

FREE LOVE

Interview
amelia phillips

"It's a scavenger hunt. You have to find that one thing. You just have to find a big penis." How do you decide what constitutes "big"? "Oh, I could tell. I was a hippie with a lot of sexual experience before settling down. I have seen quite a few penises in my life." So begins The Hunger's conversation with Dian Hanson, Taschen's *Sexy Book* Editor – responsible for *The Big Penis Book* – and previously editor of soft-core pornography magazines, *Puritan*, *Juggs* and *Leg Show*.

Speaking from her home in sunny California, Dian immediately puts you at ease. She is impossible to ruffle. A true child of the 70s, Dian is honest, liberal, nonplussed. "I was always interested in sex. My father was sort of a home nudist so I saw him walking around naked and I was fascinated. I would search through the house and find his girlie magazines." What some would dismiss as prepubescent curiosity, Dian fully embraced. "The hippies came along, there were people promoting sexual freedom, and soon pornography became legal everywhere. I was very sexually precocious, and I couldn't think of anything more fun." It was a period of experimentation, and Dian found herself at the forefront – in print at least – of the sexual revolution. "We didn't have to be very business savvy. At that time, you could sell just about anything. People were so drunk on the notion of sexual freedom that if you made a magazine with morbidly obese women in it, or people urinating, it would still sell."

The magazines that Dian is most famous for, the aptly named *Juggs* and *Leg Show*, drew in a legion of fans. "Doing men's magazines made me love men. I got probably 200-300 letters per week, telling me that I saved their marriages. They thought their own wives were the most beautiful sexy creatures on earth and they didn't see any diminution in these women's sexual appeal as they aged." As far as imagery is concerned, the porn industry seems youth-obsessed, but a lifetime of working in the industry has not proved detrimental to Dian's self-confidence, nor her enthusiasm. "The fastest growing area is MILFs and cougars. It's a bit of a fad at the moment, but it's not unusual. As far as the negatives of working in the industry are concerned, I don't think there have been any for me. I used to be stimulated by sexual imagery, and I still am. I'm still eager to find new images. I turned 60 in November, and working with these images has made me body conscious, as in giving me reason to never give up. I've lifted weights for 25 years, I've kept myself lean and in shape. I'm not going to compete with younger girls, but I'm happy that I can look at myself naked and still feel good."

First in our nude series, soft-porn editor Dian Hanson tells us why working in the industry has only made her love men more.

The conversation then turns to women and their relationship with porn. As a market, women are far less profitable than men when it comes to paying for sex. "Men are used to having to work for sex, women are used to having it come to them and delivered on a plate – they're just not big consumers of it. From women, all I hear is 'I like pictures that leave something to the imagination' but these women are not masturbating to this material, they just talk about aesthetics." Could this be because women feel ashamed about masturbation, or be to do with the fear of confessing that something turns them on? "Well, yes. We did a book about ordinary women masturbating. It was very freeing for them to masturbate in front of a photographer. But predominantly women have oestrogen and a very small amount of testosterone, whereas men have a lot of testosterone, and testosterone makes you horny. If women felt as horny as men, we'd have reproductive chaos. It's important for someone to put the brakes on it. Men are programmed to try to spread their seed as widely as possible, and women are programmed to take some control of the situation."

It's a controversial opinion to accept for the *Sex and the City* generation, but coming from someone as liberal and insightful as Dian, it's hard to argue with. "Males, by nature, are more voyeuristic. They pursue, and females attract. Women are exhibitionists. I gave up long ago trying to make visual books for a female audience. So yes, it's all for the male gaze, but men's tastes vary tremendously. You can make a book of anorexic 18-year-olds cowering in a corner and you can make books of regal 300-pound women looking down with a cool hard stare, and that will appeal to another male gaze." Dian's idea of subsidiary female sexuality understandably jars with the female sense of pride and equality, but she soon gives reason enough to surrender to it. "A friend of mine, who's been a porn actress for nine years, said the penises are so big and the guys all fuck so hard that, over the years, hers has turned into leather pussy." Yikes!

The porn industry has changed indescribably since Dian first started publishing her naughty pictures, and frequenting the odd casual swingers party. It's difficult to find out how much internet traffic exactly can be attributed to porn, but webcam porn site, *Livejasmin.com*, attracts 32 million visitors a month at least – 2.5 per cent of all internet users – which gives some indication. "I never wanted to be an artist... no, wait, I did want to be an artist until I saw real art in New York, and then I crawled back into my little hole and never dared to show anybody my art."

Juggs
december 1991



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IF WOMEN FELT AS HORNYY AS MEN, WE'D HAVE REPRODUCTION CHAOS. IT'S IMPORTANT FOR SOMEONE TO PUT THE BRAKES ON IT.

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leg show
january 1998



leg show
january 1999



I was always drawn to the more interesting images. Most of what you see on the internet is deadily dull. Still there are always some amazing images. It's like monkeys with typewriters; they'd still create some genuinely fine literature." Whether the internet is damaging the way we view sex is a topic of contention, and while Dian doesn't think the hoo-hah is justified, she does suggest that it might normalise unusual thoughts or behaviours. "There are some horrifying things on there. There are always a small number of people who have something deeply suppressed in the psyche; say, they see a woman's head flushed in a toilet full of urine and it really resonates as something exciting. In the past they'd never see this, and maybe never learn they had this interest. And a few of these men will have a wife who they'll talk into acting it out, but thankfully, the great majority will just masturbate and keep it secret." But does it really change the way we already think? "I'm sure it could make us lazier. We can get it for free, a wealth of free imagery, more free imagery than we could ever consume in the most ardently masturbatory lifetime. It's destroying the commercial sex industry. The only people who are making money in the sex industry during this recession are prostitutes, because the one thing that the internet cannot give you is that genuine human contact."

"There are a lot of picky young people now, picky about body types. In the 70s, men were happy if a woman was just interested enough to have sex with them. But now, they go online and see these surgically modified bodies. They feel that they can't accept a woman if she has cellulite, breasts that don't stand straight out, or pubic hair. That pickiness isn't very manly to me. Human beings have ascended to a point where they are very demanding, but at the same time, we live in a post-Aids world, so they are afraid of sex – they equate it with illness, injury, or death. There's a lot more anxiety."

The way Dian sees the human body is with an eagerness for wonder and surprise, and it's easy to see why she finds the everyday modern porn mundane. But she's not calling for an idealistic naturism: "If everyone walked around naked, we would see a lot of very ordinary bodies; we would definitely be less titillated. It's much better to see everyone with their clothes on and then see a strong breeze lifting up a skirt."

The quest for newness and variation, now that we are saturated with pornography, is stretching fetishism to its limits, but Dian is never short of inspiration for her books. "I do see a different aesthetic within the African-American community. They have their own magazines, focusing on really large buttocks – disproportionately large buttocks. I actually did a book called *Urban Girls* on this and people didn't get it. It seems the people who buy art books are not the same people – or at least not the same numbers of people – who buy *Smoothie* or *King* magazines, so that was a bust." Are big bottoms a niche taste in the mainstream market? Dian laughs. "Well, Arnold Schwarzenegger liked the *Urban Girls* book. He tried to pinch the buttocks with his fingers, and said, 'It makes the drool run down my face...'"

Dian is currently working on a comprehensive book about pin-up art, out in February 2013, and a new edition of *New Erotic Photography*, out in autumn of the same year.