For the past fifteen years or so I have been directing and producing adult films under the pseudonym Anna Span. I have shot over 250 scenes to date, all of which were made with the direct aim of adding to a small but growing genre within the industry, that of female-friendly pornography. The porn industry, I believe, is still largely sexist in that the male perspective (as in almost any other genre) is prioritized over the female. The female erotic gaze remains significantly underexplored.

Pornography is a creative and aesthetically valid part of culture. When I look back over my career I can’t help but ponder on some truths gleaned about the erotic through practice rather than through theory alone, which shall be the focus of this chapter. Such knowledge can be difficult to access when making a film because porn is almost impossible to do in a politically correct way (due to the erotic nature of power differences vis-à-vis our political aims to diminish such injustices in the wider social sphere). Porn is often paradoxical and, creatively speaking, frustratingly difficult to do well due to restrictions of budget and talent; hence why so much of it is of poor quality.

**Early beginnings**

My journey to seasoned porn director has taken forty years with no clear point at which I ‘became’ a pornographer. As a child I always had a strong sexual imagination, something I later learnt in Nancy Friday’s *Women on Top* is quite common amongst women. When I finally came out as a pornographer to my parents it felt that the preamble to that moment had been long and consequently very deeply set in my personality. What I eventually did with live porn stars, I’d practised many years before with Barbie and Ken.
As a child of around six or seven years old I fantasized about sadistic sailors tying me to the mast of a boat, my life spared only by the appreciation of my beauty by the head sailor (oh how young the claws of the hetero-sexism get into us!). Another favourite was a rather bizarre fantasy involving groups of handsome men patrolling the streets with sections of large silver coloured air duct tubes (the type used in air conditioning units) emanating from their groins. I have a vague recollection that they used to hoover up the gutters with this tubing as well.

I say this merely to highlight that the sexual imagination is not something that sits still, or can be denied, nor is it particularly well suited to political control. It is something that for many of us exists as a background track to our lives, one to which we rarely give any critical attention.

I’ve often wondered about this background track, this simultaneous source of energy and distraction. Perhaps my biggest fantasy is to explore one day this idea in depth. What is the role of rhythm in sexual arousal? Or repetition, or colour? I think it would be possible to make a highly erotic film with no representation of the human form whatsoever. One could take flesh tones, visual movement, perhaps a very unfocused porno flick which utilizes the repetitive movements of coitus – the throbbing and pulsating visual representation of sex – add to it some repetitive music and you have the metaphorical representation of the feeling one gets in one’s vagina during orgasm.

If I sit on a train watching the repetitive movement of a telegraph line or train track running past my eyes – whilst imagining some sexual scene, some bittersweet power play – I consciously have to stop myself from letting go. All this without any physical stimulation whatsoever or even a pornographic image to hand. (I very nearly ‘let go’ once walking through the clothes section of Peacocks department store in Lewisham High Street, a reaction to a sexual fantasy twinned with the rhythm of walking. I can think of no greater abstract sexual experience I’ve ever encountered!)

**The personal is erotic**

Regardless of a person’s sexual tastes it should always be possible to represent effectively on film that which turns him or her on. By using rhythm, point of view camera angles, carefully chosen textures and props, focused sound, the protagonist’s reactions, one ought to be able to show what a person sees as erotic, however abstract or obscure, even when one doesn’t experience excitement personally.

This is not the same, it should be noted, as believing that porn directors should represent all tastes in order to put equality of representation