Seduced: Art and Sex from Antiquity to Now


Type of Research: Book
Creators: Wallace, Marina and Bernstein, Joanne and Kemp, Martin
Description: I was the primary co-author for this book, which focuses on representations of sex from diverse eras and cultures. It includes around 250 works, spanning over 2000 years, including Roman marbles, Indian manuscripts, Renaissance and Baroque paintings and sculptures, Chinese paintings and prints, Japanese woodcuts, 19th century photographs and contemporary video drawn from unique public and private collections from around the world. The book debates the shifting attitudes towards explicit imagery, and questions the lines drawn between art and pornography. The work examines comprehensively the ways in which some of the world's greatest artists have addressed the subject of sex at different times and in different places; over 70 artists are featured including Bacon, Bourgeois, Carracci, Fragonard, Guercino, Koons, Mapplethorpe, Rodin, Schiele, Turner, Utamaro and Warhol. Among other things the work questions the changing social acceptability of visual representations of the sexual act and through this the definitions of 'acceptability' itself, which for a viewer, are particular to their historical and cultural moments. The book was published with reference to, and in parallel with, a major international exhibition at the Barbican Gallery, London with the same title. The exhibition presented a powerful sensory experience, which highlighted the relationship between viewer and artwork and provided the historical and cultural framework for visitors to question their own boundaries. The exhibition was enhanced by sound and movement; a sound installation entitled 'The Voice of Sex' featured readings from erotic texts, such as the 'Kama Sutra', 'Lolita' and late 18th century books by the Marquis de Sade. The exhibition was co-curated by myself with Martin Kemp, Professor of the History of Art at Oxford University and Joanne Bernstein, Independent Curator and designed by Stanton Williams Architects. A comprehensive programme of events and talks, including a complementary film season, accompanied the exhibition.

Keywords/subjects not otherwise listed: RAE2008 UoA63
Publisher/Broadcaster/Company: Merrell London
Your affiliations with UAL: Colleges > Central Saint Martins
Date: 2007
Date Deposited: 03 Dec 2009 23:25
Last Modified: 28 Apr 2011 14:17
Item ID: 1496
URI: http://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/id/eprint/1496

Seduced is a provocative and ambitious survey of representations of sex across cultures from ancient times to the modern day. Featuring such diverse works as Roman marbles. Marina Wallace is a professor at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design at the University of the Arts London. Martin Kemp is Professor of the History of Art at the University of Oxford. Joanne Bernstein is an independent curator. Read more. Western art has traditionally plundered classical mythology and the Bible for erotic material, in an often less than subtle attempt to ward off the censors. Leda and the Swan (attributed to Francois Boucher, c1740), featuring the blatant innuendo of a swan's angled neck lurching towards the open legs of his apparently willing victim, gratuitously flaunts how far the ancient myths could be sexed up. Rather than using the censorship of sex as a means of controlling the moral behaviour of the masses, as have Judaeo-Christian cultures to a greater or lesser extent over history, other cultures have embraced sex as an essential part of a pantheistic worldview.