

# Erotic Drawings

Page 4:  
*The Rest of Volupté*  
François Boucher, 1748

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## Foreword

“Eroticism has its own moral justification because it says that pleasure is enough for me; it is a statement of the individual’s sovereignty.”

– Mario Vargas Llosa



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Paul Gauguin

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Degas

PICASSO

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EGON  
SCHIELE

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The term "Erotic Art" is surrounded by a halo of hypocritical, misleading and dissimulating concepts. Art or pornography, sexuality or eroticism, obscenity or originality: all of these attempts of distinction and determination are so meddled that it seems almost impossible to reach an objective definition. From what point can one speak of "erotic art"?

### Scherzo

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Michelangelo, c. 1512  
Doria-Pamphili Collection, Rome



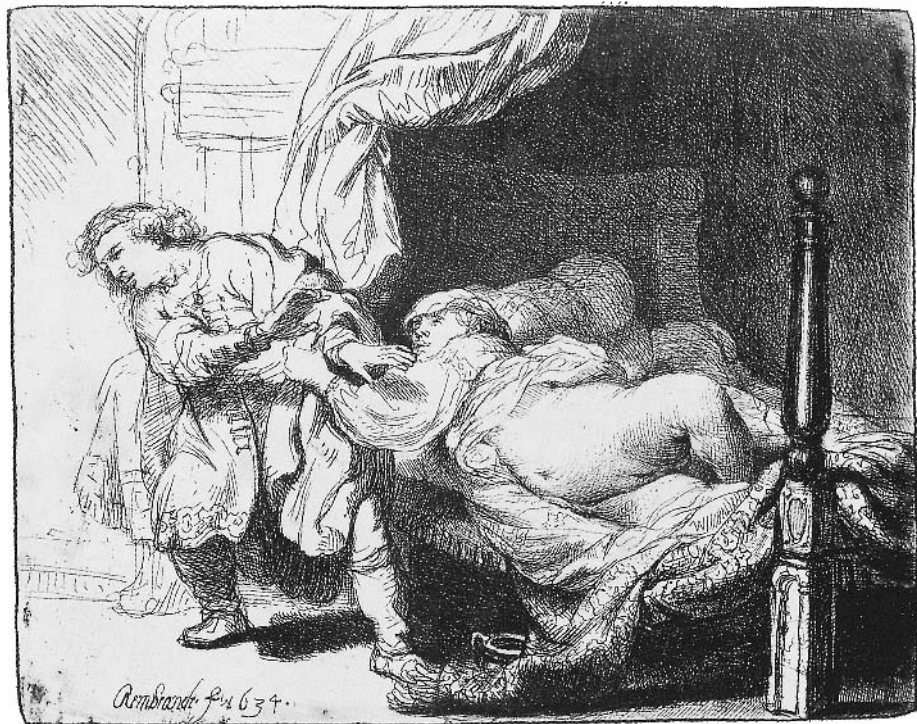


Every collector of erotic art has been at some point presented with works esteemed as insufficient from every point of view, while he expected something better. Still, the seller would affirm that he had found an important object of the erotic genre. But sometimes it seems that the eye becomes stupefied when in contact with this free subject.

## Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

---

Rembrandt van Rijn, 1634  
etching, 9 x 11.5 cm



*Ambascioli* 634.



In order to be convinced of this, one simply needs to think of a man, often very cultivated, who considers as important a work of poor artistic value. On the other hand, it often so happens that a masterpiece will be considered as futile because of its subject.

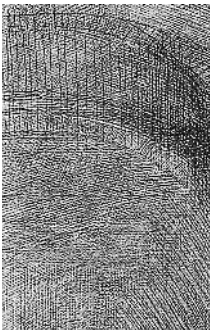


## The Monk in the Wheat Field

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Rembrandt van Rijn, 1645  
The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago





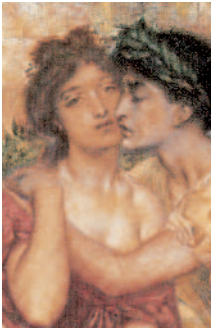
This much is certain: the depiction of a sexual activity alone does not qualify as erotic art, just as a shocking and pornographic object does not lose its character as art because of a context considered as indecent and immoral. To identify erotic art only with its content would reduce it to one dimension, just as it is not possible to distinguish artistic and pornographic depictions only by describing their immoral contents.

### The Bed at the French Way

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Rembrandt van Rijn, c. 1646  
etching, 12.9 x 22.6 cm  
The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York





The view that erotic works are created solely for sexual arousal and so cannot be art is erroneous as well. Pornography is also a product of imagination, while its structure is different than that of sexual reality. Gunter Schmidt states that pornography is “constructed like sexual fantasy and daydreams, just as unreal, megalomaniacal, magical, illogical, and just as stereotypical”.

## The Rest of Volupté

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François Boucher, 1748





Anyhow, those proposing the alternative 'art or pornography' may have already decided against pornography, driven by their moralising attitude.

Consequently, what is art to one person is the devil's handiwork to another. The mixing of aesthetic with ethical-moralistic questions dooms every clarification process right from the start.



## Mars Embracing Venus

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Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, 1800-1806





In its originally Greek meaning, pornography stands for prostitute writings – that is, text with sexual content. Such a definition could therefore permit us to equate the content of erotic art with that of pornography. This re-evaluation would amount to a rehabilitation of the term.

### Nude Couple

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, 1800-1806





The extent to which the distinction between art and pornography depends on contemporary attitudes is illustrated, for example, by the painting over of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel. Nudity was not considered obscene during the Renaissance. The patron of this work of art, Pope Clement VII, saw nothing immoral in its execution. His successor, Paul IV, however, ordered an artist to cover the obscene parts of the *Last Judgment*!

## Woman Caressed by Cupid

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Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, 1800-1806

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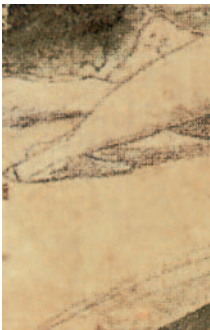


Not every age is equally propitious for the creation of eroticism. However, erotic art is not only a reflection of achieved sexual freedom. It can also be a by-product of the suppression and repression with which eroticism is burdened. It is even conceivable that the most passionate erotic works were created not in spite of, but rather because of the cultural pressures on sexuality.

### Nude Couple Embracing on a Bed

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, 1800-1806





Eroticism thus would have to be understood as a socially and culturally formed phenomenon. In which case, it is the creature of moral, legal, and magical prohibitions, which arise to prevent sexuality harming the social structure. The bridled urge expresses itself; but it also encourages fantasy without exposing society to the destructive dangers of direct sexuality.

## Nude Couple Making Love

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Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, 1800-1806