



CULTURE

Miley Cyrus's Steamy Shoot for Planned Parenthood

by [Stephanie Eckardt](#) April 19, 2016 7:00 am



"Miley" by Marilyn Minter, 2016.

The artist Marilyn Minter, who started off capturing her mother's drug addiction in the '60s, is more than used to causing controversy, but she really stirred things up last week. That's why, she explained, she ignored my initial phone call last Friday, even though we'd reconfirmed it only minutes before. "I've been getting trolled by, you know, the far right anti-Planned Parenthood crazies," she said when she called back a few minutes later, after listening to my voicemail.

This time, though, it's not so much her work's touchy subject matter – abortion and reproductive rights – that's drawing the majority of the attention, but her collaborator. Last Thursday, Miley Cyrus presented Minter with Planned Parenthood's Woman of Valor award, and unveiled a steamy portrait series they'd shot together, which they're now selling 50 limited edition, \$5,500 prints of on Artsy to raise money for the organization. (The outtakes from the shoot will soon end up on T-shirts by Marc Jacobs.)

It's an unlikely pairing, but it turns out Minter has more in common with the pop star than you might think. "She's a sincere little activist," Minter said. "Let me tell you how sincere she is. I know you're not going to believe this: She flies commercial so she doesn't have to make a carbon footprint by flying private. She books her own flights, she ends up with layovers – just like everybody else."

They first met when Cyrus took a break from filming Woody Allen's Netflix show in L.A., flew to New York, drove herself from the airport, and parked outside of Minter's studio. "[She came] upstairs, no entourage, with pimple medicine on," Minter remembered with a laugh, adding that Cyrus charmed the studio with conversation while doing her own makeup. "She's Lena Dunham without going to college, you know," Minter said affectionately, comparing her to another Planned Parenthood supporter.

That is not an idle comparison. Minter's known Dunham since she was nine years old – and even raised over \$2 million for Planned Parenthood with Dunham's mother, Laurie Simmons, and fellow artist Cindy Sherman. In fact, that's how she ended up with the Woman of Valor award: the three banded together and organized a fundraising auction with donated works by artists like Richard Prince and Richard Serra. "We targeted the big boys, basically, and they didn't let us down," Minter said.

She thought that was that – until the infamous doctored videos claiming Planned Parenthood sold baby parts started getting released. "I'm of the age group where I remember when abortions were illegal and unsafe, and I thought this was behind us," she said. "They were being just inundated with controversy, and my mind was just thinking, 'Well, maybe we should take our inspiration from the marriage equality movement and the gay rights movement. Get public figures, corporations, and institutions to stand up and fight back.'"

That's where Cyrus came along. Familiar with her LGBT and animal activism, Minter figured she might be willing to take a stand, and arranged for their mutual friend, curator Jeffrey Deitch, to pass along a letter. Then, by chance, Minter was at a party in New York explaining this plan to someone she'd just met, Diane Martell, who turned out to be the director of Cyrus's video for "We Can't Stop." Martell promptly FaceTimed the pop star. Cyrus, it turned out, was more than on board for a portrait series, which Minter ended up capturing behind a pane of frosted glass, as is her signature style.

"We chose the one that would make the most money for Planned Parenthood," Minter explained. "We're not making any money either way, this is just a labor of love for everybody involved." That's also true of the pins Minter is also making, sold so far at the New York gallery Shoot the Lobster and the Printed Matter bookstore, with the hopes that buyers will take supportive selfies.

"Everybody's really volunteering, and that's what we've got to keep doing," she added. While Minter acknowledges abortions are only about two percent of Planned Parenthood's services, for her that's not something to downplay. "It just feels like a real wear on autonomy, women's agency, and sexual agency," she said. "You don't know how close your generation is to losing any access to any abortion. You just have no idea."