

It must be a bad child

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Abstract

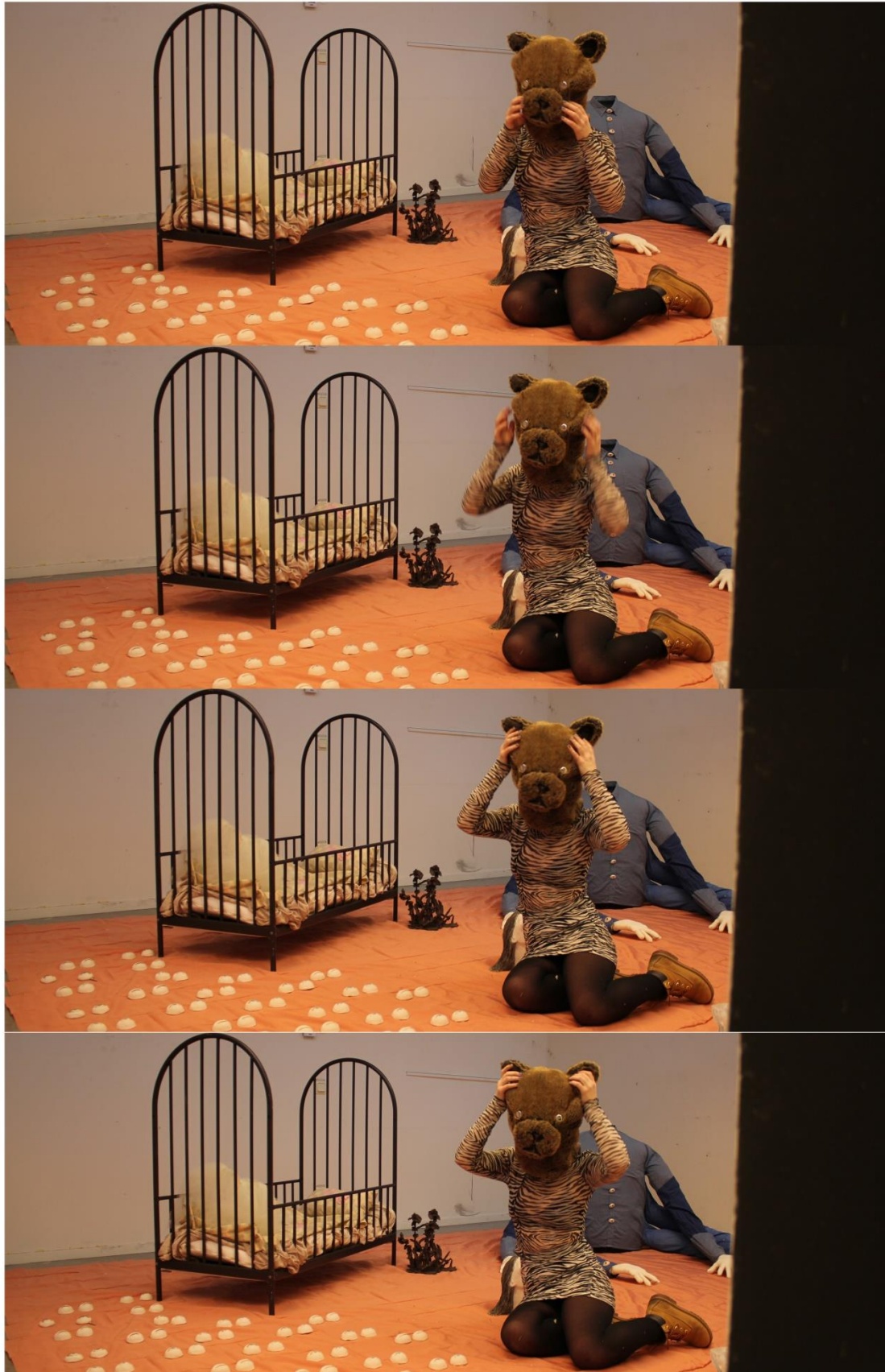
It must be a bad child

I build rooms, installations, where I combine objects into scenes. This scene is an attempt to portray feelings and mental states surrounding sexual abuse. I'm building a girls' room, but it's more of a psychological place than a real room. I want to let the girl take place and show a trauma that lives in the hidden, depending on the environment not seeing, in the public space. It's about living with memories of a trauma in a traumatized body. I place two larger sculptures in the installation, a girl and a woman, who share the (mental) room. Selection of materials is an important part of my practice. In my installations there is almost always a feeling of discomfort, that things are not what they seem at first. I use the expectations that exist around different materials and what they symbolize and create uncertainty in the room by, for example, giving them new places and functions. I use film to get movement into the installation. The sculptures come to life through the film. The film contains no sound when I see the state I portray as silent.

Key words: Trauma, Sexual abuse, PTSD, Childhood, Personal, Girl/Woman, Taking space, Psychological room, Psychological patterns, Installation, Ceramic sculpture

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Introduction

*"This is because children have an egocentric thinking, i.e. young children think from themselves and assume that other people's actions have to do with the child themselves. Moreover, if someone harms a small child, the child will often think that **it must be a bad child**, because you obviously get to do bad things against it"*

(George & Lander 2012:52)

My masters project deals with the trauma of sexual abuse and is based on personal experiences from my childhood. In my artistic practice I often work with things I need to work with on a personal level. It's a way for me to understand and work through my feelings on a level I feel that I don't reach by talking. I see it as confronting the problem from a different dimension, like when you are dreaming, and are thereby able to reach other aspects of it. Luckily for the relevance of this project I'm not alone with these experiences but one of many and the personal becomes universal. In this project, I will create an installation of a girl's room and inside the installation I show a film. In this text I will talk about trauma and my method and thoughts on the different meanings of material. I will also look at other artists take on working artistically with the personal and trauma.

I work with this subject because I need to and I can. I want to create a room that acts as a reminder and give space to victims of abuse and to myself. I believe that by artistically showing my experience of abuse to reach different aspects and a level of consciousness other than a text does. Expressed in Kajsa Widegren's thesis *Ett annat flickrum (another girls room)*; "Like Rosi Braidotti, I see artistic design as a powerful tool for creating new understandings and performances. Visual forms of expression can make it understandable to the complexity of phenomena that written/linguistic expressions and theorizing have not yet expressed." (Widegren, 2010:22). It's easier to talk artistically about the abuse than to put it into words. I want this work to talk about a confused time and feelings that are hard to describe in words. A picture doesn't require logic to be understood and is more effective in communicating emotions. It more easily accepts a logic that does not follow the world outside of the work. In a artistic work you can talk about specific events and be really private but it stays free and everything is not written in stone, there is room for interpretations based on the viewer's own experiences. This is not first-hand a comforting work but if people can recognize themselves in the work and feel comfort in that I'm glad.

From the age of 4 or 5 until about 10 I was violated by a male relative. The abuse happened at my family home or at my grandparents' house when the family was gathered for birthdays, family dinners or the big holidays, but though it happened in houses full of adults no one saw what he was exposing me to. During these years it felt impossible to tell about the abuse, I think I was too young at first to really understand what happened and when I got a little older I was too ashamed because I "let it happen". When the abuse went on, my psyche shut down parts of me to protect me mentally, it could sometimes give setbacks in the form of the bathroom psychosis (an term I invented that you can read about under the heading *Reaserch; My own work*) but that was my reality and I knew for the most part what I had to relate to. When the abuse ended, of course, it was a relief, but the protection the psyche built up began to loosen up and I started to remember things

my mind had blocked out. I was able to tell my mother about the abuse when I was 12 with the help of alcohol. If I hadn't been drunk, I wouldn't have dared, I had tried, but I never got the words out. My parents helped me report to the police and it went to trial. The trial and everything around it was hard when you relive everything by telling in such detail the court demands. You have to be careful how you address a victim of abuse not to make it worse, especially when it is a child you are questioning. Things that may seem small and unimportant, such as how a legal text is formulated, becomes significant when seeking some form of redress by notifying. The earliest abuses he was convicted for occurred in the early 90's and were in legal text called sexual relation with child (sexuellt umgänge med barn in Swedish), which sounds like something that happens with consent and on equal terms. He was convicted to 4 months in prison and to pay 50,000 sek in damages. I was told that I should be glad that he was convicted at all when the vast majority of cases were closed or led to acquittal. But that it's actually worse seems a strange reason to be satisfied. I wish a girl's self-determination over her body would be worth more in the eyes of the law.

I think the support of my surroundings is what has made it possible for me to work artistically with my trauma today. That and time, I think that by telling in such an early age I was no longer able to repress the trauma. Also, when I started to talk about this I couldn't stop, it's like a dam that bursts, it's not slow, everything just pores out with no stopping it. In the beginning I had such a need to talk about it that I didn't care who listened, I told anyone anywhere. It may have bothered some but it helped me deal with my experience. It also led to other girls telling me about similar experiences and I found that there must be an alarming number that experience abuse, that or I have had many unlucky friends but I'm afraid the first is more accurate. Now that need to tell is gone, in my artistic practice I talk about it because I want to and think it's important, not because I need to.

Research

Research questions

How can I give a voice to child trauma in my work?

What am I hoping to achieve with this work?

Why is this work important for me and how can it be relevant to others?

How can I communicate abuse without giving the perpetrator space? The focus in this work and text are that of a victim and I don't want to give him (I'm aware that there are female perpetrators to, however, due to my personal experience I will address the perpetrator as male and the victim as female in this text) a place in this.

How do I translate very personal experiences to a shared trauma language? How have other artists worked with trauma artistically?

My earlier work

I started to work with the theme sexual abuse in my final bachelor year on Konstfack, in the Ceramics and Glass department. I had come to a point in my artistic practice where I had to choose this area, anything else would be tiptoeing around the subject. I also read Karin Johannisson's, *Den sårade divan (The hurt diva)*, a portrayal of three "mad" women detained at psychological facilities during the first half of 1900. I felt a strong recognition with their "madness" and remembered the way I used to dissociate as a child and it made me want to talk about my trauma through art. The

first work I made on the subject was *Saker som inte finns och saker som inte har hänt (I)* 2016 (*Things that don't exist and things that have not happened (I)*, 2016 .

Where I made a woman in unburned clay sitting in a plastic child bathtub and made a stop motion film where I put her under running water, supposed to resemble a shower, until she eventually melts down and disappears.



Image 1. Simone Kuhs, Saker som inte finns och saker som inte har hänt (I) 2016 (Things that don't exist and things that have not happened (I), 2016

I continued the work on abuse in my bachelor project and called it *Saker som inte finns och saker som inte har hänt (II)*, 2017 (*Things that don't exist and things that have not happened (II)*, 2017). Where I worked with a psychological state I call bathroompsychosis which is a word I made up to describe a dissociative state I experienced as a child. Dissociation is a part of PTSD, posttraumatic stress disorder, and is an effect of trauma.

We are therefore trying to protect ourselves by carrying out mental survival even if we cannot protect ourselves physically. This is perhaps most evident in bodily threats, assault, sexual assault or rape. A mental survival mechanism we can then use is dissociation, which is a way to turn off experiences that are an invasion of privacy or very painful. (George & Lander 2012:49)

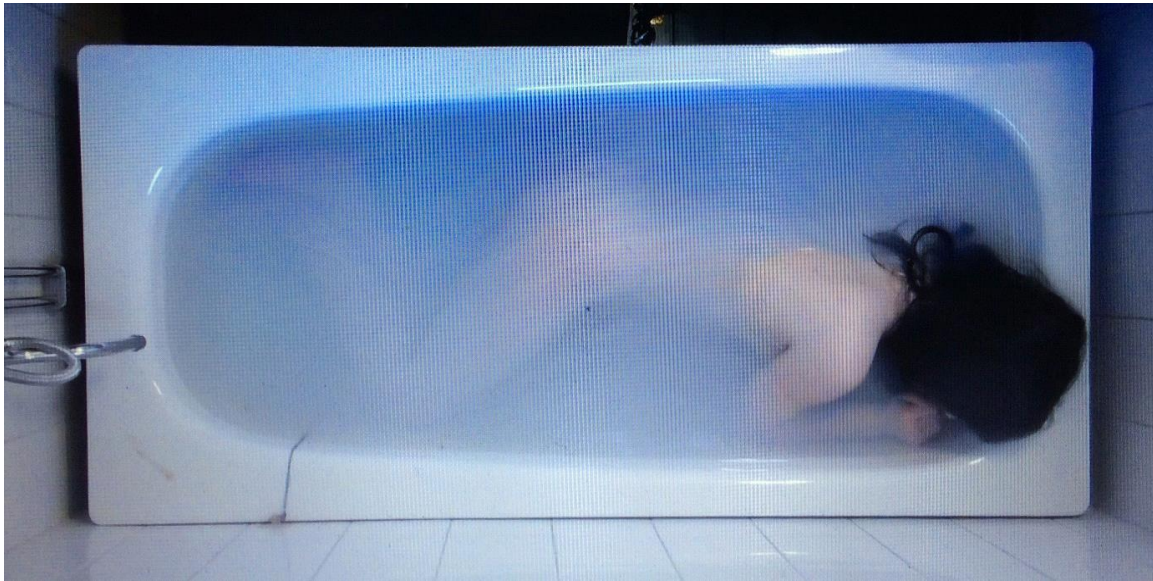
On 1177, the Swedish online medical site psychosis is described like this; “A psychosis means that you experience reality changed and differently, and have difficulty distinguishing between fantasy and reality. For example, you can hear voices or feel persecuted, even though no one else perceives it that way.” (1177, psykos) I call it psychosis because it was a state where I experienced a loss of control of my body and the surroundings would suddenly change, especially sound and smell were affected by it. I think it was a way for my mind to deal with a situation that was too much to go through had I been totally aware, to disappear mentally and lose control of the own body like that was scary but I guess the alternative, to be aware but not in control would have been worse. In my bachelor essay I describe the state like this;

It feels like I have a bulb of glass around my head. I'm in the real world but still I'm not. My head is in another dimension. I can see my body moving but the movement feels unreal and disconnected. Sounds are distorted- a sound from my head lies like a layer over all sounds around me. To be in the real world but not belonging, a place where sounds and movement feel different and strange. It's a quiet state, a secret panic that doesn't show itself outwards. You must wait, it will eventually pass. (Kuks,2017)

Pictures of my bachelor project



Image 2. Simone Kuhs, Saker som inte finns och saker som inte har hänt (II), 2017 Things that don't exist and things that have not happened(II), 2017



*Image 3. Simone Kuhs Saker som inte finns och saker som inte har hänt(II)
Things that dont exist and things that have not happened(II), 2017*



*Image 4. Simone Kuhs, Saker som inte finns och saker som inte har hänt(II)
Things that dont exist and things that have not happened(II), 2017*

The work of others

An artist I admire who works with the private and childhood memories is Louise Bourgeois. I like her way of creating atmospheres in her cages for example, I feel closeness to her when I see her work, like she is telling me her life story. She has said that she considers suppressed feelings from childhood such as jealousy and the sense of abandonment as the driving forces behind her art and her need to express herself. (Iris Müller-Westman, 2015:57). After she started going to

psychoanalysis one of her works deals with the trauma of finding out her English teacher, who lived with the family for ten years, was her father's mistress. I like that the work is uncomplicated but I still feel the awkwardness from that little girl.



Image 5. Louise Bourgeois, *Couple*, 1996

In my research I found a thesis by Kajsa Widegren that I also refer to in the section Introduction above. The thesis is named *Ett annat flickrum (Another girls room)* and in this text she discusses three women artists from Sweden, Maria Lindberg, Anna Maria Ekstrand and Hellene Billgren, that in the 90s started to get notice for their work surrounding the visualization of girliness, girls' vulnerability sexually and sexual abuse. She writes: *The definition of sexual abuse and children as a societal problem takes the guise of an oft-used feminist approach: to make visible a discourse, or a dominant order, which invisibly makes and conceals certain experiences, positions and practices. By making visible, these experiences can be recognized and given discursive existence.*

But visibility must always take a certain shape: the visibility process involves defining, shaping and fixing identities and managing inconsistencies between individual experiences. If one is to take the metaphor "visible" seriously, it must be taken into account that visibility means a visual form of appearance and that the way something emerges - aesthetically, does not always coincide with or support the political aspect of "visibility." (Widegren, s.20). It is in this complex process of visualization she talks about the works of these three artists. She also mentions the artists' work that revolves around the girls' room and the girl's room aesthetics and says that: *her own room carries a variety of important meanings. Virginia Woolf's feminist classic A room of one's own holds the room; both the concrete room and the room as metaphor, central to women's subjectivity and creation* (Woolf 1945)[...] *Girls' rooms can be woolfish arenas that allow girls to explore practices that are beyond normative perceptions of "the innocent child," and thus reshaping the girl position itself. But it can also be barred and trapped rooms that prevent detection or recognition of sexual abuse.* (Widegren 2010). I also want to make the hidden experience of abuse and the feelings surrounding it visible by making a room that talks about a (mostly) female experience that I think needs to be addressed more often and in arenas where both men and women move without a predetermined agenda, a place where it is not shocking to see a work on abuse but may also not be fully expected.



Image 6. Helene Billgren, I hetaste laget, Part of series, 1988



Image 8. Anna Maria Ekstrand, No title, 1993



Image 7. Maria Lindberg, Flicka och ben, 1990

I want my work to effect people directly, both emotionally and physically. I want the public to feel the work in their bodies. When I see some of Tracy Emin's work I get that effect, it's direct and sometimes brutal, but there is a fine line, if you cross it, it easily becomes banal and childish. I want to be on the edge, to be direct without forcing my personal story on someone but leave a little room for interpretations but at the same time be true to myself and the things I want to talk about and make visible. As Jeanette Winterson puts it in the foreword to a book on Tracy's work; *If you believe, as I do, that art's central purpose is to prompt emotion- which is why it must never be merely decorative- then Emin is letting art do its work. Emotion is not sentimentality or artificiality; in fact it is the enemy of both. To feel something deeply is an intellectual and a spiritual experience, as well as a visceral one. We were designed to feel, but our present culture is terrified of real feelings; its demands, its wildness, its commitment to truth.* (Winterson, Fuchs, Freedman 2007:7). It is easy to reduce and trivialize that you work with emotions, I have previously felt a resistance and a need to get it to that it is about something bigger. I do not feel that resistance anymore, I have realised that it was not about what I think is good art, but what I, through different channels, have been told is good vs bad art. And by being a tradition that has often been carried out by women it has become devalued. I no longer see it as something ugly to want to be private and talk about feelings. I think it's our personal stories that connect us and help us understand the world we live in.

I believe that personal stories have the ability to change society. Problems that are too abstract or that we feel don't affect us immediately are easily dismissed, not because people are mean or don't care but because we are designed that way, we can't care about everything, then we go crazy. But by showing a picture of a personal destiny, like that of Aylan Kurdi, the little boy on the beach that has drowned in the Mediterranean, we instantly understand the impact this war has on people, we can feel the parents' despair and sadness and the desperate action to bring your children on a life-threatening journey. And because we are more alike than different, the personal story is never really personal. So when I read Tracy's interview on herself about an abortion gone bad I can feel her pain even though I haven't gone through an abortion myself.

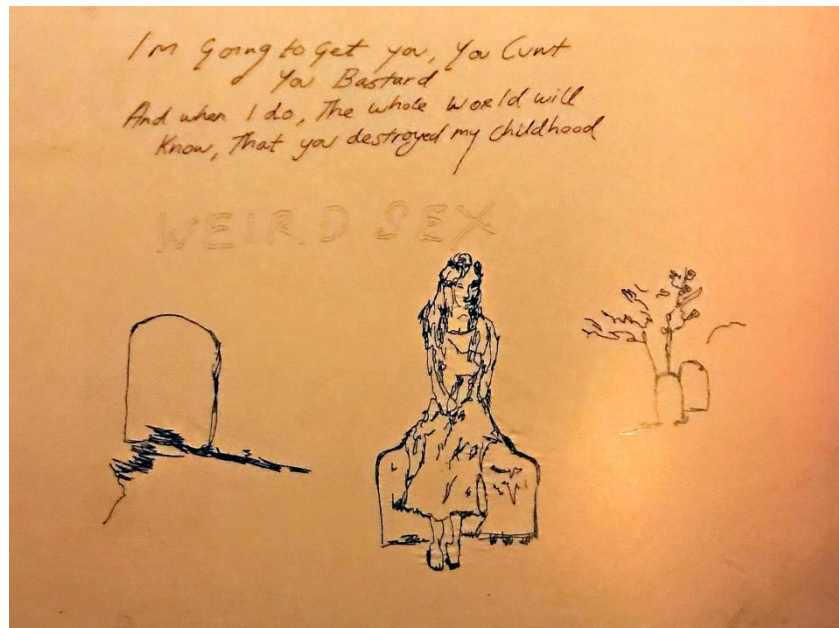


Image 9. Tracy Emin, *Weird Sex* (2002)

It must be a bad child

Starting point

In this new installation which I have titled 'It must be a bad child', I continue the work on sexual abuse but this time I want to be more direct about the subject than last time. The scene I'm creating is a way for me to talk about difficult internal feelings and emotional states and communicate my perception on a traumatic time to an audience. My aim is to create a space that talks about abuse against children. I feel that it's still a hushed down subject, you can sometimes hear about arrests on the news but the personal is stripped away, which is the way news should be distributed, but when that's the sole channel I think it's easy to make believe it only happens somewhere else, in another country or in another social class when it is happening, all the time in every group in society. I work with this because I think that this subject needs to be addressed in every place, shape and form, to get rid of the stigma surrounding it and make it easier to tell about. To stay quiet, only helps the perpetrators.

The work will contain parts of the bathroom psychosis such as the feeling of the unreal but this time I'm also adding the girl as a grown up woman to illustrate the lifelong effect abuse has on a person. I try to show a wider state of emotions, both the child and the grown up version of that same person. I want to collect the different aspects of trauma and focus on the long term effects of abuse, things that after a while becomes a part of you to an extent that you almost depend on it to define you. Within this work I also want to incorporate the confusedness in living with a big secret as a small child. It becomes like different reality's that must be separated in order to be livable, however when the two worlds collide, and the secret is about to be discovered it leads to chaos inside. I want to create this chaotic state in the room

I want to talk about that this is a lifelong trauma, that everything does not disappear and that traces of the world as perceived by the child haunts her as a grown up. Behaviors and thoughts the child created to try to understand what one is exposed to and the unconscious mechanisms that defer to

protect the psyche lose their role as protector of the psyche they had for the child and have in the adult world a tendency to destroy. The tracks remain in the head, ways of thinking, acting and reacting, that comes from not having had the body rested and not been able to protect oneself. Behaviors are created based on the violated girl's perception of value and self-respect. When someone has hurt you bodily you are stuck with the memories in your body. It's a lot of talk within the craft field about the silent knowledge of the hand. This can also be applied on the body as whole and not only in good ways. But by using craft to make my way through the trauma I regain control and give the girl recognition.

I find it difficult to connect love and sex, sex has rather become a means of imaginary power, temporarily heightened self-esteem or as punishment. I must be on my guard for sex to be something positive because it's like sex wants to be something bad and destructive, like that's its natural state. This event for example; I was with my family in Thailand for Christmas around the time I started to talk about the abuse, I had talked to a boy that worked on the hotel, he was 16 and really cute. One evening he asked if I wanted to take a walk with him so we did, we sat down on the beach and started kissing. Suddenly the atmosphere changed and he tried to pull down my pants, when he didn't succeed he sat on my chest and on my arms and forced his penis in my mouth. I was able to get out of his grip quite fast and we walked back to my worried parents. The interesting, or sad, part in this story is that my reaction to this was to fall in love with him. It took years until I realized that this was not a healthy reaction but it's a good example of the impact the abuse had. I think this is both an example of how I value (or valued) my body but I also think it was a protection from seeing what really happened, like 'you can't be raped if you say yes', you try to trick the mind that everything is okay to not take more damage. It's hard to know your boundaries when someone has torn them down completely with no consideration of the child's integrity. You must relearn from the beginning and it's easy to fall into old patterns. Today however, I can detect these behaviors and work against them. I am also lucky to have the making that helps me deal with these experiences; it is liberating to be able to talk about it through art when it is difficult to put into words. I also get it out physically, it leaves my body and is there as something concrete, as an object or a scene that I can leave and talk about in the way I choose. I can be brutally honest in art. I decide what is there and what is left out. It hurts sometimes but in a way that brings me forward, to talk about it is also necessary but sometimes it feels just like drooling, like it's still there, the words don't make it go away, there's no clear result. Here I have a work that I can leave both physically and mentally.

Working with the private

I work with the personal and the private, it's my way to relate to the work, it has to be close to me otherwise I feel no need to do it and if I do it has only turned into stuff, pointless things without substance. I often hate my objects separated from each other because of that same reason, separated they are only objects and for me therefore do not have a legitimate reason to exist. It is in the installations, when they are put together, that they become something of value. Sometimes it can become a problem when I have difficulty opting out of things and my installations can get messy. In this work, however, I feel that I have been able to even change tracks completely several times which I think has benefited the work, partly because I had so long to work through it but also because I have been sure of what it is I want to have said and it was then easier to see what belongs to the work and not.

Working with the body

Where does my imagery on trauma come from? How much is personal and how much comes from a popular cultural language? Or is it a natural language we have from birth and that we share, like smiling? I have found historical examples of how mental illness was acted out in mental facilities in the beginning of last century that I think has affected the way we imagine “madness” or psychoses and that I recognize from film but maybe mostly theater and opera were an exaggerated body language is needed. “*In a series of case descriptions of madness from the Swedish 18th century, women dominate strongly. This applies not only to numbers, but also the degree of empathy and boundness to strong emotions. [...] Everywhere in the medical literature of time you find women in high-strenit bodily outbursts: rage and wild melancholy, self-destructiveness and self-starvation, hibernation and fainting, cramping tremors and convulsions. In the woman, the body- more than in the man- seems to be the instrument of the soul.*”(Johannisson 2013:137). My understanding is that historically, the body seems to have been one of few ways for women to express strong emotions. When I read *Den sårade divan* (Johannisson 2015) I also find that there is some level of acting to the women’s crazy behaviours, they are forced to excaudate their body language for the environment to notice. The mental institutions also seems to be one of few places were women are allowed to act out there emotions in a time when women were supposed to be cool and comfortable and happy to sit at home and embroider, so perhaps in an more forgiving and tolerant environment the women were not sick at all. The more I read the more it seems that the institutions were the place where women got to be people. I also read that the expressions of mental illness, but also other emotional states, change through time. It doesn't make the pain any less true, it just means you are using the expression of your time to be understood. The body act as messenger when the words are not found or can be pronounced. I often use the human body in my works, all or part of it. When I make my sculptures I try to give them a pose and expression that correlate to the feeling or psychological state I’m searching for such as fear, resignation or desperation, but with quite a small means, there are no dissolute dramatic bodies, rather bodies that do not want to show anything outward but that cannot obstruct emotions completely from being seen. I decide the position and expression of the sculpture before I start building, I can feel the pose in my own body and then try to transfer the pose to the clay. I’m also influenced by the way dancers use their bodies to express certain emotions, they are often exaggerated and their costumes can also add to the movement. My favourite choreographer, Alexander Ekman is an inspiration, both in his choreography but also costume and sound. He manage to create his own universe without making it unreal, I believe in his worlds, they are logical. When I want to get the feeling of a real person, I use exclusively clay because of its property as a carrier of life that I'm talking about under the heading material.



Image 10. Alexander Ekman, *Eskapist*(2019)



Image 11. Simone Kuhs, No title (2018)



Image 12. Simone Kuhs, No title (2018)

Being a victim

Who am I without the trauma? To be a victim becomes an identity, something you can blame in situations where you are not at your best, even when the relation trauma-action is widely disconnected. But more than anything I perceive it as shameful. When I hear women talk about being sexually abused, I feel a reluctance from them to call themselves a victim. Calling yourself a victim makes one at once a weak individual, someone who doesn't have the ability to stand up for themselves. Even when you have been subjected to a violent damage of both body and soul, you should rise unspoiled and preferably turn into a better version of yourself as soon as possible. I want to give the ruined, traumatized girl space. I want to show the side that didn't make it unscathed and

that might never be whole. If there are perpetrators, someone must also be the victim and I think it is time to stop putting the responsibility on going unscathed from an abuse of the victim and letting the perpetrators bear the whole burden of harming another human being. It is time to remove the stigma surrounding the word victim and see it for what it is, a human being who is somehow exposed to a power, another human being, nature, whatever it may be, where for various reasons one is chanceless. It is thus the looming power that bears all responsibility and guilt. Being a victim in a situation does not make you a victim by nature, the situation made you a victim.

One can have different agendas for what she is the victim of: patriarchal oppression, captivity in the sex, in convention, sexual trauma, gender-blind doctors or anything else. The attraction of the victim story is precisely that it is flexible. But the same flexibility risks leading to a lack of concreteness. How, when and why do oppression slip over in disease languages? What is the dynamic between norm oppression and self-oppression? [...] The story builds up around more or less fix components: sense of claustrophobic compulsion to be who you are not, or become the one you don't want to be. The anxiety that grows. Sense of loneliness. The crack is portrayed in the form that culture tolerates and the surroundings can react to: panic disorder, scream attacks, eating disorders, self-harm, suicidal cravings. But if you read patient documentation below the surface, you can see that a crackling I often hide their opposite. The sense of choice and the flammable desire for herself and the world. Unruly dreamies, fantasies and longing states. Despite protest and power.

(Johannisson 2015:15)



Image 13. Simone Kuhs, *Som en sned våg. Jag ska skriva en självhjälpbok med bara quick fixes.*(2018)

(Like an unbalanced scale. I'm going to write a selfhelpbook with only quick fixes)

Making room

The room.

I tell stories and I build rooms, installations, where I combine objects into scenes. The scene is an attempt to portray feelings and states around the abuse. I build a girl's room, I want to let the girl take up room and show a trauma that lives in the hidden, dependent on the environment not seeing, in the public room. I want the experience of abuse to take up space. It talks about a life affected by trauma. It's a woman and a girl sharing body. It's a memory, it's not the truth.

I work with the room almost like an decorator, I bring a lot of things in different material and sizes but instead of making a room for a specific purpose I make a room for an specific emotional state. The feeling or state is appointed in advance and I normally have a general picture in my head of the components in the room but a lot happens on the way also, especially material decisions but also the sculptures can change completely, the sculptures are the objects that together with the film sets the room, the rest is less important, like props or helping tools, so the sculptures need to be perfect carriers of the state I'm searching for, they play the leading role in the room but I have to alter the statement that they are the most important, they have the lead but there wouldn't be an alive scene if not for the supporting roles. I care about the details, although no one will see them in the finished result, it is important to me that they are there. I am absolutely no perfectionist, details are not important in that way, I do not care how a special process should be carried out, I gladly take shortcuts, details for me are more about symbol bearers, that I find a perfect fabric to the floor or a color that reminds me of an old wallpaper. Like the embroidered duvet cover where the barbie logo is reversed, for me it symbolizes an uncertainty on reality, it is almost right but at the same time completely wrong. It may also seem foolish to embroider a text that is barely visible, but to me it is important that it is there. It's about what the individual item requires to be complete, some parts don't need to be changed, they're good as it is, they perform their function without my help but most of it requires some kind of change, few things fit perfectly when making a mix of a real and a mental room. The details are often about my associations and sometimes they can probably be so private that they pass unnoticed and may therefore seem unimportant but if it's not important then it might look either way.

The Girls

I get an image in my head of a situation or feeling and how it's played out by my (sculpture) girls. I rarely make male figures, not in any media. When I use other characters, they always play a supporting role; they are often quite expressionless and just respond to my leading character's agenda. I work with small means to get the mood I'm looking for, with subtle positions and facial expressions. In this installation there are two sculptures, a girl sitting in bed and a woman lying on the floor. The girl has her legs curled up and her mouth is missing, this symbolizes silence but also that talking is impossible. The woman has a black hole in her stomach and a blank face expression, the hole is a feeling of anxiety, a feeling of a never ending state that devours everything. They are similarly dressed as a sign that they are one and the same person.



Image 14. Simone Kuhs, It must be a bad child (2020)

The different meanings of material and objects

Choice of materials is an important part of my practice. I play with the material both based on anticipation and symbolism. I think of material as dead or alive material, I will explain how I make this division further on. Putting a material in an unexpected place often results in a sense of distortion, a feeling I often work with. There is a lot of thought behind the elections because I personally give them so much meaning. Every object in this room is carefully selected and has a purpose.



Image 15 Simone Kuhs, It must be a bad child (2020)

In my installation there is almost always a sense of discomfort I'm after, that things are not what they seem at first. Material play a big part in the uneasy feeling, it's an uncertainty of the world, what it consists of. In this installation I work with fabric for the floor and walls because I want the room to be unstable and take away the sharp edges. The outside is made like a real room but I'm dressing the inside in fabric to try to make it more of a mental room. The floor consists of a shiny fabric that is sewn together in the shape of boards to resemble a wooden floor, this also make the floor wavy which I find effective. When the ground is unstable everything is hard to trust. The objects also play a big part. I work both with own objects and ready-mades. The ready-mades are often slightly changed

to fit my intention with them. The iron bed is originally a toddler's bed that I have shortened the sides on, I want it to resemble a child's bed but with twisted proportions. I have embroidered the bed sheets with Barbie spelled the wrong way. It's the small things that makes the room uneasy, the lampshade has tassels that are black and too long, like spider legs or something reaching for you. The Barbie house has a hole in the top floor down to the black first floor that's left empty. The room on the top floor is painted like the installation room too create a room inside the room. I decided I wanted the Barbies to be in clay so I made a plaster mold of a Barbie. I wanted to be able to change their expression, the clay dolls are not polished but roughly done and painted sad. For me this relates to the meaning Barbies had for me, they often played out quite bad situations, like they were left by their husband or bullied and also physically damaged, I cut their hair and paint them with lipstick. Barbies can seem like a quiet toy but, at least for me, they got to play out hard emotions, things you maybe don't understand or problems you have. I think the Barbies stood for the things I didn't understand about the adult world. The significance of Barbies made it logical to make them myself, like a tribute, and not use ready-mades. The teddy bear was added last minute; it didn't feel like a child's room until I put it on the floor. The Shirtman is one of the first objects I made in this project. I knew I wanted a threat in the room; however I didn't want an perpetrator, to put extra arms and big hands that are clearly not real hands on a shirt made a threat like one you could have made up as a child, seeing something in the closet in the dark and imagine the rest. I got the idea for the eye buttons when I was making the eyes for the wall. On the wall there is around 30 pairs of eyes, some open and some closed, for me they symbolize people being present but not seeing.



Image16. Simone Kuhs, No title (2019)



Image 17. Simone Kuhs, No title (2019)

Clay is for me an alive material. I use clay for people and other live things. I think the surface of an engobed sculpture with no glaze on is the material that I find the most suitable for human skin and body. It has that organic feeling without even trying, it's like it wants to resemble skin and flesh. I also fire my sculptures in low temperature, just little above bisquit firing. And since I rarely use glaze I only fire them one time. I choose this method to get as little interference as possible from the kiln, the texture of the clay changes and the surface gets a harder expression when fired in high temperatures, it loses the lusterless and powdery surface that I like and it interfere with the colors and often make them dull. Clay can be used for the unreal to, with glaze on its something dead, like plastic. It's important for me to have a mix of material in my installations, too much of anything can make the room cartoonlike, it's the mix of material that makes it a real room but at the same time it's the use of materials in "wrong" places that can create an unreal feeling or atmosphere. To switch place on material is an effective way to make people uncertain on what they are seeing.

Film

I make my sculptures alive via the film. I use film to get movement in the installation. The film contains neither dialogue nor sound when I see the condition I portray as silent. It will be displayed through a thin white fabric on the entire rear short side of the finished installation. The film is filmed in the girls' room that will be the installation. The room consists of three walls and is filmed from the short side. On the left side stands a door ajar, it's dark outside. The room is quiet but there is a message on the floor that says It must be a bad child. It's a slow storyline, almost nothing is happening. The girl sits with her legs curled up in bed, the Shirtman shows up and starts moving towards her where she sits. In the end, the Shirtman reaches the bed, the girl lays down to try and get away but his arms are too long. Tufts of dead flowers show up, they are there as signs that it may go longer than we perceive and the seasons come and go without us noticing. The eyes on the wall tell you that there are people around but they see nothing.



Image 18



Image 19

Film 1

Film 2

Simone Kuhs, It must be a bad child(2020)

Film number two features the girl as a grown up, she is half laying in bed surrounded with long arms and big hands that touches her body and leave marks. The handprints are done in watery clay. I think this methaphor is quite clear, in real life the handprints doesn't show but that doesn't mean they are not there. I have not yet desided were too show this film, i'm thinking eather on a small screen inside the wall that you can see through a small hole on the outside of the room, like you were looking through a keyhole, or projected in the room, probably on an object .

Discussion

In this work I conquer the story, and work with the past on my terms. The actual making is a way to let go of bad emotions but not by avoiding them but on the contrary, by intensely working my way through them. I'm happy with how the installation turned out, I want it to affect people to feel with the characters in the room. This work is very much about the relationship to oneself but also others. I feel that the characters in the room have the ability to influence an audience. I don't seek wild reactions, I'm working on pretty vague feelings like discomfort and unease. This is a culture of silence; it is a problem that is kept hidden, so it feels natural to make a work that don't scream but that still demands its space and is honest about its agenda.

When I have done my research on artist working with the private I have had difficulties distinguish it from the personal. I believe all artist take more or less out of themselves, we just use different approaches. You can tell your own story or someone else's or the story of a country or the world or even the universe but it's still connected to you or it would not be made by you. And I don't believe there is anything that is private or personal, when it's out there its everyone's. We can't put it on the

children to solve this which we do if we leave it alone. I want to make this everyone's problem. I think that this work will be read differently depending on the viewer, for example if you are a victim of abuse, your sex and previous knowledge, however, I hope I have done a work that don't exclude but that can be a remainder and maybe a step towards dialog.

Conclusion

This text was hard to write, not because of the subject but because of what I want to show in this installation. I see this as an mental image of me looking back on a memory , but not a memory of an event but of a time. A confused time with a tangle of emotions that didn't add up and can't be lined up in text like any study. Writing about a ball of emotion in a room in a state of disintegration is almost impossible. The closest I get is in the design. For me it is much easier to explain the feelings and emotional states in images. In the picture, the room may lack logic but is logical anyway because it just is, you can accept it in a way you can not with the words of an essay.

To work physically with trauma is a great way to get nuances in the sadness that does not come out in words, you come both further and deeper. For me, it is both more natural and rewarding. When I'm done with a work, I feel like I can leave that particular aspect of the trauma, like I can put the feeling into effect and it stays there. It doesn't go away but it ends up outside of me, it creates distance to, and pause from, it.



Image 20 Simone Kuhs, It must be a bad child (2020)



Image 21. Simone Kuhs, It must be a bad child (2020)



Image 22. Simone Kuhs, It must be a bad child (2020)



Image 23. Simone Kuhs, It must be a bad child (2020)



Image 24. Simone Kuhs, It must be a bad child (2020)



Image 25. Simone Kuhs, It must be a bad child (2020)



Image 26. Simone Kuhs, It must be a bad child (2020)



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Image 37. Simone Kuhs, It must be a bad child (2020)

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Image 3. Saker som inte finns och saker som inte har hänt (II) Things that dont exist and things that have not happened (II), 2017 Video still. <https://vimeo.com/260660783>

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Image 11. Simone Kuhs, No title (2018) Engobed ceramics, H 25cm

Image 12. Simone Kuhs, No title (2018) Engobed ceramics, L 150cm

Image 13. Simone Kuhs, Som en sned våg. Jag ska skriva en självhjälpbok med bara quick fixes.(2018) (Like an unbalanced scale. I'm going to write a selfhelpbook with only quick fixes) Mixed media. Dimensions vary

Image 14. Simone Kuhs, It must be a bad child (2020) Engobed ceramics, L 160 cm

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