

THE SECOND COMING

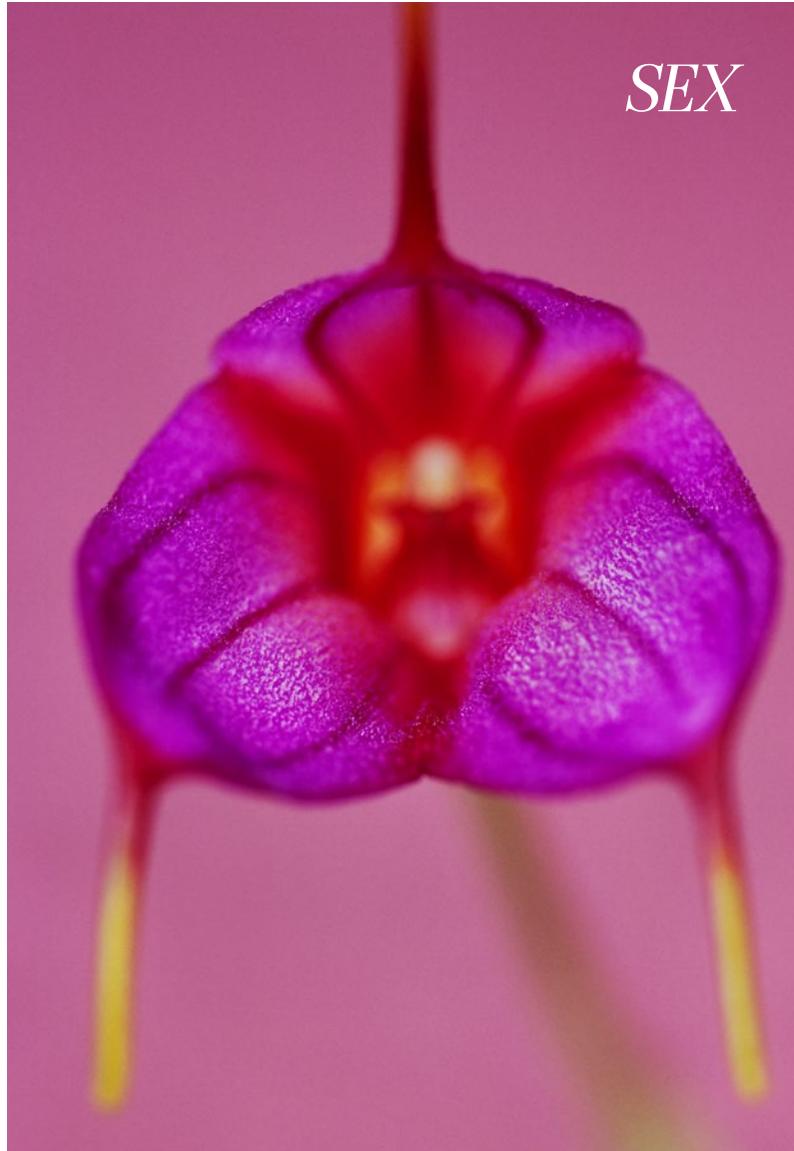
Put yourself first, take orgasm training, talk about your clitoris... Stephanie Theobald shares the secrets of 2016's sexual revolution

Earlier this year, Emma Watson embarked on an adventure more thrilling and gutsy than anything JK Rowling could have imagined. In conversation with legendary 1970s feminist Gloria Steinem, Watson broached the predictable chestnuts about the modern female experience: violence, abortion rights, women in politics. But what sent headlines careering around the world was when the 26-year-old dared to champion the importance of sexual pleasure. Enthusing about new website *omgyes.com*, where women show you how they have orgasms, Watson (“I wish it had been around longer!”) was unknowingly cutting the ribbon for the Sexual Revolution take two.

I became aware of this female-friendly Second Sexual Revolution two years ago on a journey across America, meeting the sex heroines of my youth. I'd been inspired by attending a ‘masturbation masterclass’ in New York, thrown by 86-year-old renegade feminist Betty Dodson. Dodson published the world's only bestselling book on masturbation, *Sex For One*, in 1987 and, during the workshop, her message really came home to me: getting to see and know your genitals without shame and learning how to bring yourself to orgasm alone are the foundations of every woman's sexuality.

Dodson's vision may soon come to pass thanks to *omgyes.com*. Co-creator Lydia Daniller, 37, says Dodson's work was an inspiration and that the new generation of bold women comics such as Amy Schumer helped her realise that the cultural conversation was changing to “more frank and realistic portrayals of female sexuality”.

Omgyes.com is an interactive orgasm-training programme that promises to “lift the veil on female pleasure” and since it started (in December) it has generated more than 45,000 users – half women, half men. For a flat fee of £19, subscribers can caress a selection of



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virtual vulvas with their computer mouse while hearing responses from the women they belong to (“I'm close”, “Stop for one second”, etc). Although the \$4.6 million site had research help from the famous Kinsey Institute, it's not the science that's been wowing subscribers. Daniller explained that, until now, the only funded large-scale sex research has either been biological (the physiology of what happens in the body during sex) or behavioural (the percentage of women who masturbate). Neither medical nor pornographic, *omgyes.com* talks about specific techniques women use to orgasm.

THE SELECTION BOX OF ORGASMS ON THE SITE INCLUDES 'EDGING' (GETTING VERY TURNED ON, THEN HOLDING OFF),

and ‘orbiting’ (making circles around the clitoris and clitoral hood). Daniller says she's learned how “women evolve over time. Something a woman liked in her twenties might not work in her forties.” The essential thing, she continues, is that “women need to understand it's okay to ask for lots of different things sexually”.

This was a common sentiment from everyone I spoke to. Take Annie Sprinkle, a consultant on *omgyes.com*. The porn-star-turned-cult-performance-artist told me »

that when she got into porn in the 1970s, “there was a debate about if women even had orgasms and if they did, who cares?” Sprinkle, 61, was denounced in the Senate in 1990 for a publicly funded show where she invited members of the audience to look at her cervix through a speculum (“to demystify the female body”). I meet her in her San Francisco kitchen as she’s pressing her paint-splattered DD cleavage into art paper, completing another series of ‘tit prints’ to celebrate the female form. It’s like Andy Warhol’s Factory in here only with more breasts.

Retro prints sell at Christie’s for up to \$1,000. “I’m glad the Second Sexual Revolution finally arrived,” she said, confessing that she only discovered where her clitoris was by “seeing porn movies”.

The most ‘out-there’ pleasure practitioner I met was Nicole Daedone who invented Orgasmic Meditation, or OM. Her company, now with a growing chapter in London, offers a yoga-meets-sex experience where a partner strokes the “upper left-hand quadrant of the female clitoris” for a set period of 15 minutes with the purpose of enhancing energy, libido and connection to others. Daedone claims that most guys are never taught what to do and that OM is a way for men to break free from the cycle of hovering “between bravado and helplessness, when they’re having sex with women”.

Betty Dodson’s genital show-and-tell ‘Bodysex’ classes are a response to modern women being “more at sea” about their sexuality than they were in the 1970s. She has a great line about how, as a woman, you have to “run the fuck”, ie, don’t spend all your time thinking about what your partner likes or if you’re appearing sexy enough for him or her. Millionaire motivational speaker Regena Thomashauer has a similar message. She speaks to hundreds of *Sex And The City*-style women every year about the ‘Pleasure Revolution’ and the importance of putting yourself first. “When a woman does not create pleasure in her life,” she told me, “she

dies inside. The consequence is a life of mediocrity and low-level irritation with her boss, her husband, her kids.”

One thing that’s stuck in my head from my adventures, which turned into a memoir called *Sex Drive*, is the importance of getting the word ‘clitoris’ out there. Lots of women who consider themselves liberated will refer to their genitals as their ‘vagina’ but this drives Betty Dodson crazy. “The vagina’s the goddamn birth canal!” she hollers, adding that the female equivalent of the penis is the clitoris. During my travels, I learned that the clitoris has 8,000 nerve endings, as opposed to the penis’ 4,000 and that it is actually around 8cm. Most people don’t realise because most of our erectile tissue is inside our body. We’re talking a Lamborghini versus a bicycle. No wonder we need more attention.



FROM TOP: Stephanie Theobald with Betty Dodson (left); Betty in the 1980s; her famous book

5 heroines of the Second Sexual Revolution

BETTY DODSON

An 86-year-old who runs masturbation masterclasses. dodsonandross.com

BARBARA CARRELLAS

An expert in the ‘energy orgasm’. urbantantraexperience.com

NICOLE DAEDONE

The founder of Orgasmic Meditation. onetaste.co.uk

REGENA THOMASHAUER

Motivational speaker on sexuality. mamagenas.com

SOPHIA WALLACE

(Right) Founder of the ‘Cliteracy’ project. sophiawallace.com



AT FIRST, IT WASN'T AN EASY RETURN TO BRITISH LIFE

after three months with the American sexual avant-garde. But then I started meeting some forward-thinking UK-based women. The women’s editor of *The Telegraph*, Emma Barnett, has just made a film for the BBC, *Let’s Talk About Female Masturbation*, and Newcastle-based Nicola Hunter-Canavan’s ‘Raising the Skirt’ workshops (nicolacanavan.com) are gathering force. The title refers to the ancient Greek tradition of ‘Ana-Suromai’. The vulva was believed to be so strong it had the power to drive away evil, so Hunter-Canavan takes women outdoors to flash their genitals literally to the four winds and make art about their experiences. “After three days, the women have a much stronger relationship to their bodies,” she says. I started to feel optimistic. The idea that sexual pleasure is not just allowed but crucial to our health is beginning to be understood. A new Sexual Wellness Clinic opened at Spire Southampton

Hospital earlier this year, the first in a UK hospital. Sexologists talk to patients about awkward questions around sex, and therapy can be physical as well as verbal.

The Millennials are on the case, too. Last year, artist Sophia Wallace launched her ‘Cliteracy’ project to enlighten men and women through art about the deafening silence surrounding the clitoris.

It’s an exciting time to be a woman. In the first Sexual Revolution, people talked about breaking through barriers – but this time the barricades are actually starting to come down. 🍷

Read more about Stephanie Theobald’s road trip at MYSEXDRIVE.ORG