



Published on *Carnal San Francisco* (<http://sf.carnalnation.com>)

[Home](#) > A Birthday and a Wedding (a.k.a. The Dodson-Sprinkle Report)

A Birthday and a Wedding (a.k.a. The Dodson-Sprinkle Report)

By *Carol Queen*

Created 09/04/2009 - 3:55pm

People have birthdays and get married all the time, but it's a rare week when the stars align the way they have this time. I'm writing this from an Italian train, traveling away from the second of my two extraordinary celebrations, held half a world away from each other within the space of six days. First [Betty Dodson](#) ^[1] turned 80; then [Annie Sprinkle](#) ^[2] and her wife Elizabeth Stephens got married—again—this time in Venice. And I'm your girl reporter, the only person present at both events. This makes me a human Venn diagram of art, orgasm, love, and sex-positive community. A report from the field:

Dr. Betty Dodson, sometimes known as the Mother of Masturbation, has been at it for quite a long time. Her fine-art classic nudes became well-known in the 1960s as they gave way to explicit scenarios of fucking and all manner of sexual configurations and possibilities; noted collectors still have her large-format pieces squirreled away in parts of the house where they won't tweak out the grandkids (and I believe Betty still has canvases for sale, if you ask her nicely). Her work showed at the late lamented Erotic Art Museum in San Francisco, the one full of [Phyllis and Eberhard Kronhausen](#) ^[3]'s wonderful collection. But even then Betty was multi-tasking; getting involved in the Second Wave feminist movement, she noticed how many women weren't sexually comfortable or informed. (If anything, things were worse then than they are today, and that's actually saying something.)

So Betty turned her pen to drawing vulvas, and her gorgeous, realistic genital portraits became one centerpiece of her BodySex workshops and the booklet they inspired, *[Liberating Masturbation](#)* ^[4] (and this, in turn, became her influential book *[Sex for One](#)* ^[5]). An early Betty coup, one of my very favorite of all her adventures I've heard, has her at the [National Organization for Women](#) ^[6]



conference in New York City, showing slides of her vulva images. Now, NOW has not always been the most sex-positive of organizations—in fact, if they had been more comfortable with sex and, especially, sexual variation, many radical sex organizations might never have had impetus to form. (This was the era of the Lavender Menace [7], when many of the upstanding straight-lady feminists and their closeted sisters were freaking out about lesbians taking over the women's movement... and may I just digress for a second here and say that feminists *should be so lucky* as to have lesbians there to do all the work? In a lot of organizations that's essentially what happened anyway, whether or not the dykes ever got their due.)



Oh, and Betty didn't just shake up the feminists by showing them pictures. At the BodySex workshops, which she mostly held in her apartment, women showed their own vulvas, looked at each others', talked about their bodies and their masturbation histories... and then masturbated together in a big circle, riding Hitachi Magic Wands into a raised consciousness and their own sexual futures.



I'm quite sure you have Betty to thank (and the Concerned Women of America [8] have yet another reason to curse her) that I happen to be writing this column now: I took her BodySex workshop [9] at the same time Joani Blank did, who at that time was still running Good Vibrations [10]; Joani subsequently hired me to work one day in the store, and the rest is history—my writing began getting published, my job at Good Vibes gave me plenty to write about and access to other sex-positive feminists, and before I knew it, 18 years had gone by and John and Theresa were asking if I wanted to write for their new website.

So when Dodson has a milestone birthday like 80—EIGHTY!—it's cause for celebration. She was going to let it sneak past with little fanfare, but her new associate Carlin Ross and her old friend Leslie, from Lesbian Sex Mafia [11] days, weren't about to let that happen. Anyway, Dodson happened to be on the left coast, where people don't get to spend much time with her. So Leslie threw a dinner party at her wonderful Beverly Hills home, and 40 sexologists, feminists (the frisky kind), old friends, a sprinkling of Hollywood types, and lively young dykes showed up. We dined in a gallery room—Leslie collects an extraordinary artist, Scott Covert, whose 4x4 canvases bristle with the names of famous dead people (each multiple grave rubbing takes him years to complete)—and Betty held court in a way that only a bawdy you'd-never-in-a-zillion-years-believe-she's-eighty year old woman who's seen everyone masturbate can do. People, if you don't take time to masturbate much, I recommend you start doing so right away; it's clearly very good for you.

Then a whirlwind trip to Italy to catch up with Annie and Beth's fifth wedding. Do I need to catch you up on Annie Sprinkle? Shy girl-turned porn star, porn star turned



performance artist, Annie's Post-Porn Modernist art and theatre is arguably the evolutionary reason we have porn at all. Deciding to become monogamous after doing it all (she said it was the kinkiest thing she could think of, and the only sexual practice she felt was yet to be explored), Annie met her match in Elizabeth Stephens, an artist whose most recent project (besides her life with Annie) has been making bronzes of porn stars' and academics' panties. See, you'd marry her too! Now, following the lead of her performance art mentor Linda Montano, Annie is marrying Beth every year for (at least) seven years, one for each chakra, the body's energy centers. Every year they do a new wedding in the color associated with that chakra, and this year, number five, it's blue.



Well, the Venice wedding was actually their 5 1/2th—they already held their Blue Wedding this year in Oxford. But then they got the opportunity to crash the Venice Biennale and do it again—who could say no to that? Certainly not multi-hued, dyed-in-the-wool artists like Beth and Annie. Besides, in Venice, where the water laps up at almost every street-edge, they could marry the sea. (As Annie put it, "We married a really BIG GIRL this time.") And as usual, they called to their extended artist-and-sex family to get participants, and I signed on, along with a cast of awesome European artists, mostly young queer performers, and several of our Bay Area cohorts: [Michelle Tea](#) [12], [Sadie Lune](#) [13], [Lady Monster](#) [14], hula-hooper extraordinaire [Sarah Stolar](#) [15] with her partner Jeff Medinas, plus one of Annie's photography colleagues, Tony DeBone, and his lovely wife Golden. We made a circle outside one of the Arsenale warehouses, part of a vast section of town formerly used to stage the Venetian Doges' naval excursions. Inside there were several large-scale installations, part of the official Biennale art offerings (we were not official: AT the Biennale but not OF it), including Martin Dammann's Soldier Studies, big blow-ups of found WWII-era German officers, cross-dressed and partying.



I knew what to expect from our Bay Areans, though each was even more fabulous than ever: fast-talking Michelle gave a gorgeous, powerful homily; Lady Monster danced to the *Hawaii Five-O* theme song, and what's not to love about that?—I called the four directions to witness the ceremony, and Sadie and her lovely compadre Lian Amaris made extremely weird, sexy mermaids (and Annie has long had a mermaid fetish, so they tuned in to her innermost desires, then made them even weirder and more beautiful).

But the Euro-artistes! Each one a revelation, from Margaux, who brought us greetings from the horde of dyke tourists on the beaches of—where else—Lesbos; [Diana Pornoterrorista](#) [16], who was painted bright blue and who did the tango on a tabletop, pulled a fishing net out of her vagina, and (in true Sprinkle fashion), made water everywhere, including, I think, water she'd squirted into her ass beforehand; [Timi Mei Monigatti](#) [17], crossdressed, did a monologue about castration involving, of course, a dildo—so easy to do these sorts of gigs since [Lynn Breedlove](#) [18] pioneered the use of store-bought ones, back in the days of

Tribe 8 [19]—he left the faux member on the ground and hit it with a perfect stream of whipped cream—impressively good aim—and then jumped right into the Adriatic. Oh, and so much more. Our officiant was a drag king with blue bunny ears attached to a viking helmet! And when we processed through the streets of Venice to Annie and Beth's wedding dinner, the residents stared at us like Fellini himself was at the head of the line playing a pan pipe. Whenever we got stares, the blue bunny, Beatriz Preciado, led us in a raucous chorus of "Mamma mia, che tettone!"—which, loosely translated, means, "How my god, what a tits!"

Annie and Beth kissed and exchanged rings (which they then gondola'ed out to the lagoon with and threw into the sea). More open stares, as if women dressed in amazing blue costumes do not kiss on the plaza every day... and apparently they do not; as my wonderful host Pia, from the Committee for the Rights of Prostitutes [20], told me, under Berlusconi's right-wing press and governance, anti-gay attacks are way up in Italy, this beautiful country which is a product of twin—Catholic and libertine—pasts. But everywhere there is art, and has been for millennia, so perhaps there is hope.



Photos credits: Birthday photos courtesy of Betty Dodson [1]; Top right pic from Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stevens's website LoveArtLab [21]; Bottom two by Carol Queen.

Tease Position: 0

 [live-nude-birthday-and-wedding.jpg](#) [22]

[Live Nude Woman](#) [annie sprinkle](#) [art](#) [betty dodson](#) [celebrations](#) [marriage ritual](#)

Copyright © 2009 Free Range Events LLC, All right Reserved

Source URL (retrieved on 11/05/2009 - 4:58pm): <http://sf.carnalnation.com/node/25108>

Links:

- [1] <http://dodsonandross.com/>
- [2] <http://www.anniesprinkle.org/>
- [3] http://www.artandpopularculture.com/Phyllis_and_Eberhard_Kronhausen
- [4] <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0012CA6HW?ie=UTF8&tag=carnalnationc-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B0012CA6HW>
- [5] http://www.goodvibes.com/display_product.jhtml?id=6-3-RA-BE20&lid=grid
- [6] <http://www.now.org>
- [7] <http://lesbianlife.about.com/od/lesbiansinhistory/f/LavenderMenace.htm>
- [8] <http://carnalnation.com/content/13095/17/why-do-concerned-women-america-hate-my-sexual-orientations>
- [9] <http://carnalnation.com/content/4092/11/bodysex-workshop>
- [10] <http://www.goodvibes.com>
- [11] <http://www.lesbiansexmafia.org/>
- [12] <http://www.amazon.com/gp/redirect.html?ie=UTF8&location=http://www.amazon.com/gp/entity/Michelle-Tea/B000APL3HO?ie=UTF8&ref%5F=ntt%5F&ref%5F=fathr%5F&ref%5F=fpel%5F&ref%5F=pop%5F1&>

[amp;tag=carnalnationc-20&linkCode=ur2&camp=1789&creative=390957](#)

[13] <http://www.sadielune.com>

[14] <http://ladymonsterlair.blogspot.com/>

[15] <http://www.sarahstolar.com/home.html>

[16] <http://pornoterrorismo.blogspot.com/>

[17] <http://www.myspace.com/timimeimonigatti>

[18] <http://www.lynnbreedlove.com/>

[19] <http://www.tribe8.com/>

[20] <http://www.walnet.org/csis/groups/icrse/index.html>

[21] http://loveartlab.org/wedding-album.php?year_id=5

[22] <http://sf.carnalnation.com/sites/carnalnation.com/files/live-nude-birthday-and-wedding.jpg>