

▶▶ The Inner West might be a pretty liberal kind of kind of place, but gentrification recently drove Australia's Adult Photographer of the Year (pictured right, in fancy dress) out of the area.

"I moved into squalid student housing here back in 1997 when I was at uni," **Cat O'Nine Tails**, the woman behind the erotica site **shotwithdesire.com**, reflects a little nostalgically. "Over the next 13 years I lived everywhere – Stanmore, Petersham, Lewisham, Newtown, Dulwich Hill. Me and some friends were one of the first groups to get a **warehouse in Marrickville**, back in 2000 when everyone thought that was *really* far away. But I like to do my photo shoots outside and I was finding that, because of the way things are going, you no longer had any privacy in the backyard of a terrace house. Suddenly there would be a block of shiny new flats near you with the residents staring down and yelling abuse at me and my models. And it was getting too expensive to rent the big places I like to have to live and work in. So a little while ago I moved a bit further out. Those cheaper areas are the new Newtowns, similar to what suburbs around here used to be like."

Like most people who end up working in porn, Cat O'Nine Tails never had any intention of working in porn. "I was a photojournalist but it got to the point where I didn't have the energy to be running after policemen anymore and my focus turned more from the outside world to the personal world. I was offered some work shooting **glamour models for a men's magazine**, things grew from there and I started what's been my main focus and labour of love for the last five years – **shotwithdesire.com**.

"I've tried to make it different to the millions of other sites featuring naked people. I'm the only photographer whose work is featured, so it is all my vision. It's as if my character, Cat O'Nine Tails, travels through time and photographs all these crazy things. Sometimes I end up involved in the action, sometime I'm just watching.



**Is there**  
such a thing as  
**feminist** erotica?

The usual cacophony of purse-lipped anti-porn feminists has remained uncharacteristically silent about the fairer sex's now undeniable appetite for mummy porn. We asked Cat to reflect on what the popularity of *Fifty Shades of Grey*, which has now notched up 30 million in sales, says about female sexuality circa 2012.

"I'm embarrassed to say that I've been so busy organising my ball that I haven't got around to reading it, although everyone I know is talking about it. I presume that its

# Fifty grades of

"It's been called a pan-sexual website – people of all sexualities appear on and view it. I like sexy images of **both men and women**, so I shoot both. And I try and stay away from that fake performance of sexuality you see so often – I'd never have **cheesy stuff such as fake lesbians** on my site.

"People, especially early on, posed because they wanted some nice pictures of themselves, not for the money, so there's a different dynamic at play than with a standard porn site. It's a word of mouth type of site, most people check it out because they know someone who modelled for it or a friend recommended it."

Most of Cat's models are Inner Westies and she credits an Inner West venue for opening her eyes to the possibilities of R-rated material made by and for women.

"I think it was in 2001 that I went to The Imperial in Erskineville to see **Gurlesque**, the lesbian strip club, and it blew my mind. I saw [strip tease artist] **Glitta Supernova** get up and do this amazing, sexy, empowering dance and my whole world rocked on its axis. I'm not sure you can say that there's an identifiably Inner West approach to sexuality, aside from noting it's quite a queer area, but this is definitely a place where stuff like Gurlesque happens. It's funny, I've spent a lot of time in 'alternative' areas in countries such as Germany and Sweden where you expect people to be open-minded and found they freaked out much more than people in the Inner West about what I did."

A self-described "sex nerd" Cat may soon be sharing her extensive carnal knowledge with Inner Westies troubled by boudoir issues as she has only one semester of study to complete before becoming a certified sex therapist.

"People were coming up to me in the toilets at gigs and parties wanting to discuss sexual problems they were having, plus I was getting asked to do media interviews about subjects such as **labiaplasty and porn** so I figured I may as well become a sex therapist and get the piece of paper to make it official. In many ways it's a natural transition from erotic photography to sex therapy as both are about social constructs based in history. I'm very interested in stripping things back and seeing how they are constructed, be it in a photo shoot or a therapy session."

# erotic play

**With every single Inner West woman openly or secretly reading E.L James clit lit hit, we figured the time was right to profile Cat O'Nine Tails, an erotica entrepreneur who was providing sexual fantasy fodder to women long before Ms James started mucking around on *Twilight* fan fiction sites.**

success comes down to the fact that women like a bit of character development and narrative in their erotica, which is what I try to give them in my photo shoots.

"Unlike my parent's generation, where men and women had **defined roles** and did specific things, everything is now confused, those rituals about how men and women act and interact have disappeared, so having the book's male character be so strong and sure of himself is probably appealing.

"I used to be an old-school feminist but now I come from a more sex-positivist position. I don't like a lot of porn out there and, admittedly, most of it is **made by men** for a male market. But, like **Annie Sprinkle** says, the only solution to bad porn is more porn. More women should make the porn they want to see. The membership of my site fluctuates between being 50 to almost 100 per cent female and women are the most vocal in terms of telling me they want to see more men on the site and they want them to look a certain way. I really like the idea that the website is all about the female gaze. Outside of gay porn, there's not much out there where the male body is shown in an erotic way but women obviously want to see that."

■ Words: **Nigel Bowen** Photos: **Cat O'Nine Tails**

## Shotwithdesire.com comes to life

Once a year, Ms Nine Tails throws a big party, attended by members and supporters of her site, as well as many of the incredibly sexy models who appear on it. This year's **'Winter Wonderland/Yuletide Ball'** is a night of light-hearted burlesque, cabaret and audience participation involving a Victorian Yuletide dress-up theme, spanking snow maidens, amateur strip tease competitions and performers such as Gurlesque founder Glitta Supernova.

It kicks off at 8pm on Saturday the 4th of August at the Art House Hotel on Pitt St. **Ciao** readers are welcome to attend and tickets can be purchased for \$30 on the door.

