

Find the Porno.

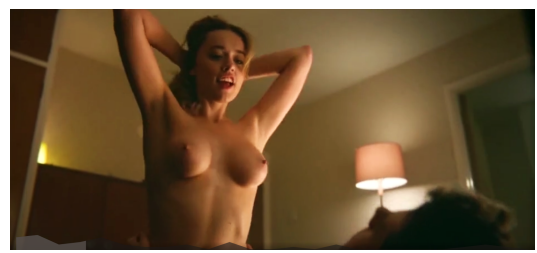
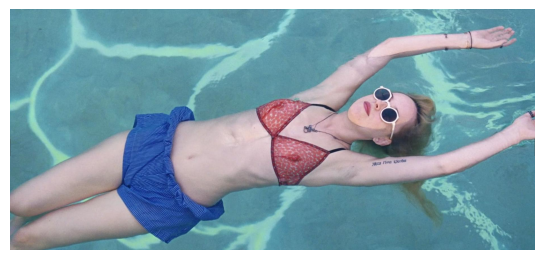
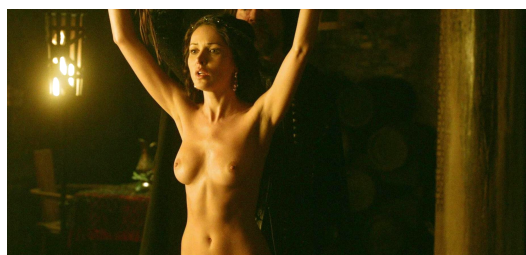
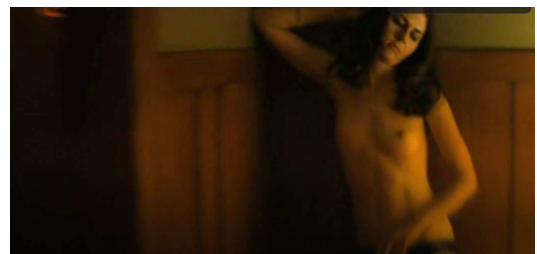
The Female Body and the Male Gaze in Contemporary Western Movies.

Visual Project & Reflection

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FIND THE PORNO.



SOLUTION
FIND THE PORNO.

361 DAYS (2020)	ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK, SEASON 2 (2014)
CARNIVAL ROW, SEASON 1 (2019)	MAMMA MIA (2008)
SEX TAPE (2014)	PORNO (@LOLLY_LIPS)
AMERICAN BEAUTY (1999)	TRUE DETECTIVE, SEASON 1 (2014)
VIKINGS, SEASON 3 (2019)	A BIGGER SPLASH (2015)
MY NIGHTS ARE MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN YOUR DAYS (1989)	SEX EDUCATION, SEASON 1 (2019)

As a creative approach to reflect upon the issue of pornification of culture this visual project explores the male gaze in Western movies as a result and manifestation of the pornification of culture. It wants to show how frequently used and how normal pornographically charged content and porn tropes have become to us in everyday life, even to the point that we are actually unaware of them if not educated about or pointed to them. And the reason for this are not some perverted freaks or weirdos, but the fact that “pornography is central to our culture” (Kipnis 1998: 118), or as David Smith puts it “the vernacular of pornography is now embedded in our culture. Even if you’re not consuming pornography, you’re consuming its logic” (2017: no pag.). This project explores the *pornographically open, available, seducing* woman who is waiting and inviting the man with open arms and exposed/revealed breasts.



Movie: American Beauty (1999)

A woman in this pose is seen through the eyes of a man, the male gaze upon her. It is the perspective of the other, which, in western movies, is for the most part a male white heterosexual counterpart. The project presents ten scenes of women in this particular pose. Nine images were taken from Western movies, one was taken from an actual porno from pornhub, the largest platform for pornographic content.

The project asks the viewer to find the one image which shows actual porn. And it asks how easily or hard it was to spot it and why. The answers

will probably vary depending on gender, age, the level of pornographic intake and probably other factors as well.

While working on this project numerous thoughts and questions turned up, which the following paragraphs briefly reflect upon. During my research I found that I am so accustomed to watching movies through the eyes of men that it somehow always seemed normal, especially when thinking back to my younger years. This posed questions of how and why this habituation is the case and what the broader implications are on a society or culture. In contemporary western culture pornification is ever present. It seems to be a cause and simultaneously a preservational manifestation of the imbalance and inequality of gender which has been shaping whole generations. From teenage girls growing up in a patriarchal society, learning to constantly see themselves through the male gaze, being sexualised and bombarded with explicit or subtle pornographic content and porn tropes, antiquated ideas about gender roles, their dreams and aspirations to young boys who are told to *man-up* through suppressing their emotions and humanness in favor of strength and power, being fed toxic masculinity and toxic ways of coping and a nowadays “increasingly idealized and erotized representation of the male body” (Gill et al. 2000; Gill 2011; see also Evans et al. 2010) (Gill 2015: 593). Like Smith, Agger suggests that everyone who watches porn is subconsciously or consciously influenced by it and he terms

the various ways in which we, viewers of porn, position ourselves as pornographic subjects, whether we appear on screen or not, the *pornographic prism*. This refers to the way we imagine ourselves enacting the roles played on the porn screen and then produce that image in our own amateur videos, our dress, our discourse, our bedroom behavior. We star in porn videos of our own lives, seeking the glamour and exposure of well-known stars and other amateur actors such as the submissive young women having sex while being interviewed. Watching pornography is an imagining of oneself having the varied sex viewed on the screen. Inevitably, it falls short we are watching others cavort (2015: 40).

Pornification and sexualisation are so deeply entrenched into our culture, it seems difficult to even begin to understand the complex origins and even more complex effects on women and men in the Western cultural sphere.

From telling boys and girls what to play with to their career choices, style choices and partner choices, everything is intertwined and manifests itself in little details or big life decisions and through a Western culture which glorifies and chooses perfect bodies over a beautiful character.

Another question this project poses is about self-determination. How free is a girl, boy, man or woman watching these movies/scenes without being either directly or indirectly affected by it? Sharon Lamp and Zoë Peterson (2012) ask “why do girls imitate sexualized media and how conscious is this imitation?” The answer must lie somewhere between the notion that media audiences are “passive dupes who unquestioningly and uncritically absorb media messages ‘hypodermically’ injected into them” (Gill 2015: 592) and the notion that even children have “a well-developed understanding of how such images are constructed and manipulated” (Buckingham and Bragg 2004: 238). By looking at societal structures in detail and the complex psychology of a human being (which this project will not further elaborate on) both assumptions would possibly be correct. Because even when assuming that inherently humans are curious and critically thinking beings, growing up in a particular cultural framework with particular beliefs, values, systems, ideas, propaganda, advertisements, supply of media content, clothes, and many other factors, actually has an effect on them and their unimpaired, autonomous critical thinking. Therefore, what is the actual impact sexualised media content and the pornification of culture in general has on women and men?

Apart from these trainthoughts, here very condensed, numerous other questions arose: Is there a cultural difference in porn, and what does the presentation of women in culturally different porn look like? Is there a difference in the presentation of female nudity/sex across movie genres or of one genre to another? Is there a difference between movies written or/and directed by female or male directors? Would there be a difference in the acting of such nude/sex scenes, especially in terms of the male gaze perspective? Is there a difference in the male gaze from one cultural sphere to another – e.g. are women in Asian movies depicted differently than in

Western movies? Or, are women in African or Latin-American movies depicted differently than in Asian movies? To answer all or even some of these questions would go far beyond the scope of this project and constitute possible topics and food for thought for further research or papers.

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