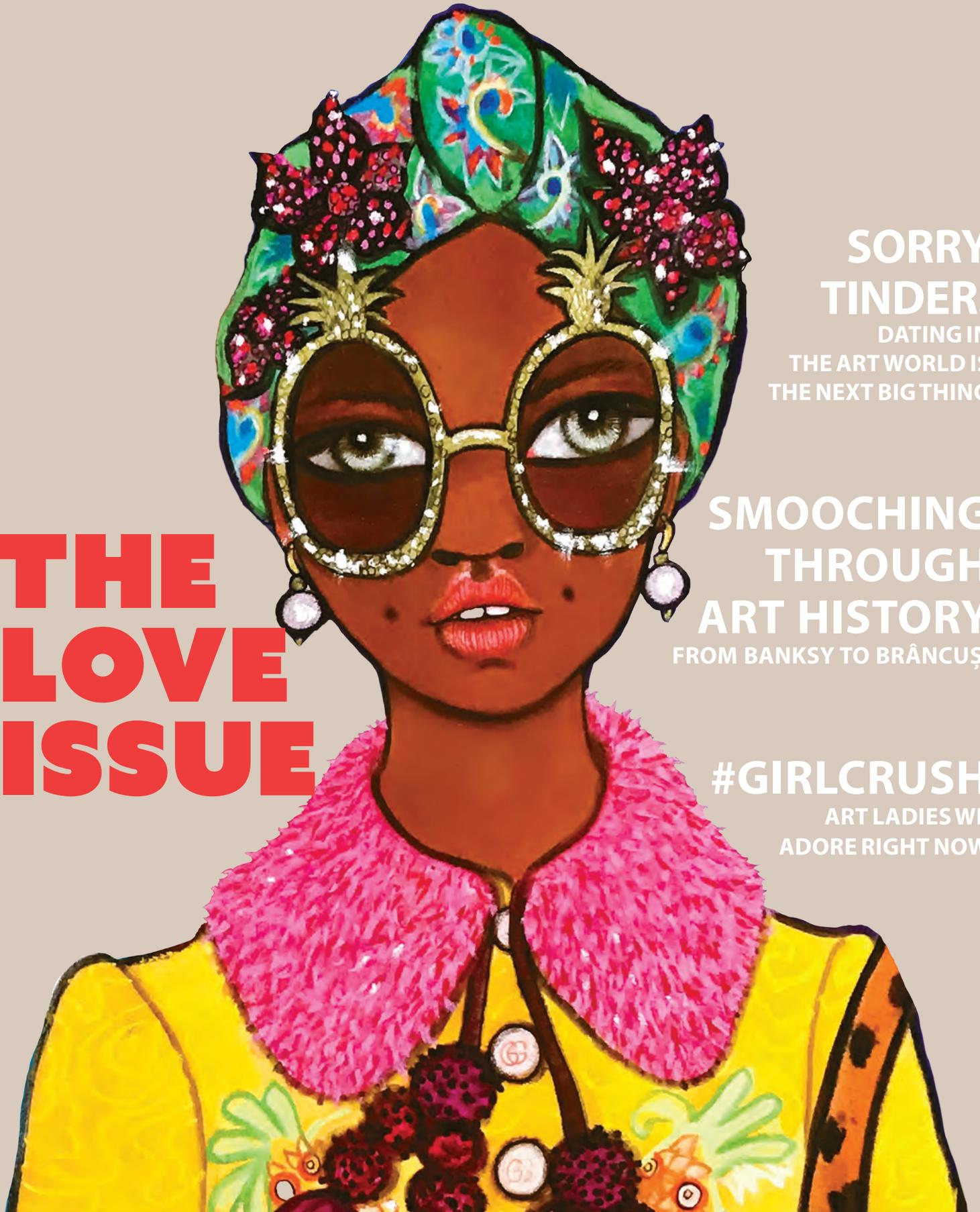


The Art Gorgeous

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**THE
LOVE
ISSUE**



**SORRY
TINDER!**
DATING IN
THE ART WORLD IS
THE NEXT BIG THING

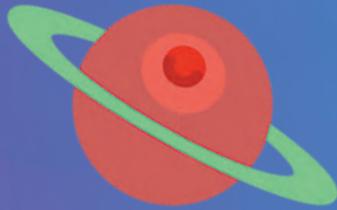
**SMOOCHING
THROUGH
ART HISTORY**
FROM BANKSY TO BRÂNCUȘI

#GIRLCRUSH
ART LADIES WE
ADORE RIGHT NOW

Liz Goldwyn Wants You to Let Your Freak Flag Fly



Image courtesy: Glynnis McDaris



For decades, Liz Goldwyn has been a fixture in the world of art and fashion.

But, whether she was curating the Sotheby's fashion department or editing *Vogue Paris*, one ambition kept calling after her: creating a one-stop shop for all our sex-ed needs. After years of dreaming and scheming, *The Sex Ed* is finally live, and Goldwyn is ready to share the fascinating backstory of its inception.

Writer KATYA LOPATKO
Illustration FLIRTMOJI.CO

Liz Goldwyn knows a thing or two about sex. Growing up in Los Angeles, she was “really interested from an early age in pornography, but always from a sociological standpoint” (“I wasn’t having crazy sex at 13,” she adds, though some of her friends were). While her friends were getting the dirty details second-hand from older siblings or gossip whispered in school bathrooms, Goldwyn went directly to the source: “I was the kind of kid who would come home from school and ask my parents questions that maybe other kids weren’t asking,” she says, and – when that fell short – “stealing my father’s *Playboys*.”

This curiosity landed Goldwyn her first job at age 13 – a peer educator at Planned Parenthood in Santa Monica – a gig that turned her into the de facto walking sex encyclopedia for all her friends. Our curiosity about Goldwyn’s life and work brought us face-to-face one summer afternoon in a cozy café in Los Feliz, one of Los Angeles’ hip east-side neighborhoods.

Goldwyn’s first job at Planned Parenthood in Santa Monica turned her into the de facto walking sex encyclopedia for all her friends

Wearing a perfectly tailored sundress and her signature red lipstick – somehow impeccable even in this late summer heat wave, which has long dissolved the entire city into a puddle of sweaty foundation, smog, and the smell of street tacos – Goldwyn is poised, her gaze piercing and intelligent. We sit down, me with a ‘Sacramento’ smoothie, her with a passion-fruit-jasmine iced tea, and dive straight into Goldwyn’s outlook on all things sex, art, and femininity.

It was only natural when Goldwyn began studying photography at the School of Visual Arts in New York that her early passion for sex found its way into her work. She began collecting vintage burlesque costumes and photographing herself in them, a project that would eventually culminate in a novel: *Sporting Guide*, inspired by her research about late 19th century sex workers in Los Angeles; a nonfiction book, *Pretty Things: the Last Generation of American Burlesque Queens*; as well as an HBO documentary with the same title.



Throughout her long and illustrious career in fashion, art, and entertainment, Goldwyn knew she would one day return to her mission at Planned Parenthood: spreading reliable information about sex and sexuality. After spending years delving into the history of burlesque and prostitution, she realised that misconceptions





about these topics, and sex in general, were stubborn. “I was still being asked the same questions that I was as a teenager,” she says, “and there was no source to get accredited information from real experts.”

Enter Goldwyn’s new venture: an online platform offering a centralised fount of wisdom on sex, sexuality, health, and consciousness. *The Sex Ed* only just launched in May 2018, but the concept has been decades in the making. “What I want to leave behind in the world is a sex education resource,” Goldwyn said, though until recently, the project felt more pipe dream than practical.

“Prior to October 2017, it’s been very difficult to talk about sex,” she explained, referring, of course, to the movement that erupted in Hollywood last fall and whose aftershocks have been echoing around the world ever since: #MeToo. “It became clear to people in positions of power that we actually do need to talk about this stuff now. We need to change the paradigm.”



Goldwyn remained elusive about her plans for *The Sex Ed*, but big things are in store. In addition to debunking sex myths, opening up taboo topics like kink and fetish, and providing reliable facts from experts for people of all genders, *The Sex Ed* will offer an interactive element, serving as a forum for all things sexy. But *The Sex Ed* will be much more than just encyclopedia-meets-advice-column-meets-open-source *Sex and the City*; by stripping away fear and confusion surrounding sex and sexuality, Goldwyn hopes to help usher in a more inclusive and sex-positive society.

The time could not be riper. The US administration’s harrowing attack on reproductive freedom has made it clear that much of our society remains hostile to sex and sexuality, while the bitter fallout from #MeToo screams that the battle of the sexes needs armistice, and it needs it now. It’s high time for an open dialogue about the deep wounds in sexual circles; the question, of course, is how to wade through the muck without drowning in it.

While women are finally getting the long-overdue chance to air their grievances and create spaces to heal, straight men are getting left behind – included in the conversation only as the guilty party, abandoned in the wild with no tools to heal their own traumas and insecurities. “We constantly label masculinity as toxic, but we don’t think about the vulnerabilities that heteronormative men have, and they don’t really have spaces to talk about their feelings. We gotta help ‘em out,” Goldwyn said. Straight men need to “learn to love themselves too,” she added, “and uplift us all.”

In addition to the obvious focus on sex and health, *The Sex Ed*’s mission statement includes one more pillar: consciousness. “We talk a lot about mindfulness in general, but we don’t apply that to sexuality,” Goldwyn said, stressing the need for a holistic integration of sex into the rest of our lives.





Goldwyn asks, “Are we being mindful of our own sexuality, our own pleasure? Are we being mindful of the sexual relationships that we’re having with partners? Are we being mindful of why we’re having sex? Are we using sex as a tool for escapism, the way that we would drugs, or alcohol, or food?”

The transactional, techy nature of modern dating plays no small role in this lack of mindfulness. With a slew of dating apps on constant rotation on everyone’s smartphones, it seems like you could get someone hot and willing in your bed in just a couple of hours and a few clicks, but Goldwyn would argue that something gets lost in the process. “I think intimacy is the next frontier in sexuality. People have transactional sex, they have casual sex, but they’re still really afraid to talk about it.”

No reactionary, Goldwyn was quick to add that she isn’t against casual, non-monogamous sex, just that many people don’t know how to go about it in a healthy way. “I don’t think, from a base level, that we’re educating people to have a great deal of respect and self-love for themselves and treat their bodies as sacred.”

While Goldwyn wants us all to come together in the bedroom, she’s not blind to the obstacles that women and minorities face in the workplace, not least in the arts. “I think that there’s a certain level of success that I’ve always felt wouldn’t be possible to achieve within certain fields because of my sex,” she admitted. Coming from an illustrious Hollywood family – her father is renowned film director Samuel Goldwyn, and one of her four brothers is a director – she often wondered, “What the hell would I have to do to be considered equal to them? And at a certain point, why am I even chasing that, is it something that I even believe in?”



While #MeToo has cast a harsh light on Hollywood, resulting in the introduction of quotas and initiatives like 50-50 by 2020, the art world has gotten away with far less scrutiny, allowing the art establishment to skate under the radar on questions of inclusivity.

While it took even the most prominent contemporary female artists, the likes of Jenny Holzer and Marina Abramović, years to gain recognition, young male artists are much more likely to catapult themselves straight to the top with a combination of talent and sheer bravado. “All of the hot-shot artists whose works are wildly inflated are men. I’m not going to name anyone, but I see a lot of male artists work the room like nothing I’ve ever seen before in Hollywood in terms of their hustle. It’s shameful.”

When asked about the role of the female gaze in her work, Goldwyn replied with ease, as if the answer were obvious: “I am a woman, so I just think it’s revisiting these storylines of women who have been traditionally ignored by history and society because their work is close in line with sex work.” While traditional society dismissed burlesque and



striptease as base entertainment, Goldwyn recognises them as performance art and believes prostitution should be legalised as the world's oldest profession.

Unfortunately, criticism for women who are open about their sexuality flows freely through the art world, and Goldwyn herself has gotten splashed. Trying to finance her first film, *Pretty Things*, with grants, she discovered first-hand how difficult it is to find support for topics dealing with female sexuality.

And for women artists, this criticism often turns personal and moral: "People assume that because I'm very open about this, that means that I am up for anything, but I'd say I'm actually a lot more vanilla than people think," says Goldwyn, pointing out that she was married for the duration of her 20s. "Sometimes you can channel things in your work that aren't necessarily things you're exploring personally," she adds, though women are unfortunately less likely to be afforded this separation between art and artist.

While Goldwyn wants us all to come together in the bedroom, she's not blind to the obstacles that women and minorities face in the workplace

Whatever the art world's systemic flaws, art itself can be a powerful tool for healing and empowerment. "I think it's great to see ourselves reflected and our experiences heard through other people in that human way, in a way that can touch your soul. I think it's great when art can be political in times like we are in now," Goldwyn said. Then she paused, and added: "I definitely think it's important for the art world to do a little self-reflection on inclusivity."

