

ENGLISH

Hate Work *Support Sexworkers*



An interview about sex-work
june 2022

*This is an anonymous interview discussing sex-work that was conducted as part of an art exhibition during the summer of 2022 in Lausanne, Switzerland. With the author's consent, *Projet-Evasions* has reworked the interview into a written and printed version.*

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Can you define what intimacy means to you?

For me, intimacy means sharing moments of vulnerability.

Does that mean you can have sex with someone without intimacy?

In my opinion, yes. I don't think the idea that sexuality necessarily includes intimacy is real. At least it doesn't really correspond to my reality. Partially because this vision implies that there is a single, similar sexuality for everyone. But in reality, there are so many different ways to live and experience sexuality. When I have sex, I can engage in practices that require no emotional involvement, no sharing, where there's little or no intimacy. But other practices make me feel very vulnerable, where I need a great deal of trust in my partners. Then it becomes intimate.

It's a paradox. On the one hand, there is a very romantic social representation of sexuality, which shows us a standardized, exclusive, pure idea of sexuality. On the other hand, there's patriarchy and heterosexuality, which reproduce an image of sexuality where the man fucks the woman with no concern for anything other than his own pleasure... often without even bothering about the other person's consent. There's no discussion or communication either before or after sex, and sexuality is surrounded by a thousand taboos and moral judgments. How can this be considered intimacy? The existing social norms provide us with images that are totally contradictory: an image of sexuality that reserves sex for intimacy and purity, and another that remains anonymous and taboo, where we don't communicate with our partners or within society on sexuality. For example, think of all the pseudo-romantic films where protagonists kiss and have sex without having once talked about their feelings, sexual desires, or debriefing.

The truth is, intimacy is subjective. It depends on each person's relationship to sexuality, to their body, to themselves. And once again, there isn't just one sexuality, but an immense spectrum of practices that can be linked to sexuality. The first time a person experiences a BDSM practice, it's a very different experience than conventional sex.

For me, there's no universal concept of what is or isn't sexuality. And I think sex-work shows that. For one person it is seen as work, while for the other it is seen as sex. Another example is foot fetishism. Some people sexualize feet like crazy, and see a hyper-intimate connection in massaging someone's feet. For others, feet are "just" a body part like any other, with no intimate or sexual significance. In short, sexuality and intimacy are subjective and personal.

What are people looking for who come to you for your services? Intimacy, sexuality or an "intimacy-sexuality" package?

It goes from one extreme to the other. Some people are clearly looking for intimacy. Others are very focused on themselves. In those situations, it doesn't feel like an intimate moment, whether for me or for the other person. There's hardly any verbal interaction. I don't think it's very different than if the person had stayed at home masturbating in front of a porn movie. I could have been a screen or a blow-up doll. In the end, it doesn't matter who I am.

For others, I feel there's a quest to have sex with a real person, so to define the contours, to see who that person is, and then intimacy can be created. But then again, why would I want to create intimacy when it is primarily a job for me, I can perform intimacy just as well as I perform sex. Why not?

Can you block out your sense of intimacy? When you meet a person for the first time who is potentially unpredictable, don't you feel vulnerable?

Rarely. I'm very confident. If I feel vulnerable in a moment like that, it means my protective filters have failed and I've misjudged the moment. In the email exchanges I have before the appointment, I try to see if I feel any warnings or red flags, that sort of thing. If there's something giving me a bad feeling. If I feel vulnerable during the appointment, it's because I haven't done my work well enough. I've misjudged the situation. I don't mind feeling vulnerable when I'm having sex with my lovers, but that's not what I want with clients.

So you feel these warnings beforehand?

Yes, through the exchanges I have with the person, often by e-mail, through what is asked, the framework we set, etc. Patriarchy also plays a big part in my confidence. It doesn't come from nowhere. Being brought up as a boy, I learned that being mugged in the street was rare, and I never learned that sexuality could be dangerous. Of course my situation has changed now, but this start as a boy still helped me feel confident.

How long have you been in the business?

Six or seven years.

What were your first references to sex-work?

I can't really remember. I think I was thrown into an environment I didn't know anything about. I had a very superficial knowledge about sex-work, but I was aware that it was all prejudice. Then, as I discovered sex-work, I understood that there are thousands of ways of working in this field. What really counts is the person's social context.

Do you meet "colleagues" even if you don't work in a brothel?

I know about ten people, let's say, who gravitate towards this field of work. Some people are in sex-work full-time, others aren't. I'd say it's people who have the same social profile as me, who work through ads, who do either BDSM or escort work, maybe a bit of work in strip-tease shows.

But for example, I don't know anyone who works on the street or in a brothel. These aren't the same social circles.

In my opinion, what most determines how you earn money through sex-work are differences like whether you're white, whether you're a migrant, whether you have a legal status in society, what access and skills you have in using the Internet or whether you speak the local language.

Why did you choose to do this job?

To earn money and survive in this society. Since I started needing money for living, I've always tried to follow these three principles. Sometimes I succeed, sometimes I don't.

- I don't want to work legally and feed the state by paying taxes.
- I don't want to be involved in a hierarchical relationship. Neither do I want to follow someone else's orders nor do I want to give orders to other people.
- I don't want anyone else to earn money from my labor. I don't want to create added value through my work and have someone else profit off of it, whether it is a boss or an intermediary.

As it happens, the way I work in this field meets all three of these criteria, and also allows me to work independently. Of course, this isn't the case by default. There are sex-workers who have legal status and pay their taxes, others who work within a hierarchical organization and still others who pay intermediaries like webcam platforms. So again, it can be very different from one person to another.

How do you establish trust with someone you meet for the first time, especially within a limited timeframe of 60 minutes? What are your tricks for making a connection with someone who also needs to trust you?

Most of the feeling of trust is already created before the meeting while communicating. Based on this, I'm usually able to see if I feel safe for a meeting or not. I always try to define the clearest possible framework for what we're going to do as early as possible. What practices we're going to do, what the person wants. I also set my prices accordingly. Once the framework is set, it's easy to see whether the person respects your limits or is trying to push them or to put pressure on you. Another question is where we meet, and what information I have about the person. Can I access their IP address and what information does that give me, is the email used linked to a real person or not? But the most obvious thing is the way people write and contact you. You can quickly see if it's respectful or not. And of course, always ask to be paid at the start of the meeting.

What does that mean in the context of humiliation practices? That it's ok within the allotted time slot, but not before or after?

Well, I've never worked as a submissive, so I don't think I've ever experienced humiliation as a sexual practice within a work context. I love this position in my sex life with my lovers, but it's not something I want to experience in my job. I need a framework of trust where I can feel vulnerable to enjoy such an experience. So if I practice BDSM in the context of sex-work, I'll be in the dominant role. .

If you had to die tomorrow, what would your worst and best memories of this job be?

I have two best memories and can't decide between them.

The first was a meeting with a man in his twenties. His sexual fantasy revolved around feet. For me, feet aren't a particular turn on. We met in a forest. That was part of his fantasy, too. He was lying on the ground. I sat on a log and put my feet on his face for forty-five minutes. What I loved about that moment was how gentle it was. He was completely aware that I wasn't that turned on and suggested I read a book so I wouldn't get bored. And that's something I value a lot. It was hyper sexual and intense for him, even though he was dressed the whole time, with nothing but my feet on his face. But he was ecstatic.

At the age of twenty, despite societal norms surrounding sexuality perpetuated by mainstream pornography, encountering a fantasy like that felt remarkably distant from the typical narratives and norms surrounding sex. And at the same time, it was also sad that someone would need to pay for it. He'd come so far to meet me, it

made me feel like he couldn't openly live out his attraction to feet. It would be great to have a society where you could say what you like openly, that you want someone to put their feet on your face.

The second memory was of a throuple I'd been involved with, three people in a loving relationship. Their desire was that each time two people would take me aside to explain a sexual practice as precisely as possible that I would then have to reproduce with the third person. And then again but with changing roles. After each time we had a little debriefing, where the third person would say whether they'd liked what I'd done or not.

Their intention was to evaluate how much they knew each other sexually by involving someone totally outside their relationship. Did they know each other well enough to effectively communicate their sexual desires to an outsider who would then act them out? To be involved in such a moment, even just for an evening, was beautiful and impressive.

Well, those are two nice experiences to tell, but they're not at all representative of usual sex-work. [Laughs].

The most negative thing I remember was a moment when someone tried to go beyond my limits. I guess it could be called sexual assault. That was the only time that ever happened to me. And it was the only time I ignored my own warnings. During our email exchange, I had thought to myself several times that I didn't have a good feeling about the person. Normally, as soon as I get a negative feeling, I stop the contact. I don't know why I ignored my instincts that time.

But I still think it was an episode that boosted my self-confidence. Because I was able to react and stand up for myself.

If you had to explain to an alien what sex-work is, how would you do it?

I think I would knowingly not explain anything about sex-work to this Alien. My political view of capitalism, labor, and specifically sex-work, is that in fact, everyone sells themselves. Everyone sells their body, their time and their labor power for money.

I bet the vast majority of people wouldn't be living the life they are living if they weren't under economic or social constraints.

The only thing that makes sex-work different from other work is that our society has a strong moral construction of what sexuality is supposed to be. And in this social construction, sexuality is supposed to be intimate all the time and for everyone, even though other forms of work aren't.

In contrast, professions like selling movie tickets or working in a hair salon are not typically associated with sharing intimate moments that one shouldn't monetize. No one thinks it's dirty or immoral.

And the alien didn't grow up in a conservative environment that says that sex is supposed to be pure and sacred. There is no main religion that says that all

ejaculation should be done for the sole purpose of procreation. Maybe there isn't moral judgment applied to sexual practices between consenting persons. If that's the case, it's completely normal for each person to decide for themselves what importance to give to their own sexuality and how to live it.

That's why I say to myself that I might as well spare that to this Alien. I will explain to them what work is, capitalism, class inequalities, economic constraints on our lives, pushing us to sell our time, our bodies, our resources to create value that will enrich other people. I will show them that each person is looking for a way to "earn a living" while remaining true to themselves, preserving the best of themselves and sometimes even finding pleasure in it. And that in this context, some people sell sexual services as a form of work. Others are forced to prostitute themselves, but at this point we are no longer talking about work, but about rape and human trafficking. This also happens in other fields of work, but the background always lies in oppression and social inequalities.

In short, to my alien friend, I will finally tell him that I have no understanding for people who criticize sex-work but do not take into account a critique of work as a whole and of capitalism as social organization. I find that hypocritical. .

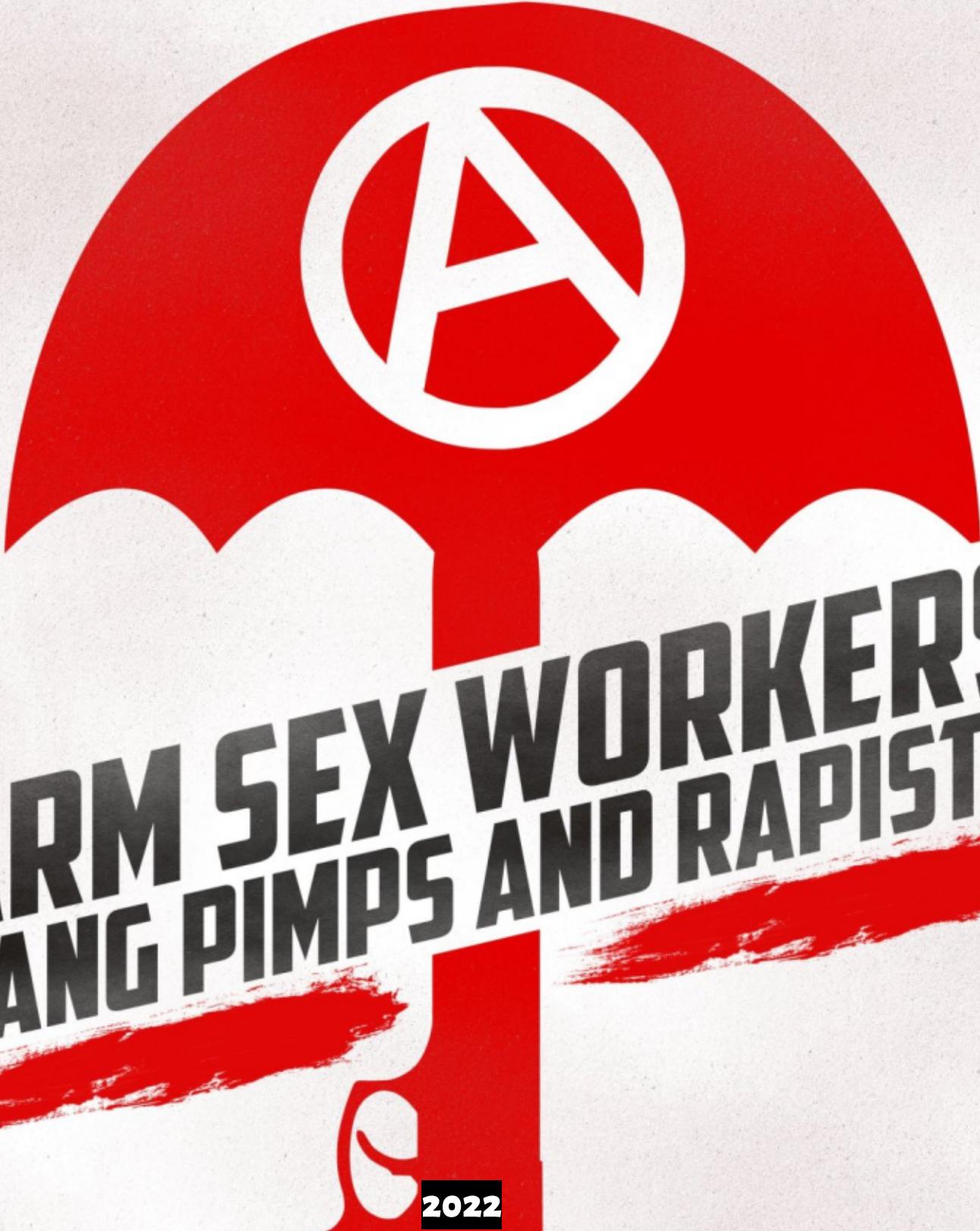
What music do you use at work?

I use a lot of industrial witch-house, electronic music or ambient music. I use music mostly when it comes to massage, super soaring stuff or just instrumental piano. And for BDSM settings, of course, then it can be slow, dark black metal.

What message would you like to pass on to people outside the world of sex-work?

I'd like to encourage people to think about the stigma attached to sex-work, who bring serious psychological and physical consequences for many people working in this field. I'd encourage them to see sex-work as a job like any other job, but with its own specificity.

I also have the impression that many people have trouble differentiating between sex-work and human trafficking. There's a huge confusion between the two, deliberately fostered by those opposed to sex-work and who use it to impose a repressive framework on sex-work.



**ARM SEX WORKERS
HANG PIMPS AND RAPISTS**

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