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It has been argued, most notably in psychoanalytic and modernist art discourse, that the production of works of art is fundamentally driven by sexual desire. It has been further argued, particularly since the early 1970s, that sexual drives and desires also condition the distribution, display and reception of art.

This anthology traces how and why this identification of art with sexual expression or repression arose and how the terms have shifted in tandem with artistic and theoretical debates, from the era of the rights movements to the present. Among the subjects it discusses are abjection and the "informe," or formless; pornography and the obscene; the performativity of gender and sexuality; and the role of sexuality in forging radical art or curatorial practices in response to such issues as state-sponsored repression and anti-feminism in the broader social realm.

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