

“The lesbian community in the late 1990s was very dynamic! They were coming out of ACT UP activism, they were doing all of this radical stuff, there was the Riot Girl scene co-mingling with lesbian punk... It was a creative identity that I missed the boat on. So, by the time I kind of came around in the early 2000s with *Velvetpark*, not that we had a bunch of rights, but it felt like we had gained a step as a community in general. The LGBT community had gained a step. There was greater acceptance by parents and larger communities. If you were not accepting it meant you lived in some part of the country that was really backward or your parents were really backward.

At the time there was *Curve* magazine, *Girlfriends* magazine and *On Our Backs*. All those magazines were out of San Francisco. *Curve* was still running but at the time that I entered into the fray those magazines had been going for at least fifteen years. I think that the criticism at the time was that those two magazines felt very assimilationist and very celebrity driven (*On Our Backs* was sex-oriented). It was all about Ellen and Melissa Etheridge. It was very much about what was palatable. But there was nothing coming out of New York, which really is a center of culture and intellectual stimulation. Coming out of New York it was grass-roots and edgy, and we were able to jump steps. I was able to get our cover stories by literally going to events and walking up to people and just saying, ‘Hey will you be on the cover of *Velvetpark*?’ This was how I met Margaret Cho who was our very first cover girl. I just went to an event and said, ‘Oh hi Margaret! I’m publishing this magazine! Will you be on the cover?’ The second person we had on the cover was Toshi Reagon and then we had Eve Ensler, who isn’t actually a lesbian but that was when *The Vagina Monologues* were still really hot, and Rachel Maddow before she was famous. From there it just progressed to all of these people who were activists, feminists, lesbian allies or lesbian/queer identified women. We covered all of the musicians and artists. Things out of New York just had kind of an edgy vibe. Today it’s different. Now everyone’s too savvy and it’s impossible to be edgy.

I started *Velvetpark* at the same time that *The L Word* was in the beginning stages of production. *The L Word* is both lame and irritating and very important, influential and seminal. There was no other cultural thing that rallied lesbians across all demographics at that time... women who were teenagers through women in their sixties. There was this moment where everyone felt so compelled. Any lesbian, any woman who sought women, watched that show.”

Grace Moon, 2017