

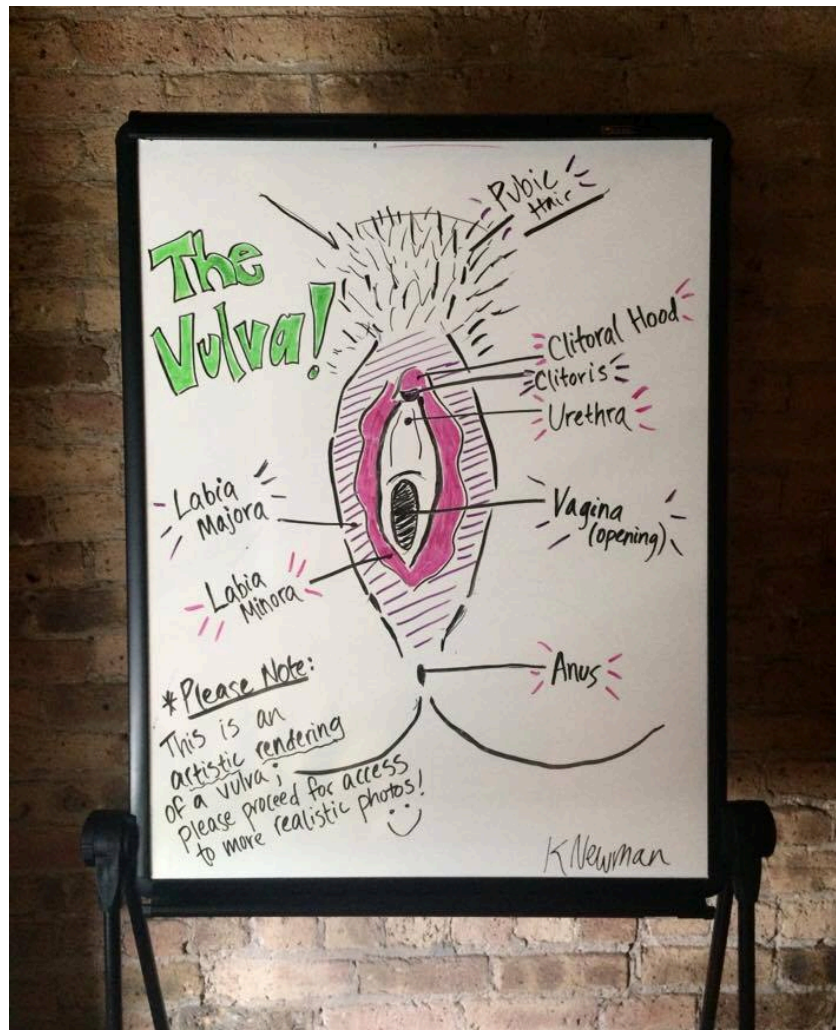
Vulva Appreciation Resources

Vulva Appreciation Day was a project that grew out of a discussion in the Entropy comfy chairs about body shaming, what we view as “normal” and why, and the lack of visibility of the diversity of vulvas. The images we consume in the media and even through medical models and pictures are misleading and create a false sense of “normal”. Genital cosmetic surgery, like labiaplasty, is on the rise and it’s troubling to us that women feel that their vulva’s appearance needs to be surgically altered in the pursuit of “normal”. Women need an accurate awareness of the range of normal vulvar appearance!

We discovered that **a)** there is no Vulva Appreciation Day, and **b)** there are many great resources out there for everyone to view, learn about, and appreciate the vulva. We decided to throw a party in celebration of the glorious vulva, complete with vulva cupcakes, on July 5th, 2017. Additionally, in an effort to make these amazing resources more easily accessible, we have compiled a list of websites, art projects, books, and documentaries that serve to normalize the diversity of the vulva. We want women to see that when it comes to the appearance of the vulva, the range of “normal” is so huge that there essentially is no “normal”. We hope to ultimately empower those who possess vulvas and those who interact with vulvas to view them all with love and respect.

One caveat: While there is no “normal” in terms of appearance of your vulva, it is NOT normal to have pain down there. If you have pain, we can help!

A Quick Anatomy Lesson!



Vulva: This is the term for the female external (outer) genitalia. Lots of people call this area the “vagina”, but that’s technically incorrect! The vagina is internal, and the vulva is external. Vulvas all look different, and it’s often hard to even get a good look at your own (if you happen to own one).

Labia Majora: The labia majora are the “outer lips”, or folds, or flaps, or whatever you would like to call them, that go around the labia minora and serve to protect all of the important stuff in there. The labia majora have pubic hair that grows on them, and the way they look varies widely from person to person.

Labia Minora: The labia minora sit within the labia majora, and serve as another layer of protection. However, the labia minora often extend outside of the labia majora and the length and width are very different from person to person. The labia minora are hairless, and generally more sensitive than the labia majora. Once again, they come in many shapes, sizes, colors, textures, etc.

Clitoral Hood: Where the labia minora join and form a “hood” of skin that covers the tip of the clitoris.

Clitoris: This is actually the “glans”, or the external “tip” of the clitoris. This external part of the clitoris is a very sensitive spot with many, many nerve endings. This part varies in size and appearance a lot! Most of the clitoris is actually internal, and it is the only organ that has the sole purpose of sexual arousal.

Urethra: The urethra is the short tube (the opening is what is pictured) where we pee out of... Note: this is not comfortable to poke!

Vagina: The vagina is the internal tube that extends from the opening (the part you can see on the outside) to the uterus. Many women want to know if the depth or size of their vagina is “normal”, and once again, we assure you that there is far too much variability to answer that question! The cervix at the end of the tunnel can actually move depending on several factors (sexual arousal, for one), changing the relative length of the vagina.

Anus: The opening where the gastrointestinal tract ends and waste exits. Hair grows around this area and the skin here is often darker in color. Some people bleach this area, but that is harsh on this sensitive skin.

Pubic Hair: Do whatever you want with this stuff, folks! Leave it, shave it, wax it, make a ponytail out of it, whatever. Just don't hurt yourself.

Online Resources:

The Labia Library:



This is an excellent online resource and great place to start looking for anyone interested in learning more about the vulva. The site not only includes real, color photos of women's vulvas (and labia, obviously!), but also answers common questions and includes an anatomy lesson.

From the Website: *The Labia Library is about showing you that, just like any other part of the body, labia come in all shapes and sizes. They're also really important in sex and they keep your vagina healthy. Women's Health Victoria has developed The Labia Library to bust a few common myths about how normal labia look. There's also a photo gallery that shows you just how unique everyone's labia are.*

<http://www.labialibrary.org.au/>

Online Resources

The Vulva Gallery:

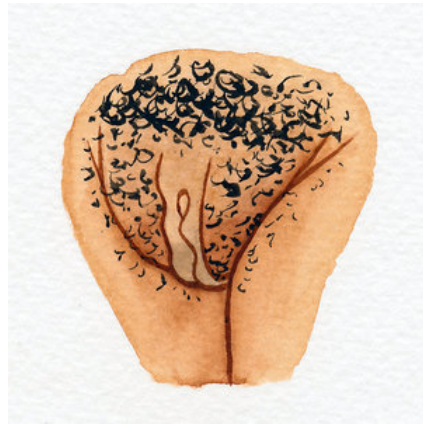


Image taken from: <https://www.thevulgagallery.com/>

We are in love with these beautiful illustrations of different vulvas! This site also includes personal stories from women about their experiences and journeys with self-love and of course, their vulvae.

From the Website: *Variations in vulvae are endless. Labia can be long or tiny, wrinkly or smooth, thick or thin, curvy or wavy, juicy or dry, big or small, chubby or skinny, flappy or wobbly, asymmetrical or equally long. Mostly it's a combination of these, and there are many more possibilities. Labia colour can vary from dark brown to pink, from red to purple, from light pink to light brown or caramel- or a combination of these, and many more colours. When inner labia are longer than outer labia and stick out they often tend to have a darker colour than the internal part of the vulva. The mons pubis can be round, chubby, skinny, firm, or wobbly- depending on estrogen levels and body weight. Some bodies are naturally hairy, others have little hair growth. The natural variety in vulvar anatomy is very broad, making sure that everyone looks a little bit different.*

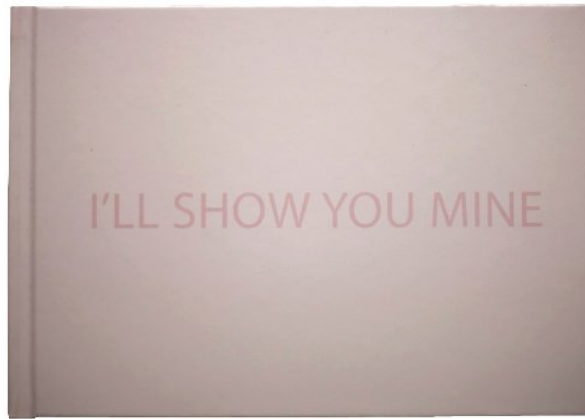
<https://www.thevulgagallery.com/>

<https://www.instagram.com/the.vulva.gallery/>

Print Books:

I'll Show You Mine

by Wrenna Robertson:



<https://www.amazon.com/Show-Mine-Wrenna-Robertson-editor/dp/0986803405>

Purchased by our own Dr. Sarah Haag, this book displays full-color photos of vulvas, both from a front view and a between-the-legs view. Each set of vulva photos is accompanied by a story from the owner. Not only is this book awesome for its content, but it is also dedicated to its purpose of educating the public. You can request the book for free if you are part of a health or education organization, and if you buy it, 10% of the net sales are donated to local and international women's charities.

From the Project: *There are very few resource tools available for women and men to gain a true appreciation of genital diversity. This skewed understanding leads many women to feel that they are alone and abnormal in their body and in their experience. The awareness of such procedures as labiaplasty can serve to further heighten women's belief that there is in fact a "normal", and that surgery is a suitable remedy for "abnormal" genitalia. This project stands in defiance of these societal constructions which serve to limit our growth, understanding and empowerment.*

101 Vagina

by Philip Werner and Toni Childs



Image taken from: <https://www.amazon.com/101-Vagina-Philip-Werner/dp/098740900X>

This book is a collection of 101 black and white photos of women, taken from a front view. Each photo is accompanied by a message, story, or poem written by the woman about their experience with their body or womanhood. Note: these are not technically photos of vaginas, but the author explains his reasoning for using the word “vagina” instead of “vulva” on the website.

From the Project: *101 Vagina is about breaking down the taboo around vaginas and body image shame generally. It confronts the lies we are told about what’s normal and celebrates our uniqueness and diversity. 101 Vagina is also about sharing of story, of experience; the passing own of knowledge and wisdom. This book is particularly relevant given the startling increase in labiaplasty, cosmetic surgery of the vagina. The photos and messages confront the lies we ae told about what’s normal and where beauty lies.*

Documentaries/Video Content:

The Perfect Vagina Documentary



This documentary by Lisa Rogers, focused on exploring the genital plastic surgery trend, is an honest and passionate look at the pressures modern women face and insecurities many hold. In the film, she follows a labiaplasty patient, talks to two labiaplasty surgeons, gets her vulva plastered by James McCartney (Great Wall of Vagina creator), and interviews both men and women about their expectations and experiences with the vulva.

From the Website: *Fronted by Lisa Rogers, this documentary focuses on the rise in vaginal cosmetic surgery, specifically labiaplasty. For the uninitiated, labiaplasty involves cutting off the inner labia so that they don't 'hang' below the outer labia. Ouch! The labiaplasty business has skyrocketed over the past few years, and Lisa's mission was to find out why so many women hate the appearance of their vulvas to the point that they'd willingly have pieces of them surgically removed.*

Watch it here:

<https://documentarystorm.com/the-perfect-vagina/>

Documentaries/Video Content:

Vagina Dispatches Part One: All About the Vulva



The entire “Vagina Dispatches” series from the Guardian’s Mona Chalabi and Mae Ryan is interesting and informative, and the first episode is all about the vulva! In this short but sweet video, they discuss lack of knowledge of female anatomy, how media and even medical images of the vulva are not realistic, and explore the labiaplasty phenomenon.

From the Website: *Think you know about vaginas? Think again. In the four-part series, we find out that even the most basic of body knowledge is lacking- people still don’t understand what vaginas look like or how they function. In episode one, we build a giant vulva, then talk to a gynecologist, a labiaplasty surgeon and a trans woman, to find out what vulvas really look like.*

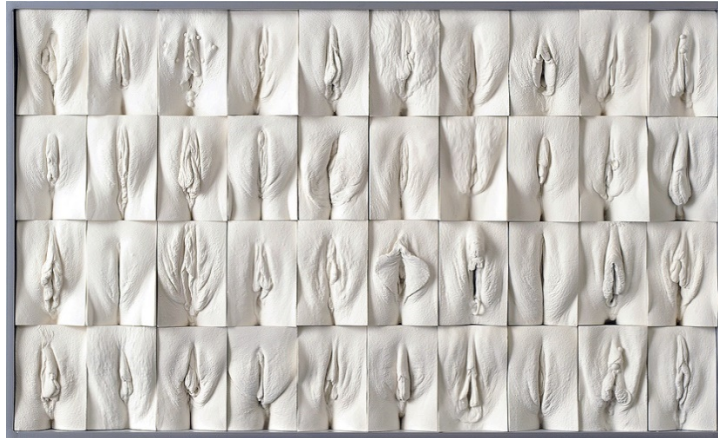
Watch it here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/video/2016/sep/23/vagina-dispatches-part-one-what-vulvas-look-like>

Other:

The Great Wall of Vagina

By Jamie McCartney



This amazing work of art by English artist Jamie McCartney consists of four hundred plaster casts of unique vulvas, arranged into large panels. The women who participated in the project range from age 18 to 76, and include twins, transgendered men and women, and women pre and post-natal. You can check out exhibitions of the work on the website listed below!

From the Website: *“For many women their genital appearance is a source of anxiety and I was in a unique position to do something about that”. Vulvas and labia are as different as faces and many people, particularly women, don’t seem to know that. McCartney hopes this sculpture will help to combat the exponential rise, seen in recent years, of cosmetic labial surgeries. This new fashion for creating ‘perfect’ vagina sets a worrying trend for future generations of women. “It’s time our society grew up around these issues and I’m certain that art has a role to play.”*

<http://www.greatwallofvagina.co.uk/home>