

## [The Pro Circuit] Silken Sleeves: An Interview With Maria Beatty, Part 1



Maria Beatty's films *The Black Glove* and *The Elegant Spanking* are quintessential fine-art fetish erotica titles; they're richly textured expressionist-noir masterpieces in which kink and esthetics tangle like snakes fucking.

In the more than ten years since those two classics, the Venezuela-born, New York-raised, currently Paris-dwelling filmmaker has continued to make audacious erotic films packed with sumptuously sensual visuals and scorching hot sex; I've already written quite rapturously about her superhot recent flicks *Skateboard Kink Freak* and *Sex Mannequin*, two of the best films of 2007. *Skateboard Kink Freak* and *Sex Mannequin* are brilliantly naturalistic art films with some of the most intense, explicit lesbian sex committed to film.

The Beatty film before that duo, *Silken Sleeves*, is an entirely different kind of sex-art film. It's an extended scene between educator/Shibari expert/performer/globetrotting perv Midori and gorgeous bottom Mayan. A sexual-aesthetic art piece about the seasons passing, it's both high-concept and immediately accessible to anyone who appreciates the aesthetics of fetish in erotica. *Silken Sleeves* features complex suspension bondage, the sensations of seasons passing and smokin' hot SM all rendered with textures that evoke Beatty's expressionist influences. If you've never seen one of Midori's brilliant live performances, this is as close as it's possible to get — it captures everything except the scent of the candles

I got a chance to ask Beatty a few questions about *Silken Sleeves* recently.

**TR:** How did you meet up with Midori and decide to make *Silken Sleeves*? Did the idea originate with Midori, with you, or in collaboration?

**Maria Beatty:** I met and did a photo shoot with Midori back in 1997. At the time we loosely talked about the possibility of collaborating on a fetish/SM film together, but for some reason or other it just didn't materialize until 8 years later. I finally decided to dedicate a medium-length film to the art of bondage and approached Midori to star in it with Mayan as the submissive. I'm often inspired by nature and thought it was time for me to blend the two — nature and the art of bondage and an homage to the Four Seasons. From this point Midori and I further developed what kind of bondage and actions would take place within each Season.

**TR:** Where was *Silken Sleeves* shot?

**MB:** *Silken Sleeves* was shot in an artist's studio in upstate New York. Initially we wanted to shoot outside in nature but due to scheduling problems we were locked into shooting in November when it was just too cold and damn to shoot these scenes outside. So, we created a very minimal set inspired by Kabuki theater.

**TR:** *Silken Sleeves* feels very much like it's a single chain of events, happening all in a flow, rather than a more traditional film that's cut together. Was it shot that way or is that an illusion of the editing process?

**MB:** Yes there is an even flow due to the seamless interaction and chemistry between Midori and Mayan. As soon as the action began, it just organically unraveled into a sensual play and delight and ended when Midori and Mayan decided to do so. It's the first time I just let the action go for a long stretch of time. The editing had very little to do with the flow. It was definitely more about the flow of energy between Midori and Mayan that created this feel. There were brief pauses in between each of the four seasons, but each season flowed as one piece without interruption.

**TR:** In watching *Silken Sleeves*, I find that it feels to me like a departure for you, but I can't really tell you why. Does it feel like a departure for you as well, or is it of a piece with all your earlier work?

**MB:** I'm curious what kind of departure and where to?

**TR:** It's so different than *Skateboard Kink Freak* and *Sex Mannequin*, both of which are so fleshy and wet and spontaneous. All three films are unified by their intense use of light and texture, but *Silken Sleeves* is much more formalized.

**MB:** I prefer to experiment with various genres, moods and travel to all sorts of time periods so my work never gets stuck or stays in one look or style. I'm an aesthete which consistently shows in my works but with variations on a theme.

**TR:** *Silken Sleeves* features intricate suspension bondage and SM. It also has a very clear visual attention paid to textures, colors, artistic details. Was it challenging to balance these two demands when shooting?

**MB:** Not at all, but rather all of these elements worked together to create a complete style, mood and piece. Midori's choice of kimonos, costume styling and bondage enhanced and further inspired the gels for lighting, additional props and post-production choices for color correction, additional texture and tones.

**TR:** Was it hard to get good shots when such intricate SM was being done?

**MB:** There was no cutting during the shooting process of each sequence, and the cameras remained as far away from the action as possible to give Midori and Mayan more intimacy. The cameras were as precise as possible without a second of footage to waste.

There were times when I would have loved a tighter shot or a pan or less movement, but I had to let go of this thought and to not compromise the intensity of the moment. The flow and buildup was more important than the shots for this piece.

**TR:** As I was saying about *Silken Sleeves* being a departure, it feels in many ways to me like it has a cold, stylized brand of eroticism compared to the very wet, hot, organic, spontaneous feeling of *Skateboard Kink Freak* and *Sex Mannequin*. Would you agree, or does it feel differently to you?

**MB:** *Silken Sleeves* has a more sophisticated cold, stylized look to it because of the attention given to the kimonos, costumes, props, color coordination,

textures, hair and makeup, and accessories to complete the Japanese look to the film. It's treated in a more precious way and as a theater piece/experience rather than the more spontaneous, grab what you can, *au naturel* look of [Skateboard Kink Freak](#) and [Sex Mannequin](#).

A lot more time and preparation and attention to details was invested in *Silken Sleeves*, and the stylized look can come off to some as artificial and cold rather than primitive, impulsive, wild hot energy circulating in *KF* and *SM*. I believe I'm moving further away from the more over-stylized pieces in my *SM*/porn films. I'm working more with available existing elements and focusing more on the dynamic, the chemistry and the interaction between the women rather than obsessing on the aesthetic details surrounding them. To me, this is what I find most exciting and groundbreaking. Finding variations on a theme and twisting it even further.

*Watch for Part 2 of this interview in an upcoming update, and check out Maria Beatty's films in [Blowfish's SM section](#).*

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