

19th Pornfilmfestival Berlin (PFFB) Presents Retrospective **Program 2024**

“San Francisco Sexual Babylon” Guest Curated by Jon Davies
October 22–27, 2024 at Kino Moviemento, Kreuzberg



James Broughton's *The Bed* (1969)

September 9, 2024

This year's **Pornfilmfestival Berlin retrospective program** celebrates **San Francisco as a sexual Babylon** – the ground zero of postwar sexual liberation and of sexually explicit cinema. In avant-garde film and performance, sex education and porn, the **San Francisco Bay Area** has long been the place not only to imagine but to **boldly try out new social and sexual possibilities**. With a strong focus on the explosion of sexually explicit representation in the 1970s, this series offers a **hot-blooded history of San Francisco sex on film and video**, a proud but under-recognized tradition invested in the belief that porn can liberate and teach as well as provide pleasure.

Featuring **six curated nightly programs mixing fiction and documentary, features and shorts**, *San Francisco Sexual Babylon* includes films by or featuring Jerry Abrams, Steven Arnold, James Broughton, The Cockettes/Angels of Light, Honey Lee Cottrell, Louise Shine Houston, Michael Kalmen, Dirk Kortz, Curt McDowell, Alice Anne Parker, Shar Rednour & Jack Strano, and Laird Sutton. Guest curated by Canadian curator and writer **Jon Davies**, who will be present in person to introduce the film programs each evening, and commissioned by the Pornfilmfestival Berlin (PFFB).

Dive into this year's retrospective program:



left: Michael Kalmen's *Elevator Girls in Bondage* (1972), right: Jerry Abrams' *Sub Rosa Rising* AKA *Open City 72* (1971)

The retrospective program launches with James Broughton's celebrated ode to the Summer of Love, **The Bed** (1968, short), and Michael Kalmen's hilarious mashup of genderfuck drag and class struggle **Elevator Girls in Bondage** (1972, feature), starring Rumi Missabu and members of the legendary Cockettes / Angels of Light as the long-suffering staff of a seedy San Francisco hotel. Program 2 continues with psychedelic filmmaker Jerry Abrams' **Sub Rosa Rising AKA Open City 72** (1971, documentary feature), a rarely seen gem that offers an erotic tour through the smorgasbord of adult entertainment on offer in San Francisco as well as activism by the Rev. Ted McIlvenna, sex worker liberationist Margo St. James and the Sexual Freedom League.



left: Laird Sutton's *Free* (1971), right: Steven Arnold's *Luminous Procuress* (1971)

Featuring 6 rarely seen shorts, program 3 consists of diverse, groundbreaking 1970s sex education films, celebrating the National Sex Forum (NSF). Started by the great Rev. Ted McIlvenna – who believed that the body and sex were holy – the NSF created modern sex ed films with real couples of all orientations and “trips” including older people and disabled Vietnam veterans. Visionary artist Steven Arnold's **Luminous Procuress** (1971, feature) will be presented in program 4. A psychedelic odyssey of unabashed hedonism featuring the Cockettes / Angels of Light. Now restored in all its sensuous glory, the film's subversive delights are ripe for rediscovery.



left: Curt McDowell's *Ronnie* (1972), right: Shar Rednour & Jack Strano's *Sugar High Glitter City* (2001)

Showcasing all recently restored films, program 5 honors the insatiable Curt McDowell with three of his shorts (**Confessions**, 1971; **Ronnie**, 1972; **Loads**, 1980) and his rarely screened transgressive featurette, **Taboo (The Single and the LP)**, 1981. McDowell embodied the libidinal spirit of San Francisco, and his sexual obsession with macho “straight” men is on full view here. The final program highlights the long legacy of lesbian and trans hardcore in San Francisco with Shar Rednour & Jack Strano’s iconic lesbian hardcore **Sugar High Glitter City** (2001, feature), set in a future where sugar is illegal and candy-addicted dykes stop at nothing to get their fix. With a 10th anniversary show of Shine Louise Houston’s **Put the Needle on the Record** (2014, short).

About the curator

Jon Davies is a curator and writer from Montreal, Canada. He received his PhD in Art History from Stanford University, where he wrote a dissertation titled “The Fountain: Art, Sex and Queer Pedagogy in San Francisco, 1945–1995.” From 2004–2016, he worked as a film and video programmer and contemporary art curator in Toronto. His book on Andy Warhol and Paul Morrissey’s 1970 film *Trash* was published by Arsenal Pulp Press in 2009 and his edited anthology *More Voice-Over: Colin Campbell Writings* was published by Concordia University Press in 2021. He co-edited issues #5 and #6 of the cult magazine *Little Joe* (“about queers and cinema, mostly”) with Sam Ashby (UK). More recently, he co-curated the 68th Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, “Queer World-Mending,” with the artist Steve Reinke, and he is currently the General Idea Fellow conducting research on the artist trio at the National Gallery of Canada.

About the festival

The Pornfilmfestival Berlin is an independent, non commercial, not publicly funded film festival centered around the topics of sexuality, politics, feminism, gender diversity, post porn and body politics. Founded in 2006, the festival is the first of its kind in Germany.

The festival program includes an average of 25 to 30 feature-length films as well as around 100 short films, which engage with questions of sexual ethics, identities, body norms, conceptions of morality around the world and the artistic-alternative approach to the genre of pornography, in a wide variety of thematic program blocks. The average annual audience of

8000 visitors – slightly more than half of which are female – identify as a mix of hetero-, homo-, bi-, trans*, non-binary and queer and, with almost 50 percent of the visitors from all over the world, is incredibly international. Additionally, the film festival includes panel discussions, lectures, readings, workshops, performances, and presentations around the topic of sexuality today. The numerous festivals with a similar focus that have emerged in various cities and countries after the founding of PFF Berlin prove that a discourse on an empowering approach to sexuality and sex work is still relevant and that networking, not just for the community, is important.

The festival was founded by filmmaker and producer Jürgen Brüning. Today, it is organized on a voluntary basis in Berlin by a dedicated international team of six people, consisting of filmmakers, film theorists, film producers and journalists, and takes place in the last week of October in Germany's oldest cinema, Moviemento, in Berlin-Kreuzberg as well as Babylon Kreuzberg.

More information: pornfilmfestivalberlin.de

The [accreditation portal](#) for press is already open on the festival website.

For interview requests, selected viewing links and accreditation requests feel free to contact:

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