

SEX MUSEUM OPENS AT HORSE HOSPITAL

*** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ***

Museum of Sex Objects
Horse Hospital
Colonnade, London, WC1N 1JD

Exhibition dates: 3 – 29 September 2022
Private View: 2 September, 6.30 – 10pm
Press Day: 6 September, 12 – 10pm
Opening Times: Weds – Sunday, 12 – 6pm



Lady Sexburga, *The Meretrix Whip*, bleached hair, leather whip, c. Roman period



Unknown, *The Woman in White*, German music box, c. 1840

Britain's first ever museum of sex objects is to be showcased at the Horse Hospital, Bloomsbury. Conceived by Deborah Sim, former creative director of the groundbreaking erotic emporium *Coco de Mer*, the peripatetic exhibition seeks to trace Britain's sexual history via a collection of storytelling objects which celebrate sexual heroes, moments and places.

Objects such as the *Meretrix whip*, the only item said to be assembled by the original keeper, Lady Sexburga, Queen of Kent, 699, trace the power dynamics around sexuality from the Roman period onwards. Roman prostitutes, known as *meretrices*, were required to dye their hair blonde and register under a permit in order to work. The Romans had more than 100 different recipes for bleaching or dyeing hair. Some favourite infusions contain ingredients such as saffron berries, vinegar and crushed nutshells, while others used harsh bleaching agents. The dye often caused hair loss, and in some cases, women resorted to wearing wigs made from the hair of blonde slaves. In this way, blonde hair became a symbol of sexual availability and domination by acquiring blonde slaves and their commodified hair. It remains a potent symbol a millennium later.

Also on show is the *Wall of Sexual Heroes*, a collective textile art piece featuring decorated handkerchiefs which celebrate underrepresented historical and contemporary heroes of sexual emancipation, activism and innovation. With information and anecdotes shared by academics, curators, creatives and activists, this wall reflects the history of sexual movements, legislations, objects and individuals who have influenced our current sexual freedoms artistically, personally, politically and professionally. As an organic piece, it will continue to be contributed to throughout the exhibition and beyond.

The Museum is entrusted to The Keeper and her proxies, sworn to protect these objects and the stories they preserve for generations to come.



Dave Johnson, John Wille's Bizarre Magazine, embroidered handkerchief, 2022

The current Keeper, Deborah Sim, states: *'Charting sexuality's cultural origins is not easy, with clues often locked away in old documents or institutions, their truth deemed too subversive at the time. The Museum of Sex Objects' mission is to bring history's blind spots into the light.'*

As part of that mission, The Keeper will be holding daily tours of the Museum's realms. Also throughout September, The Museum of Sex Objects is hosting talks with authorities on sexual history on subjects ranging from the link between witchcraft and the early LGBTQ+ community, the feminist appeal of Japanese rope art, Soho's under-the-counter book trade, sacred rites for medieval sex workers and legendary Leatherman Tom of Finland, to how one fetish pioneer went from running a No Cameras, word-of-mouth underground club scene to designing historically pertinent rubberwear for inclusion in a prestigious art collection.

Tickets for talks, tours and screenings here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/the-horse-hospital-6637681787>

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Notes to Editors:

About The Keeper

The Museum of Sex Objects' current Keeper, Deborah Sim, is an award-winning designer and art director. She was co-founder and creative director of the erotic emporium Coco de Mer. Originally studying Theatre Design, Deborah won the Sunday Times Young Theatre Designer of the Year Award. More recently, she went on to complete a Master's programme, specialising in Visual Culture and Gender Studies at Birkbeck under the tutelage of seminal philosopher Slavoj Žižek, who Freudianly once asked her to peer inside his mouth. Deborah is a devout historian and passionate storyteller who finds libraries the most sensual of public spaces.

Museumofsexobjects.co.uk

[@museumofsexobjects](https://www.instagram.com/museumofsexobjects)

About The Horse Hospital

The Horse Hospital is a progressive arts venue in a listed Georgian building, originally built to treat London's sick working horses.

V for Vendetta author Alan Moore describes it thus:

'...Anachronistic and outside of time, steeped in a hundred years of horseflesh with the past only a layer of paint away, the structure is a foundry where futurity is smelted; wherein artists

and performers at the razor edge of their respective disciplines display their snorting steeds before an audience eager to examine teeth and study form.'

thehorsehospital.com
[@thehorsehospital](https://www.instagram.com/thehorsehospital)



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