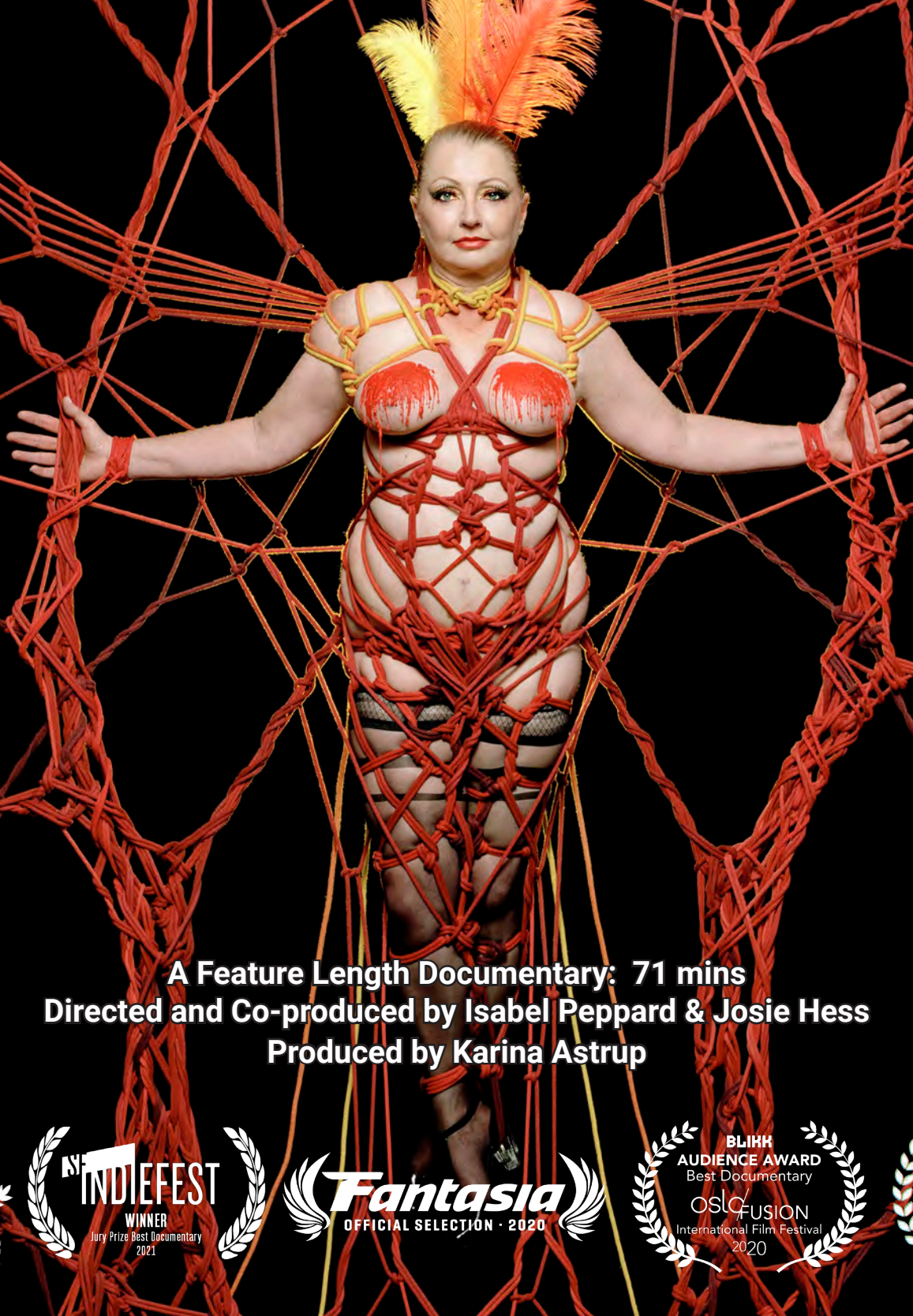


# MORGANA

"A DAZZLING PORTRAIT OF AN UNFORGETTABLE WOMAN"



A Feature Length Documentary: 71 mins

Directed and Co-produced by Isabel Peppard & Josie Hess

Produced by Karina Astrup



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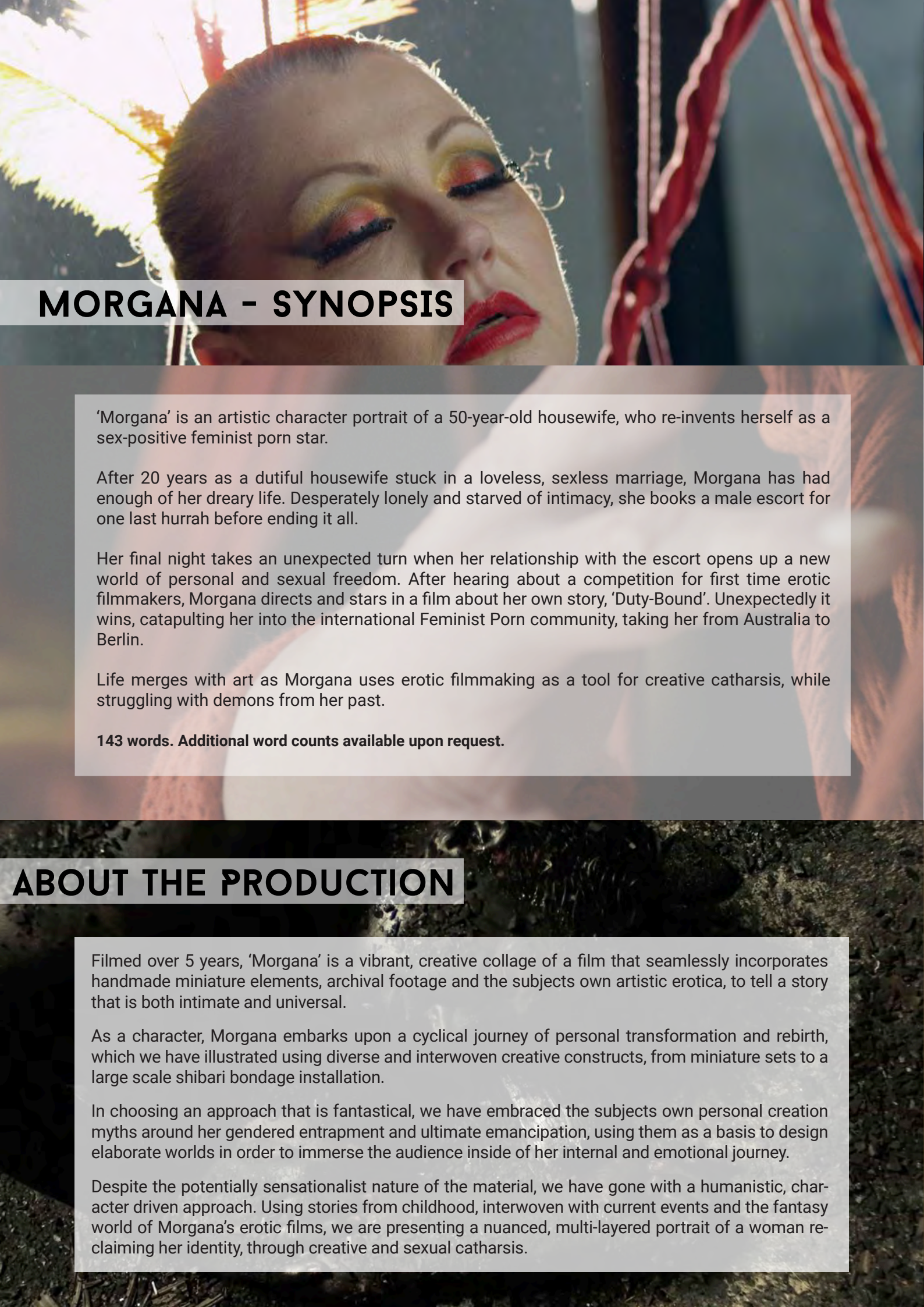
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## MORGANA - SYNOPSIS

'Morgana' is an artistic character portrait of a 50-year-old housewife, who re-invents herself as a sex-positive feminist porn star.

After 20 years as a dutiful housewife stuck in a loveless, sexless marriage, Morgana has had enough of her dreary life. Desperately lonely and starved of intimacy, she books a male escort for one last hurrah before ending it all.

Her final night takes an unexpected turn when her relationship with the escort opens up a new world of personal and sexual freedom. After hearing about a competition for first time erotic filmmakers, Morgana directs and stars in a film about her own story, 'Duty-Bound'. Unexpectedly it wins, catapulting her into the international Feminist Porn community, taking her from Australia to Berlin.

Life merges with art as Morgana uses erotic filmmaking as a tool for creative catharsis, while struggling with demons from her past.

**143 words. Additional word counts available upon request.**

## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Filmed over 5 years, 'Morgana' is a vibrant, creative collage of a film that seamlessly incorporates handmade miniature elements, archival footage and the subjects own artistic erotica, to tell a story that is both intimate and universal.

As a character, Morgana embarks upon a cyclical journey of personal transformation and rebirth, which we have illustrated using diverse and interwoven creative constructs, from miniature sets to a large scale shibari bondage installation.

In choosing an approach that is fantastical, we have embraced the subjects own personal creation myths around her gendered entrapment and ultimate emancipation, using them as a basis to design elaborate worlds in order to immerse the audience inside of her internal and emotional journey.

Despite the potentially sensationalist nature of the material, we have gone with a humanistic, character driven approach. Using stories from childhood, interwoven with current events and the fantasy world of Morgana's erotic films, we are presenting a nuanced, multi-layered portrait of a woman reclaiming her identity, through creative and sexual catharsis.





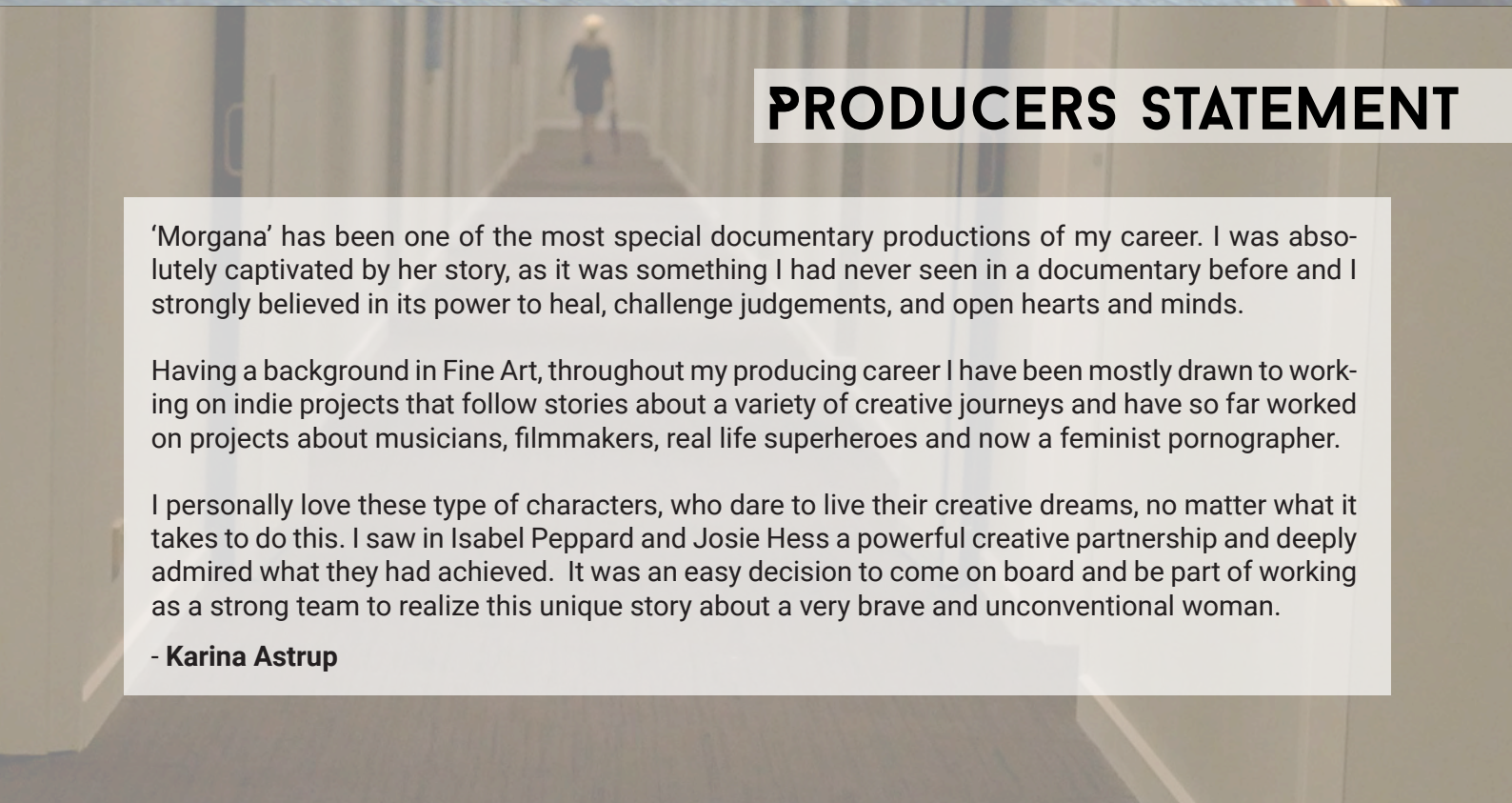
## DIRECTORS STATEMENT

As female and queer directors we were attracted to Morgana because she is a fascinating, complex protagonist who naturally challenges expectations of a middle-aged woman's character, sexuality and place in the world.

Originally what drew us to this story were the themes that were on the surface, the taboo of female aging and visible sexuality, the human need for intimacy and touch, the search for community and belonging and the redemptive power of art. As our journey with the character continued, other layers of meaning rose to the forefront; the construction of identity and self, how we play into social and personal narratives and where the line between the 'authentic self' and the 'performance of self' is drawn.

Stylistically we are drawing on our diverse creative backgrounds in animation horror and erotica to poetically illustrate and heighten our characters psychological journey. The use of handmade miniature sets, installation art and Morgana's own films compliment the dark, sexual nature of the material and adds beauty and weight to the telling of her story, while also allowing us to explore the line between art and artifice.

- Isabel Peppard and Josie Hess



## PRODUCERS STATEMENT

'Morgana' has been one of the most special documentary productions of my career. I was absolutely captivated by her story, as it was something I had never seen in a documentary before and I strongly believed in its power to heal, challenge judgements, and open hearts and minds.

Having a background in Fine Art, throughout my producing career I have been mostly drawn to working on indie projects that follow stories about a variety of creative journeys and have so far worked on projects about musicians, filmmakers, real life superheroes and now a feminist pornographer.

I personally love these type of characters, who dare to live their creative dreams, no matter what it takes to do this. I saw in Isabel Peppard and Josie Hess a powerful creative partnership and deeply admired what they had achieved. It was an easy decision to come on board and be part of working as a strong team to realize this unique story about a very brave and unconventional woman.

- Karina Astrup





## OUR STORY

### PUNK ROCK FILM SISTERS DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES

'*Morgana*' co-directors Isabel Peppard and Josie Hess first met at a punk gig in inner city Melbourne. Isabel had just directed a successful short animation 'Butterflies', starring Rachael Griffith and Nicholas Hope and Josie was working at Monster Pictures and just beginning her career in erotica/ethical porn. Over beers, rants about the film industry and smashing the patriarchy, a friendship was born and the two began collaborating on a series of projects almost immediately.

One day Josie approached Isabel to document the 50th birthday of a female pornographer, Morgana Muses, who she was working for at the time. Morgana was to be suspended naked, in a large-scale bondage installation and then photographed as a birthday gift to herself. After meeting Morgana and learning that only 3 years earlier she had been a housewife in the suburbs of rural Australia, Isabel and Josie became fascinated by Morgana and her journey, approaching her to turn her life story into a documentary film.

Initially it was only going to be a short documentary, but as the story and character progressed in unexpected ways; it grew into an intense feature length bio doc, which led the team from the suburbs of rural Victoria to the BDSM clubs of Berlin and beyond.



A woman with red makeup on her face is looking into a mirror. The background is a warm, orange-toned room with a window and a painting.

## DIRECTORS QUOTES

"Even though my background is in animation and horror, I was excited by the opportunity to tell this dark, transgressive story in a creative and lyrical way. Morgana's narrative naturally taps into many of my personal thematic fascinations around existential horror, female sexuality and the redemptive power of art."

- Isabel Peppard

"I've always been drawn to complexity and adventure, so following Morgana felt like a natural path. I'm simultaneously inspired by her gusto, perplexed by her choices and compelled to discover more about her. It's been endlessly fascinating to be allowed to so intimately capture someone I admire."

- Josie Hess

A close-up of several macarons in various colors (pink, yellow, orange) on a light-colored surface.

## FEMINIST PORN 101

### WHAT IS FEMINIST PORN?

Feminist porn is pornographic and erotic content created with an overarching sex-positive ethical framework guiding its practices. The term stems from the social movement of women's sexual liberation.

The terms "sex positive", "feminist" or "ethical porn" denote a belief that sex and its related pleasures are not inherently bad or wrong. Instead sex positive creators believe sex is a natural and healthy part of life for consenting adults.

This view follows through into sex work, with sex positive feminists rejecting the idea that all sex work is exploitative. Instead they see sex work as a viable economic and sometimes liberating choice for women.



# OUR TEAM

## Isabel Peppard - Director/Co-Producer



Isabel Peppard is a highly skilled multi-disciplinary artist who works across the mediums of film, sculpture and stop-motion animation.

Her multi-award winning work has screened at top-tier festivals, including Melbourne International Film Festival, Sitges and Annecy, as well as at art institutions such as GOMA (QLD), MOMA (Rio De Janeiro) and ACMI (Melbourne). Her short film 'Butterflies' (starring Rachel Griffiths) won the Dendy Award at the Sydney Film Festival and was broadcast nationally on SBS Television.

Isabel regularly exhibits at the Beinart Gallery, an international surrealist art collective, is currently writing a live action/animation hybrid horror feature and is developing a short stop motion animated Virtual Reality project. Isabel's work uses gothic fairytale and handmade symbolic elements to tell humane stories of existential horror and personal transformation.

## Josie Hess (They/Them) - Director/Co-Producer



Josie Hess is an award-winning filmmaker working across horror, comedy, documentary and porn.

Josie's work has included extensive collaborations with Permission4Pleasure producer Morgana Muses and co-directing Their first feature documentary 'Morgana', which premiered at Melbourne International Film Festival. Josie produced 'The Grave of Saint Oran', a short stop motion film based on a poem by Neil Gaiman with Director Jim Batt, premiering at Sydney International Film Festival.

Josie's film work has also made waves in the porn world, with 'Labia of Love' winning 'Hottest Artful Porn Award' at the Toronto International Porn Awards and also picking up 'Best Fetish Film' for 'Having my Cake'.

## Karina Astrup - Producer



Karina Astrup is the senior producer of House of Gary, with her debut film about local indie punk band '6ft Hick: notes from the underground' being broadcast nationally on ABC TV, premiering at the Brisbane International Film Festival, NXNE in Toronto and winning the 'Noisy Cat - Best Music Documentary Award'.

Working with Director Penny Vozniak, 'Despite the Gods', about renowned horror director Jennifer Lynch making a film in India, was her next feature documentary, premiering at Hot Docs, Chicago, Fantasia, Sitges, Sydney, Stockholm, eventually travelling to over 40 Festivals around the world and winning 'Best Documentary', 'Best Director' and 'Best Comedy Awards'.

Teaming up with Australian Directors, Isabel Peppard and Josie Hess, 'Morgana', is her latest film to be completed, picking up the 'Best Australian Independent Film Award' and Audience Award for Best Documentary.

# OUR TEAM

## Julie-Anne De Ruvo - Editor

Julie-Anne De Ruvo is a highly experienced Melbourne based Editor, who has been working in the Australian Film and TV industry for over 18 years.

Since graduating from AFTRS, her goal has been to continue to diversify her capacity as a storyteller and work across as many different genres as possible, including Documentary, Comedy, Horror and Thriller.

Her work has been highly acclaimed over the years, receiving multiple "Best Editor" Awards from the Australian Screen Editors Guild, the "Dendy Documentary Award" for 'Desperate Man Blues' and both AACTA and International Emmy nominations for the TV shows 'Nowhere Boys', 'Please Like Me', as well as cutting feature film 'Better Watch Out', the Television adaption of 'Romper Stomper' and most recently feature documentary "Girls Can't Surf".



## Jordan Gilmour - Music Composer

Jordan Gilmour is a film, theatre and multimedia composer, producer and teacher based in Melbourne. He specialises in combining various types of ambient synthesis, emotive string arrangements, electronic and acoustic beats, to create soundscapes which enhance a narrative. He has worked on dozens of projects between the U.K. and Australia, which has seen his work screened and performed at various festivals, to critical acclaim.

Some notable highlights include his masterclass with Philip Glass in response to the Qatsi Trilogy film series, through the BBC and Screen Academy Scotland. It was shown at the Edinburgh International Festival, as well as receiving the award for best music at the 48 hour film festival.



**Cinematography:** Josie Hess and Isabel Peppard  
**Miniatures Cinematographer:** Gerald Thompson  
**Miniatures Design and Build:** Isabel Peppard  
**Visual Effects:** Louis Nikolovski  
**Supervising Sound Editor:** John Kassab  
**Re-recording Mixer:** Doron Kipen ASSG  
**Sound Mixing Facility:** Music and Effects  
**Additional Sound Editor:** Damian Candusso  
**Dialogue Editor:** Rick Lisle  
**Additional Dialogue Editor:** David Williams  
**Titles and Subs:** Play On Play Studio

**Conform:** Suemi Akita  
**Colourist and Online Editor:** Marcus Herrick  
**Post-Production Facility:** Blue Post  
**Production Company:** House of Gary  
**Executive Producers:** Jessica Carrera and Rob Zippling  
**Associate Producers:** Patricia Piccinini, Lisa Carrodus, Rebecca Thompson, Deborah Chadwick, Judith Peppard, David Evans

## APPEARING IN THE FILM:

Morgana Muses, Stoya, Eva Sless, Jiz Lee, Judith Lucy, Shine Louise Houston, Anna Brownfield, John Oh, Petra Joy, Candida Royalle, Zhara Stardust, Scarlet Blissand, Jake Etalon, Josie Hess, Alex Mann, Kim Cums, Rob Paulson, Caritia Arbell, Candy Flip, Bishop Black, Eva Medusa Gühne, Isabel Peppard, Theo Meow, Marina Lee, Francesca D'amico, Michelle Flynn, Paula Eichhorn, Mad Dame, Tua.



# ABOUT MORGANA MUSES

## AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED 50+ EROTIC ARTIST

Morgana Muses is the age-positive, sex-positive creative director and performer of Permission4Pleasure. She shares her journey of sexual exploration with audiences through her award winning films.

Sex and sexuality were never discussed during her upbringing, they were considered completely taboo. At the tender age of 47, two years after leaving her marriage, Morgana decided to embark on her journey of sexual exploration and learning, breaking out of the role that had been imposed upon her.

In 2012 she was the recipient of the Petra Joy Award for first time film-makers with her entry 'Duty Bound', which detailed her own experience hiring a male escort.

Since then Morgana's films have screened all over the world in leading erotic festivals such as Cinekink, New York. The Porn Film Festival Berlin and even winning the Feminist Porn Awards; 'Heart Throb of the Year'. She continued to pick up more accolades for her work, including 'Best Fetish Film' for 'Having My Cake', and 'Hottest Artful Porn Award' for 'Labia of Love', at the Toronto International Porn Film Festival.

### MORGANA on her films:

*"My upbringing was incredibly repressed with a lot of shame and silence around sexuality. Capturing my sexuality on film and having others engage with my story gave me a newfound confidence within myself."*

*"My aim is to explore through narrative and experimental film genres, sexuality and social stigma. We also employ women in all the key roles on set, so we do a good deal of attempting to capture the female gaze."*

*"I want my films to act as a reminder to myself and others that there is no expiration date on our sexual pleasure".*

### MORGANA on her company:

*Permission4Pleasure is my production company, named as such because I want to encourage others to give themselves the permission to seek out pleasure, whatever that might look like for them. Our ethos is to produce high quality, ethical porn that features a diverse range of ages, bodies and sexualities.*

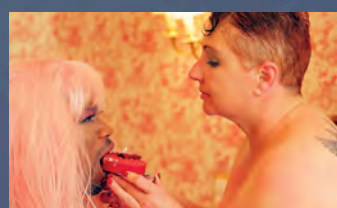
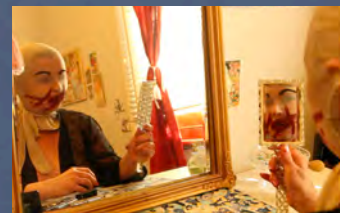
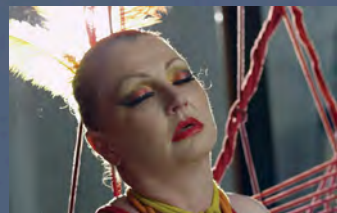
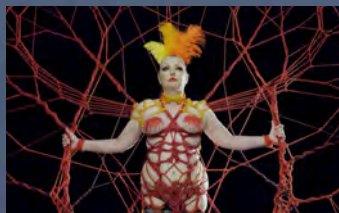
*For a long time I needed to be seen, so being in front of the camera was a way of reclaiming what I had lost in my sexless marriage. Now, I really enjoy the process of making films, so I am just as comfortable behind the camera as in front.*

*We need to remember that it's completely normal and healthy to allow ourselves to be happy, if that's hiring an escort, going on a blind date, getting tied up or just eating cake.*



Stills available in high-res:

## STILL PHOTOGRAPHS



## QUOTES

*"One of the most artfully crafted and inspiring documentary films I have ever seen - absolutely a must see!"*

- **Annie Sprinkle**

*"Morgana Muses is a force of nature. Her work is groundbreaking."*

- **Erika Lust**

*"She is a pornographer's, pornographer."*

- **The Daily Beast**

*"She's not your average adult star."*

- **The Guardian**

*"An in-your-face fearless look at a woman to be respected, loved, and held as an example of the ever-changing times."* - **Reel News Daily**

*"The fact that Morgana is a woman in her 50's and is making these films that are very positive about older women having sex, I think it's incredibly empowering."*

- **Judith Lucy**

*"...beautiful, individual, intense in nearly every way, and exactly the kind of voice I want to be leading the way in feminism and film, for decades to come."* - **Horror Buzz**

*"An unbelievable true story."*

- **IndieWire**

*"Bold and thoroughly fascinating."*

- **Screen Daily**

*"A poetic, moving, life-affirming yarn extolling the virtues of sex positivity and self expression."*

- **Film Ink**

*"Extraordinary, deeply relatable and touching."*

- **Screen Anarchy**

*"An empowering and touching film that confidently asserts that female sexuality does not come with an expiry date."* - **POV Magazine**

*"Morgana" is the feminist mid-life anti-crisis porn doc you didn't know you needed."*

- **Bust Magazine**

*"The entire history of fiction on celluloid couldn't conjure up anything as distinctive, empowering and intriguing as Morgana Muses' tale."*

- **Concrete Playground**

*"Everything about the body and soul baring of Morgana Muses feels convincingly empowering and wonderfully real."* - **Screen Space**



A Feature Length Documentary: 71 mins

English - translated into: Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Serbian

Directed and Co-produced by Isabel Peppard & Josie Hess

Produced by Karina Astrup

**WEB//** [morganadocumentary.com](http://morganadocumentary.com)

**FB//** [facebook.com/morganadoc](https://facebook.com/morganadoc)

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Australian Government



Producer Equity Program



DOCUMENTARY AUSTRALIA FOUNDATION

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