

Disability & Sexuality

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DISABILITY STUDIES

in Nederland

Overview

- The body culture
- Thinking on disability & sexuality
- Sex practices & life experiences
 - Sex Care
 - Female experiences: Eros (un)limited
- Conclusions & Food for thought

What are your first associations with
sexuality and disability?

The body culture

- Bodyculture shows certain bodies and neglects others > “pretty pictures” young, smooth, perfect, slim bodies
- Ignores:
 - Limitations & vulnerability of body and life
 - Life goes on, disabled or not
 - Sex goes on, disabled or not
- “We need to redefine beauty carefully and individually” (Rasso Brukert)







DAVIDSFONDS LITERAIR | QUERIDO



VLEES IS HET MOOISTE

GEDICHTEN GEKOZEN DOOR
BART MOEYAERT

FOTO'S VAN
ELISABETH BROEKAERT

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a red bikini and a white lace necklace, lying on her side. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. A white catheter bag is attached to her leg. The background is dark.

Tablet

THE SCROLL

Sexy and I Know It

How two disabled people are reminding us that intimacy is for every body

By **Merissa Nathan Gerson**

(Courtesy of Rachelle Friedman)

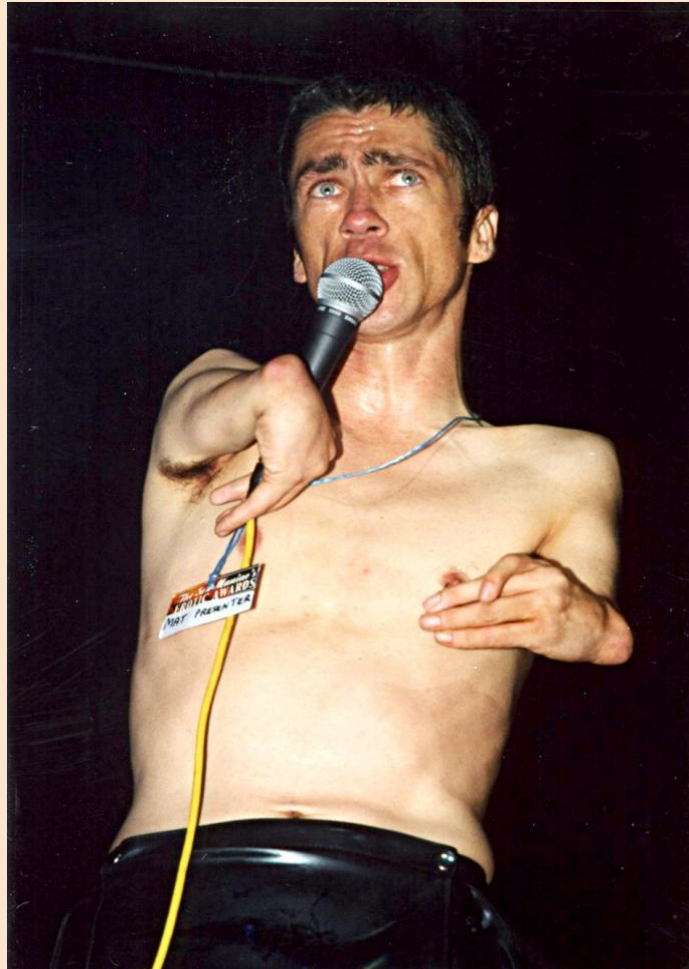




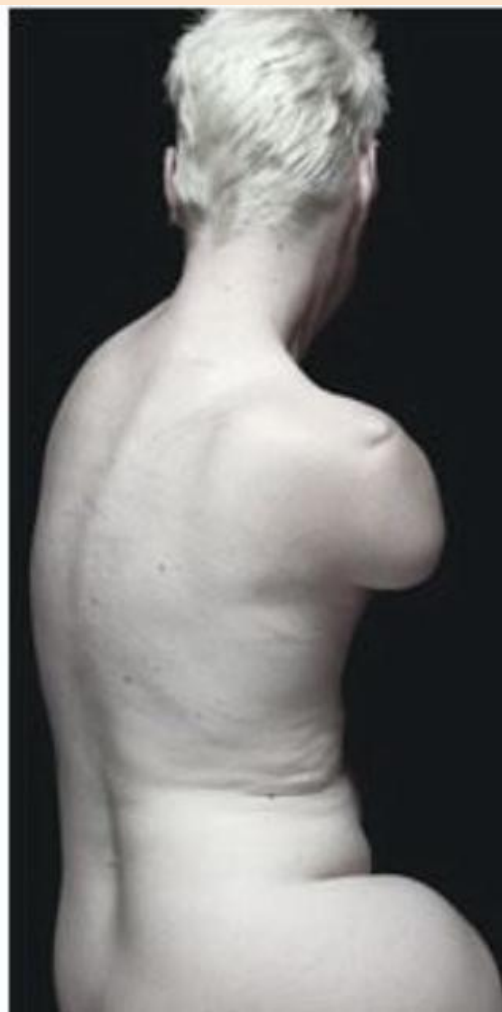
Isis

parfums de marly

She's just like our daughter.







Thinking on disability & sexuality

- Sexual citizenship has greatly been neglected regarding people with disabilities
- Person with disabilities perceived as child-like, asexual or conversely oversexualized, and only suppose to date and reproduce their 'own kind'
- Topic has received little attention by the disability movement: focus on access and rights
- Current discourse on disability and sexuality dominated by a medical perspective

Impact: 'Illegal' sex

- 'People with disabilities are seen as a problem' (Longmore)
 - Are given the position of deviants in society
 - Public discourse revolves around the correction and normalization
- Restricted access to anything related to sexuality
- Care/ Educational sector not equipped to cater towards the needs of people with disabilities in terms of sexuality and sex
- Outsourcing to sexual practices that are considered illegal in certain countries, e.g. prostitution

How to break out of the taboo zone of
sex and disability?

Sex practices & life experiences: Sex care

- Service organizations in Australia, Germany, Netherlands and the USA
- Based on the premise that sex and sexuality are integral parts of well-being and a basic human need
- Provides opportunity for hands-on sexual experiences in a safe environment
- Services consider the needs and constraints of people with disabilities during sexual activity
- Positions itself between sex therapy and prostitution
- In some cases covered by the health insurance



FleksZorg
als seks zorg is



Aditi
seksualiteit en intimiteitszorg op maat



De Ultieme Zorg

Benefits & downsides of sex care

Benefits:

- Physical
- People with disability able to gain experience in a safe space

Downsides:

- Expensive
- Stigmatization of diverse sexual practices
- Perpetuation of the medical approach towards sexuality
- Perpetuation of the idea you need to be an expert to be with a person with disabilities

Sex practices & life experiences: Female experiences: Eros (un)limited

- Book “Eros in de kreukels”: personal story/essay; themes from the interviews; images & quotes
- Themes:
 - Individual beauty?
 - The look of others
 - The hands of care and cure
 - Sex hassle



Een eerste
verkenning



over lijven,
leven en lust



Beelden en
associaties

Overall themes

- Diversity of experiences
- ‘Common sense’: attune life to what it has to offer
- Focused on ‘the good life’
- „Life is simply a mixed blessing“ (Nancy Eiesland)
- Need for ‘control’, choice
- Personal wisdom
- Sense of Humor

“Don’t wait until the bad weather is over, but learn to dance in the rain” (Marja Kramer)

“Access to pleasure is the real accessibility issue” (Benjamin Seaman)

Conclusion

- Disabled people are the same/not the same: specific experiences in the body and in society (position & stereotypical images, stigma)
- Experiences and narratives of disabled women indicate common experiences: Bridges between people with and without disability
- Sexuality is representative for the complexity of disability as being a construct defined by the body, the person, society/ environment that is never fixed

Discussion

- How does the idea 'sex as part of well-being' impact the process of creating possibility for greater sexual expression? Where lie potential limitations of this conception?

References

Pictures: Olivier Fermariello. *Je t'aime moi aussi*.

<https://www.lensculture.com/olivier-fermariello>

