



SEX AND THE POWER OF THE VISUAL

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Every year men spend billions of dollars to look at women with little clothing on – such as the annual Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue – or with no clothing on – such as on Internet sites and in so-called men’s magazines. Women, on the other hand, spend virtually nothing to see unclothed men. Why?

Some say that the reason is that men are socialized into viewing women as sex objects and that women are socialized into not viewing men as sex objects. But if that’s true, how do these people explain gay men? They are as aroused by pictures of naked men as heterosexual men are aroused by pictures of naked women. Obviously, then, it’s not socialization. It’s that men are programmed by nature – not by society – to respond sexually to the visual.

This is an area in which men are so different than women it’s probably impossible – no, not probably, just outright impossible – for a woman to truly understand. Of course women find some men attractive. And of course a woman can have an intense reaction to seeing a very appealing man. But there’s still no comparison.

The visual alone arouses men. It takes far more to arouse a woman than seeing naked men. If that’s all it took, most husbands would walk around the house naked whenever possible – or at least every time they wanted sex. And the average heterosexual man is excited countless times a day simply by seeing women – in person, on billboards, in magazines, on television, and even in his imagination.

This is not the case for women. Yes, there are some male strip shows for women. But few women ever go, and the few who do attend them in groups, a “girls’ night out.” And for every one of those shows there are probably ten thousand female strip shows for males, most of whom attend alone, not as a participant in a guys’ night out.

Let’s be honest. There is no magazine featuring men’s legs for women to look at and get aroused by. But there are websites and magazines of women’s legs for men. And are women paying to view topless men? Men pay good money to look at topless women.

Again, that doesn’t mean women never get turned on by merely looking at some men. Of course they do. But it’s only some men – on rare occasion a stranger, and more usually a celebrity. Men get turned on by any sight of female flesh on almost any female.

The effect of the visual in men is so powerful that it even amazes men. A man came over to me after hearing me lecture on male sexuality and said: “I’ve got a story to tell you. I was in front of a department store and in the window was a seated mannequin. I couldn’t believe it,

but I found myself looking up her skirt.” Here was a perfectly normal, responsible man – who found himself looking up a skirt on an inanimate object shaped like a woman. That’s how instinctive it is for men to look at female flesh.

It’s perfectly understandable that women cannot fully relate to this. But if a woman wants to understand male sexuality, the first thing she has to understand is the power of the visual. That’s why you see ads on billboards, on TV, and in magazines for every sort of product a man might buy accompanied by a scantily clad woman – or, sometimes, just part of her. I recall a famous liquor ad that showed a woman’s legs and a bottle of tequila. No face, just beautiful legs. Would you ever see an ad showing men’s legs? People would laugh; it would be considered absurd. An ad with women’s legs is not absurd—it’s alluring.

None of this is in any way meant to excuse inappropriate male behavior. Men must always control themselves. But to deny the power of the visual on men is like denying that the earth is round.

I’m Dennis Prager.