men do from the implicit and explicit messages of advertising and media representation that subliminally command unnecessary and ecologically self-destructive consumption. Women are systematically trained to spend enormous time and energy worrying about how we look, and whether or not we fit the glamor images that we see everywhere. We fuel the economy with our anxious consumption of the latest fashion trends, beauty products, mostly useless anti-aging products, diet drugs, and gym memberships. And we are made sick by our consumption.

In the United States, women suffer disproportionately more than men do from "eating disorders," as well as general anxiety and depression. Yet the mental health profession, an institution that exists to tend to our fears and nurse off our anxieties, tells us that our suffering is an individual fault, a personal psychological tendency, or a chemical imbalance. Those who can afford being diagnosed with "psychological disorders" pay a ridiculous amount of money to talk to psychologists/psychotherapist/psychiatrists who are trained by a theoretical canon dominated by white male thinkers; thinkers who often have an inferior, second-hand understanding of, if not an outright

unfavorable bias, against women. An increasing population of women pay even more money annually for drugs to correct their "chemical imbalances," and thus hand themselves over to suffer further bodily invasion to fatten the wallets of Big Pharma. By focusing attention on women's individual "illnesses," and pathologizing our choices, rather than focusing attention and energy on addressing the greater social illness of unhealthy visual programming, the mental health profession and society at large shames and isolates the woman, while remaining apathetic to the greater causes of her suffering. This is because our economic system requires that women be anxious and ever-preoccupied with appearance because this anxiety and pain is the source of so much profit that keeps the wheels of our earth-binging-and-purging economy turning.

Women are expected to personally fight off the unhealthy images of the media; in fact, we are each individually held responsible for maintaining our own "body image" with positive self-talk and other psychological tools of self-persuasion, rather than question the sanity and health of these visual and mental invasions, and hold the people who produce these images responsible for the negative impact they produce, the "externalities" of their toxic advertising. The social attitude towards eating disorders is this: if a woman doesn't have a "healthy body image," it's her own fault. Anorexia is seen as an "illness of perfectionism" rather than a logical step towards self-empowerment in a society that values skinniness, where clinically underweight women are demonstrably more successful in business, media, and social relationships. The same anorexic, underweight woman is thought to be disciplined and beautiful if she hides her "eating disorder" and pretends her thinness is "natural," but if she should admit to the world that she has a problem with eating, that she spends her days suffering over every calorie, then that same thinness is all of a sudden seen as a weakness, a psychological problem. So, on top of the humiliation of the mental invasion of advertising, women are made to be doubly ashamed of their efforts to empower ourselves within the existing structure of beauty tyranny when they choose to conform to those toxic images; we hide in solitude, with the social violence of guilt, fear, and doubt attacking from every direction, afraid even to confess to our girlfriends who, subject to the same sociological forces, are more likely to berate or envy us than truly understand or help us.

Film theorist Laura Mulvey wrote in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" that the female subjectivity has been appropriated by the male gaze. In movies, the camera literally freezes upon the glowing image of a girl, and time slows down, so that the male hero can judge the worth of the female sexual/romantic object. Living in this society, we are all engrossed in images produced by a dominant male subjectivity, where women are primarily sex objects and secondarily characters to support a male heroism. Mulvey challenged female filmmakers to create a new cinema that portrays the female subjective view, but she acknowledged the near-impossibility of that task given that the entire world as we see it is delineated in the language

of patriarchy; our very thoughts are flavored by learned subconscious symbols. How do women take agency in this structure? How do we take back our bodies from the male gaze and illuminate our lives with our own subjective vision?

Women are expected to engage in a perpetual battle against the images around us to maintain our own self-esteem. This battle takes up enormous time and energy, and is a form of social control that keeps us preoccupied with the trivialities of fashion and the ephemeral qualities of beauty, and keeps us ever-desirous of the next self-improvement item, ever-buying and ever-consuming more and more useless stuff, to the detriment of the environment, our bodies, and our self-confidence. We are told that the way we look naturally is not beautiful enough; that we must correct stray hairs, apply chemicals all over our bodies to ensure perfect, smooth skin, apply harmful deodorants and perfumes to achieve an inhumanly delightful smell, and should we ever begin to show signs of aging, we must do whatever it takes: slather cream, inject Botox, or surgically “lift” our skin to keep the natural age from showing. We wage a war against natural aging with our tubes of expensive chemical pastes, and it’s a ridiculous battle that we simply can not win. Women’s struggles against nature in our bodies parallels humanity’s greater battles against nature. Women are shown by the world that we are inherently faulty in some way. Our understanding of ourselves is one characterized by lack, that we are naturally incomplete and unattractive, that we must complete ourselves with great effort, great care, and most importantly, great purchases; and that completeness comes in the form of a seduced man.

Female performers and public figures, such as singers, actresses, models, and dancers, and erotic performers such as strippers, escorts, and sex workers, suffer a great brunt of the media toxicity. We are the physical embodiment of the idealized male “gaze”; in fact, our survival depends on embodying beauty and sex, and being perfect objects of observation. Though we profit from our fortunate position of successful embodiment, we pay the price by entirely capitulating our bodies to external opinion for survival. Our feelings of empowerment via physical beauty are sadly ephemeral and reliant on a system of inherent gender oppression.

Sex workers, be we exotic dancers, fetish models, or prostitutes, bear the heaviest brunt. Like all women in modern society, our self-conceptions are heavily tied to our physical bodies due to pop obsession with celebrity and glamor, and ubiquitous visual programming; yet sex workers are made to believe that our bodies “are not truly our own” because of what we choose to do. The law in Philadelphia, which rules that prostitutes can not be legally raped, only robbed, corresponds with this violent assertion, and legally dis-embodies us. Anti-pornography feminists who denounce sex workers for corroboration with patriarchy are also quick to call us “objects,” not real women like them, and their language robs us of the possibility of subjectivity and choice.

Is it possible for a free-thinking, free-choosing woman to

consciously embody the beauty standards of the objectifying “gaze,” and in so doing empower herself in a real, material way, without completely negating her ideological commitment to feminist liberation? When a woman is aware of the oppression that beauty standards impose on her self-concept, and conscious of how this tyranny greatly inconveniences her daily life, yet feels too helpless or too preoccupied to single-handedly change the greater cultural hegemony and pay the price of nonconformity in misunderstood isolation; when she rationally chooses success by rising up the ranks of existing power structures rather than by greatly burdening herself in an uncertain struggle to create alternative beauty standards, does her conscious choice to do so build a layer of subjectivity that negates her “objecthood”? Does consciousness and choice make a self-aware feminist out of a perceived sex object? Who defines objecthood? Does a woman’s rational choice to play to the standards of idealized beauty and sexuality given the costs and benefits of her options show conformity or freedom? cowardice or bravery? weakness or strength?

Debi Sundahl, stripper and feminist, wrote in an essay in which she reflected on her experiences dancing at the Lusty Lady Theater in San Francisco that she felt good at being objectified in the context of the strip club:

The hardest part of the job was dealing with my feminist principles concerning the objectification of women. Dancing nude is the epitome of woman as sex object. But as the weeks passed, I found I liked being a sex object, because the context was appropriate. I resent being treated as a sex object on the street or at the office. But as an erotic dancer, that is my purpose. I perform to turn you on, and if I fail, I feel I have done a poor job. Women who work in the sex industry are not responsible for, nor do they in any way perpetuate, the sexual oppression of women. In fact, to any enlightened observer, our very existence provides a distinction and a choice as to when a woman should be treated like a sex object and when she should not be. At the theater, yes; on the street, no. Having the distinction so obviously put out at work, I felt more personal power on the street.

As a feminist first and sex worker second, I also struggle constantly with the dilemma of personal power whenever I dress myself in the mornings and choose which foods to eat at every meal. I wonder if it’s ethical for me to corroborate with traditional and oppressive standards of beauty to empower myself economically. At the lap dance party where I used to work, I sometimes felt that the room I was standing in was like the spiky medieval torture instrument, the Iron Maiden, inside which the male “gaze” pierced unabated from every direction, and the dancer must learn to hold her precarious position or bleed - but this is merely an intensified version of the world outside.

However, in the theater of those black walls, the dancer can use the psychological distance of performance and movement/image control (dance) to clothe herself in layers of mirages. In so doing, she exercises a certain raw agency in self-creation, a limited subjectivity that is potent, though it is strictly

confined within the patriarchal definition of feminine sexuality. She dresses herself in the gaze of her watcher, manipulating his passions, and insodoing reversing subject-object relations.

The world of the strip club is a game of fantasy, where the purpose is to intuit the content of the male gaze and embody those desires, engaging in an artful and deliberate charade. In grasping and manipulating the gaze, the dancer disarms it, and renders it a tool for her own performance.

This detection and reflection is an essential part of the sex worker's job; it is a service that requires subjective, thoughtful action separate from her body as object. Thus the sex worker is not merely "selling her body," she is using her body to perform a valued service, like any other job in society. According to the testimony of stripper Katherine Frank, men who frequent strip clubs are looking not only for a physical product, but also an emotional personality construct that matches the prejudices of their gaze; in fact, the personality is often more important to the male customer than the physical qualities of the dancer. The stripper's work requires both intellectual perception and emotional/physical assimilation.

Any type of labor requires a certain sale of the physical body to perform service. Actresses, models, dancers, singers, entertainers and public figures of all sorts are selling the image of their bodies and often selling their sexualities; masseuses, physical therapists, trainers, and doctors, are selling their touch and physical bodies; psychotherapists, counselors, and therapists or all sorts are selling their emotional sympathies; every worker is selling his or her time and life energy to survive under Capitalism. There is a logical incoherence in the argument that many anti-pornography feminists bring up that sex work is uniquely oppressive in its sale of the physical body. It is unreasonable to single out the work of pornographic models from other models when most forms of advertisement, whether overtly or discreetly pornographic, capitalize off of objectified female sexuality. The glamor ads are more widespread and more oppressive to women than the overt pornography, which we can easily identify and dismiss outright as oppressive, or at least "dirty." The assertion of the sacredness of the sex organs, which renders them improper for service, is a part of the patriarchal and religious orthodoxy that is unfair to women, and that is on its way out, crumbling slowly since the seventeenth century Enlightenment and exponentially decaying since the sexual liberation of the sixties.

Women have historically created the space for their agency and power through influencing the perception of men. A woman's power is often subversive and underhanded: aggressively passive, indirect, dispossessed, but not necessarily less potent. Queens and courtesans have exercised this power throughout human history, and it is unfortunate that the befuddled male language can only make sense of this influence as being manipulative and treacherous. When the only source of power available is collusion with patriarchy, when there is no real alternative, then what kind of just scale could

be used to measure agency and morality? The male "gaze," which is internalized by all women and men living in patriarchy, is blind to that space of agency in the female subjectivity, except when she fails to portray fully.

The gender relations and sexual power dynamic in the strip club is merely an intensification of the world outside. All women, as objects of beauty, of the "gaze," are forced to experience themselves on multiple levels of observation: to try to see themselves as others see them and to try to control their vision, to pre-judge and post-judge themselves in anticipation and reaction to others' judgment. Men, who are less reliant on seduction for power, are less deeply affected by this torturous multiplicity of self-awareness. In all professions, sexual and non-sexual, women have found their gender and sexuality play a huge role in the way they are perceived in the workplace, and almost every woman experiences her sexuality as a tool (or burden) in the working world. Furthermore, society places great value on female emotion, on the tears of the fairytale princess trapped in a tower, on her gentleness and innocent joy, to the point that girls learn to become very aware of the emotions they are exhibiting and their effects on observers. (I find this to be especially true of Asian girls, who are encouraged to imitate cartoon versions of human emotion.) The premium that society places on female emotion, and the strong link between emotional vulnerability and female beauty, teaches all girls to use their emotions decoratively, and hold their expressions at a certain distance from themselves. In school, while boys fight in playgrounds, girls feign niceness to one another so as not to disrupt their emotional beauty, while vindictively engaging in sub-expressional combat. When female emotions are given beauty capital, when female experience of self is constantly mediated by others' experiences of them, a distance is created within each woman.

The self-distancing created by women's internalization of the male "gaze" is inherently oppressive. Throughout history and literature, women have complained of being unable to trust their own emotions and experiences because they are told that what they know and feel are not valid. Our culture of professionalized knowledge and our habit of consulting "trained experts" to lend credibility to any given topic of discussion devalues individual reason and logic, and teaches people to distrust their own analytical abilities. (I want to quote Chomsky or Gramsci on this, but I'd be contradicting myself.) While women and other "minorities" continue to be underrepresented in the upper echelons of academia and professional expertise, our culture of referring to experts for correct analysis also perpetuates an unbalanced world view. Sex workers, who have been studied by professional intellectuals of many different fields, and mystified all throughout literature, have rarely had the chance to speak for themselves. I find that most sex workers have a very difficult time making sense of our own experiences, and our own feelings of empowerment or oppression, amidst the cultural messages all around us, and I want to help in the creation of more spaces where sex workers can talk

to each other safely, and create a body of knowledge and art from our own experiences.

People who speak for us while silencing us (many of them feminists), often fail to comprehend the complexities required to analyze our line of work; generalized theory is inadequate and must be supplemented by empirical knowledge through a rich exploration of stigma-free first-hand experiences. Such empirical testimony is difficult to compile and analyze statistically (without bias) in an environment of legal and social risk. The fact that sex work is illegal also means that there can be no formation of professional associations that could create codes of professional conduct, unionize to fight for fair conditions, or certify a hierarchy of skills to justify differentials in pay; thus sex work can only be classified as unskilled labor even though it in fact requires a lot of skill. The only difference is that this skill is not schooled or certifiable (currently), which problematic for an economy that relies on Universities and legalized institutions to control and regulate entry into professionalized work.

With the rise of the presence of strippers and prostitutes in the mainstream media, I believe that public opinion with regard to sex work is on the verge of transformation, and I want to help tie this inevitable revolution to greater questions of patriarchal family, gender roles, and sexuality. American culture has long been obsessed with sex, due directly to the force of Protestant restraint, which only adds to the strength and intrigue of subversive rebellion against sexual taboos. Hollywood places sex on a pedestal, everywhere creating the mythology of the ultimate sexual experience; and all advertisers have learned to capitalize from this in countless ingenious ways. American capitalism commodifies everything shy of the touchy unmarketable subjects that strike too close to the Protestant ethics (Weber) that enable Capitalism, prostitution being one of those untouchable subjects. But I think even these boundaries are on the verge of changing, as the media is hungrily searching for ever-greater scandal and stimulation to feed the jaded masses.

As an activist trained in radical ideology and history, I am not certain that pandering to Capitalist media sensationalism will result in positive benefits for our movement; I fear cooption, both of my message and of myself. However, I believe that legalization and destigmatization of sex work is necessary to reduce harm, increase knowledge, and empower marginalized voices, and I believe it's necessary to engage in dialogue with the mainstream in order to create broadbased social change. I do not believe in the rhetoric that radicals have only one political role: to increase the range of discourse and shift the center towards the left but not to be the ultimate voice of change (for example through direct action that lends credibility to moderates). I dislike the word "radical" because it can be very self-defeating; I don't want to marginalize my own voice or alienate people through the creation of prejudices that result from the use of that word. I'm also unsure the label "Anarchist,"

with its etymological root suggesting chaos and negative destruction, a label chosen sardonically by Proudhon to piss people off, is really the right label for the complexities of this political philosophy, as it engenders immediate feelings of alienation and fear, which is not good for communicating rationally with human beings. In the coming years of sex worker and Anarchist emergence in the mainstream, I think that some of us should try to communicate to the mainstream media as sympathetic people with qualities of universal goodness that everyone can agree on: respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, caring, fairness, love for freedom and justice, those "Republican" and "moral" virtues that the Right uses for social control and keeping people in ignorance. We on the Left should be role models for those virtues, because Anarchism is essentially the logical follow-through of democracy, equality, justice, fraternity/sorority, those French Revolutionary ideals that form the basis of our current Western political philosophy. To *not* be an anarchist while embracing those liberal values, is to be a hypocrite.

Nonetheless, what is of utmost importance in the communication of values in our current movement is securing independent channels of expression and free communication to voice the complexities of so-called "radical" ideas, especially if they become simplified and commodified by mainstream sensationalism. Activists and artists on the Left must anticipate media cooption and be prepared to use the mainstream media as a tool, to coopt the cooptors and subvert them sub rosa. (Don't worry, Badass. They'll think it's Cool.) Authenticity and logical thoroughness is of utmost importance. But proper marketing certainly helps. I am very hopeful that the transformation of information technology via the internet creates a new material foundation for a faster, less mediated economic, political, and superstructural change, which will revive old movements of Anarchism deemed theoretically obsolete.



As for the question of beauty, and the ethics of pandering to traditional notions of beauty, my personal stance is: "Do whatever it is that makes you feel most powerful and most happy with yourself." Although I recognize the unhealthy bodily invasion of anorexia and plastic surgery, I sympathize with those who feel (correctly) that they will gain real power through fitting the beauty ideal. In some sense, it simply comes down to a matter of value communication speed; in a fast-paced society, you certainly gain an advantage when you can explain your beauty immediately. Thinness, boobs, and a cute face can be like the thirty-second elevator pitch of female self-promotion, which unfortunately but truthfully is enough to get you pretty far in life, as a young woman. So I do not condemn women who starve themselves to look good or purchase plastic surgery to gain self-confidence, because I am more interested in fighting the system of values than criticizing the individual, who should be free to make choices and tradeoffs within the

system of values.

As for myself, I want to focus my efforts on creating new beauty standards through alternative media that I hope will transcend the "alternative" label one day and become universally accepted, since embracing non-traditional beauty corresponds with the universal value of judging people for who they are inside, as well as the American/globalized value of embracing diversity. I believe people want very badly to see their values of Beauty Justice embraced by popular media; there are more people who do not fit the tyrannical beauty ideal than those who do, so why do we allow ourselves to suffer from the dictatorship of Vogue and MTV? Americans sit on their couches and ingest hypocrisy from their picture boxes, and it doesn't feel good. Sooner or later our confusion and disgust will lead us to a Turning Point. Active coherence universally feels better than complacent hypocrisy, and I believe beauty can and will be revolutionized to a state of Image Anarchy (true democracy) - Consider this Manifesta a joyful Declaration of Independence.

On another note, I don't want to underplay men's oppression under Beauty Tyranny. They too suffer from media representations of idealized Superman figures. They too are discriminated against based on their looks, in employment and all social relationships. In fact, women sometimes have it easier than men do in "unskilled" jobs such as bartending and waitressing in the city because they often gain special privileges if they comply with the Beauty Standard. Rent-boys, especially, have a much harder time getting by in the sex industry than female sex workers. (This is a topic that I don't know enough about and I want to explore further in future editions of this zine.)

Though men have traditionally had access to more direct resources for power than women, they too are captives of the "gaze" that idealizes an oppressive masculine hero. Men are pressured by the culture at large to "get a pretty wife" so they can enhance their own social status, so the evaluation of women based on their looks is not any single man's fault; rather society at large creates conditions that facilitates the objectification of women as trophies to men's achievement. Focusing on individuals and talking down at them from a moralistic soapbox is arrogant and self-defeating (and too reminiscent of right-wing conservative strategies.)

Anarchafeminists, who are often seen as man-hating dykes, sometimes do marginalize their own message and make the mistake of hypocritically moralizing against all men, putting the whole sex in one sweeping category and subjecting them to reverse sexism in a fight against patriarchy. Doing so fails to recognize the dignity and free choice in every human being (including men!) and isolates the message of anarchafeminism in the realm of identity politics. These man-bashing anarchafeminists fail to make the distinction between the general social phenomena of gender oppression and the choices and actions of individual human beings, so they fail to distinguish between the theoretical ideology of gender and sexuality

theory and the reality of social change on a personal level, which requires social engagement and universal solutions. Furthermore, as a bisexual woman with straight sympathies, I reject moralistic lesbianism as a politic. In addition to increasing gender and sexual diversity, and paving the way for alternative family structures, I believe the objective of feminism should be to make straight relationships more fair, not to eliminate them all together, because that is unrealistic. Most human beings are created with the help of a penis and a pair of testicles, and an utopian vision of a world without men is pretty Fascist.

AnnaKissed anarchafeminism, the ideology of whores, knows, accepts, and loves men. :-) We've done it for millenia. Men, as a population demographic, are not the enemies; it's the unjust system of patriarchal values and institutions that we are fighting against, not the people who choose to uphold them, for these people can and must be persuaded and seduced to change - whores and Cleopatras are good at that kind of persuasion. The Anarchist/democratic respect for diversity of culture and opinion requires it.

Furthermore, I find current sex worker activist media in the burlesque/trampy vein to be somewhat trashy and vulgar, and thus also immediately alienating. Although I love burlesque, and love "trashiness" in aesthetic, I find that it is not representative of my own experiences with sex work, which have generally not been very openly vulgar. I don't believe most people find the culture of loud vulgar sex proclamation to be particularly sexy, and I would like to see new forms of sex activism that portrays the sex worker as a self-confident, strong, and generally discreet individual (which most of us are, I think, since that is what clients generally need us to be). I want to see a sex worker in the media who can appear "normal" in every other aspect of his or her life and personal presentation; someone who gives off the air of a trustworthy and sympathetic character, in fact a kind and saintly character, to blur the lines between Madonna and Whore. I think it would simply be a more effective way of communicating the rational points of sex-positive activism to a mainstream audience that does not want to see proud, loud, alternative porn along with the political message - a message they might otherwise agree with if they were not immediately turned off by its in-your-face pornographic presentation.

Finally, I want to express some apprehensions as a self-identified feminist and Anarchist when taking on so many ideological contradictions in my work and sex life. My biggest emotional conflict is that I often feel selfish for exploiting sexual inequality for my own benefit. I also feel very guilty for profiting off the racism inherent in sex work, and playing to Asian stereotypes. (Is race just another fetish that I ought to treat with tolerance for sexual diversity, or is it something with such a weighty history and significance that it ought not be toyed around with?) I have always seen my engagement in sex work as subversive experimentation with gender and sexual norms: ironically, an extension of my tomboy refusal to wear dresses as a girl, and my lesbian-to-piss-off-my-mom phase in early high school. Even

though I have suffered my fair share of physical and emotional harm on the job, including sexual assault and trafficking within the United States, and even though I have worked on both the high and low-paying ends of the industry, I have also felt emotionally empowered by it from the very beginning, and I know that my experience is relatively rare and fortunate.

I feel privileged and sheltered from some of the brutal physical and emotional landscapes of sex work in worse environments around the world. I know that I am exceptionally lucky because I can freely choose my involvement in the industry and have other skills and vocations in life that I can use instead of sex work when I want to escape from the industry. I am lucky to have friends who care deeply about me; to be a part of an amazing, selfless, idealistic, generous Anarchist/D.I.Y. community that shelters and feeds runaways and rebels, that lives what it preaches and has fun doing it, and that provides me with an awesome ideological basis. Moreover, I am incredibly blessed because my education and free-thinking personality (self-confident, often to a fault/risk) protects me from the internalized social stigma that can be deeply destructive to the self-esteem and the self-care of some people who work in this industry.

I feel extremely privileged for living such a free and happy life right now, spending a hundred percent of my time doing only what I love to do: music, poetry, art, and volunteering for causes I care about. I am painfully aware that this good fortune I have gained by working at the top of the sex work food chain comes at the price of great inequality and oppression at the bottom end of the industry. With privilege comes responsibility, and more than anything, I feel responsible for fighting for the rights and safety of sex workers who deal with far harsher realities than I do. I believe that organizing cross-culturally in the industry, and fighting the stigma and criminalization of sex work are necessary steps, not only towards the empowerment of marginalized sex workers, but also towards the progress of feminism and human rights.

I believe that the gender binary needs to be either further enforced or eliminated altogether, and I insist strongly on the latter option. Our half-way revolution causes confusion, doubt, shame, and unhappiness. Like many conservatives, I admit that there was a certain clarity in the traditional gender roles of patriarchy: let the man be the provider while the woman stays at home. Even though this system is unfair and greatly limits individual freedom while hindering the full development of human potential; even though it terrorizes the lives of all non-heterosexual male dissidents; it has provided five millennia of (relative) stability via marriage under religious orthodoxy. Women's liberation, sexual liberation, racial equality, and the self-empowering movements of various marginalized groups during the 1960's, along with the advancement of science and technology, throws this orthodoxy into question, and the cultural attitudes that once supported traditional family structures have been greatly undermined, yet we are living in a half-way revolution where alternative family arrangements and true embrace of a rainbow range of sexualities and genders

are still not legally or socially acceptable.

Individualism via the neoliberal Capitalist market ideology of the Chicago Boys, coupled with technologies that change the way we communicate and interact with people, lead to greater physical isolation and a consumer-oriented (rather than worker-oriented) activism and world view. This increased individualism, enhanced by the extension and redefinition of adolescence due to surplus wealth, recreates the solitary person as a free and unitary sex consumer. Today, it is the norm to engage in a good deal of "sex shopping" before settling down with someone to marry. With the rise of single parenthood and divorced/restructured families, the idea of the couple/family as the basic unit of society is being slowly replaced by life-long individual agency and identity. So the problem of childcare and community arises: how do we provide children with adequate support and role models outside of the protective nuclear family structure?

I currently live in a fifty-three person intentional community in Brooklyn that is relatively new in creation, with a (mostly) young demographic of residents that meet regularly to make decisions collectively under a framework of consensus. I believe strongly in Anarchist ideas of true (not merely representative) democracy and the elimination of hierarchy based on the potential of web 2.0 e-government; I want to live in a more just and healthy food production system based on localized permaculture and bioregionalism, free from reliance on fossil fuels, free from the insane buildup of military technology and nuclear stockpiling, which leads to global injustice and mutually assured disaster. More than anything, I believe in communal living and alternative family structures, in D.I.Y. and mutual aid communities that fulfill the human need for kinship and social leisure. Although utopian ecovillages have failed throughout history, I think the time is ripe for creating a new urban community residential model. For sex workers, who have historically been excluded from nuclear family structures due to social stigma, collective living and collective childcare seems like the natural answer. I intend on finding out if this would work in practice.



CHAPTER THREE:

The Freegan Stripster: A Bohemian Code of Honor

The following chapter is a work in progress that I hope to expand upon in future editions of this zine. My intention here is to relate AnnaKiss'em in practice to the Anarchist/D.I.Y./Freegan culture, and humorously reclaiming the hated and refused pop label "hipster" with the creation of the political identity of the young, privileged, shameless and idealistic, Bohemian sex worker: the Stripster.

I ride my bicycle up from Brooklyn
To whip your ass to shape in your Wall Street dungeon
--- VIKTOR LOROX (lyrics)

Freeganism and sex work appear to contradict each other. The former denounces all Capitalist activity as destructive to nature, and promotes a gift economy over the use of money; the latter takes what is normally given away "for free" and sells it for a shitload of cash. So how can sex workers ever be considered "freegan"?

In terms of its core principles, as defined by Freegan.info's thought leader Adam Weissman, freeganism and sex work are not at all compatible. For Weissman, in an utopian, post-Revolutionary society of Anarcho-Primitivism, sex work would not even exist. However, in terms of its current practice, the two can sometimes run parallel courses.

Freeganism is usually understood as being synonymous to "dumpster diving," though its greater purpose is to create alternatives to participation in wasteful, Capitalist mass consumption through the recycling of all kinds of tossed out garbage, such as second-hand clothing, broken electronics, lumber and building materials, as well as foods. Freegans are the human scavengers who ravage supermarket trash bags at the end of the night and salvage things that would otherwise go directly to landfills, where it would rot and pollute the atmosphere. In Marxist terms, freegans seek to minimize their time spent laboring in work that is not fulfilling or enjoyable, and maximize time spent in community service, creative expression, and friendly leisure.

AnnaKissed sex workers can be "freegan" in practice if they enjoy their work, see it as humanly fulfilling in some way, and if their work allows them to minimize time spent in drudgery and maximize time spent in creative and joyful activities that benefit their communities. Sex work pays far more roses by the hour than any other "unskilled" labor, and can potentially be used to buy a lot of freedom and free time. In New York City, sex workers are often

serving clients who work in the financial or legal industries, the white collars that uphold the Capitalist infrastructure; some sex workers, such as the dominatrix, are literally "whipping" corporate executives into submission and taking their money. The profit from sex work can then be directed towards volunteerism and Anarchist/Non-Capitalist activities in a strange twist of the modern day Robbin Hood: stealing from the Man and giving to the collective.

A little bit of a stretch? Maybe. But for many contemporary Bohemian starving artists seeking recognition in a city of unforgiving rent, this form of sex "freeganism" is a common Brooklyn reality.

Thus, the Stripster.

What is a Stripster?

A stripping hipster. All the rent boys and rent girls of Indy America.

Before continuing to define "Stripster" and establishing a Code of Honor for its practice, it would be wise (and entertaining for me) to take a moment to (re)define the Hipster.

Rescuing "Hipster" from the Cultural Trash Dump

Being called a hipster is not a nice thing. Very few hipster kids would willingly subscribe to the unflattering name. If you're a young Anarchist cringing from the sound of this word, you are very likely to be a hipster; or at least others probably perceive you as one. Does that sting a little bit? Unfortunately, the irony of hipsterdom is this: every hipster denies his/her hipsterhood, so if you really want to stop being a hipster by definition, what you need to do first is admit that you just might be one.

I might be a hipster. I sprinkle salt as I write the following paragraphs.

After the hopeful hippies of the '60s lost their activist glow and dejectedly joined corporate jobs, and after the original punks and hip hop heads of the '80s and '90s were co-opted and watered down by mainstream bubble-gum-punk and bling-gangsta-rap, the birth of the postmodern hipster came about as a sardonic, second-hand mélange of past resistance movements, glamorized and stripped of substance. The stereotypical Lower East Side or Williamsburg hipster lives rich off of daddy's allowance, and lives cool off the gentrified ghost of East Village past. This supremely educated, and aesthetically-refined know-it-all wears very carefully chosen, often anachronistic, clothing to make a social statement, or to fashionably imitate somebody else making a social statement. They are usually aspiring artists or aesthetes of varying degrees, refusing participation in the normal nine-to-five workforce. Troubled by awareness of their own privilege, they often make artistic statements about it in guilt, while avoiding direct

confrontation, and discussing it in their own predominantly white circles. Falling short of artistic success, these kids sulk for the look it, for indie coolness capital, and moral or aesthetic superiority. Like a good and proper poststructuralist, they are jaded and confused at heart, cynical and disempowered, shying away from radical activism while jeering at mainstream culture.

Adbuster Magazine did an exposé on the Hipster in their 79th issue, entitled, "Hipster: The Dead End of Western Civilization." The magazine called the hipster counterculture "a self-obsessed aesthetic vacuum...the end product of all prior countercultures...stripped of its subversion and originality."

Such is the sad "hipster" stereotype. However, many kids who appear to fall into the hipster category don't fit the description exactly, and not all perceived hipsters are trust fund babies whose parents sponsor their privileged choice of unemployment. Perhaps Adbuster's critique of hipsterdom is a little harsh. There are some noble ethics underlying the fashion: wear American Apparel so as to oppose sweatshop labor, don't wear logos so as to oppose big corporate branding. Dress like you're from an era of moral struggle and social upheaval, even if your present existence is devoid of these things. Dress like you don't give a shit, even if you do it purposefully. Because after all, the foundational principle of hipsterdom is: express your individuality through meaningful choice, or mockery thereof.

Now that's not so bad, is it?

Maybe we aren't giving hipsters enough credit for the political statements, conscious or otherwise, underlying a seemingly superficial expression. In the United States of Consumerism where your dollar votes more loudly and more frequently than your ballot, your consuming patterns best exemplify your politics and your fashion and entertainment tastes best exemplify your consumption ethics, so naturally it is of utmost importance, politically, how you dress and what you listen to. Hipster fashion is the hipster vote: sunglasses do not imply abstention.

Maybe hipsters and their critics ought to take a little more pride in hipsterdom, and (re)define the image. Both underestimate the power and potential hipsters possess as a social group. Feeling victimized by a mainstream culture of insane and meaningless buying and slaving; feeling jaded by the culture of post-hippie apathy where the only logical rebellion against hopeful peace-chanting parents is to not hope at all; and feeling disconnected from the sources of class, race, and third world struggle that many secretly envy, hipsters are too ironic, too cynical, and too individualistic to organize into a collaborative movement with objective goals. Yet they possess enormous capital in the form of free time, education, citizenship, and access to material wealth. Their finely culled cultural capital can be used to influence the mainstream, which is always looking to the subculture for new ideas.

More importantly, their finely tuned sense of ethics, their outrage against American policies and social realities, can be channeled to greatly improve the lives of people outside of the U.S. citizenry, who are equally affected by American politics, but have no voice in the government's decision-making.

There are many popular movements all over the world, particularly in neighboring Latin America, in which people who suffer from poverty and global injustice are organizing every day to create new alternatives and envision a better world. These people lack resources and media channels. Struggling to survive, they often also lack time and manpower for organizing. If young American hipsters who suffer from feelings of boredom and meaninglessness, who have excess resources and social capital, can connect to those who lack these things, there can be a mutually beneficial exchange: political voice for artistic legitimacy.

Hipsters are capable of projecting their voice through many different mediums - music, film, writing, art, and internet publishing. Perhaps they can use their global consciousness and technological skills, and their privileged surplus of cultural, educational, and material capital, to leverage an elevation of mainstream American consciousness. If all of their capacity, free time, and political and social freedom can be channeled into reflecting the struggles of marginalized peoples in the U.S. and other parts of the world, if they can truly reach outside their circles of privilege, in spite of awkward social barriers, and lend their voices to others in a cooperative way, then perhaps they can be a highly impactful social force.

But then, would they still be hipsters? A tree falls in the forest....

The world wide web has brought about a new age of communication and media arts. It represents a significant change in the material structure and technological possibilities that have yet to be fully adopted in the political institutions and cultural values of our society. The internet's potential for enhancing true, participatory democracy through e-government, free education and culture, instant access to information and global networking has yet to thoroughly develop. These technologies can be the key to success in movements that have failed in the past. Hipsters who love independent media, open source programming, and free culture are on the forefront of tapping into the revolutionary potential of these technologies. They can definitely make a big impact, take a risk beyond the irony, and reclaim the pejorative name "hipster" by engaging in activism and art of struggle and resistance, through connecting and cooperating with others worldwide.

How hipster is the Stripster?

Stripsters are self-made hipsters, in the best sense of the word. We don't have trust funds, per se, but we have other assets, and we're not ashamed to use them to get our sugar. Like the hipster, stripsters refuse to work in alienated

labor, or soul-numbing bullshit without passion. Bohemian, with dreams of artistry, stripsters are young, creative, and privileged, working at the top end of the global sex industry. They occupy the back pages of your Village Voice and creep around your college campus with dark circles under their eyes. Just like the hipster, they represent a social group with greatly underutilized resources: time and capital that can potentially be directed towards a greater good.

Stripster's Code of Honor:

1. **Joy** - A stripster is a sex worker who enjoys his or her work. Though there are ups and downs, like in any other line of work, you are a stripster if you enjoy, in an essential way, the act of providing sexual service. More importantly, you are NOT a stripster if you find it to be fundamentally oppressive or degrading. Stripsters go into sex work to escape alienating labor, not to submit to it.

2. **Maximization of freedom, service, and creativity** - A stripster works to maximize economic freedom and free time to do other things he or she is passionate about, whether that be an artistic or activist activity, an educational goal, a social or business venture, or the ability to spend more time with friends and family. A stripster works for personal freedom and consciously chooses the tradeoffs of this industry.

3. **Anti-materialism, anti-accumulation** - A stripster is not a materially-obsessed individual who spends all her or his money accumulating brand name personal possessions or luxury experiences; she or he is conscious of the fundamentally oppressive and unjust aspects of Capitalism, and avoids the trap. Everyone splurges from time to time, but you are a stripster if you aim to direct the dividends of your assets towards building long-term skills and community solutions.

4. **Conscious subversion of Patriarchy** - A stripster must be a feminist. You are a stripster if you choose sex work with the desire to subvert patriarchal gender relations and heteronormative family structures. You empower yourself by fighting the Stigmwwwa, and you work with subversive pride. You represent the voice of other silenced workers worldwide.

5. **Human and environmental rights activism** - A stripster is a self-aware sex worker of enormous and unfair privilege, whose high-paying work on the top end of the industry is made possible by workers who toil in worse conditions throughout the world and history. You are a stripster if you recognize your good fortune and build solidarity with others. You aim to be an advocate not only for sex workers' rights but for the advancement of all other causes in the global justice movement, seeing your struggles as fundamentally tied together. When possible, you direct your resources towards global justice.

Sex work carries so many ethical complications. Stripsters are brainy sex workers with politics and a sense of humor, who question irrational and oppressive social norms, assert our self-esteem, while also striving to objectively resist self-rationalization.

CHAPTER FOUR:

The JOY Manifesto: AnnaKiss'em as Art

You Are My Joy is the name of the artistic vision I created with my college boyfriend. It was created outside of the paradigm of sex work. My ex chose the name and organized the initial artwork. But I articulated the principles, which constitute for me a lifelong ethic, applicable in all my artistic and interpersonal choices.

JOY is a set of creative principles that values human connection and emotion over meritocratic elitism. We believe that art should come off the white gallery walls where it is placed on rather arbitrary pedestals by professionalized art critics and art schools. Success in the contemporary art world is a mind-boggling business, requiring a lot of luck and elite networking. We believe that art belongs to the people. It is a basic human instinct, and we claim our alienated creativities back from the professionals that have taught us to devalue them. We seek to erase the classist line between fine art and popular art by celebrating the joy that we once generated as children, when we made pictures for our friends and made emotional connections through handicraft.

The five principles of You Are My Joy are:

1) JOY Art is an intensely personal exchange between the artist and the audience, where audience participation and interaction defines the piece. JOY Art is often a personal gift from one person to another, celebrating shared experience.

2) JOY Art is egalitarian and accessible, descending out of the gallery and the auction house, the sterile places of admittance and rejection, and onto the streets, the livingrooms, the subways, the places of human exchange: **JOY art is lived, not priced and consumed.**

3) JOY Art is fleeting and temporary, like one moment of human connection. Through JOY Art, we acknowledge the ephemeral nature of all physical things, the fragility of our humanity and life on Earth; we acknowledge death; we acknowledge the limits of material resources. We confront death with joy; we defy decay with human connection; we celebrate limitation through creativity; and we cherish the moment because it is the only eternity.

Every society is significantly shaped by the attitudes it has towards death. The twenty-first century is a nervous era, jittery with warnings of species death through climate change, nuclear warfare, demographic collapse, ecological imbalance, and resource depletion, yet we are a culture in denial of death; ev-

er-hiding behind euphemisms, we take technological progress and economic growth for granted as a law of history, believing in Cornucopian mythologies and procrastinating global cooperation for the preservation of life. Our fear and blind denial of death paralyzes us and only sends us faster towards destruction. JOY Artists seek to liberate ourselves from the fear of death by celebrating decay as a part of life, as the truest universal communion, the fullest material sharing; for in death, there is life; and the inevitability of death makes joy the only source of immortality. Only by liberating ourselves from fear of death can we acquire freedom and the capacity to engage more fully in life. We celebrate impermanence and freedom with destructible artwork.

4) JOY Art is first, the tangible material, and second, the transient memory. It is very physical, requiring touch, demanding total feeling. We celebrate the physical because the sense of touch requires our full presence, and because all things physical are temporary and transforming, so even as we are touching, we are changing the thing we are touching and ourselves. (See Principle #1.) Later, the audience recalls what was once physical by contrasting the memory of the total feeling with the sensation of its absence. Memory is all that we can hold on to, and our personal memories are also an act of art. Our memories are ever-transforming, and the way the audience actively or passively holds on to its memories shapes the second stage of the enjoyment of a JOY Art piece. (Again, see Principle #1.) Thus, there are always two artists in any experience: the one who creates and the one who remembers. Each person's life is his or her greatest art piece; and even though death is inevitable, each person lives on through the memories of those he or she has touched. We all live in the shared space between reality and its perception: You Are My Joy, my experience of you preserves you, our experience of each other is life itself.

Paradoxically, even though JOY Art focuses on physical, tangible, and material structures, You Are My Joy as a philosophy is essentially anti-materialistic. Since all things physical are decaying, and all memories are changing, the only constant is the joy and connectivity of the moment. Given our own individual transience, the only rational way to live is to live altruistically, in cooperation with others, in harmony with the greater processes of nature and the Universe. We maximize experience by maintaining diversity, and we cherish life by allowing for the full, natural expression of each thing we encounter. We approach each material thing and each experience with curiosity, with the intention to preserve through mental experience and not physical possessiveness, because physically possessing and controlling another thing quickly alters its essential nature, thus diminishing diversity and experience in the world. When we respect other living things, allowing all things to express their essential natures while we express our own, we maximize lived experience in the world. It is senseless to hoard materially in the face of death and physical decay; posses-

sion that is not utilized is senseless because it restricts experience. We increase life by constantly seeking to experience others and preserve some part of others, thus JOY Art aims to preserve the natural expressions of living things and to mirror to these subjects our experience of them as objects, complicating the relationship between subject and object.

5) JOY Art embraces non-traditional mediums beyond the paint brush and the canvas, the frames that give parameters to artistic expression. **JOY Art is a celebration of the natural living extinct to create, and we reject the need for expensive materials and special knowledge, instead encouraging atavistic human expression in its most natural forms.** Touch is art; memory is art; daily living is art; and each human relationship is an artistic piece. Each individual cultivates his or her own artistic practice over the course of a lifetime, indefinable, but exquisitely shared, equal to all others. JOY Art seeks novel ways to remember creative intercourse.

Examples of JOY Art:

In college, my boyfriend created JoyBombs that were essentially hand-crafted gifts that he hung on the doors of his friends. My artwork consists of creating nontraditional musical instruments that people can pluck, blow, and hit: the experience of the art piece lies in the music that is created by the person "viewing" the work – it is interactive and transient, quickly disappearing as soon as it is created, preserved only in memory. Through JOY, we celebrate the handmade over the manufactured; we celebrate DIY, human expression, agency, and imperfection. In Guatemala, I worked one year with women's craft cooperatives creating textiles and jewelry by hand. I love Etsy and fair trade organizations that seek to connect human beings in a global marketplace that respects the labor required to create each of our possessions. The best protection for better labor conditions may come about through web 2.0 personal connections between producer and consumer. There is something infinitely more meaningful in wearing something created by someone whose face and story you know; I believe we should all reduce our consumption of clothing, wear artistic creations of personal meaning, and choose having fewer items of self-expression over an excess of sweat shop clothing dictated by trends. I help with the Freegan Sewing Workshop in Brooklyn and host Do-It-Yourself fashion shows, because doing things yourself is empowering and promotes skillful, engaged living and sharing, which are necessary for human fulfillment.

The AnnaKissed Stripster: an artist of JOY

This tongue-in-cheek name identifies a sex worker who is primarily an artist and secondarily as a sex therapist. Art is created willingly, passionately, and artistic skill is refined over the course of a lifetime. Likewise, the Stripster en-

gages in the art of creating human emotions through sex and simulated romance. She or he enJOYs her or his work, seeing it as a means of touching and intimately connecting with another human being, seeing it as something that requires skill. She or he strives for excellence and unique expression in her or his work, which continually builds over a lifetime of improvement and mastery. The Stripster's art form is intensely personal, intensely physical, transient, and preserved only in sensation and memory. It is a nontraditional art form that honors essential human expression.

A new currency of JOY: Economists debate whether or not there could be another way to measure human happiness other than with money. Psychological studies show that the wealthiest countries in the world are not the happiest. Can we create a new economic measurement through interpersonal creativity and JOYful art? In the Anarchist utopia, what would replace money?

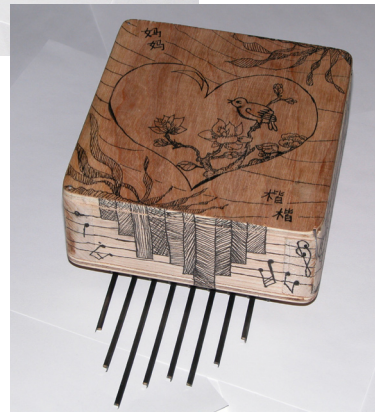


An example of my artwork under the JOY principles:

This is a thumb "piano" I made for my mom on her birthday. I created it out of dumpstered wood, wasted wire from our fence, and a \$5 electric clamp. I pieced it together, sanded it smooth, and drew various designs on the surfaces. The wires are painstakingly tuned to the pentatonic scale so that I could play the Chinese lullaby celebrating motherhood:

世上只有妈妈好

The JOY lies in the music, which is always temporary.



CHAPTER FIVE:

\$ex in the City: A D.I.Y. Guide

My two cents, most of it common, for beginners. Take it or leave it:

There are a lot of guides like this on the internet. Craig's List is not one of them. Avoid Craig's List because it is being monitored by police and the federal government. If you live in New York City, the back pages of the Village Voice are usually a better option. Avoid working for any agency that doesn't care to meet you personally or see you face-to-face because the managers/dispatchers of those agencies are far more likely to send you into risky situations if they don't feel humanly connected to you. Visit Eros.com or Rentboy.com and contact agencies you feel you may want to work for, or work independently, but beware that anybody that posts information on the internet is subject to being targeted by law enforcement. Don't post an ad of yourself with your photo unless you are really committed to working in the industry and you don't care about your past "biting you in the ass" later on. Don't email trashy/trampy pictures of yourself to prospectives because that will make you look cheap, scare customers away, or attract the wrong kind of customer. Beware of all web presence in general. Beware of hotel rooms. Dungeons are way cool but there are usually long waiting periods without clients and training takes a significant amount of time; so don't expect to make bank through domination work. Being caught selling a massage without a license will give you a heavier fine than prostitution in the state of New York, so be careful when you body rub. Foot fetish daddies are the best things since Jesus; they generally like big, smelly feet and dark nail polish, so keep those nylon stockings on for days at a time, and have no shame. Don't stress yourself out about how you look or how much you weigh; personality is truly more important; and touchy, flirty persistence will eventually earn you gold in a strip club. Be fat positive. Be proud; be strong; be happy. If you're not already gay, you'll probably get gayer. Don't be shy to collect and count your money beforehand in front of the customer. Don't use escrow. Don't travel to another state to see someone you don't know: that constitutes as trafficking and gets really complicated, and you can get royally screwed over. DO choose sugar daddies and few constant, caring companions over many strangers. DO go independent, and avoid agencies that are not collectively managed. DO use a buddy system and mutual aid if you have access to a network (See Resources). Always use your common sense and trust your gut intuition. Keep discreet; when in doubt, play as innocent as can be. Go to school; it's mad legitimate. Never do anything that you know will make you feel bad about yourself; it's not worth it. Prostitution is illegal; escorts sell companionship, not sex.

The police crackdowns in New York City have recently put away a lot of dungeons and sex venues. It is harder and harder to make a living in the industry in this city. If you are looking to join, now is probably not the best time.

APPENDIX:

New York Resources from \$pread Magazine:

AnnaKissed Collective

www.annakissed.net
annakissed@riseup.net

Bluestockings Bookstore

172 Stanton Street / (212)777-6028
bluestockings.com

Breaking the Silence, Film & Arts Festival

www.tediumshift.com/breakingthesilence

Callen-Lorde Community Health Center

356 W. 18th St., New York, NY 10011
(212)271-7200 / www.callen-lorde.org

CitiWide Harm Reduction

226 E. 144th St., Bronx, NY 10451
(212)292-7718 / www.citihidehr.org

Commercial Sex Information Service

www.walnet.org/csis

Desiree Alliance

www.desireealliance.org

International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe

www.sexworkeurope.org

International Sex Worker Foundation for Art, Culture, and Education

www.iswface.org

Male Escort Blacklist

www.blacklistednow.blogspot.com

Network of Sex Work Projects

www.nswp.org

Positive Health Project

301 West 37th Street, 2nd Floor, NY, NY 10018 (212)271-0770 / www.pocc.org

Prostitutes of New York (PONY)

(212)713-5678
www.bayswan.org/pony.html

Sex Worker Online Community

www.livejournal.com/userinfo.
bml?user=sexworkers

Sex Workers Project, Urban Justice Center

666 Broadway, 10th Floor, NY, NY 10012
(646)602-5690
www.sexworkersproject.org

Silvia Rivera Law Project

322 8th Ave., 3rd Fl, New York, NY 10001
(212)337-8550 / www.srlp.org

\$pread Magazine

www.spreadmagazine.org

Stripperweb

www.stripperweb.com

Streetwalking the World Online Magazine

safe sexb.secureid.org

Streetwork Project

545 8th Ave (btw 37th and 38th St) /
(212)695-2220

SWANK (Sex Workers Action New York)

swank@riseup.net

SWOP-NYC (Sex Workers Outreach Project - NYC Chapter)

www.swop-nyc.org

The Naked Truth

www.nakedtruth.ca

US Database of HIV Testing Sites

www.hivtest.org

Books to Turn You On:

A Vindication of the Rights of Whores (Margo St. James)

Brothels of Nevada: Candid Views of America's Legal Sex Industry (Alexa Albert)

Ecofeminism (Greta Gaard, ed.)

Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Cultue (Ariel Levy)

Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us (Kate Bornstein)

Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (Judith Butler)

Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition (Kempadoo)

Live Sex Acts: Women Performing Erotic Labor (Wendy Chapkis)

Love For Sale: A World History of Prostitution (Nils Johan Ringdal)

Naked Ambition: Women Who Are Changing Pornography (Carly Mine)

Prostitution, Power and Freedom (Julia O'Connell Davidson)

Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress (Melissa Farley)

Rent Girl (Michelle Tea)

Sex Trafficking: The Global Market in Women and Childen (Kathryn Farr)

Sex Work: Writings By Women in the Sex Industry (Frederique Delacoste)

SM 101: A Realistic Introduction (Jay Wiseman)

The Ethical Slut: A Guide to Infinite Sexual Possibilities (Dossie Easton)

The Feminine Mystique (Betty Friedan)

The Happy Hooker: My Own Story (Xavier Hollander)

The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1 and 2 (Michel Foucault)

The Internet Escort's Handbook, Vol. 1 and 2 (Amanda Brooks)

The Myth of Monogamy (David P. Barasch PhD and Judith Eve Lipton MD)

Unrepentent Whore: The Collected Works of Scarlot Harlot (Scarlot Harlot)

Whores and Other Feminists (Jil Nagle)

Working Sex: Sex Workers Write About a Changing Industry (Annie Oakley)

Sex Worker Blogs:

Afterhours

Bound, Not Gagged

Fatty D

Hobo Stripper

Mariko Passion

Mistess Milliscent

Radical Vixen

Renegade Evolution

Scarlot Harlot

Sex Worker Internet Radio Library (SWIRL)

Serpent Libertine, Sly Sex Pro

\$pread Magazine Blog

TastyTrixie: The Wandering WebWhore

Vinaigrette

Waking Vixen

Whores in the Woods

www.texasgoldengirl.com/afterhours

deepthroated.wordpress.org

www.fattyd.com

www.hobostripper.com

marikopassion.wordpress.com

www.milliscent.com/blog

www.radicalvixen.com

renegadeevolution.blogspot.com

scarlotharlot.blogspot.com

swirlwebcast.blogspot.com

www.sexpros.net

www.spreadmagazine.org/blog

www.tastytrixie.com/blog

wendyvinaigrette.wordpress.com

www.wakingvixen.com

www.whoresinthewoods.blogspot.com

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Author Bio:



Mistress CiXi is an electronic musician, performance poet, multimedia artist/craftist, and street dancer from Shanghai and Brooklyn. Growing up in the trailer parks of Colorado and the housing projects of Spanish Harlem, she first started working as a run-away at age fifteen and has discreetly explored various aspects of the industry for the past six years while studying ecology and political economy in college, working as a bead jewelry production coordinator with Mayan women's crafts cooperatives in Guatemala, and backpacking as a dreadlocked artisan through Central America. She helps organize the NYC Anarchist Bookfair 2009, and volunteers as a graphic designer for \$pread Magazine and Left Forum. She is involved with the Freegan Sewing Workshop and helps organize a monthly underground four elements hip hop cypher. CiXi is enamored with circus and burlesque. She spins, dances, and writes as DJ SubRos@>%.

Mistress CiXi is currently working on starting a mutual aid/donation-based emergency room with her open marriage partner, a Canadian ER doctor. They are starting a Free School called PUPAL (People Usurp Power Through Art and Learning - "People Use Your Power!"), and the first skillshare will be a Mini-Medical School for teaching basic medical diagnostics to people committed to practicing truly democratic health care, with special outreach to NYC sex workers.

CiXi supports and volunteers at a battered women's shelter. She is interested in ecospirituality, tantric Buddhism, slow foods & herbology, bioregionalism and urban permaculture. She teaches radical yoga in her surreal Brooklyn collective house. CiXi feels extremely blessed to be pursuing a life of total passion, thanks to her awesome sugar daddies.

Contact: annakissed@riseup.net | mistresscixi@youaremyjoy.org
www.annakissed.net | viveklorax.wordpress.com