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# Brands to Watch!

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## Lora DiCarlo's Osé Lands Spot on Time's Best Of List

Time Magazine released its annual list of the 100 Best Inventions that are making the world "better, smarter and even a bit more fun," naming Lora DiCarlo's Osé as one of the year's Best Inventions.

To assemble the 2019 Time Best Inventions list, Time solicited nominations across a variety of categories from editors and correspondents around the world, and through an online application process.

SEE LORA DICARLO'S, PAGE 152

## Lioness' Anna Lee Named to Forbes '30 Under 30' List

Anna Lee, co-founder of the sexual wellness company Lioness, landed one of the coveted spots on Forbes' famed "30 Under 30" list.

Placing in its Consumer Technology sector for 2020, Lee's contribution as the engineering lead on Lioness' flagship smart vibrator earned her the prestigious ranking as one of the year's honorees.

SEE LIONESS' ANNA LEE, PAGE 144

## XR Brands to Showcase Sextech at CES 2020

XR Brands is set to showcase its Ergo-Fit range at the upcoming Consumer Electronics Show (CES) this January 7-10 at the Sands Expo Center in Las Vegas.

XR Brands' appearance at CES follows a highly publicized scandal at last year's event with the controversial revocation and subsequent re-awarding of a robotics award to Lora DiCarlo.

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## MAKING MOVES

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# Passion Project

Lorals CEO Melanie Cristol Details Career Journey

BY ZOE TAMARA

"Dental dams are sort of the nerdy kid at school, which is exactly what I was," mused Melanie Cristol from a plush office chair at XBIZ headquarters in early October. Exactly five years ago to the day, the now founder and CEO had quit her lucrative job at a law firm to pursue an immediate passion project: latex oral sex panties.

Cristol had begun her journey in the sexual wellness field at Columbia University, where she worked as a peer sex educator while completing her undergraduate degree. It was there that she first became a dental dam user, and subsequently discovered all the misgivings of perhaps the most underrated product in sexual health history.



"I appreciated that they existed, but I just always found them to be so disappointing as a user," she said.

"And the fact that they're called dental dams — it's just such an unsexy concept to integrate into something that's supposed to be fun and exploratory and exciting."

After a particularly romantic vacation, she related, the idea came to her like a fever dream and since then, she's been on a mission to help people have as much oral sex as possible with the help of Lorals.

"We were on the coast of Mexico and you can't get dental dams there," she recounted. "It's hard to get them even here in the U.S. That's when I thought to myself, 'what if this product were sexy?'"

Unlike condoms that are available in a variety of sizes, colors, styles, flavors and price points in every pharmacy and gas station, dental dams are, without exaggeration, indeed "the nerdy kid at school." There's an undeniable dearth of options, with few stores even carrying them at all. Of the options available, the packaging and general presentation more closely resemble generic-brand decongestant or dated feminine hygiene campaigns that pre-date the millennial "periods are badass" marketing trend.

As Cristol notes simply, they're far from sexy.

Aside from the lackluster sex-appeal factor, traditional dental dams have to be held in place and can often result in looseness or slippage that can feel less than awesome for both the giver and/or receiver when it comes to oral sex.

This, coupled with the previously mentioned foiled romantic evening, led Cristol to an iteration

“  
I think that when we remove taboos, people will be more comfortable being themselves and living their lives as they want to be living them.”

MELANIE CRISTOL, FOUNDER AND CEO, LORALS

of the dental dam as a hands-free, wearable "sexy panty."

"I thought to myself, what if I could reinvent this product and make it into something that's cool and desirable, and something that people actually want to enjoy."

Although it's one of Cristol's top priorities moving forward with the brand, Lorals are not yet cleared by the FDA to protect against STIs, and therefore not yet a suitable replacement for dental dams when it comes to STI protection. However, since the company's launch in November of last year, Lorals has emerged as a forerunner in the sexual wellness marketplace that 100 percent of everyone owes to themselves to try at least once.

So if they're not wearable dental dams, what exactly are they?

"Single-use latex panties designed for oral sex and rimming," is perhaps the best



textbook definition one-liner one can offer for Lorals. They're paper thin to allow for maximum sensation and feature an ultra-wide crotch that stays in place during all kinds of play. They're also currently opaque and vanilla-scented, although Cristol teased plans to release a transparent option, as requested by popular demand, soon.

Oh, and they're damn sexy to boot.

Think of Lorals less as a one-to-one alternative to dental dams and more as a self-care item.

"If you wear this, you're likely to have a really amazing and fulfilling sexual experience," said Cristol. "It's kind of akin to prices of a really nice bath bomb or facemask, and significantly less expensive than getting a massage."

In creating Lorals, Cristol ruminated on reasons why people turned down oral sex when they really wanted to be having it, using her own experience as a jumping off point before expanding her research to include input from other women, as well as trans and non-binary folks.

The responses Cristol received ran the gamut, rang-

ing.

"That's what's so cool about wearing them," enthused Cristol, "they allow you to feel all of those sensations without stressing over whatever is holding you back — you just get to enjoy the experience."

For people who are already having fantastically uninhibited oral sex all the time, Lorals is also for you. Imagine being able to switch gears seamlessly, oscillating between cunnilingus and rimming, vagina to asshole, all in one go — just back and forth, up and down — it's possible

have yet to be announced.

In terms of the company's goals moving forward, "We eventually want to be in CVS or Target," said Cristol. "We want Lorals to be in bedside tables the same way that condoms are in bedside tables."

"We revamped our website a few months ago with the goal being to make this product really feel accessible for a huge range of people, and now that many retailers — even a few big-box ones — have reached out asking about us and the product, I'd say we achieved that much."

Looking back on the five-year journey that's seen Lorals go from a fledgling of an idea to a full-blown company on the verge of disrupting the sexual health/wellness field, it's difficult to imagine Cristol's story unfolding any other way, although it very easily could have.

Throughout the interview, she shared a number of anecdotes — some hilarious, some moving and some profound — illuminating the backstory of where exactly Lorals comes from in a deeply personal sense, offering a glimpse into the ethos that continues to drive the brand now.

"I've had Tourette's since I was 16 and for a long time the tics were light and didn't happen very frequently," she revealed. "But when I be-

came a lawyer, I started ticking more often and when I got the idea for Lorals, I started ticking all over the place."

Caught in the grind of corporate office culture and worsening symptoms, Cristol recounted a defining moment in her undergraduate career. "When I was a sociology student I was really interested in the issue of stigma and why things are stigmatized."

As an intern on the production team of Eve Ensler's "The Vagina Monologues," she recalled, "There was never any discomfort talking about sex. Instead it was like, 'sex and vaginas are a normal part of life and that is what our show is about,' and that became normal for me."

"I ended up becoming a lawyer and I liked being a lawyer, but I missed being able to talk about joyful things in life. I missed the joy of creating theater and creating things in general."

When it came time to make the pivotal decision that ultimately led her to pursuing Lorals full-time, Cristol said, smiling, "It sounds super cheesy, but I was very fortunate to have a sign happen to me."

"My mind was telling me 'you have this very stable, steady job and this career you worked very hard for.' I could've continued to progress in that field and likely had a 'successful' life but thanks to my Tourette's, I became very aware of how I actually felt about that standard career path."

"I've always known that to be able to facilitate sexual interactions that weren't otherwise happening was very meaningful and exciting for me," she said.

In summary, forget the nerdy kid from school. With regards to Lorals, it's clear where Cristol is aiming.

Her final thoughts on the matter offer the most poignant reflection on what Lorals is and what they can do on both the personal level and in the grand scheme of all things. "I think that when we remove taboos, people will be more comfortable being themselves and living their lives as they want to be living them." ❄️



ing from the obvious being on one's period or not having showered in a few days to people who are interested in rimming but are nervous about the poop-factor.

"One thing I hear a lot," she said, "is that somebody's partner has a scratchy beard and it physically hurts to receive oral because it's chafing against their skin."

For some, Lorals presents a training wheels-type of situation that can help them get back into oral sex after going through childbirth or experiencing some kind of trauma.

"I've talked with people who are survivors of sexual assault or who are trans or gender non-conforming, and for a variety of reasons don't want the skin-to-skin contact of oral sex," said Cristol. "By using Lorals, they're able to feel all of those great sensations [of oral sex] but the skin-to-skin contact is something that's no longer on their mind."

In essence, the great gift of Lorals is the permission it grants the wearer to have the worry-free oral sex they want and deserve to be

with Lorals.

The tension in the material allows you to "finger forever," enthused a gleeful Cristol, demonstrating the pushback on a pair of the stretched out panties.

"You can play with texture and sensation a little bit more than you would be able to with skin-to-skin contact," she explained. "You can basically put your chin or nose up against this and rub vigorously and it's not going to have the same kind of friction as it would otherwise."

Also, yes — for all you fetishists who've been quietly suspecting until now, you absolutely can incorporate Lorals into your kinky playtime.

"People will use it as latex fetishwear that you can have oral sex through," said Cristol. "If you turn them inside out, they have more of a traditional wetlook that way. Plus you can snap them and make a lot of fun sounds."

"Sometimes people will rip them off when they're done and that can be really exciting — it's a whole other group of the population that's into Lorals."

If you've never physically torn your partner's panties off their body after going down on them, we suggest you try it as soon as possible.

Currently, Lorals fits U.S. sizes 0-14, although Cristol is working on doubling the size range. Additionally, she plans to release a masculine version soon, along with other products that