

# PORNIFIED HOMES

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*Victoria amazonica* is one of the most primitive extant flowers on Earth. It is one of the first flowering species to branch from the stream of evolution. Its large floating system of leaves occupies space on the surface of Amazonian water bodies while keeping competitors away, so that its grounded roots can expand onto a large portion of undisputed soil. Due to lack of light and movement, the bottom of Amazonian rivers and lakes accumulate CO<sub>2</sub>, making it difficult for life. It is the thorny stacks of the *Victoria amazonica* that connect its floating parts (the ones exposed to the underwater world) to its grounded ones, bringing the oxygen needed to keep alive its roots system.

Many botanists consider *Victoria amazonica*'s reproduction a baroque and primitive oddity, but it has allowed it to expand over a great territory, which encompasses French Guyana,

Bolivia or Brazil and expands into enclosed environments in Brooklyn, Helsinki, Oslo or Miami. *Victoria amazonica* changes gender over a twenty-four-hour period of pollination. The flower only lives two days. When it blossoms it is white and broadcasts an intense fragrance. It works as a multisensory billboard, that glows in the dark of the chilling rainforest and attracts *Cyclocephala castanea*, beetles that have often travelled from more than 200 kilometers away via the wind. They bring with them the pollen of distant Victoria flowers where they happened to have spent their previous night.

The warm and comfortable environment of the chamber attracts as many as twenty 3-centimeter-long beetles, convened in the distance to spend the night together. Once they enter the chamber, the flower closes, due to the drop in temperature at night. In such a crowded and comfortable interior, beetles find unfamiliar partners to copulate with.

Instigated by this trans-species architecture of sex, the beetles' movement frees the pollen they carry, and the flower gets pollinized by a genetically diverse and distant specimen of *Victoria amazonica*. With the sunrise, the flower changes gender and turns pink. The flowers remain closed for another few hours, but now the stigma, loaded with pollen, warms, and this attracts the beetles to the upper part of the flower. Only when the beetles are covered with pollen, does the flower open, freeing them to the windy morning that will take them to new and distant locations, where the genes of their host will find new exotic chambers of glow and unfamiliar sex.

November 1849 was the first time *Victoria amazonica* blossomed in the UK. Joseph Paxton, chief gardener at the Duke of Devonshire's estate, Chatsworth, designed a heated glasshouse so that his employer could succeed in a scientific competition, by offering Queen Victoria the first *Victoria amazonica* to blossom in the country.

Forty-thousand Londoners saw the image of Anna, Joseph Paxton's daughter, at the Lily House, on a gigantic leaf of the blossomed *Victoria amazonica* when it was published in *The Illustrated London News*.

The extant Waterlily House in Kew Gardens was built as an iteration of Paxton's invention in 1852. The modular manufacturing made it possible for the iron-made sexualizing-devices to be introduced in upper-middle-class residential architecture. One of the main architectural endeavors of nineteenth-century was to engineer glasshouses to introduce the sexualized specimens of remote colonial territories into British homes.

The keyword "Brazilian" is the number one search on Sleepyboy.com, Europe's most popular male escort website. It was launched in February 2000 as the personal site of British escort Marcus Denton. It was not until 2003 that the site became a space where different male-sex-workers could be listed. With 686,565 consolidated users, who spend an average of 11 minutes on the site, Sleepyboy.com increases its company value at a rate of 18% every three months. Denton runs a holding of successful gay sites: gayscenecams.com, sleepyboyscam.com, men4rentnow.com; and domains such as boyorchard.com, nakedstraightlads.com, gayreview.com, shemaleescortcams.com, nakedstraightlads.com, and silverboys.com. From those sites, he drives the flow of internet users to his lifestyle site, where he can be seen driving fancy cars or vacationing with trendy young lovers.

Over ten years, Sleepyboy.com has moved from Denton's personal escort page to becoming a platform that not only collectively commodifies sex, but also accommodates in London an urbanism to articulate self-branding with aspirational consumption.

Rafael thinks it is “hot blood” that his clients expect when hiring an escort tagged as “Brazilian” on Sleepyboy.com. They believe Brazilians are fully sexualized. Rafael says: “My clients think Brazilians only think and talk sex.” When asked why his profile in Sleepyboy.com is one of the most seen, he gives two reasons. First, he looks young and innocent and that sells. Rafael is not actually his real name. Giving himself an archangel’s name is part of his self-branding strategy. Second, he thinks that everyone fancies “sexy, wealthy people.” He wears jeans and Armani polos, as he thinks rich guys do, but he wears them very snug to make them sexy. On his cell phone, he carries a picture of his dad, mom, siblings, and the son he had when he was a teenager. He constantly chats with them through Whatsapp. Although he loves them, he did not want to get stuck in the life he had in Brazil.

Two years ago when he turned nineteen, he left the central Brazil town where he had spent his entire life. His parents were too strict and strongly religious. At thirteen, he began to work as a real estate broker, construction worker, and cellphone seller. Working thirteen hours a day, he would make 1000 reals a month, of which 700 went towards rent. He could not afford to party even once a month. Inspired by Tati Zaqui, he asked a friend, the day he was leaving Brazil, to tattoo him a British Imperial State Crown, as it was redesigned for Queen Victoria in 1838, on his right chest. To celebrate his first year in London, he added to the crown Julius Caesar’s quote “Veni, vidi, vici” written in Edwardian calligraphy.

He sublets a 50 square-meter-apartment in a basement in Chelsea. It is here where he often meets his clients. He has not bought a single piece of furniture for the apartment, but he did buy a flat screen TV and a sound system. When he is not working, he spends time with his girlfriend watching Mo Vlogs’ Youtube channel “Rich Boy in the Middle East.” With 1.4

million followers, it shows the daily life of a young Dubai man and his girlfriend who play around in Lamborghinis and shop for expensive clothes in endless air-conditioned malls.

When Rafael first arrived in London, he lived in a big apartment shared with many escorts. His business requires that he be connected, but not too connected, to his competitors. He believes the way to emancipate himself from Brazil's working class economy is to surround himself with rich people. For him, real estate is the real politics of emancipation. He will soon be eligible to rent a big apartment, so that he can quit escorting and instead sublet rooms to young Brazilian escorts.

Bruno's profile on Sleepyboy.com presents him as a Brazilian man available for paid sexual encounters in his apartment. He grew up with his mom and siblings in a favela in Rosinna. When he was a kid, his mum called him "Bambam," after *The Flintstones'* sweet and strong kid character. At fourteen, he moved to Rio de Janeiro and decided to get the name "Bambam" tattooed on his forearm.

In Rio he lived on the streets for two years. Using the parallel bars at the street gyms, and inspired by his late cousin who was muscular, he began to sculpt his body. He had his mom's and siblings' faces tattooed on different parts of his body as a way of bridging the distance between himself and his loved ones. He was already a good dancer when a religious organization took him to a children's shelter, where he lived for a while and learnt to play guitar and drums. While dancing at the carnival, someone invited him to move to London, where he ended up marrying a British lawyer. They communicated with Google translator until Bruno, with the lawyer's help, could speak English. This opened up many opportunities, and Bruno started dancing at the spin flow club called Heaven. Four years later his videos on Youtube, which involve him dancing, have millions of views, and he is regularly invited to dance in clubs in Hamburg and Ibiza.

He uses one cell phone to communicate with his clients in the UK and Germany; a second one for storage and to play the music he uses for dancing; and a third used only for Whatsapp to contact his mates and relatives in Brazil. Sex clients, dancing, and loved ones in Brazil remain independent realms in the way Bruno distributes them among his three cell phones.

About his clients, Bruno says: "In the UK and Germany, people love Brazilians: they think we rock the world in a good way, that we are beautiful and sexy. My clients want to know more about my tattoos, my life in Rio... They love to take me to their homes, it makes them think that their life is fun and sexy."

Bruno lives with his dog Eros in a small apartment at the rear part of a fancy building in Kensington. He needs to live in a central and prestigious part of London – this helps clients feel comfortable. He is turning his 28 square meter apartment into what he calls "a pornifying stage". One year ago, he added a plinth to his window. He can now jump from a platform on top of his washing machine onto a tatami and then slowly move to end leaning on the wall. He has already installed a sound system, and soon the lights and cameras will arrive.

Bruno's society is one built to make it possible for clients in the UK and Germany to bring sexiness into their daily lives. It is a complex assemblage of demarcations that can only remain together through the mediation of independent phones, tattoos, and staged interiors; and that are reprogramming London's central and prestigious neighborhoods into networks of transnational daily life pornification.



Central London, so many times narrated as the hub of the globalized post-states-oriented government, contains an ecosystem of shady back backyards and down-rated basement apartments. This is a transnational urbanism that is not built out of blocks, roads, and institutional buildings, but rather composed of the way humans, bereft of economic power, are displaced and then sexualized by the way their offline existence is pornified through online projection.

Colonial creation of a geography of center and periphery might now be replaced by a layered coexistence in which the architecture of properness, the one that accommodates law firms, wealthy residences, and corporative headquarters, contains a secluded and sexualized backyard architecture of otherness.

We might have never been global. We inhabit the way transnational constellations negotiate their articulation with each other. It might be in the way our skins, texts, Whatsapps, desires, loved ones, domestic interiors, unfamiliar interaction, and sound systems get together where we can find the urbanism we now live by.