

## Lydia Lunch

Hank Hyena

Thursday, September 22, 1998

Lydia Lunch stormed through San Francisco last week, arousing and assaulting audiences with two ferocious spewings from her porn confessional novel, "Paradoxia: A Predator's Diary." She's also displaying her disturbing voodoo boxes and decadent photos at the Mission District's Gallerie Luscombe.

Lydia is the raging queen of the underground -- she's been terrifying audiences for over two decades with her horrific honesty and anticorporate rage. She began her career in 1976 as primal screamer/guitarist of the New York no-wave band, "Teenage Jesus and the Jerks." She was only sixteen then having recently fled her sexually abusive father in upstate New York.

In the 80's she shocked sensibilities with starring roles in "Fingered" and "The Right Side of my Brain," two films by legendary S & M director Richard Kern. Her post-punk productivity since 1990 has been largely spoken word, in renowned collaborations with Henry Rollins and Exene Cervenka. Her Renaissance-woman resume also includes comic books, like "Toxic Gumbo" (illustrated by Ted McKeever, DC Comics, 1998).

In all mediums, Lydia's message is taboo-shattering and politically and sexually savage. Fiercely intelligent and uncompromising, she's consumed with a wrath that shows no sign of abatement.

The following interview took place at Gallerie Luscombe on September 10th, before her reading at the Transmission Theater:

Hank Hyena: In "Paradoxia: A Predator's Diary" -- you stalk men, to exploit. You do this by "looking for the 'sweet spot', a small tear in the psychic fabric to feast upon..."

Lydia Lunch: As a sexual predator, I would seek out any number of their weak spots. Men are incredibly weak, as you well know...

HH: Gosh! Why are we so weak?

LL: Men act macho, but they're afraid to murder the little girl inside themselves... They're ashamed of their feminine side.

HH: What kind of men were your favorite prey?

LL: It was exciting to mistreat men who mistreated women -- the would-be Marlon Brandos. I treated them the way they treated women -- I used them, abused them and then got rid of them.

HH: San Francisco guys... Do we have any specific vulnerabilities?

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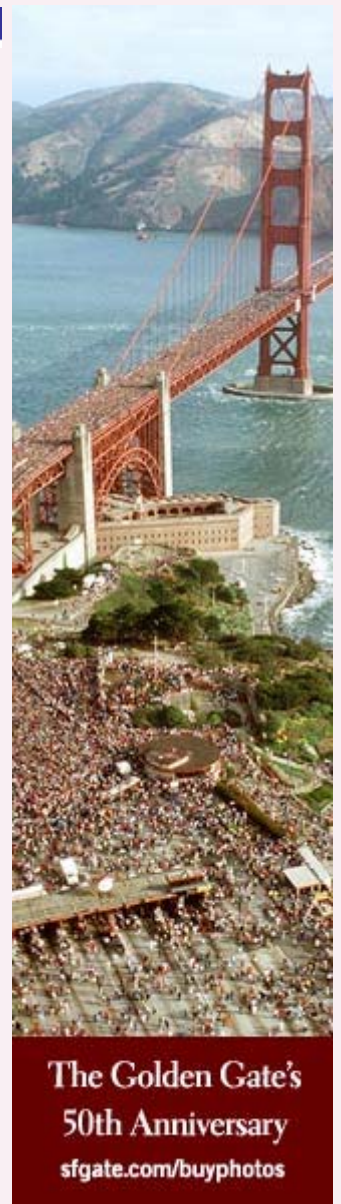
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LL: Ha ha ha! San Francisco men are such easy targets; they're pathetic wanna-bes.

HH: Really? Really?

LL: I used to teach at the San Francisco Art Institute... But -- STOP IT! I don't know where you're going with that cheesy question.

HH: Is your novel amoral?

LL: No. It's about gluttony. I believe happiness is a chemical imbalance -- it's a silly thing to strive for. But, satisfaction -- if you seek satisfaction you can succeed. Satisfaction is knowing that you're doing the best that you can do, you're living your life to the fullest.

HH: I read your press packet... Do you agree with how the press has characterized you?

LL: I've been misrepresented by the media. Aggressive female icons have been chronically demeaned... It's fine for male artists to be angry, they're encouraged to outwardly express their aggression, but women? I've been painted as an aggressive Feminazi because I'm blunt, stubborn, independent, forthright...

HH: Anything other mistakes the press has made?

LL: The biggest insult is that I've been called an exaggerator... I tell the truth as I know it. I don't glamorize the nightmare and horror that I witness, I just digest it and spew it back, with venom.

HH: I hear rumors that you drink excessively and chain smoke. True or false?

LL: My only addiction is to adrenaline, to danger, to precarious situations. I've often been a willing victim.

HH: Lydia... You're almost forty but you look so youthful. What's your workout schedule?

LL: "Foxy-Boxing!" I hit heavy weight bags in my basement. Plus, I have a healthy attitude and so I have a healthy body.

HH: You're real pissed-off about contemporary politics, right?

LL: You'd have to be an idiot not to be enraged at the world today. Critics say my work is shocking, but there's no way it can compare with reality -- that's the true obscenity. innercity poverty, and those bombings in Soudan and Afghanis tan. And slave-trader corporations -- they seek the abolition of the individual! Children today are becoming sports-logo whores.

HH: I write for an online publication. What should internet users be aware of?

LL: TV and the Internet are narcotics to waste time on! The Internet is just preparation for cloning, believe me: Sheep today, humans tomorrow...

HH: You don't watch television?

LL: I watch the news. It fuels my rage; it informs my work.

HH: How can we change the world?

LL: We're lazy, we're afraid to lose what we have, and we're forced to spend all our time chasing money. BUT, if all the economically disenfranchised got together -- that's all of us, right?

HH: I could use a raise. Rents in San Francisco are sickening.

LL: If all the economically disenfranchised people in this country came together for a one-day general strike, we could topple this \*#!#!#!#!

HH: Wow, that would be fun.

LL: My genius is that I am at least formatting my rage into art. That I am not a political terrorist is a credit to my control.

HH: Why do you live in Pittsburgh?

LL: Why not? I get tired of people in San Francisco and New York thinking they live in the center of the world. They don't -- they need to get over themselves.

HH: Rents are low in Pittsburgh?

LL: Very. But I move every two to three years. Before Pittsburgh I lived in New Orleans -- that's where these photos in this exhibit are from. I like the blossoms of youth, urban and rural decay, momentos of death.

HH: You're sharing the Gallerie Luscombe show with local collage artist Jane Handsel. You've known her a long time?

LL: Yes, since 1980. Her brother was one of the psychos I chased.

[The Gallerie Luscombe](#) (3040 24th St., sf; 415-285-8545) exhibit continues until September 27th. Lydia's photos and voodoo boxes are very inexpensive, plus there's signed copies of "Paradoxia: A Predator's Diary" and other books, comics, and cd's.

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**Hank Hyena**, a.k.a. Hank Pellissier, is a frequent contributor to Salon Magazine. He has taught "Subversive Humor" at New College of California, and he'll be teaching "Comic Monologues" at UC Berkeley Extension next year. Hank will soon be presenting "One Testicle in the Grave," a solo show about his midlife crises, at the Grasshopper Palace.