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Center for Sex and Culture 2011
Final Report

I have finally reached acceptance in my five stages of grief. At first, I was in denial: No, my time at the Center for Sex and Culture isn’t over. It couldn’t possibly be. Ten weeks did not go by *that* quickly. Then I was angry: Why didn’t I attend that Perverts Put Out event? It’s not fair, I didn’t even have a chance to see the Center’s library shelves installed! Then it was bargaining: If I help out at another event, it’s like I’m still an intern. I spent an entire day at the Center after my end date to help out with the Arty Fartsy Shoe Party Nude Aid, so I must still be an intern! Then depression. I couldn’t bear to gather my wits and write a final report. And now, here I am: acceptance. My internship at the Center for Sex and Culture has officially ended and it was a great ten weeks.

I have always been familiar with Carol Queen’s work and to intern at the Center was a dream come true. Carol Queen is a sexologist extraordinaire. She and her partner, Robert Lawrence, co-founded the Center of Sex and Culture at the suggestion of Dr. Betty Dodson. Everything from the furniture in the Center to their library and archives has sexological significance. What’s not to love? My very first day at the Center just so happened to also be the day of the supposed end of the world. And how did I spend my “last day on Earth?” I spent it at the Center helping out with the Masturbate-athon. What a great way to go. My first day set the pace for my time working at the Center.

Between her job at Good Vibrations and other very exciting sexological happenings occurring, I did not see Carol that often. I usually spent my time with Robert — I would help him with miscellaneous tasks at the Center. Because the Center is completely volunteer-run,
most of the maintenance and administrative duties are left to Carol and Robert. As an intern, my tasks varied from mopping the floors to deciphering grant-writing jargon. In addition, because the Center had recently moved locations, there was also a lot of heavy lifting involved in setting up the interior of the Center.

There were various projects I worked on at the Center that required me to use tools. I have never been a very handy person. Tools and their various uses are usually lost on me. For several of these projects, I had to learn simple things like which piece was a nut and which was a bolt. So when I was helping Robert refurnish chairs, or mounting a mirror on a rolling screen or buffer the edges of a glass case, I really had to stretch myself into new and unknown territory. I can now confidently say that I know my way around a screwdriver. I can navigate some extremely heavy pipes and pole dancing poles around. Copper pipes? Beware. I had a lot of fun cutting the last copper pipe I saw. I proudly wear the tiny blisters on my fingers from screwing in bolts with my bare hands.

Aside from learning the difference between all the different type of washers and the various glues you can use to ensure loose bolts won’t fall out, I also helped with the many events at the Center. Not only did I learn skills in production, but I also got to witness amazing shows for free. Three events in particular really stood out to me: Mariko Passion’s one woman show, the EcoSex Symposium and Frank Moore’s Friction of Passion Pleasure.

My first week at the Center was consumed with helping the production of Mariko Passion’s one woman show, Modern Day Asian Sex Slavery: The Musical. This show is a reflection about Mariko’s work as a sex worker, her parents and her growth into a whore revolutionary. It is also a commentary on Asian sex workers and how the media and many well-known figures are quick to victimize Asian sex workers and feel the need to “save” them. After
all, no self-confident, intelligent woman would ever willingly turn to sex work, right? I got to attend this show for free (four nights in a row) and each time I saw it, the more inspired I became.

The EcoSex Symposium was a two-day event in which Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens unveiled their EcoSex art show and invited ecosexuals from all around the world to talk about this new sexuality. Ecosexuality is an identity for anyone who is sexual and also believes in taking care of the Earth. The main idea is that we, as sexual beings, should not depend on the Earth as if it were our mother, but instead, treat it as our lover and nurture it. I, personally, love the idea that we do not need to separate our sex lives from our daily efforts to take care of the planet. Many people offered new ways and ideas to incorporate green ideas into our sex lives. For example, pornography can have a more green aspect in it: instead of a pizza deliveryman, it could be a solar panel installer. One panelist showed exactly how sexy a fruitarian could be, making good use of an organic banana.

Frank Moore is a performer, writer and artist who has cerebral palsy. He is most well known for his controversial ritual events. Moore’s main goal is to challenge the way we interact with strangers and he tries to push people’s boundaries and become closer and more intimate with strangers. He mixes the events with eroticism, music and nudity. Frank started out with the help of Linda, his long time partner, by asking simple questions of the audience. He asked them their names, how they heard about the event, what they expected from the event, and if they could undress the man behind them while someone else played one of the various instruments to their left. By the end of the night, there was a small group of ten people in different stages of undress.

Initially, I thought my only job was to keep and eye on the door and help Frank and his
staff with any needs they had. Towards the end of the event, Frank roped me into the final activity, one that was called “gestures.” By the end of the night, the group did seem really close and connected through the intimacy of the event. Whether or not you agree with Frank’s unconventional methods, there is a truth to what he is trying to tackle. People encounter strangers all the time without a second thought. It is very difficult to become close to a random stranger following our society’s rules of convention. At the end of the night, ten complete strangers became close in a matter of two hours.

When I wasn’t helping out with events or with using my new handy skills, I was working on other on-going projects such as re-cataloguing the Center’s collection of antique vibrators and doing research for the Center. I had the opportunity to go through over twenty boxes of antique vibrators and every day I am beyond thankful of the invention of silicone. A fellow intern and I also photographed each of the vibrators for an online album of the Center’s collection.

As previous interns stated, there is a fair amount of unstructured time at the Center. I tried to work on several projects to stay busy, but when it slowed down at the Center, I found myself doing a lot of self-reflection about my future career. I have been interested in sex and human sexuality for the longest time, but I could never really focus my interests past the fact that I love talking about sex. Carol and Robert do some amazing things in the community (they’ve even been canonized by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence!), and that has only inspired me even more to work in the non-profit world, specifically in the public health sector. In addition, after attending some events I am even more motivated to bring an Asian voice to the sexology community.

Working at the Center has made me more comfortable with myself, as well as with my roles in more immediate goals. Attending events like Frank Moore’s Friction of Pleasure Passion
really pushed me to be more confident with myself. In the fall, I will be a member of Mount Holyoke College’s sexual health educators group, In*Touch. I feel confident in distributing information to the student body, especially with an Asian-American voice. I have read several articles about Asian women being either entirely sexually repressed or completely over-sexualized. I hope to be a reminder that not all Asian women are strictly on one side of the spectrum or the other.

Growing up in San Francisco, I’ve seen my fair share of genitals billowing in the wind. I’ve seen them at San Francisco Pride, at the annual Bay to Breakers race and at the nude section of Baker Beach. If I could take all those experiences and boil it down into a nice thick reduction sauce of penises and vulvas in San Francisco it would look a lot like my time at the Center for Sex and Culture. Robert and Carol are amazing and caring people and I don’t think my internship would have been the same without them. From my very first day with the Masturbate-a-thon to my very last with the Artsy Fartsy Shoe Party Nude Aid, my time at the Center started off and ended with a bang, (no pun intended) and I enjoyed every moment of it.