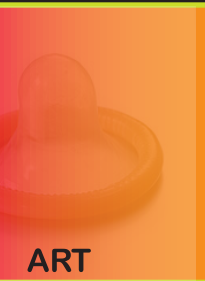


# RUBBERS!



ART



HISTORY



SAFE SEX



MATERIALS



INSTRUCTION



AWARENESS

A NEW EXHIBITION ON CONDOMS BY

museumofsex<sup>®</sup>

# OBJECTIVES OF THE EXHIBITION

In presenting the history, cultural significance and social meaning of condoms, through art, photography, historical ephemera and film, the Museum of Sex hopes to narrate the monumental impact the condom has had upon our society and our health.



# EXHIBITION OVERVIEW



Known by many nicknames, condoms have been used for centuries to prevent the spread of disease, as well as a means of controlling pregnancy. As both a contraceptive and a prophylactic, condoms have been both influential and controversial, often caught at the epicenter of debates regarding morality, religion and disease. Condoms have at times been viewed as the portal to sin, vice and moral bankruptcy and at others, particularly in a post HIV/AIDS world, a beacon of hope in halting the transmission of this vicious epidemic. Currently more than 33 million people worldwide are living with HIV/AIDS, with more than 22 million of these people living with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa alone. The history of condoms is a mélange of material invention, morality and education. Through the analysis of this one revolutionary object we can access an incredible expanse of social insights.



Existing for centuries, condoms have appeared in various forms across the world and through time. From linen, tortoiseshell and animal intestines to rubber, latex, and polyurethane, condoms have been made out a multitude of materials. Coming into regular use during the syphilis epidemic of the 1500s, condoms were also used as a contraceptive, particularly as needs for population control surged during the Industrial Revolution. The contraceptive benefits of condoms ultimately led to their prohibition. Unless solely promoted as a medical preventative in the moral battle against venereal disease, the underground condom business was soon associated with other illegal and illicit materials and behaviors, such as pornography and prostitution.

Prostitution and venereal disease have had a notorious relationship with the military throughout history. In the mid 1800s, both England and the United States created legislation which allowed for the quarantine of women who were prostitutes and those suspected to be prostitutes, particularly in areas close to military bases. The Contagious Disease Acts, as they were known in England, granted the government power to detain a woman for up to a year without her consent, in effect appropriating power over women's bodies as a means of controlling the spread of infection. Venereal disease among the United States military was rampant during WWI and the government was forced to intervene. In spite of its moral reservations, soldiers were given condoms and military-produced sex education films came into existence, later serving as a springboard for the sex education films and curricula developed for America's school children.

The Sexual Revolution of the 1960s transformed our ideas about sex and sexual freedom. Sexual exploration was safe, pregnancy fears were erased by the birth control pill and known sexually transmitted diseases could be treated with antibiotics. But the arrival of HIV/AIDS in the early 1980s brought that world to a halt. Free love ended and safe sex began. Sex education and safe sex campaigns such as "no glove, no love" centered on condom use. Yet debates rage about the promotion of condoms, with some advocating that condom distribution leads to promiscuity and the promotion of sex before marriage. Eventually this argument won out in the United States, and under the eight year term of former President George W. Bush (2001-2009), government funding went exclusively to abstinence only sex education programming and as recently as March 17, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI actively spoke out about condom use.

Yet as these counter condom debates continue and are implemented, the rate of HIV and sexually transmitted disease or sexually transmitted infections (STDs/STIs) rise, compounded by poverty, power, violence and gender inequalities both abroad and in the United States. Although contentious, celebrities and artists still lend their support to make safe sex both sexy and chic, and initiatives such as Project Red allow us to contribute just by being consumers. Although originally utilitarian, condom design today strives to incorporate both function and pleasure. With innovative textures to increase sensations, flavors to increase use during oral sex, as well as technological advances to make condoms as thin as possible, the excuses not to use them become more and more obsolete.



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## ABOUT THE MUSEUM

Since its opening in 2002, the Museum of Sex has generated 14 exhibitions, and 5 virtual installations, each in keeping with the Museum's mission of advocating open discourse about sex and sexuality. In striving to present to the public the best in current scholarship unhindered by self-censorship, the Museum of Sex is unlike any other cultural institution in the world.

## EXPANSION

In summer 2009, the Museum of Sex will be undergoing an expansion and renovation. Growing in gallery space as well as launching a brand new Fifth Avenue retail space, we will soon be able to accommodate our growing patronage. As an institution we continue to grow each month, with more than 100,000 visitors currently attending our exhibitions and shopping in the Museum of Sex Store. We are confident these numbers will double in the not too distant future.