

THE WOMAN WHO WANTS YOU TO MAKE A PORNO

Fiona Cowood speaks to film-maker Erika Lust about her provocative new project

Main image:
Erika wants
to start a porn
revolution.
Below: on the
set of one
of her films



HOW DO YOU TAKE YOUR

PORN? It's possibly not a question you've asked yourself recently, but Swedish director Erika Lust is determined to make ethical porn consumers of us all. Her back catalogue may sound as hackneyed as Peter Stringfellow's DVD collection – *Handcuffs*, *Cabaret Desire*, *The Good Girl* – but behind the titles, Erika is pioneering a wave of seriously feminist erotica.

Erika, who runs her 18-person strong film company in Barcelona, is evangelical about the need to shake up the porn industry and sees only one way to do it: get more women behind the camera.

'Porn is an area that has been completely created by men, for men, where they have all the power,' she tells *Grazia*. 'It just doesn't make any sense that women wouldn't contribute our vision of sexuality and tell *our* stories. In the same way that we need women

in Parliament, hospitals, schools, companies and board meetings, we need women in porn.'

Porn sites currently get more regular traffic every month than Netflix, Amazon and Twitter combined*. And while Erika is not the only female porn director out there, she's the only one using €250,000 (£212,000) of her own cash to help build a more diverse, positive, cleaned-up porn industry. In October, she pledged to finance and produce 10 films by wannabe adult film-makers. The criteria? Only women out to shun the clichés of mainstream porn need apply. Applications have since been flooding in and Erika began green-lighting her favourites just last week.

'I'm so tired of the exploitation of the female body in porn – it's always about tits and ass,' she says. 'For me, porn is just explicit sex and you can do explicit sex in so many different ways – ▶

10 HOT STORIES



beautifully, artistically, cinematically... When I started out, I just wanted to make the woman the main character and make the story about *her* sex drive, *her* fantasies, *her* adventures – *her* explicit sex...'

Erika made her first film, *The Good Girl*, in 2004. It was her first foray into adult cinema – at the time she was studying film and working as a production assistant. Erika made the 22-minute film available to watch on her blog for free. Within weeks, it had racked up more than two million downloads and Erika was inundated with emails from women (and men) telling her that this was the porn they'd been waiting for.

Naturally, anyone working in the field of 'feminist pornography' runs into confusion/outrage from people who struggle to see any kind of fit between the two. What does Erika say to those who see all sex work as inherently exploitative?

'We need to understand that many



Erika's mission is to create a new porn era that speaks to both women and men, and respects its actors.



people want to watch porn – but that doesn't mean it can't be done ethically and show the right values. It doesn't have to be nasty to be good,' she insists. 'We need to start talking about being a responsible consumer and being aware of what you're watching – you don't have to get your porn from tube sites.'

Respect for the actors is at the root of everything Erika makes. 'We make sure our actors are well-paid, that they are doing the kind of sex they would like to do, with people they would like to perform it with.'

'Actors who have worked on other sets tell me they often aren't told what they'll be shooting or with whom. They don't get to see the other actors' health papers. The worst things I hear are stories about directors pushing them to do more than they agreed to. That's not OK. When you're naked in front of a film crew, you're very vulnerable.'

Erika's message is clear: if you're someone who regularly signs change.org petitions and buys organic veg, there's absolutely no excuse for not ensuring that your porn is 'fair trade', too.

'This is the beginning of the indie porn movement,' she says. 'We're in a new era. When, as a woman, you get to a position where you can help change happen faster, then you must do it.'

Photos: Erika Lust Films. * According to The Huffington Post