Karin Bruns

All by Myself
Technologies of the Self in Porn Blogs and Web Forums

In the pop song "All by Myself", the American singer Eartha Kitt describes the pleasure felt in self-withdrawal as well as the dangers it brings.[1] Since the song was first released in 1976 by Eric Carmen, it stands as a symbol for the ambivalent feelings arising from being famous, being a star, and loneliness.[2] Again and again, Eartha Kitt sung "All by Myself", adding variations and including passages with a seemingly very personal touch. The last time was in a New York revue theater, shortly before her seventieth birthday in 2008. The confession manifest in the lyrics of this version of the song and the related self-publishing of a star suffering under the pressure of publicity refer to the marginalized position of a female afro-American artist. The 1982 documentary film "All by Myself" (USA/D, director: Christian Blackwood) follows this interpretation. The refrain "I wanna be all by myself" is staged over and over again, and the film, just like at the close of the song, reverses it at the end ("*don't* wanna be all by myself anymore"). I will take the contradiction apparent in this process of media circulation as a basis on which to reflect on shifting processes in current media practices of autobiographical documentarism. They are triggered by practices that are called digital networking cross the board in public discourse for nearly twenty years. Widely and controversially debated transformations cover digital communication and consumption equally and are currently discussed under keywords such as *new consumerism* or *prosumerism*.[3] Media-technological access to the World Wide Web has, in the meantime, made diversified media archives on the Internet available to practically all sections of the population. At the end of the 1990s, Laurence O'Toole declared that "more people than ever before are

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[1]   For a shorter, German version of this article see: Audiovisuelle Techniken der Selbstveröffentlichung in pornografischen Webforen, in: Susanne Regener (ed.): Amateure! Zur Aktualität dilettantischer Fotografie. Special issue for the journal: *Fotogeschichte. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Fotografie,* ed. by Anton Holzer, May 2009.

[2]   Carmen adapted Sergei Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor for the song. Further cover versions were brought out later by, amongst others, Tom Jones, Shirley Bassey, and Celine Dion. Within the framework of a research project on the topic of "Rumor culture and the Internet" I hope to investigate the increasing momentum of distribution processes arising from internet media.

[3]   Cf. Karin Bruns, Ramón Reichert (eds.): Vorwort, in: *Reader Neue Medien. Texte zur digitalen Kultur und Kommunikation*, Bielefeld 2007, pp. 3-19.

gaining access through new technology to sexual materials and communities of likeminded types".[4]

It goes without saying that the changed status of distribution, which is valid for all media formats, has severely impacted media practices and the juristic standing of amateur films. But not only the distribution potential in the WWW is concerned here. Also especially the option of immediate reproduction, instant replay and, with it, the control over recorded material contributes to the expansion of private digital image and film archives. During the 1970s and 1980s, direct control availability promoted the practice of pre-digital amateur photography in the area of Polaroid technology, which was followed shortly by the private video boom.[5]

In this article, my observations are focused on "intimate" amateur videos that circulate in web forums and blogs as the latest trend in "instant porn". I will concentrate on the issue of what kinds of displacement occur, in the present, through the forms of production and Internet technology in the field of non-professional photos and making of videos.

Private Documentarism in the Age of the World Wide Web

In 2003 in an article bearing, in translation, the title of "Private Documentarism, the Dark Side of the Image Industry", Annette Deeken named seven criteria for the amateur film that distinguish it from media industry products. Among them are low-cost production and production processes without division of labor.[6] She pinpoints at least two of the characteristics that display drastically the radical way in which new media practices in the World Wide Web dissolve the boundaries between the professional/commercial side and the non-commercial/amateur-like side. Deeken wrote that "amateur films are more or less unique. At least they are very seldom circulated as copies, as they are never requested by distributors", and "the locations sought for showing amateur films are discreet: home cinemas, the Internet, bars and pubs, and also occasionally museums (…)".[7] On observing the dynamics and proliferation of photographs and videos that are declaredly "private" on swap meets and other platforms, such as *YouTube*, *MySpace*, *StudiVZ* (European social networking platform for students), *Facebook*, or *YouPorn* (ill.1), it becomes evident that what once were the discreet archives of amateurs are now zones

4   Laurence O'Toole: *Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology, and Desire*, London 1998, p. 284, cit. from: Dennis D. Waskul: Introduction: Sex on the Internet: Old Thrills in a New World; New Thrills in an Old World, in: ibid (ed.): *net.seXXX. Readings on Sex, Pornography, and the Internet,* New York, Washington 2006, pp. 1-8: p. 7f.
5   Typically, the very first Polaroid model was called "Swinger" and appeared in the US on the market at the end of the 1970s.
6   Annette Deeken: Privater Dokumentarismus. Die Schattenseite der Bildindustrie, in: Burkhard Röwekam, Astrid Pohl, Matthias Steil, Mathias Wierth-Heining (eds): *Medien /Interferenzen.* Dokumentation des 16. Film- und Fernsehwissenschaftlichen Kolloquiums der Philipps-Universität Marburg, March 2003, Marburg 2003, pp. 26-37.
7   Ibid, p. 27.

for trafficking "mass-produced articles" of the media industry in an almost classical sense. For many years now, web forums and image archives containing explicitly sexual content can be counted among the continuously growing sectors of the World Wide Web.[8] Besides a few exceptions, pornographic forums present highly conventionalized set patterns in the Web. For example, currently one of the most popular of these video archives, *YouPorn* (ill. 1), features video clips with sexual content of approximately 1 to 20 minutes duration. The clips are ordered according to the date or latest submission. Their producers give them a title while uploading and furnish them with "thumbnails", that is, with miniature photographs or photo sequences that catch the eye (ills. 1, 4 and 5). Established pornographic categories are often adopted for choosing titles like "*Anal* in the Park", "*Facial* with Closed Eyes", or "Hot *Amateur* Fucks the Sybian *Rider*". Catchwords such as "amateur" or "home made" can be counted amongst the most popular "tags", that is, labels for calling up or activating the respective videos or images. Many web forums like *Sex Mummy* or *YourAmateurPorn* present themselves as purely amateur sites in terms of not being commercial and provide, besides the already mentioned ordering categories of sexual preferences "straight", "gay", "cocks" etc., also web-specific applications, such as search engines, online chat services, dating, live web cams, and on-demand videos.[9]
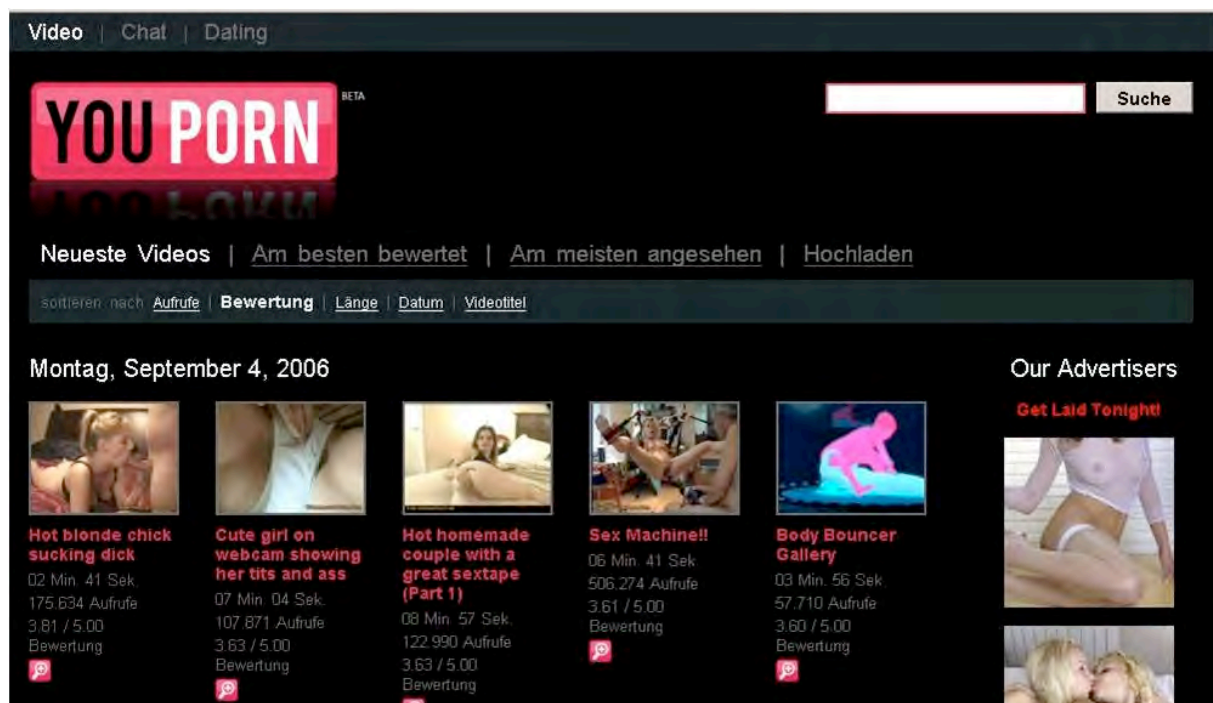
Ill. 1 YouPorn Homepage 2006

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[8]   Cf. Sigrid Neudecker: Emils scharfe Strings, in: *Die Zeit*. Internet Spezial, April 2008, pp. 28f., Geert Lovink: Ich blogge, also bin ich, in: *Die Zeit* no. 52, 12.19.2007, p. 55; for a more detailed account of current web formats: ibid: *Zero Comments*, Bielefeld 2008.
[9]   The following belong to the indexing, amongst others, "bizarre", "extreme", "fetish", or "swinger".

Sex on the Net: Digital Archives of the Pornographic

Irrespective of the easy access to pornography (production, distribution, technology) in Web 2.0 and ready availability of the results through instant video display, we must ask how can we account for the success of the label "home made" and the fascination for anti-professional pornography? Does the answer lie in the simple pleasure of drawing attention in media with "amateur camera work" and the "actors' tennis socks", as Barbara Eder stated?[10]

As a counter-program to the porn industry, web logs and forums – such as *newsfilter.org*, *allkindofporn.com*, or *homemadefuckvideos.com* – circulate scenes, images, and sexual sounds on a hitherto unknown scale. They seemingly elude both the rules of e-commerce and the hegemonic aesthetic of the pornographic film. This is accomplished media-aesthetically in extremely diverse ways. You can hear the static, the productions crackle, or are completely without sound. They are out of focus, shaky, and disintegrate again and again. The lighting is often too bright, too dark, or has too much contrast. Quite a few of the close-ups and details in the photographs and scenes are so poorly focused or reveal pixilation to such an extent that they acquire the quality of abstract images (ill. 2). In addition, many home movies break the taboo of actors looking directly at the camera, a convention that is observed in mainstream films (ill. 5).[11] The culmination of the image and sound politics is secretly or seemingly secretly filmed private or surveillance-cam videos, in which there is often no sound or one dominantly hears the wind or noises from the street.

Functioning in an advisory capacity when selecting and accessing the range of products, thumbnails and teasers in websites likewise adopt established conventions from pornographic productions by focusing on visual topoi, either in an exemplary way or nested together, such as varying sexual positions or bodily parts that are privileged in pornography like breasts, buttocks, or penises. These very brief formats differ from professional pornography by way of dysfunctional lighting, little variety in the position of the camera, only a few cuts (often completely uncut[12]) and deviant representations of bodies in action. Already Internet sites such as *punio.blogspot.com, watchhervideo.com* or *ifeelmyself.com (IFM)* redefine conventional conceptions of the actors in regard to age and body types.

"IFM dedicates itself to female pleasure in its myriad forms. We present the female

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[10]   Barbara Eder: From Hard-Core to Post-Porn. Sex, Gender und der kalte Blick aufs nackte Fleisch, in: *testcard*. Beiträge zur Popgeschichte, no. 17, Feb. 2008: Sex, pp. 96-100.

[11]   The taboo of eye contact with the actors standing in front of the camera is often not observed in visual pornography and especially in pornographic film- and advertising clips. For example, when the actors address expressly the public either verbally or with their eyes.

[12]   Quite frequently the actors readjust the frame and the focus of the camera themselves during the shooting.

orgasm as a point of focus, and we want to represent it in a way that does justice to its beauty and idiosyncrasy. Too often we are exposed to images of eroticism that ignore or trivialize the female orgasm, and it's our aim to counteract that imagery by providing a confident, affirming, and sexy alternative. First and foremost, the women of IFM are what makes it one of the sexiest places on the web. Because female pleasure comes in such diverse forms, we strive to break the molds of conventional femininity in general and of erotic images of women in particular."[13]
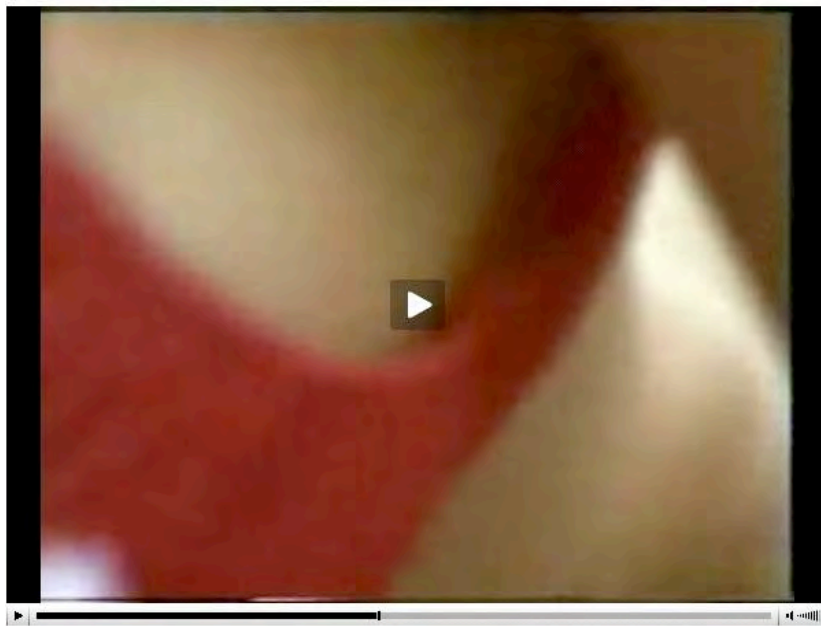
Ill. 2: Video and Thumbnail "Amateur Couple fucking in H & M" on: *YouPorn*

They are by no means 'heavenly bodies' who perform sexually here. Quite the opposite: even among the search categories offered in *YouPorn* we find explicit attributes such as "mature", "elderly", "fat", "hairy" etc.[14] Users generate the precedence of certain products by means of "ranking". This is the term for the key process of description and selection on the Internet. It categorizes products as the "top rated" and "most viewed" and in this way influences users' selection. What at first appears to have technical and dramaturgic shortcomings and seems crude (category "beginners"), emerges, on closer scrutiny, without a doubt as a constituent of a new heteronormative image aesthetic of the "home made", which websites advertise explicitly with titles such as "Amateur Couples".

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[13]   Translated from: http://nl.ifeelmyself.com/public/main.php?page=about, 12-14-2008.
[14]   This likewise does not exist in opposition to the practice of pre-digital pornography! On the dominant specialties, on the diversity management and exclusion procedures of *YouPorn* cf. Eder (note 7).

The fact that "home-made porn" videos, at least semi-professionally, operate on the background of industrial production of pornographic material can be clearly seen in their ritualized play with visibility and invisibility.[15] Serialized clips like the "Night Invasions" (ill. 3) circulating on several forums are on the verge of being visible and overtly introduce a moment of the forbidden, arcane, and exposure. They recur to a uniform sequential structure. The opening shot lingers on a sleeping female body. From the first person perspective, the hand camera approaches a badly and unsteadily lit image of a body. Simultaneously, a man's hand gropes into the scene and throws the blankets aside and removes articles of clothing. Very often the optical perspective of the intruder is accompanied by loud breathing. Productions such as "Night Invasions" refer to a tradition of images, texts, scenes, and sounds that are distinct from pornography because they are comprehended as explicitly erotic through a dramaturgy of alternating revelation and veiling.

Ill. 3: The semi-professional web series "Night Invasion"

Also forums such as "Beautiful Agony – Facettes de la petite mort" (ill. 4) deploy a comparable technique of shifting within the range of the visible/invisible or on/off. This website comprises fundamentally, analogous to *YouPorn*, uploads of videos that are ordered according to the date. Their subject is the sexual act filmed from a *fixed* camera

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[15] On the canon of visualization in pornography using the example of ejaculation, cf. Frank Apunkt Schneider: Monochroms bewährtes Rezept zur Herstellung von „1 Einh. technol. Innovation, in: *testcard*, Beiträge zur Popgeschichte, no. 17, Feb. 2008: Sex, pp. 200-207. On reterritorialization in the sense of a rigid boundary within a normalistic image Schnieder maintains that: "Such reterritorialization is most noticeably visible in the cum shot, which appears particularly inauthentic and staged in order to authenticate what is shown as cum. It can only be absolutely contorted, lonely, and pathetic. The actor must forcibly subdue ecstasy and self-abandonment in order to present the act as a product." Ibid, p. 207).

position without varying setting. Already the programmatic blurb under the page link "about" refers to the correlation between not-knowing and not-seeing, desire and visual lust. As a strategic measure for presenting the forum to the public, it is labeled as "home made", "authentic", or "real". Additionally, the fact that it deviates from the photographic canon of pornography makes it attractive.

Here two aspects distinguish a fundamental difference to the greater sector of pornography found in the WWW: a focus on the moment of orgasm and radically reducing the visible parts. But what does "Beautiful Agony" reveal of intimacy if it doesn't expose the naked body? The screen shows the act of masturbation, uncut, in one take that can be categorized as a (self-)portrait. "Beautiful Agony is dedicated to the beauty of human orgasm. This may be the most erotic thing you have ever seen, yet the only nudity it contains is from the neck up."[16] Obviously, a Janus-faced quality inheres in the visage in the area of pornography: it reveals the very private and personal ("your most intimate secrets", as formulated by the *Beautiful Agony* site) and also seems, nevertheless, to be a code. "The videos were made in private by the contributors (and sometimes their partner). (…) We don't know what they're doing, or how they are doing it, we just know it's real and it's sexy as hell".[17] Founded in 2004 and acquiring popularity at a breathtaking pace, this video forum articulates sexuality and eroticism primarily through the topography of facial indexical signs. The face, its expressions contorted in dramatized ecstasy, is exposed and exhibited. It triggers desire or respectively arouses the viewer sexually, or is intended to do so.

One of the users comments the overall concept: "Oooh yes, I like this! People who have themselves filmed when they're coming. And you only see their faces! They're real people, not porn stars. That's what I call erotic! I'm totally convinced and turned on!"[18] "Personal features", as *pars pro toto* for the genuine, singular, and authentic, take the place of the conventional protagonists of the typical pornographic visual catalog of genitals, cum shots, and ejaculate. *Beautiful Agony* thereby launches out on a search for an intimacy that is not part of the usual aggregate of pornographic traits. Many actors seek to frankly exhibit and make public very intimate and authentic moments of the self, which they, in the ritual of a confession, comment on and – from the perspective of Foucault's necessity of confession – justify and explain. After all, "orgasm videos" and video "confessions" function as a unity in reception, as can be inferred from many of community blogs. By clicking on the "help" function on the *Beautiful Agony* site, we accordingly find a detailed list of questions and instructions for producing a confession video. There aspects such as sexual practices, stimulation by means of forums like *My Beautiful Agony*, the impact of the camera on sexual practices etc. are considered.

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[16]   Www.beautifulagony.com/about. In the 1960s, photographs and posters of the photographer, and later, founder of "Body Shop", Anita Roddick grew popular. They are early portraits of women in the very moment of experiencing an orgasm.
[17]   Translated from: www.beautifulagony.com/about, 12-14-2008.
[18]   Http://mypov.twoday.net/stories/942229/ 12-14-2008.

"Firstly, how was your Beautiful Agony experience?", "Why did you submit to Beautiful Agony", "Did having the camera above you make it more difficult to get the job done?"[19] If the "confessions" provide insight into and information on the phantasma of "real self" by means of making a declaration, then the fascination these videos have for viewers is the enigmatic that is evoked by what is *not* revealed. Dyslexius describes this on the *Beautiful Agony* discussion forum using the example of his favorite clip of "Minka" as follows: "I'd not wish to view something that could shred my very own Minka enigma. I value the mysteries that these intriguing websites conjure, whether by design or not".[20]
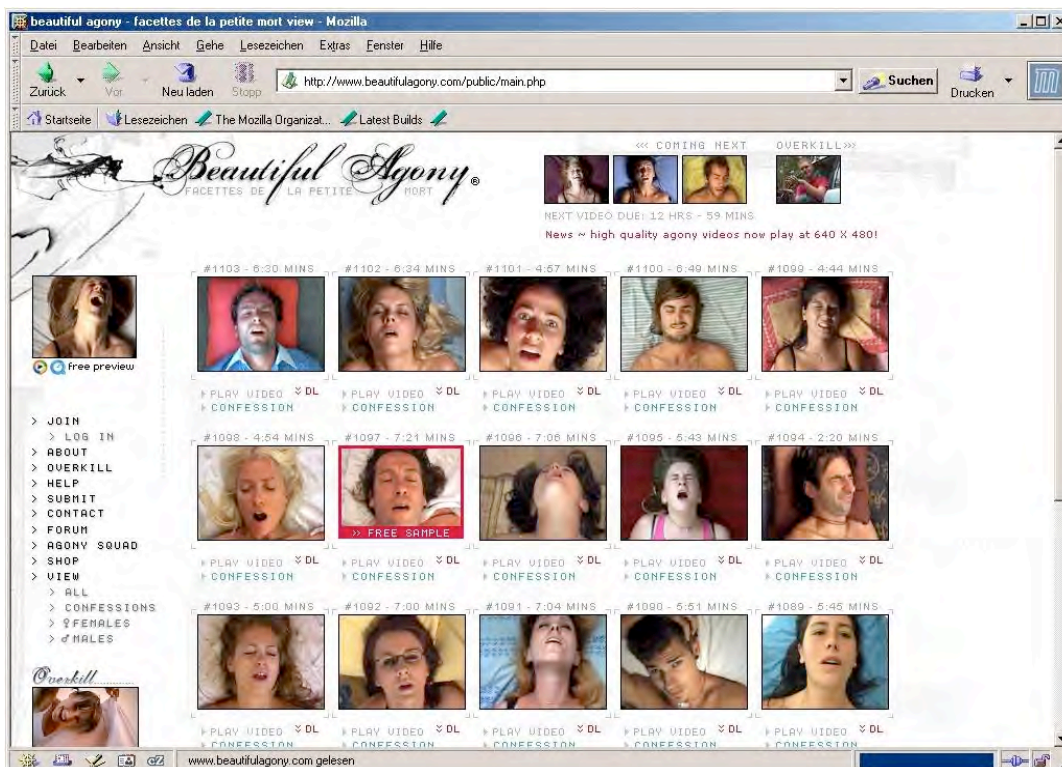
Ill. 4: Beautiful Agony-Homepage 2007

In a very detailed study that argues empirically on "cybersex", the American sociologist Dennis D. Waskul pursues the significance of the face for representation of the self in online communication environments, such as chats or televideos, specializing in sexuality.[21] Besides obvious legal reasons for remaining invisible or hiding the head and

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[19]   Http://beautifulagony.be.ohost.de.

[20]   Dyslexius Last edited by dyslexius (2006-10-13 23:27:02); http://www.beautifulagony.com/forum/viewtopic.php?id=727

[21]   Cf. Dennis D. Waskul: *Self-Games and Body-Play. Personhood in Online Chat and Cybersex,* New York et al. 2003. Televideo functions by means of web cam according to the real-time principle and the peer-to-peer swap meet; cf. also Susanne Regener: Upload – über private Webcams, in: Immanuel Chi, Susanne Düchting, Jens Schröter (eds.): *Ephemer_Temporär_Provisorisch. Aspekte von Zeit und Zeitlichkeit in Medien, Kunst und Design*, Essen 2002; pp. 140-155.

face, namely, remaining or not remaining anonymous (in televideo this is mostly achieved by adjusting the angle of the camera), the study points out that individualized and identifiable facial features increase the significance for the complex of Western subjectivity as well as for the complex of exposure. "Clearly the face occupies a supreme position in connecting or disconnecting the self with the body. One's face is the most identifiable feature of one's body and self; it is the single human physiological feature that concretely conjoins the corporeal body with the self. Although the face is just another part of our bodies, we tend to regard it as more uniquely ours than any other part. Significantly, the face is the one part of the body that is almost always seen naked, and therefore televideo cybersex makes it extremely vulnerable."[22]

Documentation of the ego – political strategies and practices in self-publishing

According to the program of the *Beautiful Agony* website, *"hardcore without nudity"* manifests the paradox of exhibiting subjectivity at the very instant when loss of self and isolation is greatest from the viewpoint of Western sexual psychology. New practices in the area of pornography undoubtedly target a specific audience that hitherto could not so easily be recruited for consuming pornographic mainstream media and are located in the context of technologies of the self, which realize the "fabrication"[23] of the subject and the body in media. This brings up the question of what are the political strategies and consequences of publishing the self in this way? Producing visibility in the sense of enlightened bourgeois practices of writing and confession begins, fundamentally, in the practices of amateurs and dilettantes. In previous centuries this was essentially done via media/literature. It began with notes made by merchants, seafarers, and commercial travelers who, besides maintaining an expanded form of inventory with lists of earnings and expenses, increasingly wrote down everyday procedures and notable events. Trade registers, lists of specifications, and log books led to the development of the type of notes characteristic for the (bourgeois) diary.[24] According to Michel Foucault, such diary notes succeeded the religious *confessiones* and constituted the archetype of the confessional genre. They therefore must be regarded as the direct predecessors of the

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[22]   Translated from Dennis D. Waskul: The Naked Self., in: ibid.: *Net.SeXXX* (footnote 1), p. 51; cf. Gunnar Schmidt: *Das Gesicht. Eine Mediengeschichte*, Paderborn 2003; on the film-theoretical discussion see: Joanna Barck, Wolfgang Beilenhoff (eds.): *montage/av* 13/1 (2004): Das Gesicht im Film. Sekundäre Inszenierungen/1.

[23]   Judith Butler speaks of performative fabrication. See: Judith Butler: *Das Unbehagen der Geschlechter*. Frankfurt/Main 2000, esp. p. 200.

[24]   Cf. on the history of logbooks and lists of specifications: M. Spagnol, G. Dossena:. *Logbuch. Nach Briefen, Augenzeugenberichten, Bordbüchern und Tagebuchblättern zusammengestellt*, Hamburg 1965; on the transitions between merchants' diaries, travelogues, and account books with the renowned example of Albrecht Dürer: Heike Sahm: *Dürers kleinere Texte. Konventionen als Spielraum für Individualität*. (Hermaea. Germanistische Forschungen. Neue Folge 97), Tübingen 2002.

online diary. Blogs – or at least most of the new webformats[25] – are located in the frame categories of early personal testimonials (brevity, stringent adherence to the calendar, conventional tabular representation). The ordering functions of dates or categories based on dates such as "New Year's Fuck" demonstrate this very clearly.

I can only touch on the history and structure of testimonial formats and their visualization function (that is, publications) for communities and movements, such as feminism and the gay and lesbian movement, cursorily here. To be noted, however, is that after introducing the category 'gender' into the public sphere and the consequences thereof – the most famous example in the German language is the campaign "We have aborted" led by "Stern" magazine in 1971 – this was extended in the 1960s until the 1980s to subjects and visual strategies still largely taboo for the initial feminist movement. Films like Yoko Ono's "Bottoms" (GB 1966) or "Near the Big Chakra" by Anne Severson alias Alice Anne Parker (USA 1974) took the concept of exhibiting "sex" literally by letting artworks, documents, archives, and political interventions merge into one. "Near the Big Chakra" presents a close-up and, in a single take, serializes the similarity and diversity of female genitals 37 times for the total duration of 17 minutes.[26] The preoccupation with the category of 'sex' aims in the dual sense of the word (sex/gender) at establishing visualization. It additionally targets at attaining the power to design and visually dispose of images of sexualized body parts and their designated meanings at will. Furthermore, in the second feminist movement it is characteristic for cultural and politico-artistic attitudes to likewise address non-professionals and do away with the distinction between "beginners" and "professionals". Demands for feminist eroticism and pornography were thereby temporarily the focus of publicist strategies. Barbara Hammer's call for participation (1982) in the "First Women's International Erotic Art Film" label was clearly directed at amateurs and sought contributions presenting subjective erotic experiences:

"Join in!
Participate in the Women's International Erotic Art Film. We invite women filmmakers and artists (beginners and professional alike) from all nations to participate in putting together a compilation film on female eroticism. The contributions should have a length of 3 minutes (Super 8 or 16 mms), their content and form deal with eroticism, and be based on subjective experience. Please send the developed film by Dec. 30, 1982, at the very latest to the following address:

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[25]   Cf. Michel Foucault: Technologies of the Self, in: ibid et al.: *Technologies of the Self,* Amherst/MA 1988, pp. 16-59; on the blog mode of writing and recording cf. Karin Bruns: Archive erzählen: Weblogs, V-Blogs und Online-Tagebücher als dokumentar-fiktionale Formate, in: Harro Segeberg (ed.): *Perspektiven der Referenz. Schriftenreihe der Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaften*, Marburg 2009, pp. 310-329, and also Helmut Gold, Christiane Holm, Eva Bös, Tine Nowak (eds.): *Absolut privat? Vom Tagebuch zum Weblog.* Exhibition catalog of the Museum für Kommunikation Frankfurt, Frankfurt/Main 2008.
[26]   Cf. Scott MacDonald: Two Interviews. Demystifying the Female Body: Anne Severson: "Near the Big Chakra", Yvonne Rainer: "Privilege", in: *Film Quarterly*, Oct. 1991, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 18-32.

Barbara Hammer

Women's International Film

P.O.-Box 2446

Berkeley, California 94702

U.S.A.

This film seeks to feature a spectrum of the variety and similarities and the intensity of personal erotic fantasy at an international, supracultural level. Forget your inhibitions and start work! Borrow a Super 8 camera and turn your fantasies into reality/reality into fantasy. Make female art out of male art."[27]

The visible signs of sexual protest and subversion that were dramatized in films by mainly female artists and activists, however, migrated from feminist art and film to mainstream cinema, video stores, TV, and finally the Internet. A visual strategy from "Near the Big Chakra" returns to feature in professional cinema in Paul Verhoeven's thriller "Basic Instinct" (USA 1992), a film that scandalized the public at the time. Here the provocative exhibition and demonstrative exposure of the sex is staged as a view under the skirt of the protagonist, who, even in this pose, is presented as an aggressive female exhibitionist, an anti-heroine, a lesbian, a bisexual, and literally a murderess of men. A diversified program of a feminist, female, lesbian, gay, queer pornography evolved out of the women's erotic art movement as well as the PorNo campaign, which is largely anti-porn. In turn it was followed by (largely short-lived) attempts of the pornfilm industry to develop women-specific or lesbian/gay labels and formats.[28] Many of the concepts that are and were born of this context focus/ed on do-it-yourself. This is not only the case in the media-technological and aesthetic sense of self-presentation in the media. It also applies to the control over the production of images of the own sex or own gender, "women in control of their own image", as it is formulated in *www.ishotmyself.com*.[29] Significantly, the *Beautiful Agony* forum, which was first founded after *I Shot Myself (ISM)* (ill. 5), adopts a similar approach.

"The previous night my partner and I had been to an adult store and could not find a single video which looked even remotely erotic. Lauren had similar experiences, but as a recent arts graduate, she had another perspective, somewhat more analytical. We had a

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[27] Published in: *Frauen und Film*, no. 33: Die pornografische Projektion (1982), p. 18.

[28] These approaches framed and accompanied, to an extent, research of "feminist" female scholars on the impact of pornography on a female public. On queer porn cf. Vina Yun: Hardcore mit Herz. Beobachtungen zum D.I.Y.-Porno., in: Sonja Eismann (ed.): *Hot Topic. Popfeminismus heute*, Mainz 2007, pp. 83-88; on the project of visualization as a political strategy cf. esp. p. 83f.

[29] See www.ishotmyself.com/about; "individual sexuality" is represented here in opposition to representations in "mainstream media"; the same is true for the forum *I Feel Myself*; http://nl.ifeelmyself.com/public/main.php; on do-it-yourself feminism in the WWW cf. Karin Bruns: 'Disgruntled Housewives' und 'Cyber-B.I.T.C.H.E.S.' – Verfahren geschlechterdifferenter In- und Exklusionen im World Wide Web, in: Irene Dölling, Dorothea Dornhof, Karin Esders et al. (eds.): *Transformationen von Wissen, Mensch und Geschlecht. Transdisziplinäre Interventionen.* Königstein 2007, pp. 159-175.

reductionist discussion which came to the conclusion that really, the eroticism is mostly in the face, and it stood to reason that you could make porn with no nudity. So we passed a video camera around amongst a few friends and ISM contributors, and the ISM designer whipped up a simple, but elegant site."[30]
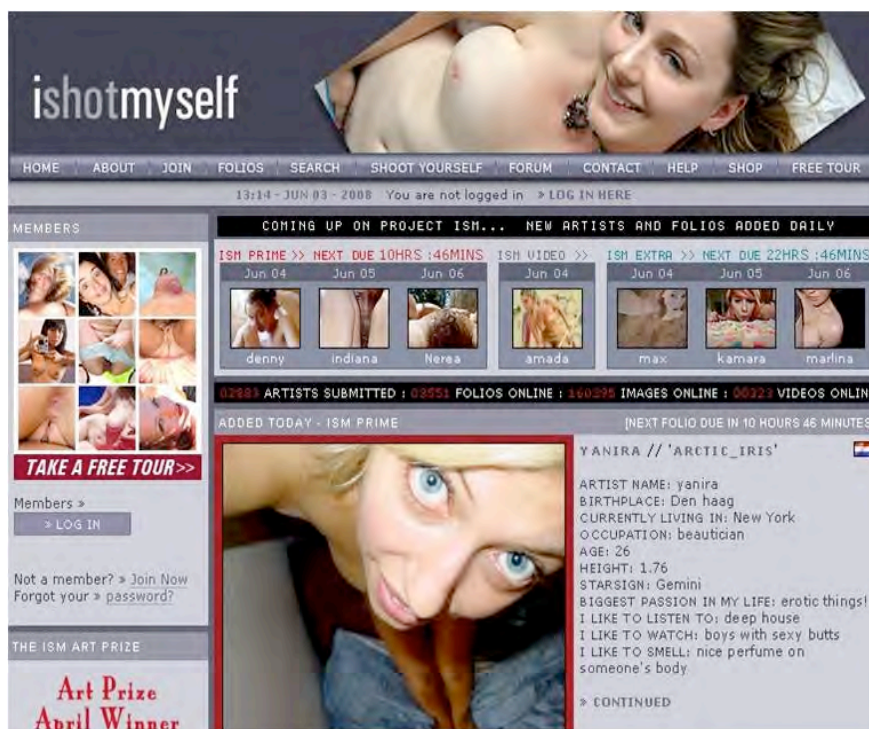
Ill. 5: I Shot Myself – homepage 2008

Home made or *amateur* therefore ceased long ago, on the Internet, to be terms that distinguish amateurs from media professions (in the sense of earning one's bread and butter), standardization, and the exploitation economy. The legitimation for many swap meets with sexual contents and the reasons for their existence depend on aesthetic and technological realizability. If the label of *amateur* still signifies something it is, first and foremost, a sales and public-relations strategy. As a tag or search category it engages private people and companies alike. The interchange of sexual images and scenes between professionals and amateurs corresponds to the growing similarity of business practices in both sectors. In this way, transgressions of film fans contribute to the regulation of the "economy of desire", which Linda Williams speaks of in her book

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[30]   Interview with Richard from Beautiful Agony; http://www.positive-porn.com/beautiful-agony.html.

"Hardcore: Power, Pleasure, and the Frenzy of the Visible" as early as 1989.[31] Both *Beautiful Agony* and *I Shot Myself* – both hosted by "Feck", a Dutch company – are websites that apply to the digital philosophy of "do-it-yourself". The media practices of amateurs who upload their photos and videos comprise not only the strict application to exacting aesthetic guidelines, such as the positioning of and angle of the camera, types of shots (ill. 4), and maintaining technical "standards".[32] They also involve the transfer of the copyright, including the "confessions", for 150 dollars. Meanwhile, in web forums of prosumers – as with *Beautiful Agony* or *I Shot Myself* – do-it-yourself has the function of building communities. Formerly, in the popular culture of the 1970s and the 1980s it still counted as a sign of the isolation or even solitariness of the creatively active and articulate subject. Blog entries and contributions in associated discussion forums recur emphatically, ironically, or even sarcastically to autoeroticism and its dual functions of the masturbation act, on the one hand, of the individualized media exhibition of this sexual act, on the other. Thereby, users or respectively authors from the websites considered as independent pornography copy and process the exact same habitus that helped the pop song "All by Myself" and its derivatives in music and film become famous. Erotically sexual video productions and "confessions" of autobiographic documentarism in the World Wide Web contribute further to the shift in boundaries in the field of pornography itself. Likewise the practice of selling one's self, or, repectively, disposing of the self, has found its way into pornography, in the economic sense as well as in that of media law.[33] Considered from this standpoint, it is an interesting fact that the number of female users and actors, the "Agonees" in *Beautiful Agony*, comprise 75% of the total and is exceptionally large – especially for a web forum whose content is explicitly sexual.

Captions

Ill. 1 Screenshot, YouPorn homepage 2006, www.youporn.com, 9-4-2006.

Ill. 2: Screenshot, Video and Thumbnail "Amateur Couple fucking in H & M" on: *YouPorn,* www.youporn.com, 2-3-2008.

Ill. 3: Screenshot, Videos from the web series "Night Invasion", www.nightinvasion.com, 2-3-2008.

Ill. 4: Screenshot, Beautiful Agony homepage 2007, www.beautifulagony.com/main.php, 5-4-2007.

Ill. 5: Screenshot, I Shot Myself homepage 2008, www.ishotmyself.com, 6-3-2008.

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[31]   Linda Williams: *Hardcore. Power, Pleasure, and the Frenzy of the Visible*, Berkeley, 1st ed. 1989, reprint 1999.

[32]   *Beautiful Agony* asserts, for example, that "Our quality standards are high, which means straight up, no web cams. You'll to record your agony using a digital camcorder"; , 2http://beautifulagony.be.ohost.de-24-2009.

[33]   The task of or giving up copyrights fulfills a subject-technological function, such as the copyright debates documented in the area of photography and literature, amongst others, with terminological analogies like international property/originality.