

LOVE, SEX & RELATIONSHIP

LOREDANA DENICOLA

Dedicated to Mankind

Once you said,

'I Love you'.

Then you slapped me,

You punched me,

You shouted at me,

You called me 'bitch',

You said, 'I want to kill you'.

I cried.

'What is love?'

I asked.

'Love, Sex & Relationship aims to be a conversational photographic project.

I meet with couples and ask them questions about their relationship, what they think about love or about sex, how they show love; sometimes questions will be very intimate.

They are free to answer or not.

Then I take few photographs with my medium format camera, a Mamiya II 6x7, for which I invite the couple to present themselves as they see themselves in their actual relationship.

I take ten pictures of each.'

We were walking in the streets.

'I want to have sex with other women.

I want to fuck her,

She is gorgeous.

I want to see you suck another dick',

You said to me.

I didn't want that for myself,

I shut down my doors,

But I didn't leave.

'The topic is so broad and elusive (it is difficult to explain exactly what love, sex and relationships are), but everyone is unique and has his or her own personal experience and his/her own opinion about it — as I do with mine.

I think that through honest communication their story will emerge, with all its fascination.

A relationship can be destroyed easily, exactly like a picture.'

Then, back home,
You put on a porn video,
Wanking yourself for hours.
You said that I was jealous.
You didn't touch me,
You didn't spoil me,
You didn't want me,
You didn't look me in the eyes.
How, then, can I want you?

'A picture is something mortal, like life.

It is fragile, like us, human beings.

Not only does the content of a picture die but, additionally, the piece of paper on which the image is printed ages, until it dies, too. Photography is like a special witness of a particular moment in life.'

'What is sex?'

I asked.

Time passed and I began to wonder ...

'Do I want a relationship like this one?

What is a relationship?

Do I love myself?'

I asked, that day,

Looking at myself in the mirror.

A picture is fragile ...

'It represents the present moment, which is only real once, and which then immediately becomes past, and transforms itself into a memory.

We will look at that memory and we will see ourselves as a spectator of ourselves, left with a feeling of strange awareness about who we were and what we felt in that exact moment; thinking that the moment is dead, and the person in the picture is not us anymore, because we are different now, we have changed.

We evolve.

Photography is the witnessing of life (this period has existed in front of my camera, as a documentation of that once-present moment), and represents 'Love and Time' in that fraction of time which, recorded, will become eternal'.

FILIZ



FILIZ

Single Mother

Do you love yourself?

Yes I do love myself, I know my worth now.

I am Turkish, and in a Turkish culture, a woman doesn't leave the house until she is actually married, so we don't have this influence of women or young ladies leaving the household, and being by themselves, and venturing out; that is not perceived as a good thing.

So I have been conditioned to get married, have a good life, have a good husband, and to look for those things in life, and I think that is because of my cultural background.

Do you think that Love is pleasure, desire?

I thought love was pleasure, but I have learnt that love is more than pleasure: I have found that love is the most powerful weapon in the world.

How can one find out what love is?

... when it becomes unconditional, when there is no limit, when there are no boundaries, because love can make you do all sorts of things.

Now, my love can hurt the people around me so I have to love and consider them, but I am just stuck getting the balance right of 'do I need to please my parents? ... or do I need to please myself?' ... because now I have got my daughter to please as well. My love

must be worth my fight. I need to prove to my parents that the person I love is good to me, is good with my daughter, then my parents will understand that, in no time; I won't have to fight his corner.

I don't ever want to fight the corner of the man I love, because I want him to prove to everybody else that this is a good relationship, and they should accept it.

My mum, still, up to the present time, threatens me about who I should be with, who should I marry. She still frightens me.

I feel I don't make myself available, I am always rushing around; I am walking from one point to the other, focusing on my destination, not looking at the people around me.

When I realize and look up, I see a lot of people, and lots of smiles; so I know, then, that I am inviting people – but I don't have a chance to invite people because I am always rushing around, I am always working so, you know - I could have gone out last night, and probably met someone, but I had to do a night shift.

I am old school, I like a man to make an effort, I like a man to chase or to call or to make me feel that I am beautiful ...

I think in a relationship you should make an effort for your sex life because I believe it should be between the two.

There are couples that would explore to satisfy, to fulfil their needs.

What is Intimacy?

Intimacy is when you really, really care and when you really, really know that person, when you know their likes, their dislikes; you know what makes them angry, you know what makes them happy — so I think when you are involved, you know how to raise their intensity.

I have never cheated, but everybody has their own class of cheating.

I had a dance with a guy once, and my partner, my ex, thought it was disgraceful, but I thought it was just a dance; so cheating is a very painful thing to experience ...

It can destroy everything: it destroyed me ... it makes me wonder why — what, was I not good enough?

So it's a horrible thing.

What is a relationship for you?

A relationship for me is 50/50, someone who is going to have my back, and I am going to have their back; someone who is going to work hard for me, and I am going to work hard for them; someone who I don't have to tell — they know.

I am very old school, so I don't mind providing for my husband, or my boyfriend; I like a man who is masculine, mainly.

A man is a man, and a woman has to be a woman, and they both have to know their roles.

I didn't fall in love with my last dates.

Honestly, I didn't want to expose myself to a relationship too soon, because I had just come out of a 7 year relationship; but my other, 7 year relationship was not a physical relationship, because my partner was not present.

He was living at 'Her Majesty's pleasure', so he was locked up, and we were consummating our relationship while he was there and I was here, so there were no sexual activities — but we would compromise in other ways, to please each other.

So having that experience, I could not express myself to someone new, because I didn't want to tell them about my past, because my past was still with me — he is still with me now, and I do still love him very much, because we have been through a lot ... so for me to meet someone new, now, I think it is going to be quite difficult, because I really need to finish what was in the past, in order for me to love someone else.

I would like to let my partner know that I would like to be free, and I'd like to do this and I'd like to do that, but I think it depends on your partner. I have been in relationships where I haven't been so free, and now I am free — I have found my freedom, I want to keep my freedom when I go to my next relationship, so it is important



GANGA

Divorced, after 10 years of marriage

Do you love yourself?

This is a really hard question, of course I love myself.

Are you in love now?

Not with someone — I love myself, yes, not with others; probably I need to find one very soon.

It has been nearly 8 years that I have been based in London; I do music, I am a full time musician. I came here to study music, I had poliomyelitis when I was 5 years old, and since then I have used my crutches for mobility.

Is your disability a problem in your relationships?

Of course it has been. I come from Nepal. In my culture, all the parents that want to marry their daughter are looking for someone who has got a good job, paid well and who has no physical challenges. And you can see I have a physical problem.

I never used to have the courage to ask a girl — Do you love me? Do you want to be with me? — because, for me, it was difficult.

I had many opportunities before getting married, I got many letters from ladies who proposed to me and, even then, I always wondered if I was the right person for them, knowing my story and my disability. Definitely there are some barriers. But then, I met my wife, she proposed to me, she loved me and we got married, ten

years ago.

I even asked her — are you sure you want to get married to me? — since I was aware of my background, the family I came from, which was poor, the fact that I didn't have a job, living as an orphan in a community — plus my disability challenge.

After marriage, she never had a problem with my disability. The good side was that she hadn't any issues with my physical condition, she never saw me as someone with a disability and, in that sense, I was quite lucky, and she always uplifted me emotionally, in many situations.

Definitely it is challenging, to have a relationship, and have physical issues, as I can't do everything she would like me to do but it doesn't mean that I feel bored or depressed about my disability — not at all, I see it differently.

I was married for 10 years — now we are separated; now I am single, and we are getting divorced very soon.

Are you happy with this decision?

At the beginning, I was quite depressed, because someone who I really loved more than anything else betrayed me, even though I had tried to make her happy and fulfil her desire ...

... even though I always trusted and loved (she is someone I really loved and trusted) ... she didn't respect me and our relationship.



In that sense I was quite depressed.

I had always been open and honest with her; I had always said to her to leave me, if she wasn't feeling happy in our relationship.

I had always been open with her.

It was a difficult moment, but I am very positive, because now I have left the bad things behind me and I don't have any regrets: I have forgiven her many times. I am running my life very happily, keeping always positive.

Our realtionship lasted 10 years, so sometimes I find it hard to forget some memories, but honestly I don't have any regrets.

In our culture, Nepal's culture, where I come from, talking about sex is not open. We stay with one wife for all our entire life.

And sex is not open talk.

It is not like Western Culture, where if you want to have sex one night with others, you go out and have sex with whoever you like.

Certainly culture had a big effect on how I perceive love, sex and relationships.

For me, love is something that goes beyond exchange. If you truly love me, I don't expect that you do the same for me.

Love is giving without expecting anything for me. Now, I don't

expect love from my wife, I love and I loved my wife. I gave her too much love.

I really loved her and I am still thinking, did I do something wrong to her? — Wasn't my love enough?

She betrayed me at some point.

It is something that makes you think — What did I do wrong?

If someone cares about you ... I am going to take my mother as an example, the love of my mother towards me; she doesn't want to get anything from me and she has always been an inspiration to me, and if I am positive right now, it is because of my mother: because she always gave, and gave love without expecting something back.

How do you understand Love?

That is a very, very difficult question, honestly I am still not able to understand love, I don't know what love actually is. It is hard to tell — I know love, but love between people is hard to pinpoint.

Do you know what love is? — I don't know what to answer.

If I love someone, I don't show love to them; I don't do that. I don't say — I love you. Probably it is my nature. I am analysing myself right now, many things have happened to me in life.

If you have a chance to grow up in a family, you can spend time

Human beings can never be separated from sex.

Sex is the very source of one's life; one is born out of it. Existence has accepted the energy of sex as the starting point of creation, and 'your holy men call it sinful ... something that existence itself does not consider a sin!'

And if you think of God as the creator, and if God considers sex to be a sin, then there is no greater sinner than God in this world, no greater sinner than God in this universe want to say to you that sex is godly.

The energy of sex is divine energy.

That is why this energy creates new life.

It is the greatest, most mysterious force of all.

Osho

GILL & RICHARD



GILL & RICHARD

Married for 30 years

Gill

If it is a long relationship, I think it is possible to have a sort of loving companionship, and it doesn't have to depend on a sexual relationship. This is my opinion.

It may be because there is always an evolution; love evolves ... it can't stay the same ...

People have expectations. And they think that after 5 years in a relationship ... they think — oh we don't have sex anymore — so we had better break up ... it shouldn't necessarily be a reason to split up, but rather just as you say, an evolution ...

For me, sex is not that important — maybe I think the way I am?

In this stage of your life?

In this stage of my life, it is not very important because I tend to channel my energy into my creative work, into the work that I do; I am very focused on that, and sex doesn't really occur to me very much. I think it can at an earlier stage, if a couple are regularly having sex: I am sure it does influence the relationship ...

... but it doesn't make a relationship.

I don't think it makes a relationship, although some people think it does, and then that idea, that attitude, can affect how they feel about a relationship; maybe it is a kind of brainwashing.

Every person is so different; I suppose there are some people with

a very strong sex drive, if you want, who just have the urge to do that ... if they meet someone who attracts them, and they just want to respond to that — it's their choice, but for me it wouldn't be at all satisfying.

I would probably feel very bad about it.

It wouldn't feel right, probably because I was brought up in quite a moral way, so that sort of attitude ... at the time, it was given that I had to shake off advances, pleasantly ...

I just think it is a bit too casual really; it is meaningless to me ... that sort that you may call casual sex, if you want to call in that way.

Intimacy is just closeness for me, and being comfortable with the person, and not necessarily having to be talking all the time or having a conversation all the time, but being comfortable in the same room as somebody, and not feeling that you have to make conversation — just being completely comfortable with somebody.

What is abuse?

From watching films, TV dramas and things, sometimes someone has an empty spot, something is missing, or they meet somebody and they are attracted to them, and then they are sort of hooked — they can't unhook themselves ... often they know in their head that it is not right, but it is a sort of compulsion. Sometimes, maybe in a manipulative relationship, one person can make the other



I don't know, maybe you want somebody who has the same interests as you, but then I think it looks like the adventure is not there anymore, because that is the nicest thing about a relationship ... I don't know, exploring the other person.

I guess on a dating line, we have all sorts of information, so when you meet in real life, you can say — oh, oh I know all about you because I know your interests, you know my interests — but all the fun is gone there ...

But, I guess if you want the perfect partner, is there for you.

I am not religious; I don't believe in religion; I don't believe in life after death and all of that.

I believe that everybody is entitled to love, however they do that — and whoever they love is up to them.

If there are two men or two women making love, or the situation of the nun and a priest as you said, and whatever — everybody should be entitled, and there should not be somebody there telling them — no, you can't love that person because the church say so ...

I think that is a lot of crap, to use the nice and polite word, but a lot of people follow that, and it is sad. But, hey ... free world, 'democracy': it is up to them!

I grew up with my parents; my parents survived the war ... it had

definitely had an effect on their relationship, in the end I don't think my parents ... it wasn't love at first sight, it was a love which was built up over the years, but at that time they were forced to get married ... my mother falling pregnant with my sister ... and there was not choice. I guess at that time, even in Holland ...

And also their background: my father comes from an upper class family, my mother from a low class family, so I think that they brought that complexity with them, and that had an effect on us, me and my brothers ...

I think, for me, my saving was my school back home, in Holland; and having older brothers, even though they would not talk much about it.

Actually it is funny ... maybe because I left home young, and I started to explore all of this by myself. That is why I learned, you know ... by sort of educating myself.

I don't think that sex is the most important thing in life ...

My niece said that sex is like a sky ...

Like a sky, wow! I guess, when you get older, it becomes less important, I think love becomes more important than sex.

Can sex with a stranger be loving?

... with a stranger? Can it be loving? Can it be loving? ... of course

... can it be loving? ... I guess so, why not?

Intimacy?

I don't know ... like a movie close-up?

I don't think I can answer that: I don't think I have a clear vision of it or I never thought about that ...

Cheating?

I think the trust is gone, or they have hard moments in life and then maybe that is the easiest way out ...

Does love imply a relationship for you?

No, no, no, because I have got good friends — yes ... I mean it is all right?

It doesn't mean that I have to feel love for that person to have a good relationship with them, but I think for girls it is different, because girls think differently than men ... when you get close to somebody, and that person thinks that you want more than that ...

And then you say — No, no, I am not interested in that at all ... I think this is the difference between males and females.

What do you mean by free? Well, I am free now ...

I am in a relationship now, and I feel free, but of course there are some limitations to that as well.

I can't say — hey you know? I am going to start another relationship tomorrow; no, that is not part of that freedom; but I am free in my relationship, as I express my own ideas, and she has the same freedom ... we think differently, but we both feel free, because I give her freedom, and she gives it back to me.

Why do we feel love? Do we feel love or loved?

Because she meets, I guess, my interests, ideas; but here it becomes tricky because it depends on whether we talk about friendship ... even if it is about a personal level, where attraction is involved but if you talk about people, friends and all of that, it's about interests and circumstances ... whether they are doing things in certain ways that you sort of like, enjoying that, I guess ...

I think Love is a need: you need to love, you need to give love and you need to be loved ...

I have never understood, actually, abuse. I don't believe in abuse. I hate abuse. At the time, you are upset — you don't understand; but that comes with experience ...

I got married four years ago, but I believe you can be happy without getting married.

Can love be a trap?

I can't answer to that ... I don't know ...

What is trust?
What is respect?
What is understanding?
What is communication?
What is sharing?
What is silence?
Does love imply a relationship?
Relationship or 'to relate'?
Is a relationship a compromise?
Do we need a relationship to feel love?
What is love?

AGNESE & VIRGINIA



AGNESE & VIRGINIA

Married since 2012

Agnese

I am Agnese, I work as a chef.

I have been in a relationship with Virginia since 2012, actually 2009, and we have been married since 2012 ... so in January it is going to be 4 years of marriage.

We have a very old fashioned relationship, like in the olden days, we share everything; we share our money, we share our experiences and dreams, and we really like to do a lot of things together, so it's a very full relationship as a couple, not as two individuals, living together.

In this period of my life, I am not 100% happy because we are living in a difficult situation ... in any relationship there are always ups and downs, and this is a down moment for us.

Do you love yourself?

Yes, I love myself very much. I am Aries — myself comes first.

I am still in love. I really think that the relationship I have got with Virginia is very different than the kind of relationship people have typically at this moment. As I said before, many people I know ... they kind of live individual lives, in a couple: I live consciously in a couple.

If you live love as 'ideal love', that is how it should be, desire and pleasure, but then, if you put the love in a relationship, there are more things involved, such as pure love; I think love is desire and

pleasure but then, in a society and in a couple, there are other factors going on, like routine, commitment, to create a more, like, constructive idea of love, basically.

I feel that Virginia just completes myself 100%: that's why I believe it is love, and I have never felt this before with anybody else.

I think that we don't need to understand love: we need to feel love. If we try to understand love, maybe we try to understand the forms of love, or how it is evolving, how it is showing — but Love is more a feeling than a concept for me. It cannot be explained. It can only be felt.

Nowadays we have a lot of ways of communicating because of 'social media', but, at the same time, I think that more ways we have to communicate with people in more ways we feel disorientated.

Honestly, I don't think that nowadays it is easy to meet people.

In London people live very individual lives, rather than feeling part of a community, so I think it is not easy to meet people.

I have many friends who have got problems, and even myself, I met my wife through a website. I have been very lucky over that — it doesn't happen to everybody. It was maybe the right time, when things get together naturally.

You can give love to a person who is begging in the street, and maybe for just once? Love is a form of communication but it

JOAKIM & JAMES



JAMES & JOAKIM

In a loving relationship

James

Are you in love now?

Yes, I think I am in love; I think I have got a feeling, a warm feeling inside, that I have never felt before outside of my family I guess, but I think it is stronger than that ...

I thought I had experienced love until it hit me in the face ...

Maybe I felt like, one day you meet the right person, or you just find your first love, or you find the person you've got the chemistry with, and then you feel love, because it is more about chemistry, chemical reactions.

Something that you know in your heart ...

Yes, I think you know instantly but it feels like, I don't know, I had never felt love until I met Jo — never like that, and now, to not feel that love would feel so weird.

It is like that love has always been part of me, even if we have just been together for a year and a half ... It is like it has always been there ... does that make sense?

It is like a weird realization, because I feel like it is just natural, when you feel it ... when you find the right person, it is like, all those parts are already there: they just mix together.

It is as if love, like, bubbles up ...

This morning, for instance, there was this warm feeling between

me and Jo, like more actually temperature-warm; it is like all the feelings inside, just hugging ... it was so beautiful.

Sometimes I need him to tell me — You did a good job!

Jo is a more laid back person; he does more relaxing ... he doesn't necessarily give those compliments all the time, so whereas I am cleaning the house and all of these things, which for me is a way just to say — love me; I love you like this, that's why I do all of this ... but Jo is, like — lay down and don't worry — because he said — I love you like this, I just love you inside ... come here and cuddle me — and I think if he just says — Thank you — to me and compliments me, I will do more stuff for him — it is just how different people love you ...

Nowadays, it is probably more harder to have a good relationship, in the 'new age of technology and Internet' with things like Tinder and quick meeting up things, but I think we have a better understanding of our rôles together, in a partnership, going through life. I love power couples; I love the idea of us being like a power couples, giving strength to each other.

For me, love doesn't imply a relationship. If me and Jo break up one day, I will still love him. You still love your first love, no matter what happens.

There was a teacher that once told me ... he said — sex is a very important part of marriage. If you have good sex, you have got



but I don't understand the theory of that ...

My daughter has the essence of God's great body heart, which has been broken slowly — and now she is not getting in touch, and that worries me a lot. She told me that she has got my number, that she kept it; that she has got my telephone number off by heart ... she has been in her possession for a long time, but she has never called me, not even once.

She is twelve now; I am giving her a few more years ... she has been quiet.

When I was in prison, I wrote her a few letters — she never responded, and I am not allowed to go to their address; they will call the police. The police will tell me that they'll go and check out my daughter's situation, but they won't give me a proper response back — or tell me anything, without me even having to ask what's going on. No one tells me anything, so I am burdened by this uncertainty, and I have decided to move on. My daughter wanted me to stop smoking, but I have got my own justified cause ...

What is intimacy for you?

Intimacy is love, like intense love towards another. Intense love towards another, with mutual intense attraction.

It can be a moment that makes me smile, or a moment that makes me happy — those are intimate moments for me; and whoever is a contributor to God makes me feel intimate ... and I feel it, as now:

that music, you, everything around me, makes me feel intimate about everything; about myself, about love, about everything ...

I feel love ...

Responsibility in a couple, is working together as a team in everything; starting from budgeting, cooking, cleaning, simple things ... basically looking after each other's welfare and wellbeing ... together taking care of each other's wellbeing — end of!

Why do you think we don't do that?

Because of ignorance, lack of understanding ...

... so it is something that applies to both parties, not just to one person, isn't it?

Exactly, now you are talking ...

Because one person can't make the difference ...

Exactly. That's where the still voice came from; we have to be listening in order to process information in a positive way — positive information to give positive feedback ...

There are people who tend to listen to negative information, they tend to the wrong path.

Love has to be unconditional in order to be like that.

It's conditional, weather is conditional, where you are bound by conditions: you are not bound to be free to talk to a man or to talk

Robert

For me, love comes from God; he is a source of all love: he is love, so any kind of human ... I understand that love comes from him ...

We are made in the image of God, and in that image we love.

Love is ... if I would look at it from a Freudian perspective, love can be seen as a selfish thing, because I need to connect to others; I need to relate to others, therefore the only way I can relate to others, is by fulfilling my way; is to love people — but I disagree with that: love should be giving ...

I think there is a universality in needing to connect, but how it is expressed is very different, isn't?

I always see it ... that love, perfect love, is like molded 'Play-doh' model ... shaped, naturally, by those around it ...

If there are things that dent your sexuality when you are young, it can be the cause of guilt, which can become unhealthy obsessions — so some people have an unhealthy view of love, other than what love is. Maybe the domineering personality wants to control the other person, because that's what their parents' relationship was like ... that's just an interesting example ... so yes, it depends how we progress over the course of our lives; on whether we are dented by our parents' upbringings, by our schooling, our teachers, our siblings — by whatever can really dent our personality.

The love that is defined in the Bible is the love between a man

and a woman, which is mutually fulfilled, and which, ultimately, is to have children and nurture them to go on; and so, as regards polygamy, that's a difficult one.

What does it mean ...? I don't know ...

... it seems to be wanting more than one thing because you are not satisfied with what you have, and actually, ultimately, polygamy is quite a selfish thing ... if it is a man taking more than one woman, then there are other instances of men not having a wife, or woman ... and that doesn't mean to say I haven't thought about it myself ... the idea of 'when one wife is in a mood, you go and seek comfort with the other' would be quite nice.

Incest? No, it doesn't sound healthy, does it?

A child, (I presume you are talking about parents and children) ... a child should grow up and be nurtured by their family, in a healthy way ... and incest would never be healthy.

I think that sex is a fulfillment of a loving relationship; some people look to form a relationship, they have sex first, and then see if the relationship will work out, but that's not ideal ...

The ideal would be to fall in love with that person, and then sex be the next step.

Sex validates each partner. When I make love to my wife, it is giving her her femininity. It should be about fulfilling each other's





confidence ...

Sex with a stranger is quite difficult for me. I have thought about it — obviously there are people thinking that someone is a very pleasant, good looking woman; but it is about knowing each other, mentally as well as physically; and I think that lots of times that is totally missed by a society that prizes sex on the first date, saying — wow, that's amazing!!

... it takes quite a long time to get to know each other intimately, mentally; so that you can almost predict what the other person is going to say, in any given circumstance — so in an ideal world, we would be waiting and getting to know each other, loving each other first, before having sex — but we don't live in an ideal world, so this is not happening.

When we talk of intimacy, we talk of being able to be completely nude in front of the other person, and not be shy.

We only have one toilet at home ... it is being able to go to the toilet without the other thinking that it is disgusting ... but it is also when you talk of your plans for the day. I discuss with my wife, sometimes, at home ... silly little things, like wanting to go to the shop together and buy something, and having a mutual destination in your life.

I think a lot of relationships don't work because one of the people starts taking, and they start demanding everything for themselves;

they become lazy in the relationship, and don't make any effort to make it flourish — and then look for ways out, instead of working on it. It is always a case where you have to give, not just take.

I think many men — I am not sure about women — but many men in their forties start looking at the 'younger model', and it is finding ways to keep your relationship interesting; not necessarily just "swinging from the chandeliers" but ... it's a way to interact.

Why not be creative in a relationship then?

Yes, a relationship should be adventurous, whatever that means — sex on the beach, or in the woods, in a forest ... whatever; someone can do kinky things ... it should have that element of spark to it, shouldn't it?

Something fresh that should be distinctly out of the way, which is the way: for me, sometimes, a woman should take the initiative and lead, and desire her husband or man, in a way that she hasn't done before; to make him feel that he is wanted, desired.

It is not boring if you feel that you are the centre of that person's attention.

Love should be freely given — there is a Bible verse — love gives: it is not self-seeking, rather it is giving, and you look at the truly great loving people, like Mother Teresa — she just gave, gave, gave; she didn't ask for anything back.



Respect in relationship...

Since we have been together, she still has her friends; sometimes she still wants to do her own things, and I let her do her own things, do what she wants, and support her.

The same is for me — if I want to be with my friends, or I want to spend time with myself ... even just reading or listening to music, she is the same.

You have to respect all the decisions your partner wants to make, and respect everything your partner wants to do. I grew up a lot from my previous experience; I learned so many things from my past.

In the past, sometimes, I wanted to change my partner but, since me and Valeria have been together, I have found out that it is not right: because you love this woman, you shouldn't change — or want to change — her personality or anything ...

Respect is important. Respect is accepting what she likes ...

Love is something that just happens. We cannot predict the feeling.

For example, at the beginning, I wasn't her type and of course she needed me, but then we felt a sort of strong chemical reaction between us, so it is like a need, and then it is a choice, because I am happy to be with her.

When I was younger, I was really jealous, envious and insecure; even now, sometimes, I am still insecure — but now I know how to manage difficult situations.

We met on Tinder!

Really? What do you think about technology?

It is good, very good, but I think it depends on people — it is not the same for everybody. It is very funny, because, with my actual girlfriend, and the previous one, and the one before the previous one, I met all of them on dating websites and apps.

I can't say anything negative about technology. I love technology!

I am someone who doesn't care about another person's opinion, because I always show my personality and my character. If someone likes me, then that's good; but, if someone finds me really annoying, what can I do?

I can't change my personality to please someone else.

Relationship is like your job or your lifestyle — it is what you choose to do in life. I have improved a lot, looking back at my previous experiences; I have found that I have grown up a lot since when I was in Taiwan.

I had always been with the same girls but, when I came to London, I had different experiences with different women, from different

cultures, and if you have been with someone who comes from a different culture, it is different, because if you do something that makes your partner uncomfortable, they will immediately tell you what is right or not for them.

And all that makes you think — Am I doing something good or wrong? Is it good what I am doing?

And you grow up as an individual.

I really care about feelings — I don't know about other countries, but in my country, Taiwan, a lot of people fall in love or get married because of money or because of financial needs but ... for me ... I care very much about feelings ...

What is pure love? Something to do with sex?

For me, love hurts.

I never cared about what my friends said to me: the only words I would care about are those of my girlfriend. If she said anything and hurt me or something, I would feel insecure.

So yes, love hurts, but I wouldn't think it is a bad thing, because you care — otherwise, if you didn't care, you wouldn't be hurt ...

Valeria

Do you love yourself?

I would say that I really love myself, and that is why I am the harshest critic towards myself: so I would say I really love myself. I don't like being lazy, or making excuses for mistakes.

Are you happy with your partner?

Super happy, incredibly happy ... deadly happy ...

I see love in a Christian way, and in a Catholic way: if you do something to get something in return, don't do it at all. I just think you do certain things just because you want to do them; because they are for free — the gratuity of the gesture is the most important part of love for me.

Of course, you get something in return, but that's life; whatever you do, you get a reaction: you take rejections, you take indifference — it is something you get, otherwise it wouldn't affect you, if it was nothing.

It is certainly something; you can't say that you have nothing ... it is not a capitalistic transaction: giving something and taking something in return, of equal value ... no, it doesn't work like this.

My partner is the person I am most attracted to, ever, in the world, but ... I think this can be the case at the beginning, yet it is not what a relationship is based on. It would be, and sex is fundamental, but it is not the essence of love, in my opinion.

Trust is believing another person; it's knowing and hoping that they are not lying to you ... it is hoping that they are being really honest and up-front with you about everything you say ... everything you ask them. It's them being up-front, so that when you ask them — do you want this, do you believe in this? — they tell you the truth.

And trust and honesty are two really important things for me in friendship and relationship. And I actually saying things to people fully meaning what I say and I hope they trust and believe what I say.

Are you a loving person?

Yes, very much so; I like to love, I like to give love — I don't like to be the one who is nasty and unpleasant to people.

Have you ever cheated?

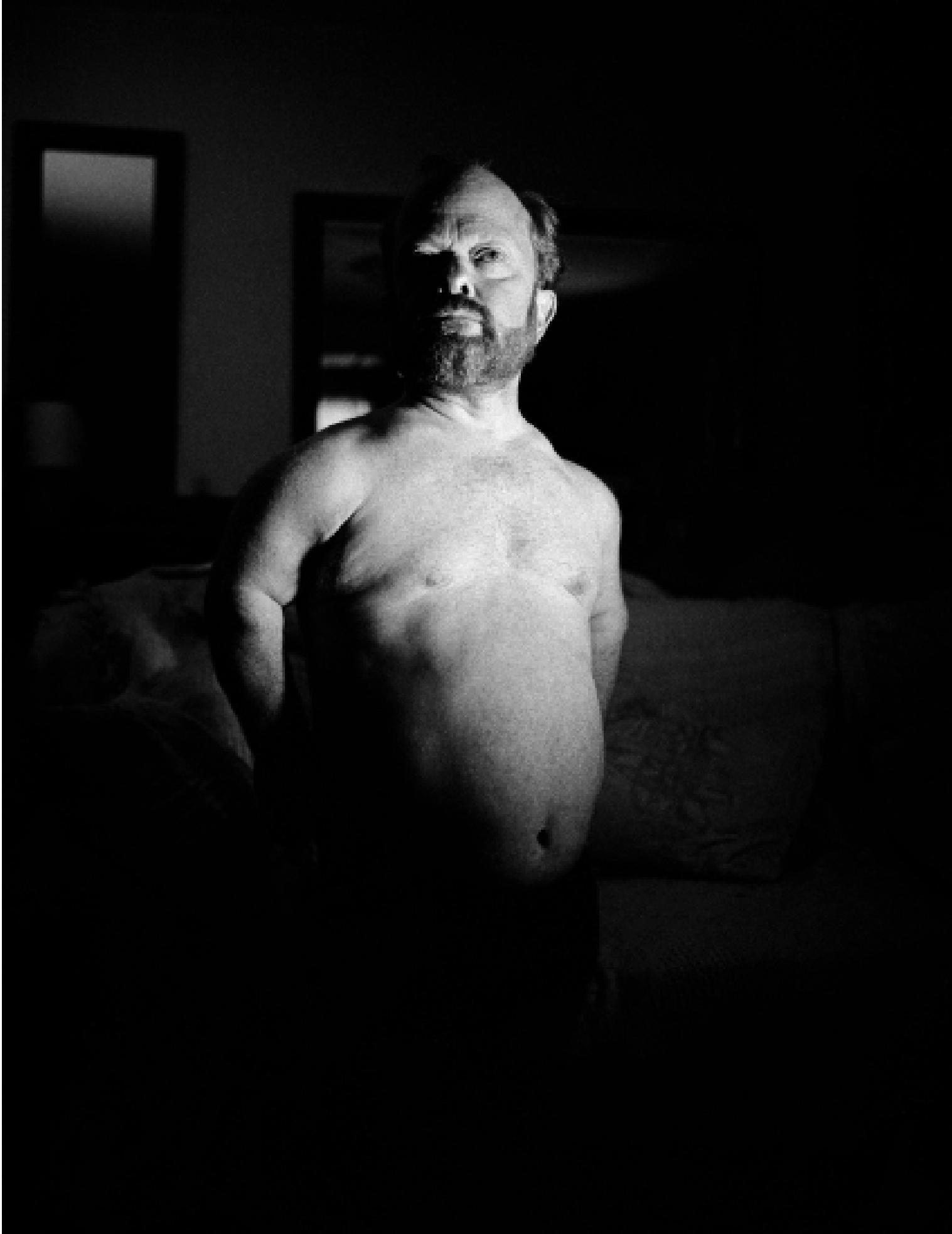
Yes, I did, but it was at the end of the relationship ... it was within the last few months of the relationship. I went to a party, up North. The person knew that I was going to the party, and it was a very open party — they might have given their blessing, that I did what I did, but I never told them ...

Love is one of the main fuels of a relationship: it fuels it. It must be there; it has to be the fire behind it: love, trust, honesty, support, care ... they have to be the main ingredients and fuel beyond a relationship.

Pure love? If it exists? I think it does exist ...

When I have been in love with someone, sex was far more passionate — and passionate in terms of being really intense with the person: physical, faster, harder, more passionate, kissing ... more passionate about everything that was going on, making it last longer.

Pure love does exist.



passion, there is this idea ... where a certain persona comes out, as opposed to one that is real — and it is a process of seduction, but at the same time, there is a reflection in my mind ... that happens when you meet someone, and they perhaps see in you something that you were unable to see in yourself; and you can either like the thing in question, and therefore perform even more in a sense — or, you can dislike it, and create some sort of resistance in that relationship ... where I don't like the way someone perceive me as, let's say radical, and therefore I stop being radical and I start to become a little bit more conservative ... or perhaps I like that, and I start performing my radicality within the relationship.

There are many configurations but to me, they have always been specific to an individual, so certain individuals have brought out certain things in me, that I have either acknowledged and embraced myself, or completely rejected, because I have found, at a certain point, that — as people — we were incompatible; even though those very things were actually making the relationship work.

I have been in relationships where, let's say, my femininity was appreciated — which is something that, I suppose, I have struggled to embrace, and I thought — ok, this is cool, I am going to perform femininity now!

That was an interesting lesson, having spent a lot of my time actually trying to reject any femininity that I felt in myself, growing

up in Cyprus, and trying to avoid sexism as much as possible, kind of creates that for you, and that rejection was a denial of a fundamental aspect of myself ...

But, nevertheless, experiencing a relationship, which was actually not that great, but brought out this single element, which I decided to keep ... not simply as performance but as embodied main ...

When you get to the point of meeting someone, and that getting-to-know process is enduring and lasting, it is completely effortless, and there is no performance whatsoever; it is almost like you know each other's moves, and they are not performed: they are completely ... structured, in a sense ... but, at the same time, I do think that once you recognize those structures, that very recognition is a way to undo them, so the relationship can bring out something in you, and then you realize how stable some elements have become ... and you can see what you like, and what you don't like ... and how we move on from this, either together or individually ...

Is love pleasure or desire?

Maybe 10 years ago or 5 years ago, I was very driven by desire, in a very, kind of, experiential way: I wanted to experience a maximum of intensity, and as fast as possible ... but now, that has fundamentally changed for me; I still remember that desire, but it is no longer contained in myself. It is almost like an ethical

responsability. My desire has somehow been put into synch with the impact that I can create on the world, or towards my partner or my immediate circle.

I would say that love, for me, is now more driven by, sort of, ethics, and also imagination; so maybe not pleasure and desire — but creativity, for sure ... where can you take yourself, where can you take your intimate environment to, and especially, with Giulia now, it's always a configuration of the two ...

I think of myself because I love myself: I think what I want to do, but she is always present in that picture with me. It is not longer — I need to be doing something ... it's that I will do something and she will be involved, and the same with our friends and our community around us.

That is love, for me: taking the time out to occupy your mind with a critical kind of appraisal of that position that you inhabit, in that love — and transforming it, if there is to be any transformation ...

I have always tried to leave a little bit of space in any person that I have encountered, and I think that most of the times that I have fallen in love, it has been because I have been, sort of, taking something out of myself, through someone else's existence.

With Giulia, I don't think I had to change or transform so much. It was ... something was in synch, that hadn't been in my control and I think, for me at least, it was very scary at the beginning —

trying to come to terms — so — you like me, I am not quite sure what is happening; we have been friends — how do we negotiate? — and it was interesting to see how you don't have to occupy your mind so much about what's going to happen, but rather, you are just, kind of, naturally sitting to its rhythm ... and there is this sort of harmony, that I have never experienced before ...

The partnerships that I had had, had been very intense and very passionate ... that doesn't necessarily mean that you're actually communicating with someone, at least in my experience: I have found that the most intense relationships have probably been so intense and vividly enduring in my mind and body, precisely because we were actually not communicating with each other.

At the same time, trying to find a language in a relationship to avoid hurting each other, to kind of recognize what mechanisms another person inhabits, which are not your own but instead radically different from the way you behave, it is a difficult exercise, not just in relationships, but having to relate more broadly to the world ... and to be understood ... I think is very difficult.

So I think beyond the relationship like even in society to not be tolerated, somewhere like London where it claims to be the diversity capital, it is more about tolerance here than is about real respect ... so to understand that differences can exist outside you, and that difference needs to be respected and understood ... you have to understand how someone else behaves.





she took hers out and said — you know what you said to me in the taxi? — and I said — yes — and, as the performance continued all around us, she said — I think I am feeling that too; so, yes, love is an emotion: it is an instinct, which you have to respect.

If your rational mind comes in, then it can't be love.

Love is unedited: it is a stream; it is not edited.

Loving person covers more, than just Paola ... It covers, 'Am I selfish? Am I loving? Am I giving? Am I generous?

People say maybe that I am loving; I don't consider that I am, but maybe I am?

Whatever Paola and I have done has always been full of adventure, and I am sure that, if she really wants to, she can come back with another bloke, I wouldn't be so keen ... though if she comes back with a girl, I will be very happy.

I think that, when you are in love with someone, if you keep exploring ... it can get richer; I am sure it will last, I don't even have a moment's doubt.

Our love is, sort of perfect — maybe it will improve in some way, but I can't imagine how.

Maybe it will? Maybe there will be new things?

When we go to our little farm, it means that we can do more things

down there; we can re-build and do things ... all these things are opportunities to express our love through having a new farm.

Does pure love exist?

Impure love?

In pure, I know — I am making a joke ...

Does love hurt?

Not if it is love.



Never ...?

Never, never ... never.

No one?

No

Why do two people fall in love?

Because they love each other; or, when they see each other, when a man sees a woman, he finds her beautiful ... and he wants to fall in love ...

... so, does he fall in love with her beauty?

Yes, but also with other things ...

Like?

The body, if he likes her, if she is slim ... or her hair ... eyes; the face, the way she talks and acts and that she is!

What is sex for you?

Sex?

Have you ever heard of sex?

No

What does the word 'sex' make you think about?

The street.

The street ... or?

The world.

The world?

Houses ... anything ...

... so, for you, sex is the world, houses ...

Houses ... people ... clothes ...

But you have never heard the word 'sex' before ...

No

What do you think emotions are?

It is when you are happy, when one person, or mum and daddy, says — today, we go to the swimming pool — and you are happy ...

And then? Are you happy?

When they say something which makes me happy, yes: I am happy ... or when we do something happy at school ...

What makes you happy?

Anything.

The things of the mind are jealousy, envy, ambition, the desire to be somebody, to achieve success.

These things of the mind fill our hearts, and then you say you love; but how can you love when you have all these confusing elements in you?

When there is smoke, how can there be a pure flame?

Love is not a thing of the mind; and love is the only solution to our problems.

Jiddu Krishnamurti's Talks 1949-1950, India

When you are nothing, you love ...

Love your brother,
Love your sister,
Love your mother,
Love your father,
Love your family,
Love your neighbor,
Love a stranger,
Love your friend,
Love your enemy,
Love your community,
Love a tree,
Love nature,
Love a flower,
Love all the animals.
Love a rock,
Love the sun,
Love the rain,
Love the wind,
Love the planet,
Love your life,
Become human,
Take responsibility for yourself.
But, first of all

...

I don't care what happens to me,
I think I am in love,
I want to be here and live my life's highs and lows to the full.
I don't know what will happen.

It will be very good,
maybe,
or
It will be very bad.

I don't know right now ...
Inside, I feel that it is worth letting myself go.

I met you,
I decided to take the risk,
I like him,
I like his energy,
He is like an animal,
I like this raw feeling
He could kill me.

Strangely I know ...
I would like to be eaten alive!
What a weird thought I am having now.
I would like to be eaten alive!

All through my life,
I thought that I loved somebody,
Now I am here,
For the first time, with you,
And I ask myself – Have I ever been in love?
Am I able to love someone?
Am I able to love you?
Am I happy with myself?
Do I love myself?

The most significant thing about all human beings is that their Love is always for somebody;
It is addressed to somebody ...
... and, in the moment you address your love,
You destroy it.

It is as if you are seeking to say,
'I will breathe only for you'...

And, where you are not,
How can I breathe?
Love is breathing;
It is a quality that I have in me,
Wherever I am,
With whomsoever I am,
And, even if I am alone,
Love goes on overflowing
From me;
It is not a question of being in love with someone;
It is a question of being in love.
Just asking yourself – am I able to become Love?

I kept my anger inside again,
Repressing it;

Again, I behaved in an aggressive way – Why am I so aggressive?
Where does it come from?

My emotions collapsed.

I felt out of synchronization, angry, frustrated, guilty, agitated.

My mind is obsessed,
My heart is broken,
I feel a hole inside my chest – It is empty; there is a hole there ...
I can see it,
I can feel it.

I want to change my negative attitude,

I want to be a loving person,

I want to lift you up,

I don't want to put you down,

I behaved badly,

I got angry for a stupid reason,

He bought some beers,

And I exploded,

I didn't trust him, that he could drink just one ...

He was drunk last night,

And he shouted at me in the street,

In front of people,

Loudly ...

They were looking at me.

I felt embarrassed.

I was silent.

I don't want that shit to happen again.

There was violence in his words,

Love, Sex and Relationship

'Love, Sex & Relationship' is a collection of conversations between others and myself.

It is a video and photography project, that includes a series of questions to myself, to couples and to individuals, who are or were in love, sex and relationship.

I collected 40 hours of interviews.

During the process of interviewing people, I entered an intimate space made of memories, thoughts and feelings; we looked into each other's eyes, we heard each other's voices, we opened our hearts: our souls were connected, and we shared past love experiences; we related, we created a relation.

Then I asked them to represent themselves in one picture. I took ten frames each.

This project began in July 2015, while I was in an abusive relationship with a guy, which lasted nine months.

By the end of the project, the intrinsic process had become a therapeutic tool. I discovered my worth, and the importance of loving myself.

It all began when I accepted his friend request on Facebook in 2015.

After a few months he was commenting on my posts. I went on his profile. I noticed that I couldn't find a picture of him. I was curious, and I texted him, asking to meet up for a coffee, somewhere in Stoke Newington.

The first time I saw him, I liked and disliked him at the same time.

He was physically attractive — a sexy man. I felt at ease, but also very uncomfortable. That day we met, we went to Abney Cemetery, eating apples.

He talked about bipolar disorder, borderline personality, alcohol and cocaine addiction, suicide and prostitution, ex-girlfriends and sex, hippie life, separation from his wife, abuse as a child, bloody episodes and wanting to kill everybody, death and how he had been trying to get away from all this since 2012, after a breakdown and hospitalization.

My reaction was building a wall around me.

I had never felt myself in a situation like this one, where someone vomits all the shit from his life onto you, the first time he meets you. I was judging him, and at the same time I was attracted to him. There was a feeling of something being wrong inside me, but I was still not able to pinpoint it.

The second time I met him was in a park in Muswell Hill, where he lives. That day he invited me to go to his place for dinner.

I remember that he cooked tortellini with spinach and mushrooms. I told him that I was vegetarian.

Then, while we were watching something on his laptop, he jumped on me, kissing me everywhere and we had sex. I didn't want to have sex with him, but I did, and I slept there that night.

I woke up, silently, in the morning, trying to make as little noise as possible whilst collecting all my stuff from around the room, and getting dressed. Then I left. He was still sleeping.

He called me back the day after, asking me how I was and saying that mine was the most delicious pussy that he had ever tasted. It was an unusual compliment and he was nice with me, so I decided to meet him again. I don't know why.

So I went to visit him again.

In the morning, lying in bed next to him, looking at the ceiling, he asked me - What are we now?

We are just friends — I replied.

Ok, friends — he said.

I didn't want to have a relationship with him. He was damaged.

Was I damaged as well?

But I was looking for enjoyment, to have fun and sex, and he was attractive. On the other hand, he was looking for a relationship, a wife and wanted to have children, yet he was still married to his ex-wife, all the while telling me how much he loved me, 20 days after we had met.

It was all so contradictory. How could someone love me, after knowing me for 20 days? He was telling me that he loved me and wanted to marry me, and at the same time he was looking at all the women, everywhere, while I was with him, telling me how much he wanted to have sex with them, and what kind of sex he had had with his ex-girlfriends.

So, I wasn't sure if I wanted to see him again. He would also call his ex on the phone or Skype a few times, while he was with me.

I told him that I was annoyed by the situation, but he only made jokes about me, on the phone to his ex. I felt unworthy, and this created more distance between us.

I thought that he was probably just naturally like that, and I didn't want to force things; I accepted it, and pushed myself out of my comfort zone.

I didn't run away.

All the right conditions to leave were there, right in front of me. But I couldn't see them. Why didn't I leave?

At the start, I managed to be detached; we argued, violently, many times. Then I began to become dependent on the situation.

I was feeling guilty.

It all resembled a trap; it was the starting point of a consciously destructive period of my life, where I certainly wasn't loving myself. I was destroying, humiliating and dis-respecting myself, without being aware of all the damage I was doing to myself — and, indirectly, to him.

A so called 'relationship' began, but it was very painful, and we constantly misunderstood each other: there was no communication at all — only a deeply problematic confusion with myself. We were two different worlds: two different cultures, with different values, different life experiences, different dreams and different goals.

He is a painter.

I actually couldn't understand myself: if I didn't love him, and I didn't communicate with him, why was I in a relationship with him?

Interviews and photographs are taken by Loredana Denicola and may not be used or copied without her written consent.

Pictures are taken with a Mamiya II 6X7, 120 mm, using black & white film, and in this book they are cropped.

Gelatin Silver Prints available, limited edition of (10) with Coa (certificate of authenticity)

Love, Sex & Relationship

A conceptual photography - video project © 2015/2018 by Loredana Denicola

Website: <https://www.loredanadenicola.com/>

Email:info@loredanadenicola.com

Instagram: [loredana_denicola](https://www.instagram.com/loredana_denicola)