

one of a kind

## Fearless filmmaker **Monika Treut** challenges perceptions all over again, with her latest release

### "Didn't Do It For Love"

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Monika Treut is legendary in some circles. As a filmmaker, she was breaking taboos before anybody in the mainstream even knew that such taboos existed. Born in Monchengladbach, Germany, in 1954, and prior to embarking on her film career, she wrote her doctoral thesis on the Marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. The thesis has been published in book form as *The Cruel Woman: The Portrayal Of Women In de Sade And Sacher-Masoch*. She has worked with such flamboyantly famous sexual authorities as Susie Bright, Camille Paglia and Annie Sprinkle through such controversial film classics as *Seduction: The Cruel Woman* (1985), *Virgin Machine* (1988), *My Father Is Coming* (1991) and *Female Misbehavior* (1992).

And the trend continues. Treut's latest endeavor, the feature-length documentary *Didn't Do It For Love*, is an unflinching portrait of Eva Norvind, a Norwegian-born former filmactress in Mexico-turned-dominatrix in New York City-turned-therapist to sex offenders and graduate student in forensic psychology. It's a fascinating view of fetishism, feminism and sexuality through the eyes of one of the great sexual revolutionaries of our time.

**Playtime:** You have been called everything from a "sexual-political provocateur" and a taboo-breaker to an "obscene sensationalist" and a "feminist revolutionary." What do these labels say about the reception of your work on the whole?

**Monika Treut:** That's a good question, I don't know. I really don't know why people label me that way. I have a completely different outlook on my own work.

To me it's all really regular stuff. It's about real people and real life, like the last one *Didn't Do It For Love*. People think that these people are outrageous that I'm doing documentaries about, but to me these people are just regular people.

**PT:** You said in one interview that you were interested in the "banality of perversion." I love that term. Can you elaborate on that?

**MT:** I have the opposite viewpoint from American talk shows, which try to introduce people as exotic outcasts, people who are different from the norm. I, on the contrary, feel that people who are presented as freaks are as normal as your next door neighbor. Or your next door neighbor who looks very plain might be much more outrageous than, say, RuPaul or something.

**PT:** I recently watched *Seduction: The Cruel Woman* with a good friend of mine who is a professional dominatrix here in Phoenix - she felt that you were right on target in your depictions of sado-masochistic relationships. To what do you owe that understanding?

**MT:** Well, on that special subject, sado-masochism, I think I'm kind of an expert because I wrote my Ph.D. thesis on de Sade and Sacher-Masoch, his Austrian counterpart whose name was used to coin the phrase masochism. I studied those two worlds for three years, intellectually. Plus, I was going out to clubs at the same time, so I think I got a pretty good education into those kinds of fantasies.

**PT:** So, is your interest, then, purely intellectual?

**MT:** Both. Always both. I'm just a very curious person and I like to understand the human psyche. To me nothing is ever foreign in terms of what people do.

**PT:** And how has your latest film, *Didn't Do It For Love*, been received?

**MT:** It has been received, strangely enough, very well. People think it's kind of a rich documentary. What I like about it personally is people see that I do not judge the person named Eva Norvind. It's up to the audience to judge her. I'm just presenting different parts of her life and this approach seems to work quite well. There are a lot of things to discover for an audience. Of course, people who don't like the woman, Eva Norvind, probably won't like the movie. But people who are far away from her viewpoint do appreciate that it's open for them to meet this person on the screen and form their own opinions about her.

**PT:** What was it about Eva that so fascinated you and made you feel that her story was worthy of the full treatment as opposed to the documentary shorts you had done previously?

**MT:** Well, because I think that Eva is such a multi-faceted person. If I had only done a twenty minute piece about her, I think it would have been more like an HBO piece or something. I find that Eva has had so many lives—she was a B-movie actress in Mexico, she was born and raised in Norway the



Filmmaker Monika Treut: Challenging the prejudices of sexual politics.



daughter of a Russian father and a Finnish mother, and she was a show-girl in France at age 16, then she became a photographer and studied film at NYU, then eventually she became a dominatrix and now she hates being a dominatrix and is studying psychology—she has so many dif-



Eva Norvind, the subject of Monika Treut's latest documentary *Didn't Do It For Love*.

ferent lives and facets to her personality, I felt this needs more time to develop.

PT: And how did you come to meet Eva?

MT: She found me, in a way. She came to the press screening of *Seduction: The Cruel Woman*, which actually opened in New York in 89. I had heard about Eva before, because some of my German friends would say, 'oh, you have to meet this woman,' but I forgot about her until she called me one day and asked me if she could come to the screening. She was working as a film critic then and she hated the film with a passion. She attacked me on the streets verbally after the film and we had this funny argument and we became friends after that. So, we had a negative encounter and then she respected my views and she actually turned out to be quite a good friend and introduced me to a lot of interesting people.

PT: And you decided then to make a film about her?

MT: Not right away. She saw

Female Misbehavior at the film festival in Toronto and she said, 'why don't you do Female Misbehavior Part II about my life.' It was not a good time, then a few years later I had lost touch with her and she came back from India and was telling me stories about working for Mother Theresa and I was on the floor laughing. I said, 'okay, Eva, let's do the film now.' She brought me a suitcase filled with photographs and articles about her B-movie life in Mexico and I just loved it. But I had a hard time raising money for this because people thought I had invented her. They wouldn't believe that she really existed. So, finally, I got a small grant from my home town, the city-state of Hamburg in Germany, and we started traveling. We traveled to Norway, to Mexico and we visited her in New York, so eventually we made the film.

PT: What was it about *Seduction: The Cruel Woman* that she didn't like? At the time she was a dominatrix, right?

MT: Right. She did not like the portrayal of the dominatrix in it. She found her cold and not accessible. She had strong views about what a dominatrix should and should not do.

PT: That's very interesting. As I said before, I watched this movie with a friend of mine who is a dominatrix and she was very fond of the dominatrix in the film. She felt that she was an archetype, if you will, for a dominatrix.

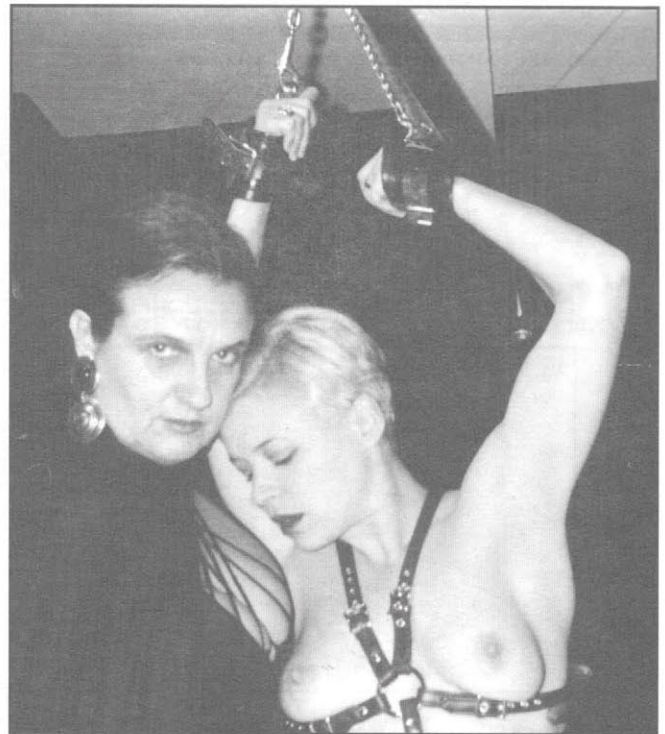
MT: You see, that's what I like. That people have different opinions of things. You know, Eva was already getting tired of being a dominatrix and was trying to get out of that profes-

sion. I guess seeing this archetype—I feel the same way, that Wanda is an archetype—probably was too specific for Eva, who was trying to get away from it all.

PT: Would you say then that Eva is one of those 'eccentric obsessive women' that you like to focus on?

MT: Absolutely. She's absolutely fearless. She's very courageous. She embodies all of the qualities which are normally not attributed to women. She's very out there and she's compulsive in a way. I think these qualities are much more accepted in men. If you meet a woman like that—a domineering, strong, courageous, fearless, at times really compulsive, woman—people tend to shrink away from her. I just like to put people like that on the screen and make them accessible.

*Didn't Do It For Love* will be available on home video from First Run Fea-



Norvind as dominatrix, with an unidentified submissive.

tures beginning May 11th, at a suggested retail price of \$39.95. To order, call toll free at 1-800-448-6652 or visit the website at [www.firstrunfeatures.com](http://www.firstrunfeatures.com).