

## Common Beliefs about Sexual Imagery, and Questions to Open Dialogue

Below are statements that are sometimes made about artworks containing sexual imagery. They can stem from core beliefs and values, or from episodes in history.

They can seem like conversation stoppers, but where age- and time-appropriate, they can also provide openings into discussion of more general topics, in which discomfort might shift to a broadened point of view.

The question below each statement can be used to initiate such discussions.

“These images are obscene/ in bad taste/ immoral.”

Belief: Sex or its display is distasteful or base.

Question: How can sex be the subject of cultural, political and scientific study?

“This doesn’t show natural, meaningful sex.”

Belief: There are proper ways to engage in sex.

Question: Where do we learn about sex and sexual diversity?

“These images don’t belong in a public venue.”

Belief: Sex is a private activity.

Question: How can we effectively exchange information about sex in a public forum?

“Show these images on a porn website, not in an art gallery.”

Belief: Sexual imagery belongs in specific contexts.

Question: Who benefits from/ suffers from compartmentalising sex?

“Why would an artist choose to portray this?” “Why would a museum choose to show this?”

Belief: Sex is too easy a sell.

Question: Where are all of the places that sexual diversity is shown?

“These images will instigate sex crimes.”

Belief: Sexual talk or imagery should be policed.

Question: What is the difference between a sexual image and a sex crime?

“Innocent people might see this and be harmed.”

Belief: Sexual imagery around “Innocents” should be monitored.

Question: Would all viewers interpret these images the same way?

Belief: Sex can and has been used to abuse people.

Question: Could the suppression of sexual imagery cause harm to anyone?

“These images make me feel like a voyeur/ object.”

Belief: Sex is personal and experiential.

Question: How do you feel about art that affects you personally?

“Why am I paying to look at sexual material?”

Belief: Money and sex make uncomfortable bedmates.

Question: Who benefits/suffers from sexual cultures being invisible?