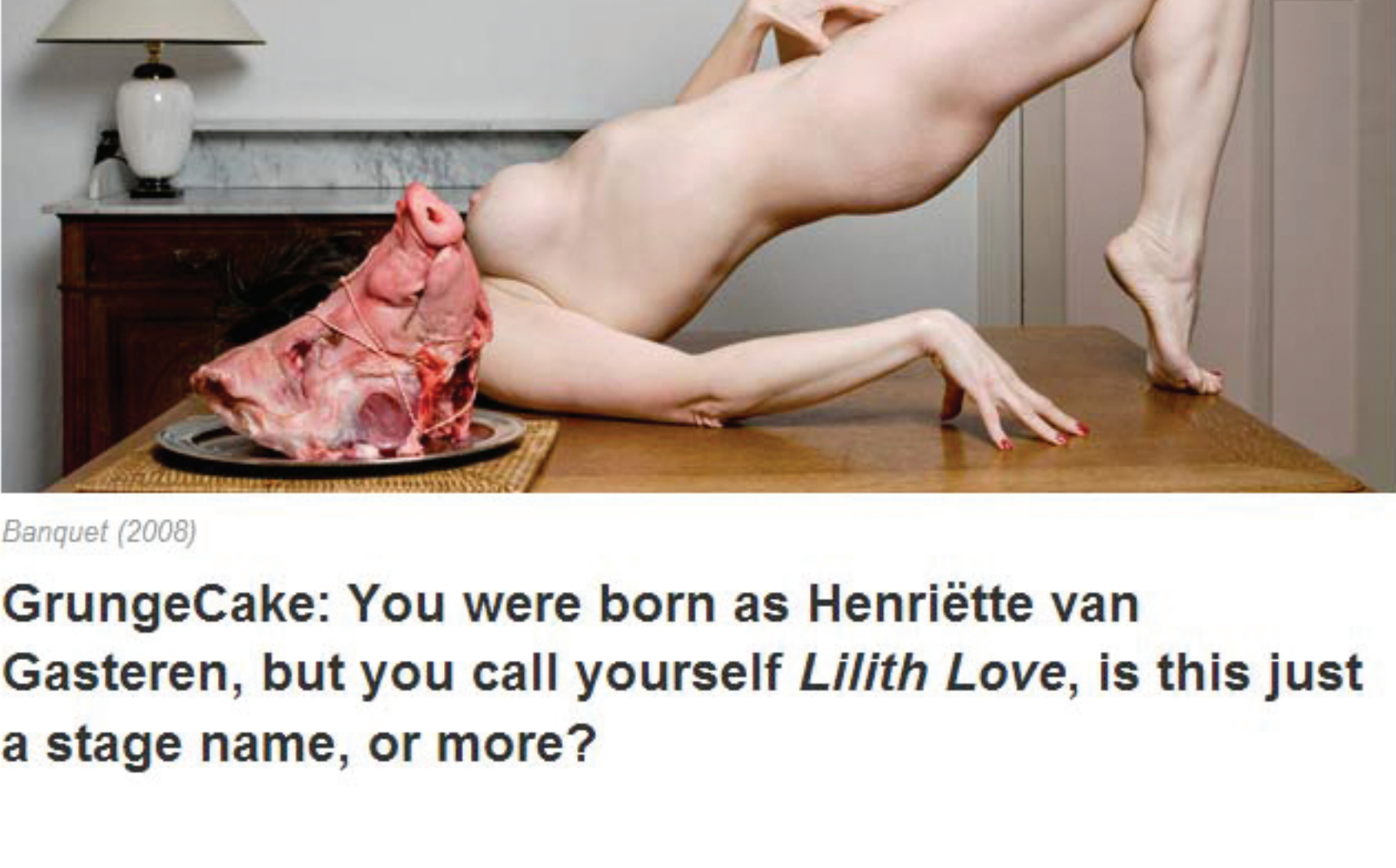


Interview: Lilith Love, The Naked Truth

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Lilith Love is a Dutch photographer who uses her self-portraits to glorify womanhood in a humorous, sensual and controversial way. She shows femininity in all it's aspects, including the lesser known, or less favoured ones. Because her work is so daring, several of her exhibitions have been censored, like the one at the Euregio-Haus in the German town Mönchengladbach in 2010. In 2012 Lilith Love's work could be seen during two exhibitions at Photoville in Brooklyn. This summer her work will be exhibited in Amsterdam, The Hague and Dresden. GrungeCake talked with Lilith Love about transformation, inspiration and masturbation.



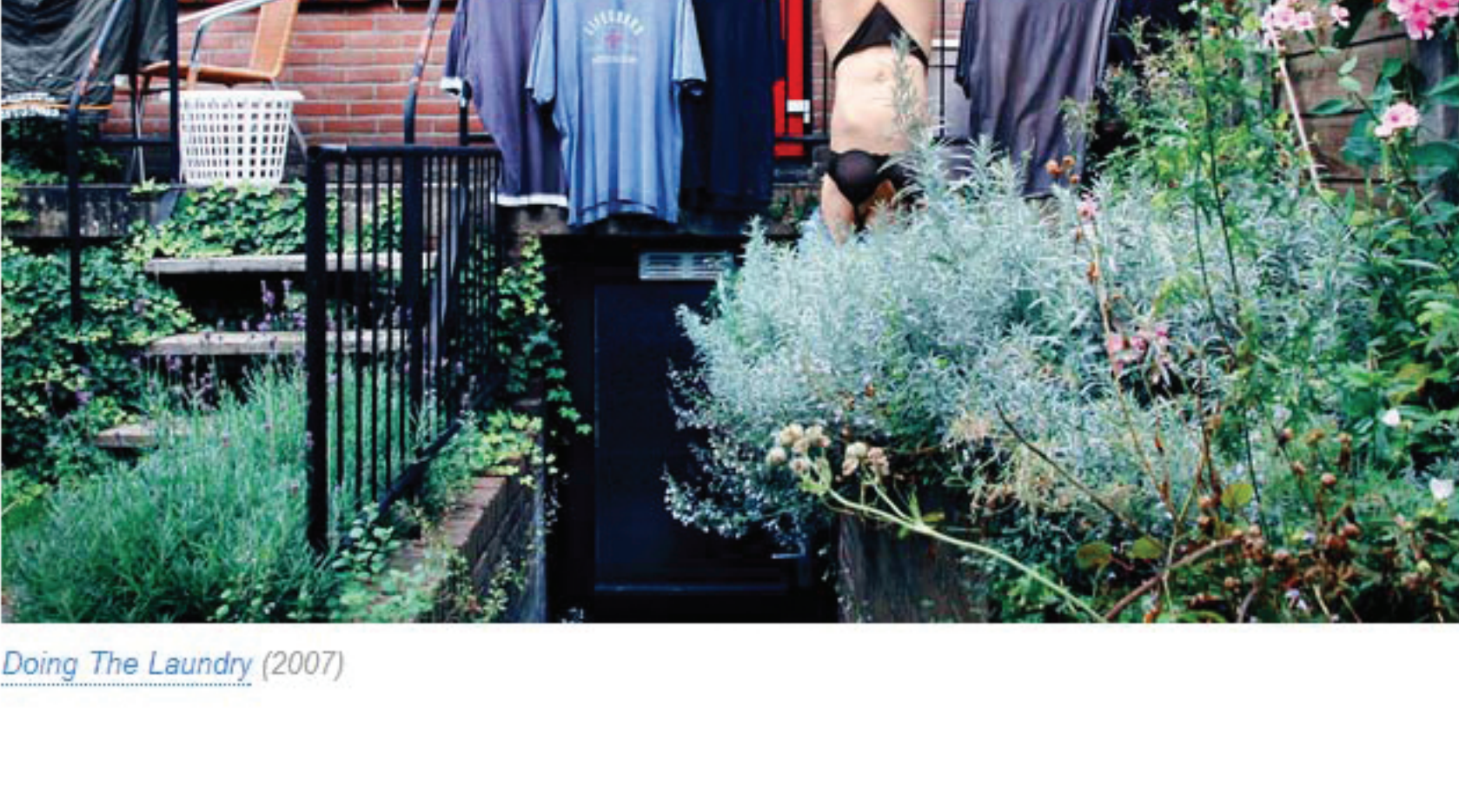
Banquet (2008)

GrungeCake: You were born as Henriëtte van Gasteren, but you call yourself Lilith Love, is this just a stage name, or more?

Lilith Love: It's more than a stage name, the name is part of my reinvention. I had come to a point in my life where I felt I was reduced to being a mother and housewife, whatever happened to me? I choose the name Lilith Love intuitively, but when I looked up the meaning it fit so well. Lilith was created from the same material as Adam, she's the opposite of all things masculine, and she's sensual. I don't just use the name for my work, but in my private life as well. Lex [photographer Lex Hulscher, her partner since 2007] also calls me Lilith.

GrungeCake: How did your children feel about your transformation?

Lilith Love: My three children are very proud of me, one of them even did a school assignment about me. Sometimes you have to make choices, that can be very scary, but you have to choose happiness. I am a mother, and I have my responsibilities, but it is also important to be happy in life. Your children will notice it if you're happy or not.



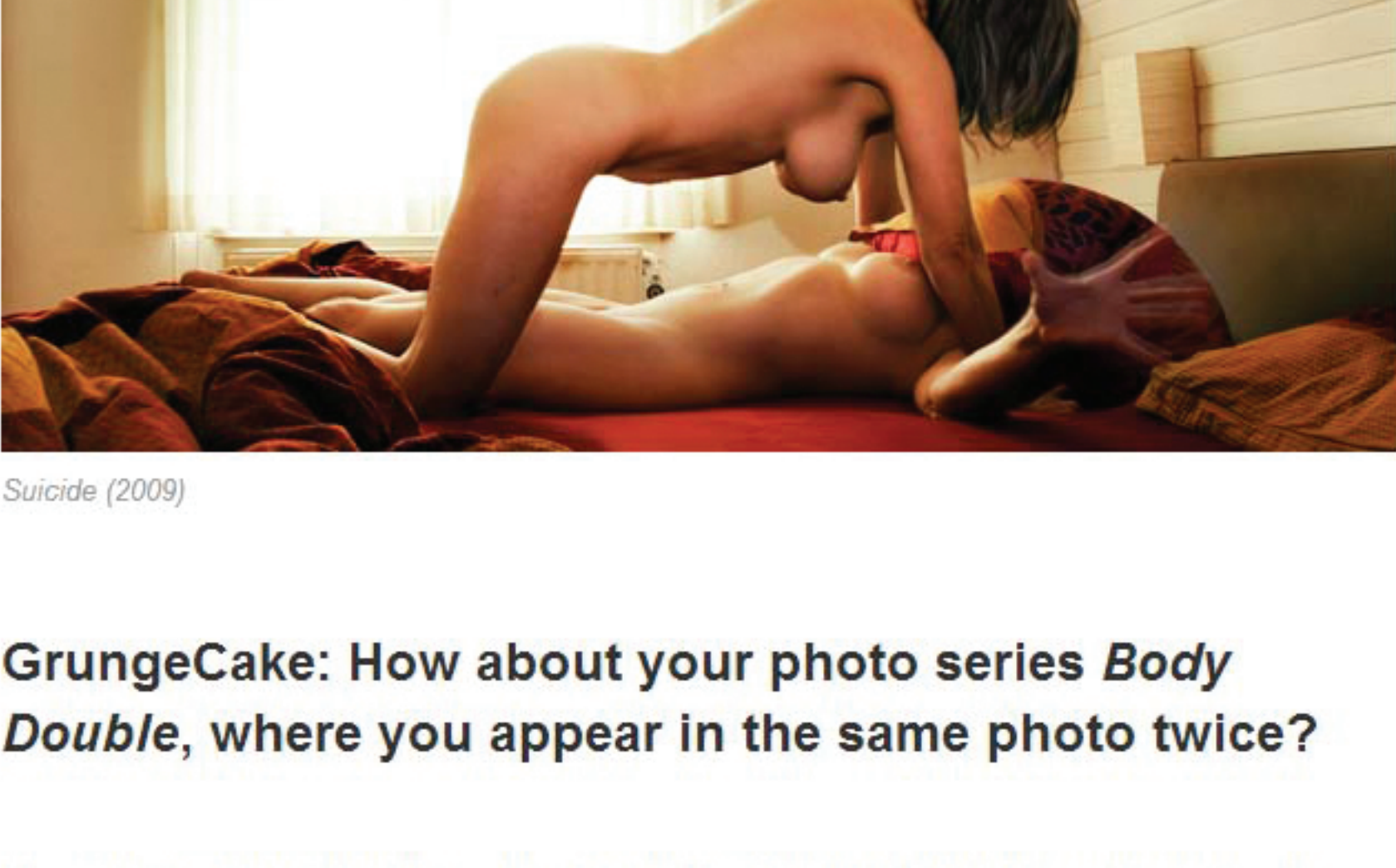
Doing The Laundry (2007)

GrungeCake: So when did you start making photos?

Lilith Love: I started as a writer, working on an erotic cookbook. I posted the stories [one was even published in the Dutch Penthouse] and recipes on my blog and included a photo that I made with a webcam someone gave me. I found out I could use my face to tell a story and I started to make photo's of myself in the mirror, using a compact camera. Next, Lex taught me about remote control photography, what a revelation! I no longer wanted to limit myself to culinary masterpieces and eroticism, I had so much more stories to tell with my photography.

GrungeCake: How on earth do you make your self-portraits? Sometimes you seem to be balancing in impossible positions.

Lilith Love: Often people don't understand that I do everything by myself. The other day someone asked Lex at an exhibition which photo he made. Grrrrr..... No, I do everything by myself; I can't work with other people around me. I use a Nikon D700 or Nikon D800, a tripod and a Hähnel Giga T Pro remote control, that does the trick. And I used to do artistic gymnastics, so I'm quite flexible.



Suicide (2009)

GrungeCake: How about your photo series Body Double, where you appear in the same photo twice?

Lilith Love: I had to be very precise for Body Double. You can not move the camera, or change the lighting. The photo Suicide, where I suffocate myself with a pillow, was especially tricky. Yet I hardly use Photoshop.

GrungeCake: So how does a day in the life of Lilith Love look?

Lilith Love: I wake up in the morning with an idea and during the day I try to work it out. But I have to be alone, I can't work when the children are at home. I don't plan anything, that stresses me out. I work with emotion and do a lot of things intuitively. Because I work with the remote control I don't see what I make, but subconsciously I get a lot of things right.

GrungeCake: What's your inspiration?

Lilith Love: I am influenced by what I see and what I experience. Sometimes, I'm compared with other photographers, like Cindy Sherman. Personally I don't agree with that, and it's not my intention to copy anybody, but it's hard to be original, so many things have already been done, so be it. It doesn't stop me from going to exhibitions by other photographers.

GrungeCake: Are there any books or movies that have inspired you?

Lilith Love: Sophie's Choice, both the book and the movie. American Psycho by Brett Easton Ellis, it inspired me to make the photo series Psycho. I recognized a lot in The Story of My Baldness by Marek van der Jagt, a pseudonym of Arnon Grunberg, I can really sympathize with its absurdity. Franz Kafka's The Metamorphosis is also a story I could have made up.

GrungeCake: You show a lot of yourself.

Lilith Love: I am who I am. I want to be free. I had this manager who told me I had to remain a mystery, but that was exactly what I didn't want. I want to be an open book! I don't Photoshop myself because I want to show people the truth. In my self-portrait Portrait I look quite tired, to me that is much more naked than with my breasts out.

GrungeCake: How do you deal with criticism?

Lilith Love: I don't mind if people have an opinion about my work, they are entitled to that. Some people react very strongly to my work, they find it disgusting, but I don't care about that. It's a good thing people react to my work, it's meant to do that, be it 'wow' or 'yuk'.

GrungeCake: But how about those people who look at your work and yourself in an erotic, sexual way?

Lilith Love: Well... it is strange idea that people might jerk off to it.

GrungeCake: Could you tell more about the recurring themes in your work, like religion?

Lilith Love: I was raised with the idea that there's a God, now I'm trying to figure out for myself what's out there. I know I'm responsible for my own actions, because they are my own choices, but I also believe I'm being watched over. I think there's a path in life, but there are different ways to walk it. I always need temporary goals, but I don't know what my final goal in life is. It's important to me to be a good person. I think the basis of religion is love, all the rules surrounding it are made up by men.

GrungeCake: And masturbation in your self-portraits?

Lilith Love: Your body is built for it, why shouldn't you enjoy it?

GrungeCake: Gender bending is also a recurring theme in your work, could you tell more about that?

Lilith Love: Everyone has a female and male side. Sometimes I think and feel like a man. Half of the times I masturbate I fantasize I'm the man; a man being taken by another man, several men, or a woman. Or I fantasize I am a man taking a woman or a man... usually a woman actually. Yet, I feel absolutely no need to have sex with a woman in real life, even though I have a strong connection with women.

GrungeCake: What are you currently working on?

Lilith Love: I'm still working on my project Lilith in da House. After using my own house for so long it was time for something new, so I started making self-portraits in houses of complete strangers. People find it intriguing that I'm making photo's of myself in their house during their absence, the fact that I'm walking around in my bare ass is an added bonus [smiles]. It's a very important project and I'm even thinking of moving it abroad. I've also started working on the series My Phone and I. I bought a new cell phone [a Nokia Lumia 800] that I use to make photo's with, very back to basics. I use it to make photo's of myself in my bath tub, so everything takes place in one square meter, quite a challenge. It's also a bit tricky, I already dropped my phone in the water once.

GrungeCake: Being the subject of your work, do you find it hard to grow older?

Lilith Love: I want to show the truth, but sometimes I do find it hard. I want to continue doing this as long as possible, but if I can handle it is another question. At the moment I want to keep doing this, but if something new comes my way, I go with the flow.

Lilith Love owns the copyright to all of her photography. For more about Lilith Love, please visit her website and follow her on Pinterest.






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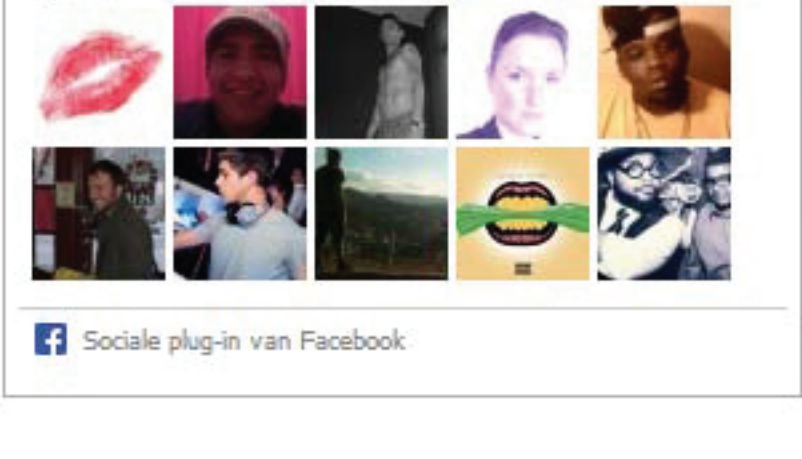
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