



## Corinne, Tee (1943-2006)

by Tamsin Wilton

Encyclopedia Copyright © 2015, glbtq, Inc.  
Entry Copyright © 2002, glbtq, Inc.  
Reprinted from <http://www.glbtq.com>

A gifted and versatile artist, Tee Corinne worked with photography, line drawing, paint, sculpture, ceramics and printing, and she also published erotic fiction and poetry and reviews. Favorite cover artist for lesbian publisher Naiad, and author of the famous *Cunt Coloring Book* (the first version of which was published in 1975, but which was reissued as *Labiaflowers* in 1981), Corinne's work is found on bookshelves across the lesbian nation.

Born Linda Tee Cutchin on November 3, 1943, in St. Petersburg, Florida, Tee Corinne attended Newcomb College of Tulane University before obtaining her B. A. from the University of South Florida (1965) and her Master of Fine Arts from the Pratt Institute (1968). After a seven-year marriage, she became the shy superstar of lesbian erotica.

Corinne's courage in insisting that the frank and erotic representation of lesbian sex empowers women gained her the respect of different "schools" of lesbian thought, even those that usually regard one another with hostility. Thus, her work may be found in Pat Califia's *Sapphistry* (1988) but also in *Lesbian Culture* (1993), to whose editors, Julia Penelope and Susan Wolfe, Califia is the lesbian antichrist.

Corinne is sometimes accused of romanticizing lesbian sex. Close analysis, however, tells a different story. The sex scenes that now saturate lesbian culture, complete with leather, toys, and lipstick, are highly staged, use models (albeit often friends of the photographer), and aim to shock as much as titillate.

Corinne's work is very different. Showing real sex between real-life lovers, she is "interested in loving, beautiful, sexy images. . . I also want the images to be a turn on, create an adrenaline high, a rush of desire so intense that the act of looking is sexual." Stripped of the distancing effect of routine pornographic signifiers, Corinne's work becomes *more* challenging and takes more risks.

*Yantras of Womanlove* (1982) was the first book of lesbian erotic photographs ever published, and Corinne was at the forefront of the fight against censorship. Printers often refused to handle her work, and community art galleries sometimes declined to show it. The inclusiveness of her sex photographs also broke new ground. Fat women, women of color, and disabled women are presented to be gazed at with desire, lust, and pleasure. In the era before political correctness, this diversity was genuinely revolutionary.

Partly to protect the privacy of her models and partly to express the beauty and complexity of lesbian sex, Corinne's photographs often use solarization and repeat/reverse printing to produce kaleidoscopic images. At first glance these images are merely pretty, but closer study reveals astonishingly explicit sexual activity. Their complexity and attractiveness take these blatant images of lesbian sex into places that staged S&M photographs cannot reach.

In 1985 *Yantras* was seized by New Zealand customs, but released by the Indecent Publications Tribunal on the grounds that the abstractness of the photographs meant that even young children could glance at the



A self-portrait by Tee Corinne.  
This image is one of 65 included in Corinne's series, *Scars, Stoma, Ostomy Bag, Portacath: Picturing Cancer in Our Lives*.  
Courtesy University of Oregon Archives and Special Collections.

book and not be corrupted! This "open hidden-ness" is also a rich metaphor for lesbian sexuality itself--invisible unless you know what to look for, and then, suddenly, it has been there all along.

Combining technical skill in a variety of media, aesthetic inventiveness, and a sexual openness absent from much "bad girl" lesbian pornography, Tee Corinne invented a new language for lesbian sexual power.

In addition to her own original contributions to lesbian art and photography, Corinne was tireless in supporting other lesbian artists. She wrote about art for a variety of publications. A co-founder and past co-chair of the Gay & Lesbian Caucus (an affiliated society of the College Art Association), she is also a co-founder of the Lesbian & Bisexual Caucus of the Women's Caucus for Art. In 1991 she was chosen by *Lambda Book Report* as one of the fifty most influential lesbians and gay men of the decade.

[Corinne died at her home in Oregon on August 27, 2006, after a valiant struggle with liver cancer. She was preceded in death by her longtime partner, Beverly Brown.

In her honor Moonforce Media established the Tee A. Corinne Prize for Lesbian Media Artists. Corinne left her manuscripts and other material to the University of Oregon Libraries.]

## **Bibliography**

Boffin, Tessa, and Jean Fraser, ed. *Stolen Glances: Lesbians Take Photographs*. London: Pandora, 1991.

Califia, Pat. *Sapphistry: The Book of Lesbian Sexuality*. Tallahassee: Naiad Press, 1988.

Corinne, Tee. *Labiaflowers: A Coloring Book*. Tallahassee: Naiad Press, 1981; also published as *The Cunt Coloring Book*. San Francisco: Last Gasp Press, 1988.

\_\_\_\_\_, with Jacqueline Lapidus. *Yantras of Womanlove: Diagrams of Energy*. Tallahassee: Naiad Press, 1982.

\_\_\_\_\_, et al. *Intimacies*. San Francisco: Last Gasp of San Francisco, 2001.

Penelope, Julia, and Susan Wolfe, eds. *Lesbian Culture: An Anthology*. Freedom, Cal.: The Crossing Press, 1993.

Wilton, Tamsin. *Finger-Licking Good: The Ins and Outs of Lesbian Sex*. London: Cassell, 1996.

## **About the Author**

**Tamsin Wilton** was Reader in Sociology at the University of the West of England, Bristol. She published widely on lesbian and gay issues since 1988, and visited many countries to lecture on lesbian studies and on the sociology of HIV/AIDS. Her books include *Lesbian Studies: Setting an Agenda*; *Immortal, Invisible: Lesbians and the Moving Image*; and *Sexualities in Health and Social Care*.