



If you're a fan of fine-art video erotica, you can't do any better than the films of Maria Beatty. Caracas-born, NYC-raised and a longtime Paris resident, Beatty creates some of the most lushly textured porn around, lolling about deliciously in the shadowland between the sacred and the profane. Watch a Maria Beatty film closely enough, and you can taste the sweat, smell the perfume of decadence.

Her early film *The Black Glove* is widely regarded as a spanking masterpiece, if not *the* spanking masterpiece, among devotees of that most scarlet of arts. More recently, Beatty's films appeared on Eros Zine's *Best of 2007* list twice -- *Sex Mannequin* as a winner and *Skateboard Kink Freak* as a strong runner-up. Beatty will be premiering her newest film, *Silken Sleeves* (starring Eros Zine columnist Midori), at *Cinekink NYC*, which is also screening *Sex Mannequin*.

We caught up with this charming multinational genius for a chat about art and erotica.



From the *Black Glove*

Eros Zine: You were born in Caracas, Venezuela. When, how and why did you move to New York?

Maria Beatty: My mother separated from my natural father, who is Venezuelan, when I was 9 months old and we moved to Oklahoma. Then soon after, she remarried and we moved New York City where I was raised and lived thereafter... until moving to Paris, France 5 years ago.

Eros Zine: How long did you live in New York?

Maria Beatty: I've lived in New York City (Manhattan) for 40+ years. Mainly downtown Lower East side, Gramercy Park then Chelsea areas.

Eros Zine: And then, what brought you to Paris?

Maria Beatty: Soon after 9/11 I moved from New York City to Paris. There was an overwhelming morbidity and sad energy in New York at the time. Also, Guiliani sterilizing the city, the "fear" tactic dominating the press and media, and the Busheviks motivated me to move to Europe as well.

I had this romantic notion of the art and intellectual circles of Paris in the 40's and 50's as well as the Surrealists artists' quarters in Montparnasse in the 1920's during the era of



From *Ladies of the Night: Les Vampyres*

great creativity that seduced me to live in Paris. The notion of erotic liberation and unlimited expression of sensuality and aesthetic appreciation for eroticism too. Taking erotic vision to a higher level as an art form rather than porno merchandise.

Eros Zine: Reviewers and commentators often cite as your influences expressionist German cinema, French surrealism, Kenneth Anger, Jean Genet and American film noir. Are there other influences in your filmmaking style that people might not see at first viewing?

Maria Beatty: Modern dance, nature and horticulture, animals, Japanese new wave film movement (such as Shohei Imamura, Nagisa Oshima, Seijun Suzuki, Teshigahara), Robert Mapplethorpe, Irving Penn, The French Decadents and Weimar Berlin.

Eros Zine: Do you think there's one central theme or aesthetic idea that brings you to what might be called "darker" or riskier modes of expression -- fetish, noir, expressionism, surrealism?

Maria Beatty: Perversions or deviations from the orthodox or normal.

Eros Zine: Do experimental or challenging artistic aspirations and sexual experimentation go hand in hand in terms of lifestyle, or is it a marriage of aesthetics? In other words, does leading an artist's life lend itself naturally to transgression?

Maria Beatty: I'm extreme so naturally I totally dive into the universe I'm exploring artistically. I did this with s/m, fetish and lesbian sexuality.

Eros Zine: How did your first feature film, "Boy in a Bathtub," come to be made?

Maria Beatty: Totally by chance and coincidence. I was approached by a Fetish/Adult Industry Producer who wanted to branch out into Adult Narrative Feature Films. I sent him this particular feature film script, as a work in progress which was co-written by me and my ex-partner Claire Menichi. Soon after reading it he gave it the green light and we finished writing the final draft within one month. We were in production for 4 months and the film was shot in 14 days which is quite unusual and half the scheduling time for a indie feature film. It all happened so rapidly it seems like a blur in time.

Eros Zine: Is it available anywhere on DVD?

Maria Beatty: We still haven't found the right distributor for this film. It's a slow process because of the nature of this film which is a bit queer and a hard market to pin point for it. Sooner or later it will find it's niche. It may take another one or two more features under my belt to build a body of feature film works to do so.

Eros Zine: How would you describe this project?

Maria Beatty: Shot splendidly as "erotic noir", this queer drama shows a universe where genders are switched and the barriers between love and dependency are blurred.

Eros Zine: Other early work of yours include "Gang of Souls," a documentary about the Beat poets. What drew you to this artistic movement in particular?



From *The Elegant Spanking*

Maria Beatty: I had a connection to rebellion against conventional attitude and structures and lifestyles advocating personal release through heightened sensory awareness and free thinking. Also, the free lyrical unstructured composition of thoughts and feelings to convey spontaneous experience.

Eros Zine: What was it like documenting some of the great writers and artists in the film like Burroughs, Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Jim Carroll, Dian Di Prima, Richard Hell, Lydia Lunch, Marianne Faithful and Henry Rollins?

Maria Beatty: Inspirational and magical.. a conglomeration of tendencies. Each artist was gracious and humble.

Eros Zine: Is that project available on DVD?

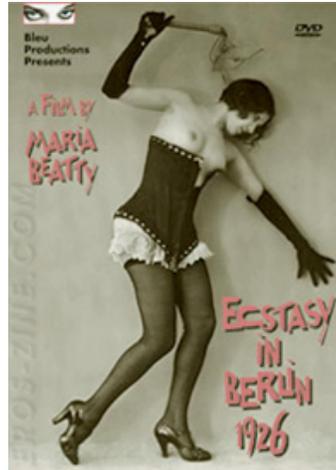
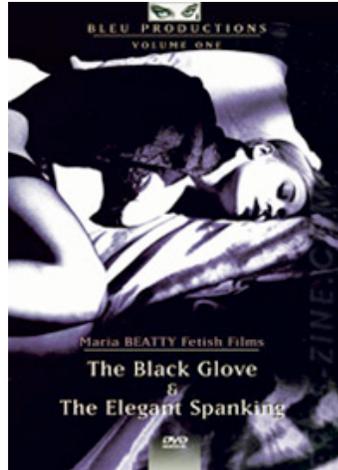
Maria Beatty: Yes, finally this film will soon be available on DVD -- release date scheduled for mid March 2008.

Eros Zine: You also directed "Sphinxes Without Secrets," which covers female performance artists like Diamanda Galas, Carolee Schneeman, Holly Hughes, Annie Sprinkle, and others. How did that project come to happen?

Maria Beatty: I was drawn to women speaking out politically and socially using their bodies in performance in the early 1990's. I was involved with numerous video activist groups at the time and came in contact with so many women taking their bodies in to the streets and public venues to express a melange of issues. There was a body movement happening at the time and I just happened to dive right into the middle of it.

Eros Zine: In the mid-1990s, you moved from predominantly doing documentary film to making intensely erotic films that feature transgressive sexuality -- perhaps the most famous being "The Black Glove." What drew you into this series of projects?

Maria Beatty: I was frustrated at the time being strictly behind the camera and wanted to take my own fantasies and create this universe while performing in them as well. I wanted to go all the way and extreme -- feel and experience it completely. Dive into it as deep as possible.



Eros Zine: What were you trying to bring to erotic film that you hadn't seen there before?

Maria Beatty: My own experiences as deep as possible and as beautiful and aesthetic as I perceived them to be. Getting as close as I could to the way I perceived my erotic visions in my mind.

Eros Zine: John Zorn composed the soundtrack for three of your films: "The Black Glove," "The Elegant Spanking," and "A Lot of Fun for the Evil One." How did this collaboration come about?

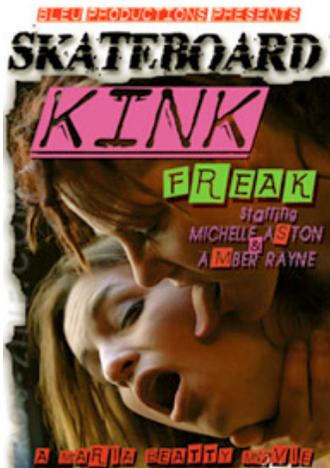
Maria Beatty: I sent him my first film "A lot of fun for the evil one" which he whipped up the soundtrack for. Soon after I sent him another fetish s/m film "the elegant Spanking" which he had a more classical approach too then came "the black glove" which was more organic. He seemed inspired by my film works to continue the collaboration.

Eros Zine: Though Zorn is known for his fairly edgy projects, was this a change of pace for him?

Maria Beatty: Not at all. As eclectic as he is, this was another outlet for his diversity.

Eros Zine: Were your two most recent films, "Skateboard Kink Freak" and "Sex Mannequin," shot in the US or in France?

Maria Beatty: They were both shot in Los Angeles. There's a saying for s/m in France which stands for "Standing and Modeling" and in Los Angeles "Sex and More"! The women are so much more alive and kinkier in the States. Willing and able to take chances and push their fantasies and sexuality on film.



Eros Zine: How did "Skateboard Kink Freak" and "Sex Mannequin" come to be made?

Maria Beatty: They were both shot in one day in Los Angeles. I contacted Michelle Aston who helped me as production coordinator and talent scout. The stories were loose and free flowing concentrating more on the eroticism and sexual chemistry of the partners and less on the locations, set, clothing and props. Interaction between the lovers and lovemaking.

Eros Zine: Were they entirely independent projects or were you collaborating with a production company? How are they being released in the US?

Maria Beatty: Entirely self produced by me. I'm a one woman operation-- Producer, writer, director, editor, dvd designer, distributor!

All my titles are released through my production company (which is operated by me) Bleu Productions -- www.bleuproductions.com.

Eros Zine: You've appeared in some of your films, including "The Black Glove." Do you plan to act in any upcoming projects?

Maria Beatty: Not at all. Those days of being in front of the camera are over. Perhaps I might do a "Hitchcock" appearance in one of my upcoming feature films but there's a time and a place when you should gracefully hand the baton over. I don't want to turn into Bette Davis in "What Ever Happened to Baby Jane."

Eros Zine: What projects are you working on for release in the near future?

Maria Beatty: In in pre-production and development with two feature films at the moment. Both are thematically linked as they are "dark" noir Lesbian love stories with a touches of kink, gothic, horror, erotic and fetish. And an ongoing slew of Girl/Girl erotic porn with fetish/sm films in the making.

Eros Zine: Any last items you'd like to make sure our readers know about?

Maria Beatty: I'm always open and looking for kinky investors and or performers for my film works.

Eros Zine: Thanks, Maria! Readers can find Maria Beatty's amazing works at www.bleuproductions.com, www.mariabeatty.com, and www.myspace.com/bleuproductions.

Thomas Roche is the author of many hundreds of published short stories and four-time contributor to the Best American Erotica series. He has also written a wide variety of articles on sex, kink, crime, horror, goth, science fiction. He can be found at www.thomasroche.com.