# Cosey Fanni Tutti reflects on 50 years of subversion in art and music



Describing Cosey Fanni Tutti as an artist who "wrecked civilization" is no small feat, but such was the reaction of Conservative MP Sir Nicholas Fairbairn following the 1976 exhibition "Prostitution," which she co-created as part of the influential collective COUM Transmissions. This controversial showcase, hosted at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts, not only featured Tutti’s pornographic images but also scandalous items like used bandages, challenging societal norms head-on. Reflecting on the tumultuous response to the exhibition recently, the now 73-year-old Tutti remarked, “It has taken 50 years for it to be revisited and understood for what it was really trying to say.” This retrospective dialogue highlights her enduring influence, shedding light on the complexities of sexuality and artistic expression.

Central to Tutti's philosophy is the idea of subversion. By modelling for pornographic magazines, she sought to "infiltrate" the industry and alter the narrative around consumerism in adult entertainment. Speaking at Castle Acre Priory, near her home in Norfolk, she explained how she aimed to empower women to engage critically with the porn industry, stating, “It’s my point of view. It was my action.” This revolutionary approach was not merely about art; it was a clarion call to rethink societal attitudes toward sexuality, particularly within a male-dominated context.

Tutti's experiences with the provocative realm of art and performance have left a lasting imprint on music culture as well. As a founding member of Throbbing Gristle—often heralded as the pioneers of industrial music—her contributions extend beyond artistry into defining genres. Their sound is said to have influenced a multitude of artists, including Nine Inch Nails and Ministry. After a hiatus, Throbbing Gristle's legacy re-emerged in the early 2000s, and recently, Tutti has focused on her solo career, with her latest album "2T2" set for release. The album, imbued with the emotions stemming from personal hardships and the pandemic's impact, showcases not just her endurance but also her ongoing evolution as an artist.

This evolution is underscored by her recent activities, including an upcoming documentary that delves into her multifaceted life and work. The film, directed by Caroline Catz, aims to further explore the tensions surrounding Tutti's art, much of which has grappled with the intersection of gender, identity, and societal norms. This fresh narrative follows the success of her memoir "Art Sex Music," shedding light on her formative years and the trials she faced as a pioneering voice in the avant-garde space. Tutti’s reflections extend into a broader context, citing a shared struggle with other female artists like Delia Derbyshire—a figure overshadowed in her time despite substantial contributions to electronic music.

Today, away from the frenetic energy of performance, Tutti finds solace in the tranquillity of the Norfolk countryside. She advocates for a return to simpler pleasures, stating, “I like peace and quiet.” The shift from the tumultuous life of an avant-garde provocateur to the comforting landscape of her rural home illustrates not only a personal evolution but also represents a generational change in artistic expression. Amidst the chaos of city life, the quietude provides an opportunity for reflection—a necessary pause to appreciate the complex layers of her journey and the impact of her art.

Cosey Fanni Tutti's ongoing narrative serves as a testament to the power of art to provoke thought and inspire change, affirming her place as a critical figure in the art and music worlds. Her evolving understanding of identity, sexuality, and creativity continues to resonate, urging new generations to engage with the boundaries of artistic expression.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm2k113yywzo), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/jun/03/art1)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm2k113yywzo), [[5]](https://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/artist-cosey-fanni-tutti-helping-mainstream-art-embrace-sex)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm2k113yywzo), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/aug/13/cosey-fanni-tutti-throbbing-gristle-coum-interview-re-sisters-memoir)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm2k113yywzo), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/friday_review/story/0%2C%2C313518%2C00.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm2k113yywzo), [[6]](https://www.forcedexposure.com/Catalog/tutti-cosey-fanni-2t2-cd/CTI.2T2CD2025.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm2k113yywzo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/jun/03/art1> - In October 1976, the British art group COUM Transmissions, including Cosey Fanni Tutti, staged the exhibition 'Prostitution' at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts. The show featured sculptures made from used tampons and a series of pornographic photographs of Tutti, who had modeled for Playbirds magazine. The exhibition lasted eight days and was described in the press as 'sickening' and 'depraved'. Conservative MP Nicholas Fairbairn dubbed Throbbing Gristle, the band formed from COUM Transmissions, 'wreckers of civilisation'.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/friday_review/story/0%2C%2C313518%2C00.html> - Cosey Fanni Tutti's work as a model for magazines like Fiesta and Men Only informed her art. In 1976, COUM Transmissions exhibited these photographs in 'Prostitution' at the Institute of Contemporary Arts. The exhibition, lasting a week, sparked significant controversy, with at least 100 newspaper and magazine articles and questions in Parliament. The press criticized the exhibition, and Tutti and Genesis P-Orridge were briefly household names due to the scandal.
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tutti_%28album%29> - Tutti is a studio album by English musician Cosey Fanni Tutti, released on 8 February 2019 through Conspiracy International. Despite her prolific output in Throbbing Gristle and Chris & Cosey, this was her first solo album in 36 years, since 1983's Time To Tell. The album was composed as the soundtrack to Harmonic COUMaction, an autobiographical film shown at the opening ceremony of Hull UK City of Culture in 2017.
5. <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/artist-cosey-fanni-tutti-helping-mainstream-art-embrace-sex> - In 1976, British artist and musician Cosey Fanni Tutti, a founding member of Throbbing Gristle, presented the exhibition 'Prostitution' at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts. The exhibition featured explicit pornographic performances and images, including blood, urine, used tampons, and the pornographic images Tutti repurposed. The show caused a significant stir in the British art world, with newspapers campaigning for its immediate removal and the House of Commons debating its safety.
6. <https://www.forcedexposure.com/Catalog/tutti-cosey-fanni-2t2-cd/CTI.2T2CD2025.html> - Cosey Fanni Tutti's album '2t2' is a nine-track project released on June 13, 2025, via Conspiracy International. The album moves between propulsive beat constructions and expansive electronic explorations, continuing themes from her 2019 album 'TUTTI'. It reflects on her life, drawing on personal experiences and expressing them through music. The album is divided into two distinct parts: one rhythmic and the other more meditative, connected by an overwhelmingly positive mood.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/aug/13/cosey-fanni-tutti-throbbing-gristle-coum-interview-re-sisters-memoir> - Cosey Fanni Tutti, co-founder of Throbbing Gristle and performance artist, discusses her legacy and the liberation of revisiting her darkest experiences for her new memoir, 'Re-Sisters'. She reflects on her early life, including being thrown out of her family home, and the challenges faced by her and Genesis P-Orridge in their hometown of Hull due to their provocative performances. The interview provides insight into her personal journey and the impact of her work on the art world.