Protesting Sex Slavery: The Textile Doll as Activism

If anything, art is ... about morals, about our belief in humanity. Without that, there simply is no art."
Ai Wei Wei (The Tate 2017)

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ABSTRACT

Natural disasters, climate change, war and poverty have increased the vulnerability of migrants to modern slavery. Human traffickers prey upon post-disaster migrant populations who are vulnerable to promises of jobs and security. And among the most vulnerable are children, who are often given no choices. The incredibly sad yet lucrative side of sex trafficking is that a child or a young person's body can be sold repeatedly for high profit with low overheads – often leading to a lifetime of severe trauma.

This project involves the textile practice of cloth dolls. Dolls have rich cultural significance. They are used in children's play, religious ceremonies, and are often dressed in national costumes. They are used in counselling to help victims deal with traumatic experiences. And as artist Eric Fischl (Fischl 2015) points out, they are a widespread genre in contemporary art, used by artists such as Hans Belmar, Cindy Sherman, Louise Bourgeois, and Morten Bartlett. And textiles themselves have been used as a form of protest from suffragette banners to the dolls of the Chilean Arpilleras.

The cloth dolls that have been made as part of this project highlight and protest issues of sex trafficking. The dolls are darned and patched, just as the women and children, who are rescued by organisations that fight against modern slavery, need mending and restoration. They have a name tag on their ankles with a URL directing people to an agency that fights modern slavery and its consequences. They have been left in public places and displayed in a gallery setting.

1. INTRODUCTION

This project, involving a textile practice that uses both written and 'made work', is underpinned by concerns about slavery in New Zealand and globally with reference to faith-based organisations who are working to fight against it and who are helping those who are rescued or have escaped.

Textiles themselves have a long history of being associated with protest and activism. Some examples are:

- The stitched banners of the Suffragettes in England, which were carried during protest marches, from 1907 to the beginning of World War I. Mary Lowndes a stained glass artist and poster designer for the Suffragettes, said that a banner was 'a thing to float in the wind, to flicker in the breeze, to flirt its colours for your pleasure'. (Murphy 2016) She had founded the Artists' Suffrage League in 1907 to further the cause of women's enfranchisement by the work and professional help of artists. The Artists' Suffrage League produced not only banners but posters, postcards and illustrative leaflets. The suffrage banners either represented a region (e.g., East Anglia), an occupation (e.g., shorthand writers), a heroine or historical figure (e.g., Elizabeth Fry) or a society (e.g., the Civil Service Suffrage Society) (Murphy 2016);
- The Arperillas (small quilts with attached dolls) of South America, began as a form of protest and later income, during the Pinochet era in Chile from 1973 to 1990. It was during these years that thousands of people disappeared and were tortured and imprisoned. The women stitched small quilts that pictorially told the story of what was happening to them. Three dimensional in nature, the naïve folk art of the Arperillas "demonstrate resistance to poverty; resistance against repressive regimes; resistance to non-resistance by subversively stitching; and resistance to the Art world by being exhibited as if they were classical works of art". (Bacic in Argosin Chapter 9)

The story of Carmen Gloria Quintana and Rodrigo Rojas, teenage protestors who were tortured and burned in 1986. Rojas died; Quintana, who suffered burns over 67 percent of her body, received reconstructive surgeries in Canada and returned to Chile, where she became a symbol of resistance to the regime (Onion 2014).

- Esther Krinitz stitched scenes of pre-war and Nazi-occupied Poland including her memories of watching her family being taken in carts to the railway station and on to the death camps. Her 'tapestries' tell of her life in hiding and her daughters' efforts to have them filmed, written about and exhibited. (Steinhardt in Argosin Chapter 16). Both women made textiles as a way of remembering those who were lost, but also so that the memories would endure and be an inspiration to others to resist what seems to be inevitable;

'On Friday, October 15, 1942, it was the beginning of the end, the sombre march of the Rachow Jews to their deaths', Embroidery and fabric collage by Esther Nisenthal Krinitz, 1991 (Smithsonian 2012).

- Textiles have also been associated with slavery, particularly in the U.S.A. The centre of slavery in the U.S. was Richmond, Virginia. It was the equivalent of Wall Street. Slaves were dressed for sale in warehouses, as shown in Eyre Crowe's painting "Slaves Waiting for Sale - Richmond, Virginia." 1861. Here the dressing of slaves meant textiles were used against them, not as protest (Hidden Patterns of the Civil War, 2010). Also, slaves were used in the production of cotton. Further, quilt making, it is rumoured, was associated with the human rail road, guiding people north to freedom, by hanging quilts on fences or washing lines, using quilt blocks with names that indicated the direction to go, e.g., 'Cross Roads to Texas'.

  My work begins from the perspective of a woman who stayed at home to look after her children. I use techniques associated with 'woman's work' and domesticity to express my concerns for issues like slavery. For the duration of my MFA, I have worked with dolls for two reasons. First, they are used in recovery counselling for those who have suffered trauma, as those who have been rescued from the sex slave industry have. And, secondly, dolls have often been used in conceptual ways in art. In this project, dolls have been used as a metaphor for those who have been trafficked. It is sometimes easier to confront difficult issues through metaphor than directly citing real examples. In this exegesis, I will also consider art works that provoke different kinds of responses and the effects of research on my work, both written research and 'making' research.

2. MODERN SLAVERY

Human trafficking is the second largest illicit crime in the world, next to drugs (Global Slave Index). However, it only came onto the global political scene as an organised crime in 2000. Since 2010, it is believed to have grown from a $32 to a $150 billion-dollar industry. The Asia Pacific region, which is our region, is considered the most active area in the world for trafficking. Modern forms of slavery include:

- human trafficking;
- forced labour;
- debt bondage;
- forms of forced and servile marriage; and,
- the sale and exploitation of children, including for child pornography.

Slavery includes "situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, abuse of power or deception, with treatment akin to a farm animal. For example, passports might be taken away if people are in a foreign country, they may experience or be threatened with violence or their family might be threatened." (GSI) Further, in 2015–2016, modern slavery was found in many industries including Thai fishing, Uzbek and Turkmen cotton, and the Qatari construction industries. It was identified in the domestic households of diplomats, in Islamic State (IS) controlled areas, and in areas that

have experienced natural disasters, such as Nepal, and environmental destruction, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It impacts on all of us, from the food we consume and the goods we purchase." (GSI)

What are the reasons for the exponential growth of modern slavery? They include:

- Migrations of people due to war;
- Migrations of people due to famine brought about by climate change;
- Poverty;
- The low price of slaves (in 1840, the price was the equivalent of US$40,000 and today it is US$100.00); and,
- The death of large numbers of people due to civil war, for example in Cambodia, resulting in trauma for parents who have difficulty bonding with their children, who then become expendable.

Globally, trafficking has three components:

- The act of receiving, recruiting, harbouring or transporting a person;
- The means of coercing or deceiving that person; and,
- The purpose of exploiting that person.

Often, all three elements must be proved for a charge to be laid and a conviction to be obtained. Consequently, in countries like New Zealand, the police have often use a lesser charge that will secure a conviction of some sort for the trafficker. As a result, incidents of trafficking are often not recorded as trafficking and a country can pretend it does not happen there. In other countries, the police are directly involved in the trade, like trafficking for sex. Those that have evidence that brothels are being run with trafficked sex workers and children find it difficult to find police that will raid the premises without returning the sex workers to their 'owners' later.

How can we respond to this situation that involves well over 48.5 million people worldwide, 70% of whom are female, 50% are children and too many have been trafficked for sex? The average age of a trafficked person, including for sex, is 12.

In 2013 I joined the board of Hagar NZ, the country office of Hagar International. Hagar is a not-for-profit, faith-based international organisation working with all people to restore the lives of women and children who have been devastated by severe human rights abuses including paedophilia, torture, kidnapping or sale, rape, violence, and or sex slavery. Hagar runs programmes in Cambodia (Phnom Penh), Afghanistan (Kabul) and Vietnam (Hanoi). Hagar is recognised as having developed international best practice in recovery counselling and case management. Hagar only takes cases that other agencies cannot take and is committed to supporting their clients until they are able to live and support themselves independently. It helped fund a research report "Worker Exploitation in New Zealand: A Troubling Landscape", published by Auckland University in 2016, and has been involved in

petitioning the New Zealand government to become more active in dealing with issues of human trafficking.

When I began the Masters programme at Massey University at the back of my mind was how was I going to respond to the information I already had through my work with Hagar? Of course, money helps. To help the people who are rescued from severe abuse there must be money. It takes a long time but through Hagar's work we know it is achievable. But how could I communicate their need to a wider audience? How could I reach people who were able to face such unspeakable the evil and do something? (Author's Journal).

3. SEXUAL OFFENDING AND ART

The cover of *Mapping the Terrain* edited by Suzanne Lacy has a quote by poet and author, Estella Conwill Majozo:

"To search for the good and make it matter this is the real challenge for the artist. Not simply to transform ideas or revelations into matter, but to make those revelations actually matter".

If a project is dealing with a subject like slavery, particularly slavery for sex, then how do you find the good in it? How do you contrast the evil in humanity with the belief in humanity that Ai Wei Wei references in his statement?

"If anything, art is... about morals, about our belief in humanity. Without that, there simply is no art." (The Tate 2017)

For all of us, slavery is a difficult subject. On more than one occasion, as this project has been discussed, people have put their hands over their ears and said, "I can't hear any more. Don't tell me." So how can we communicate a difficult subject to an unknowing public in a way that will encourage them to respond? How can we make art that might make a difficult matter, matter?

This project attempts to deal with these questions by presenting the information in a different way. If people cannot 'listen' to stories about difficult matters, what happens if they are shown information in a physical or visual way, if they 'see' the information? This is the area where art has a part to play. By using the materiality of textiles to draw people 'in', difficult information can be presented in a way that causes people to respond. Textiles are familiar to us. We all wear them every day and sleep in them at night. They are tactile and comforting. This project subverts something that we associate with comfort into something that

communicates ‘bad news’. It also explores the role art can play in raising a moral issue by using cloth-made dolls and text, both in a public and in a gallery setting.

In the exhibition, “Mixed up Childhood”, held at the Auckland Art Gallery in Auckland 2004, curators Janita Craw and Robert Leonard brought together art that subverted something we see as innocent into something that left the viewer feeling uneasy in a manner that was of interest. The exhibition included artists Morten Bartlett and Sally Mann:

- Sally Mann, as a parent, photographing her children often naked, records the adventure of a childhood unimpeded and unprogrammed by adults. The images are sensual and confusing and suggest a dark side, a disturbing eroticism that could make the viewer feel uneasy. Viewers are implicated in that they are aware of something that the children seem unaware of, and that might be paedophilia e.g. ‘Hayhook’ (1989) in which a young naked girl is seemingly strung up and adults close by take no notice or ‘The Wet Bed’ (1987) in which a naked child sleeps legs askew in apparently her own urine. But Mann often composed these photos with her children’s permission so they are not quite what they seem. The public’s response was mixed and even *The New York Times* published one photograph with the chest and pubis blacked out. This had a profound effect on the youngest daughter, Victoria. The photographs resulted in the family being followed by a stalker for many years (Woodward 2015).

"The Wet Bed" (1987) Sally Mann

- Morten Bartlett was a graphic designer and photographer. For 30 years up until 1963 he made dolls - 12 girls and 8 boys, all lookalikes from the time he was orphaned. They were anatomically correct, half scale, and each one took a year to make. He posed them in

childhood activities, photographed them and hung them around his apartment like family portraits. They became the substitute for a real-life family, the family he lost. They cry, laugh, read books, wave – they are concerned or forlorn. The photos are often described as creepy or "uncanny". As the artist himself admitted, "[i]ts purpose (photography) is that of all proper hobbies – to let out urges that do not find expression in other channels." (Frank 2015). The family he created were not discovered until after his death in 1992. Bartlett's small, black-and-white photographs, dramatically lit, feature the dolls — and some human subjects — in hauntingly innocent scenarios, e.g., a girl doll of around five sits across from her stuffed puppy, pointing a finger at him in stern admonishment. She's wearing socks, her legs are spread, and you can make out the trim of her underwear from beneath her dress). Bartlett's dolls, despite their anatomical correctness, do not necessarily try to pass as real. The viewer must look twice: Is this real or not? They convey a combination of playful eroticism and pure innocence and have been described as looking through the eyes of a paedophile. After his death, Bartlett's work has received acclaim as outsider art and was featured in the 2013 Venice Biennale.

'Untitled' (Girl Wagging Finger at Dog) c 1950s Morten Bartlett

Neither of these artists intended to make work that was unsettling to the viewer. In fact, the reverse is true. Sally Mann was photographing to record her children's childhood. Bartlett was creating his own family in secret and it was not until his death that the dolls were found. But this creepiness addresses the issues that this exegesis attempts to address. Sexual predation is related to trafficking for sex because the trafficked sex workers are so young.

However, in the catalogue essay for the exhibition "Mixed up Childhood", James R. Kincaid, Professor of English at the University of Southern California, contributes an essay, 'Looking at you Kid'. He suggests we over emphasise paedophiles. He asks, "Who are these shadowy enemies, monsters, children need protecting from?" and "what are we really protecting kids from and whose interests are we really safeguarding? I think kids would ask us to exercise our vigilance in enemies more real, closer to home. They might even say that the greatest threat to their well-being these days is our sense that our main and only duty is to protect them from the enemies we take pleasure in designating" (Kincaid 2004).

In the history of the treatment (counselling) of paedophilia, the victim has frequently been blamed despite the law being quite clear about the illegality of having sex with underage boys and girls, and in my view, there is a risk that Kincaid's thesis can be used to protect the perpetrator.

In *The New York Times* review of J. Kincaid's book "Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture", it is explained that "Raymond Buckey and his mother, Peggy McMartin Buckey, were defendants in the longest criminal trial in American history. The pair were charged with some 100 child molestations at their McMartin Pre-School in suburban Manhattan Beach. Eventually all charges against the defendants were dismissed for lack of evidence." But paedophiles are notoriously manipulative and children are vulnerable in a court setting.

Anne Salter, on the other hand, writes, "We don't recognise the predators because we think of them as monsters. Surely we would recognise them as monsters, wouldn't we? But they are friends and neighbours, Boy Scout leaders, priests, principals, teachers, doctors and coaches. They are invited into our homes repeatedly, we give them permission to take our children on overnight trips, to sports games." (Salter 2003 p5) So, in one sense Kincaid is correct, molestations are perpetrated in homes but the molesters were strangers until they ingratiated themselves into families.

Incidents of molestations are on the rise and Salter suggests this is because:

- More mothers are working, so more children are spending their days in childcare facilities;
- Divorce is on the rise and research shows stepfathers and boyfriends are more likely to abuse their partner's children than biological fathers are;
- Sexual crimes against children also increase as victims of abuse grow up to become abusers; and,
- As most sexual predators molest many children, the number of victims is growing exponentially. (Salter p xiv)

Salter as part of her PHD project from Harvard interviewed hundreds of paedophiles and she recorded 291,000 offenses and 195,000 victims by 561 offenders. How do we know that this isn't just bragging? This research is backed up by studies in which victims support what offenders say. Despite the astounding figures, most of these offenses have never been detected. Studies of victims show the offenders are often not lying. For example, one study

showed 28% of women had been molested as children under the age of 14, and 38% if 14–17-year olds are included and 9-16% of boys had been molested. Rape statistics were no better. In this study, 41% of women had been raped or were the victims of attempted rape and 44%, if spousal rape was included. (Salter 2003 p11).

On the website of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, it states plainly that "although many, if not most, sexual abusers are treatable, there is no known cure. Why? A sizable proportion molest children simply because they are sexually attracted to that age group. They have what is most often termed a "deviant arousal pattern"." (Salter 2003 p69). So why does someone like James Kincaid believe that paedophiles and their acts of molestation are so far and few between? As Salter discovered and noted, paedophiles are extremely manipulative and persuade adults of their good character while secretly persuading children to comply with their demands through coercion and fear. Also, like Kincaid, we just do not believe our children when they try to tell us what has happened.

In May this year, the Australian government announced that it would soon introduce measures (removal of passports) to prevent child sex offenders from travelling to South East Asia for sex holidays with child prostitutes (the average of a trafficked sex worker is 12). This would be a world first. There are 20,000 sex offenders on the Australian National Child Offender Register. "There has been increasing community concern about sexual exploitation of vulnerable children and community concern is justified," Foreign Minister Ms Bishop said. "Last year alone, almost 800 registered child sex offenders travelled overseas from Australia," she said, with about half travelling to South-East Asia.

“Mixed up Childhood” is a good example of how an art exhibition is able raise issues for public discussion around sexual predation, about the relationship of innocence and eroticism, and how such complex social issues can be addressed through images, objects and contemporary art installation practices.

4. THE DOLL IN CONTEMPORARY ART

This section will deal with Freud’s theory of the uncanny with reference to Ruth Ronen’s paper “Look the Doll in The Eyes” and how it applies to the doll in art. Ronen references the surrealist Hans Belmar’s dolls as the iconic Twentieth Century Art doll maker. I will apply the theory of the uncanny to his work and contrast that to the dolls I made and the response to them.

Freud used the doll to explain his theory of the uncanny. He wrote that:

“It is only rarely that a psychoanalyst feels impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics, even when aesthetics is understood to mean not merely the theory of beauty but the theory of the qualities of feeling” (Freud p219).

The uncanny is a quality of feeling defined by Freud as being related to what is frightening – to what arouses dread and horror. To illustrate this, he referred to A.T. Hoffman's story "The Sandman" during which the main character Nathaniel falls in love with a mechanical doll, Olympia. There are several aspects of the story that give rise to the uncanny, one of which is that

"a particularly favourable condition for awakening uncanny feelings is created when there is intellectual uncertainty about whether an object is alive or not and when an inanimate object becomes too like an animate one" (Freud p212).

Freud describes the uncanny as the space between *heimlich,* (the German word for homely, familiar and not strange) and *unheimlich* (strange and frightening). But *heimlich* has another meaning - that which is concealed and kept out of sight - and *unheimlich* then means that which is revealed. Anxiety is the feeling that is aroused between these two states, particularly in the context of repressed, traumatic experiences or fears such as of death, parental separation and castration (including anti-Semitism). To summarise, the uncanny is a feeling of the strange or frightening, that may have been repressed, being revealed and this causes feelings of anxiety.

Freud's clinical work made him aware of the universality of suffering and he kept trying to identify our primary sources of pain perhaps to understand his own pain (internal and physical - cancer) (Nicholi pp24-25). In *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, he adds another source of pain, the pain caused by fellow human beings. "The suffering which comes from this last source is perhaps more painful to us than any other" and he concludes that "life is hard to bear" and often results in a "permanent state of anxious expectation" (Freud in Nicholi pp24-25).

Ruth Ronen in her paper "Look the Doll in the Eyes: The Uncanny in Contemporary Art" looks at concepts of philosophical aesthetics (like pleasure, beauty, sublime, etc.) and compares them to the notion of anxiety, the Freudian concept of the uncanny. She concentrates on the doll image because "the anxiety associated with dolls is both exemplified in 20th Century art and fully explored in the writings of Freud and Lacan" (Ronen). She states that not all doll images elicit anxiety and carry uncanny effects, but Hal Foster in his book "Compulsive Beauty" has characterised Surrealism in general, and dolls in particular, as a form of art practice that references the uncanny. She points to the indistinction between life and death and the confusion between compulsion and repressed desires. Ronen also argues that anxiety is not the product of repression, but is an unconscious formation, a formation that imposes its presence through the blocking effect of repression. This state of anxious expectation can be placed in the category of the uncanny and can also be elicited by art.

What may cause this feeling of anxiety when being confronted by a doll in an art context is that they are out of place; we associate dolls with the innocence of childhood, childhood games, and childhood role plays, as children try to make sense of an adult world. But childhood is not as innocent we might wish. "Freud saw neurosis as the result of a traumatic encounter in childhood with mature sexuality" (Ronen 2004). One aspect of Ronen's paper

that has particular interest to this project is the doll as a split subject and although Ronen references the projection of the psyche of the maker on the doll, which becomes a representative of an inner world, the same doll also constitutes a strange object that becomes uncanny. An example of this are Hans Belmar's dolls.

La Poupee (1938 printed 1983) Hans Bellmer

Belmar was a photographer who promoted his art to protest patriarchal authority and the rise of fascism. His pubescent female dolls embodied many qualities of surrealism and were subversive erotic, sadistic and fetishist. His dolls were made with ball bearing joints that could be twisted and 'contorted' and their fragmented female nature expressed his feelings of fragmentation as he realised his mother could not protect him from male patriarchy. He projected his psyche and his internal world onto a familiar object, making it strange and even grotesque.

Doll playing is associated with counselling and play because it is a way of addressing horror that cannot be addressed in a real way. But the artifice to the uninitiated, can become more disturbing than the real. If a doll represented a trafficked sex worker, as were my first set of dolls, then the uncanny would work in a different way. The doll, in this case, by representing a trafficked person, juxtaposes the childhood concept of a doll, with its body that is tactile and homely (made of felt, fine linen or men's shirt fabric), and used for play, with the inexplicable evil that is slavery. The initial dolls were ordinary, in typical dolls' clothes. They were left around the Massey University Wellington campus with a card saying they represented someone who had been trafficked and asking to be taken home. They came with a website www.Hagar.org.nz for people to go to, to find out more information or make a

donation. It was apparent that having a series of dolls was essential, as initially, people thought that they had been left behind. When a number of dolls were placed in the space, it became obvious that they were there for a purpose. They were out of context and associated with a sense of loss and abandonment, even though they were everyday dolls. Most of the dolls were taken. But rather than project the psyche of the maker, they projected the abandonment of the trafficked person. How could someone leave such a carefully made object behind? There was a confusion between the familiar and homely (*heimlich* and unfamiliar *unheimlich*) giving rise to the uncanny.

Rosie White Dolls 1 and 2 2016

The second exhibition that has provided a reference point is "Disturbing Innocence: Dolls and Mannequins at Play in Contemporary Art." In 2005, the painter Eric Fischl was asked to curate an exhibition at the Parrish Art Museum in Long Island NY. Fischl had long believed dolls were a big movement in contemporary art and consequently he curated this exhibition. The artists and artworks included were:

- Hans Belmar;
- Louise Bourgeois' man and woman made of stuffed material meeting face to face;

'Couple' (2002) Louise Bourgeois

- Cindy Sherman's black and white photograph of a naked Barbie type doll lying spread-eagled, her face having been repeatedly slashed as if she were the victim of an extremely violent rape (Johnson 2014);
    - Morton Bartlett; and,
    - Jennifer Rubell.

Jennifer Rubell builds dramatically on the Sexual Objectification metaphor, and turns the female body into a nutcracker. Although there was only one nutcracker in 'Disturbing Innocence', Rubell describes her nutcrackers like this: "In the Dallas Contemporary's largest gallery space, 'Nutcrackers' consists of 18 life-size interactive sculptures of women surrounding a pedestal holding one ton of Texas pecans. Each prefabricated female mannequin is mounted on her side and has been retooled to function as a nutcracker. Visitors interact with each sculpture by placing a pecan in the mannequin's inner thigh, then pushing down the upper leg to crack open the nut so they may eat it in the gallery. Inspired by nutcrackers depicting female figures – especially one of Hillary Clinton – these interactive sculptures embody the two polar stereotypes of female power: the idealized, sexualized nude female form; and the too-powerful, nut-busting überwoman." (Rubell). During the exhibition, it was women who were happy to crack nuts but were uncomfortable removing the cracked nut. A ton of pecan nuts were delivered to the exhibition.

'Nut Cracker' (2010) Jennifer Rubell

Rubell uses humour to engage the viewer and raise the issue of the objectification of women.

Overall, 'Disturbing Innocence' was so uncomfortable that many of the visitors to it did not stay. As described earlier, the unease or anxiety surrounding dolls in art is described by Ruth Ronnel in her article "Dolls and the Uncanny in Art" as being a result of the lack or absence of play or game so closely associated with dolls. Dolls historically signified innocence and beauty but Martell's Barbie, being based on a German pornographic doll, has subverted our idea of how dolls are. Dolls in art have become surrogates for other things and make it possible for an audience to confront difficult subjects by being removed from the suffering of real people. Sometimes, like the Tumbling Women, the way art represents difficult issues goes too far and the object causes people to walk away.

5. ART AS ACTIVISM

Art has always been relational in varying degrees. It can 'link' relationally, unlike TV or literature, which each individual person experiences in their own space. Art in an exhibition creates the possibility of immediate discussion. *"I see, I perceive, I comment, and I evolve in a unique space and time. Art is the place that produces a specific sociability."* (Bourriaud p16) I suppose with TV or literature the possibility of discussion comes later and is not so instantaneous. What then if that principle of engagement is applied to a subject like trafficking? Would that instantaneous discussion lead to a deeper engagement or the possibility of it? "*Contemporary art is definitely developing a political project when it endeavours to move into the relational realm by turning it into an issue*." (Bourraud p15).

On its website, the Tate Gallery defines 'Art Activism' as "empowering individuals and communities and is generally situated in the public arena with artists working closely with a community to generate the art." And "the aim of activist artists is to create art that is a form of political or social currency, actively addressing cultural power structures rather than representing them or simply describing them." It is based on a view that art is a means of communicative exchange. *"Activist artists find themselves in a complex position with economic, aesthetic and political contradictions and considerations." And "… an art that takes on activism as its driving force must emphasize clarity of meaning and communication without being condescending to its audience."* (Lucy Lippard in Francina p206)

I have attempted to address cultural power structures by providing information and facts but this project is in a test phase and has only been seen by an academic audience and my peers. How successful it will be with the general public is yet to be determined. But what I hope is that by inspiring others to care they may donate money in exchange for a doll and that the finance generated will enable care to be provided for clients in South East Asia or pressure will be applied to Government to deal with the issue in New Zealand. For example, a news report was published on 12th September 2017 stated that, according to researcher, Natalie Thorburn, *"Kiwi girls as young as nine are being forced to sell their bodies in ordinary houses on our streets to white collar businessmen. It's a growth industry."* (Hobbs 2017)

An example of an art work that typifies Art Activism is Suzanne Lacy's Crystal Quilt. It was first shown in 1987. In 2012, the Tate Modern showed it again. It involved 250 older women coming together, sitting around tables and talking about the present and the future. This was not a work about being old but about discrimination and inequality – the invisibility of older women and their leadership capacity. After three weeks of workshops, the women gathered around tables of four and unfolded the black table cloths, revealing yellow or red underneath. They then started talking about prescribed subject matter and every fifteen minutes a sound would be made and they would be given instructions as to how to place their hands on the tables. To the audience watching on, (linking relationally and physically), their hands would move as stitches do on a quilt, as it is being made. A recording of 75 women's conversations was played at the same time. Lacy's art was often created outside the institutional structure which brought the artist into direct engagement with the audience, while addressing social and political issues. The important aspect of the work in the context of this project is that Lacy says that her work is not always political but, when it is, she believes as an artist she must understand the social issues both politically and personally and the choreography must respond in a positive way.

'Crystal Quilt' 1985- 1987 Suzanne Lacy

This work successfully raised issues of the invisibility of older women just as I would like to raise issues of the invisibility of trafficked persons, particularly children, for sex. It raised the issues not only in a wider audience but particularly for the participants. It confirms for me that getting people together in groups and interrupting conversations and bringing people back to the subject at hand can have a profound effect not only for the participants but also for the audience. Lacy's project took months to organise and required collaboration and commitment. Finding an institution to back my project would enable its progress without the burnout so common in relational participatory work.

As Art Activism has been considered in this exegesis, text has been seen to be of importance. It is a direct form of information transference, and having information is a way of backing up images and visual communication. Also, it provides another way of providing 'take-aways' - something to remind the viewer at a later stage. The response to Felix Gonzales-Torres work 'Untitled' (Death by Gun, 1998) is one of uncertainty. The viewer is unsure if this stack of papers on the floor is meant to be walked around and viewed from different angles, like sculpture, or did the artist intend these papers to be picked up and examined? "Listed on the sheets are the names of 460 individuals killed by gunshot during the week of May 1-7, 1989, cited by name, age, city, and state, with a brief description of the circumstances of their deaths, and, in most cases, a photographic image of the deceased. These images and works, appropriated from Time magazine, where they first appeared, reflect Gonzales-Torres's interest in gun control.

"*Conceptually, Death by Gun is an ongoing work of art. Viewer participation is an important element, and the public is encouraged to read the sheets and take them away to keep, display, or give to others. While Gonzalez-Torres determined that the stack is "ideally" nine inches high, he arranged for the depleted sheets to be continually reprinted and replaced, thus ensuring that Death by Gun can be distributed indefinitely. From its beginnings, printed art has been made in multiple copies for dissemination to a wide audience. Here that idea is expanded with an edition that is 'endless'*." (Wye 2004 p245).

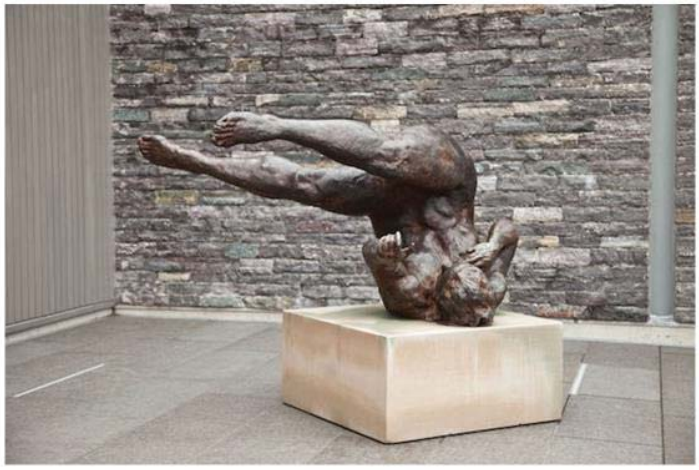
I too produced posters like Gonzales Torres. Where his were based on a desire to confront gun control and communicated directly, I wanted the audience to be drawn in by the contrasting skin colours of the 'posters', then to be confronted by the awful message. I am interested in creating uncertainty, the space between familiar and frightening.

'Untitled' (Death by Gun) 1990 - Felix Gonzales Torres

There is a balance between showing enough to engage an audience, and being so provocative that the audience walks away or detaches from the issue. In 2002, a year after 9/11, Eric Fischl made a sculpture called "the Tumbling Woman", which memorialised the people who threw themselves out of the windows of the Twin Towers after the attack. People in the lower floors had been told it was safe to stay where they were, but when they saw people tumbling down outside their windows, like falling dolls, they ran. In testimony after testimony, survivors of the South Tower credit 'the tumblers' for having saved their lives.

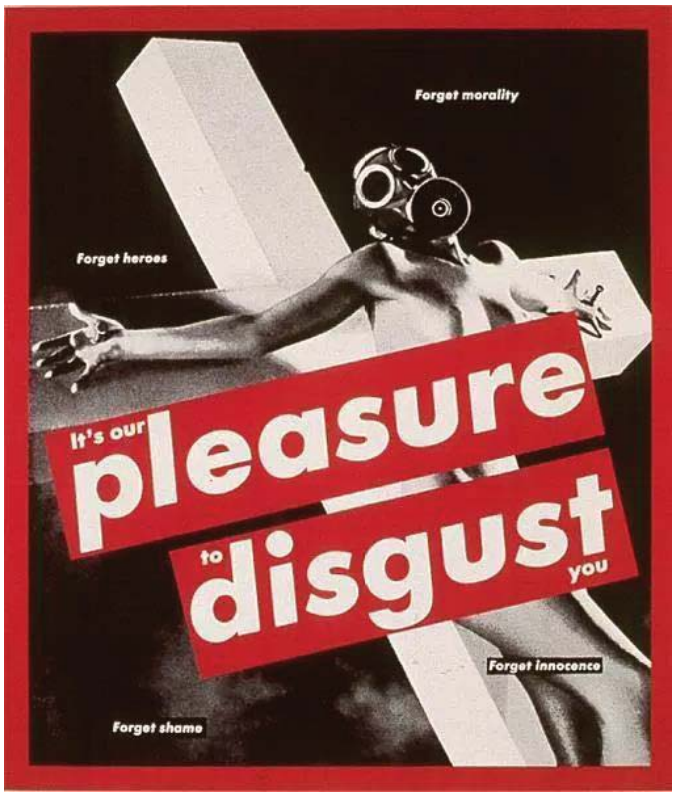
Fischl's sculpture looks as if a woman has just landed on her shoulder with her arm outstretched, and hand open inviting the onlooker to hold it. It was placed in the Rockefeller Plaza, N.Y., without warning. The outcry was so great, Fischl agreed to have it removed within a week. It was too much, too soon after the event. People were happy to talk about the building, as we are with the Grenfell Tower in London, but not about the tumbling bodies, the people who chose to die the way they did. Later, Fischl was to say he regretted agreeing to have it moved but also that it would have been better in an art gallery where the preparation for what was going to be seen would have made it easier to comprehend.

Eric Fischl, Tumbling Woman, 2002, bronze, 38 x 72 x 48". Photo: Brian Wilcox.



Another type of response is elicited through text.

- Barbara Kruger with a background in graphic design and magazine work appropriated black and white photographs and imposes red and white text onto them. The messages are subversive and ambiguous and critical. The work resembles mass advertising and includes messages like “I shop therefore I am” (Wye 1996, p15).



‘Untitled’ (It's our pleasure to disgust you) 1991 Barbara Kruger

- Penny Diggs was trained as a printmaker and uses printmaking in her socially engaged work. Her website states, “She researched domestic violence extensively and conducted many interviews with rape counsellors, police, women's advocates, shelter workers and others." An imprisoned victim of domestic violence who killed her abuser suggested she, Diggs, create an intervention that would be seen in a public space like a grocery store. She had a message printed on milk cartons by working with milk producer Tuscan Dairy, and the milk was delivered to six states in the U.S. Later, she was asked to speak to a Subcommittee on Crime and Criminal Justice on the subject "Domestic Violence: Not Just a Family Matter”.

Domestic Violence Milk Carton Project 1992 Peggy Diggs

Kruger and Diggs have demonstrated the effectiveness of text in Activist Art. Diggs made such an impact she was able to affect Government Policy and that was outside the art gallery. The opportunity to act similarly would be welcome especially living in a capital city. Diggs’ text put the question directly, not using irony or any device. Kruger, on the other hand, by reversing her questions becomes ironic or sarcastic in a way that causes the viewer to think. For this project, irony, even though wonderfully effective, is very difficult. It is hard to be amused by the awfulness of violent abuse.

The author did consider manifestos.

But to me they seemed particularly "blokey", male, a type of living in a world wider than my experience. I after all am a woman who chose to stay at home to look after her four dyslexic children. I know a domestic women’s world not the stage of high minded cultural change, an authoritarian didactic calling for a new order. A written manifesto was considered and rejected because it seemed too grand and too ‘blokey’. There is the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights which says it all (Author’s Journal).

On the other hand, as stated, text has been investigated and a number of posters and postcards have been produced. The most successful have been posters that can be taken

away and, like Peggy Diggs, I have begun to explore containers with text, except that mine are miniature shipping containers.

6. MATERIALITY AND THE MAKER

This section of the exegesis will be concerned with the role of the artist as a maker and the processes of materiality and making. It will discuss the dilemmas of making-driven research, the methods that suit me best, both methodology and place. It will discuss the effects of the handmade work as they were placed in different environments and how the work 'spoke' as it was being made and how I hoped to amplify the voice of the work – and the relationship of medium and materials to the subjects depicted. The dolls began, as ideas or imagined pictures, became material objects and then provoked an immaterial response. The degree of that response varied and part of the project was to gauge that response.

For me having a studio space has been important to establish my own identity as an artist and to get away from the demands of family and home. To progress my art practice, I need space and a place to quiet the internal voices reminding me of the chores waiting to be done, or the needs of family members (Author's Journal).

Alison Bain puts it this way: *"For many women artists at various stages in their careers, continuity, predictability and order would appear to facilitate creative practice by generating feelings of familiarity, certainty and security that, in turn, permit single-minded immersion in work and reinforce an artistic identity"* (Bain 2006).

My own work with textiles is informed by a desire to make it the best I can and by so doing honour the men and women who have gone before me who have invested their health and eyes making intricate, fine, beautiful textile and fibre work. On the other hand, the word precious has been used in a derogatory sense to describe work made by women that is too worked, too afraid to fail, too beautiful, too feminine, too concerned with self and unaware of the world around the maker. I am less concerned with self and more concerned for the disenfranchised or down trodden. I have a feeling that my work could be described as perfect and precious. I get caught up in the precision of making. I care about the detail and the way objects come together and spontaneity can be lost. I think expertise is when you let go of perfectionism and do what passion drives you to do. That's when making takes over reading. And that's when you take off with wings of abandonment (Author's Journal).

It could be put this way:

"Great technique means that you have to abandon perfectionism. Perfectionism either stops you cold or slows you down too much. Yet, paradoxically, it's proficiency that allows a person to make any art at all; you must have technical skill to accomplish anything, but you also must have passion, which in an odd way is technique forgotten. The joy of technique is the bulging bag of tricks it gives you to solve your dilemmas. Craft gives you tools for reparation" (Peacock 2010, p28).

However,

"Materials have their own (often oblique and ever-changing) logic, one that allows for constant rediscovery. When setting out to make something, most artists and designers refuse to predict what the result might be; the thrill of making lies in the possibility of what might be unearthed, both in the maker and in the materials. Accidents are not always life-threatening: sometimes they give birth to something new." (Olowu 2016, p62).

If an artist is an object maker, how then do they control the life of the material if they are trying to put forward a Manifesto, a Call for Action, a Campaign, or encourage a response to a political or social situation? What is the role of manipulation in a call to action? How does the artist allow the material to have a life of its own and yet make it say what the artist wants it to say? If the accident happens and it gives birth to something new, does that, or will that, change the manifesto? Or will it, the manifesto, remain the same? Was it broad enough, simple enough to allow for the non-life-threatening accident? This tension between the life of the material and the material having its own life is always a dilemma.

I *plan the objects I make in my head and sometimes their 'life-of-their-own-ness' frustrates me. In my head, I see what I am going to make quite clearly, the front, the back and from the side. These clearly imagined objects rarely arrive the way I imagined them. They demand I pay them attention, they will not let go. Respecting them and learning to respect their life has been hard fought. They have resisted me and done what they please anyway. I am learning to let go, to give up and let them have their way. Giving up is being "calm"; giving up is to experience peace and rest (Author's Journal).*

The project began with a pattern downloaded from the internet and adapted by changing its size and proportions. Mimi Kirchener, an American doll-maker, made dolls that had always appealed. Her dolls had individual characters and seem to be on the verge of telling a story. But they were relatively simple stuffed 'rag' dolls without an internal support structure.

'Tattoo Dolls' 2015 -Mimi Kirchener

My dolls began to 'speak', tentatively, more confidently as they were dressed. They became replacements for the children who were trafficked. They 'spoke' of the lives they might have had.

They played on a swing in the back yard, went to their first dance, to school, to a trip to Te Papa on a wet day with a friend (Author's Journal).

As was referred to previously, when they were finished they were placed around Massey with a notice saying they represented a trafficked child and were left to be picked up. Of course, they were taken and various comments were made from the people who found them. The comments made were about how they were being treasured. One had travelled in a suit case to Christchurch, had stopped in Picton on the way, and everyone who saw it wanted to know its story and they went to the website too and researched slavery as well. One doll travelled to Australia and its owner enquired if they could make dolls to be left for people to find in that country. A pattern was emailed to them.

These dolls were ordinary children's dolls but still provoked a response of enquiry. They demonstrated that as an artist has control over the means of production (allowing for its materiality to speak) so control is lost once production is complete. *"Like a child the work is abandoned to an independent existence in a world that may transform it beyond recognition …… stripping it of its ideology or using it to prove other political concerns"* (Lippard in Frascina p199).

If a work is hung in a gallery or passed to a dealer, the artist has the illusion of more control. So wherever or whatever is done with the work it must be let go or allowed to grow up to independence and we may never know what will happen to it. But, in this instance, the dolls were uncanny only in their out-of-place-ment, but inspired a response and provoked discussion. Their materiality was formed into an immateriality, which provoked a response, which resulted in action.

The next iteration involved making dolls of fine linen including metallicized linen. There is a proverb in South East Asia that says men are like fine metal and when they tarnish they can be polished and shone so that they are like brand new. But women are like fine linen and when they are stained the stain is permanent. This means that when women and girl children are rescued from trafficking they may not be able to go home. So, agencies who help them must find safe places for them to live, far from the places where their abuses happen.

Investigation of the Slow Stitch movement revealed Tom of Holland who has revived the art of mending and travels internationally teaching ways of preserving woollen textiles. *"I like to do things that take forever, as it allows me to gain a deep understanding of material qualities and the traditional techniques I use for making and mending contemporary objects."* And "… *I favour not the new and perfect but the old and imperfect* …." (van Deijnen).

Tom of Holland at the Yarn Dispensary U.K., Teaching Darning 2016

I cut and slashed the fabric, put it through the wash and start to mend it. I took new fabrics, distressing them and mending them as a metaphor for those who have suffered extreme human rights abuses. As I abused the fabrics their materiality spoke to me and I responded with care and attention taking as long as I needed to make the fabric whole again. It takes a long time to recover from the sort of trauma trafficked people have suffered. These tears and mending were not disguised or hidden, as Freud's repressed memories, but are familiar and out in the open. They are unsettling and suggest the uncanny. One response I had was that a viewer said, "I wanted to take one (a doll) on my shoulder and gently stroke its back." I stained (dyed) the fine linen using Indigo. Indigo is a mystery; when you take the fabric out of the vat it's a nasty olive green but as it oxidises it turns a beautiful blue. My indigo comes from Bangladesh where slavery and human rights abuse are not uncommon. There is a town in the Rajshahi District in Bangladesh, whose sole occupation is prostitution. The sex workers are often children. I sourced some fine linen that had been metallicized and I began working with that. As I made the dolls I discovered that if I stuffed them in just the right way when I sewed the buttons on they formed a pubis, so referring to Robert Mapplethorpe's controversial image of a little girl sitting on a step, having 'forgotten' to put on her underwear. I made some of the dolls only partly clothed. I had always had reservations about that image, not because it isn't a beautiful image, but that it was shown in public and that there was no control over who would look at it in what way. It's open to the gaze of a paedophile and if it was my little girl I wouldn't want her to be looked at in that in that way. I remembered Sally Mann's photographs (Author's Journal).

'Honey' 1976 Robert Mapplethorpe

Again, the dolls found their voice.

"I began life on a table flat, bored, waiting. She took scissors to me, she cut me, she drew on me, she pierced me with needles. She drew thread through me. Sometimes she left me, incomplete, threads hanging my insides exposed. When she returned, she cut me again; she made holes in me; she frayed me, she squashed me, she drew the thread tight and pulled my skin together like a purse. It hurt. She thrust stuffing into me and poked and prodded. She pushed hard, she pushed more stuffing into me. I felt as if I would burst. Sometimes the stuffing came out of my seams so she stitched me together again. I wept silently, inside. She couldn't see my tears, the clenched longing-to-be-done-with. I couldn't cry out. Finally, she was finished. What would she do next? What would happen to me? She left me abandoned and went elsewhere - but where? Would she come back?

I was picked up, found. I was taken into comforting arms that held my body against a shoulder. I was gently stroked along my back. The reflection in the mirror revealed that I was whole. I was loved. Even the skin wounds, were mended with coloured thread, not matching thread, but soft yellow, pale blue, coral, pink; soothing colours of comfort. And I saw I had been made of fine linen, it was slightly discoloured and dirty but it was the best I could hope for. I could sit. The buttons were old, but special. It was as if they had come from a much-loved grandmother's button tin. The buttons that had been played with by a child. A child sitting at her grandmother's feet sorting colours and shapes, making patterns and scooping them back into the tin when she was done. They were given to me as a fragment of different childhood" (Author's Journal).

The purpose of "Textiles as Activism" is to provoke a response. So how do art works provoke responses and what is the effect? How do we make an impact on the viewer that won't turn

them away but inspire them to act? I wish to explore responses in an art context to difficult or dark issues.

I began making again. This time I thought about changing the scale and by photocopying the pattern pieces up several times I ended up with a large doll. I was uncomfortable with the size so I made him a man-doll; an extremely well-endowed man-doll. It occurred to me that I could subvert the female nude so famously portrayed through centuries of art in Titian's Venus of Urbino (1538), Monet's Olympia (1856) and Seward Johnson (Confrontational Vulnerability) (2011), referencing Burt Reynolds' photograph for Cosmopolitan in 1972. I embroidered his open mouth with bared teeth, gave him a moustache and embroidered his hair with French knots, thick French knots with thread I had dyed myself. He was displayed on a plinth lying sideways like Burt Reynolds, his head propped up by his hand. I tipped the dolls and doll parts I had onto the floor in front of him, gave them a kick or two, just to spread them around. I dropped a couple of pairs of dolls undies on the floor, sprayed some Lynx cologne and watched to see what happened.

The response was profound. Initially, like the Barbie nutcrackers, some people laughed, (irony) but then were horrified - "they (the dolls on the floor) looked so abandoned and abused," they said. Also, "The grey felt penis is both attractive and repulsive – grey felt is a material that itself provokes the desire to touch – I laugh at 'donkey …. But I do so because I am provoked by both desire and revulsion – especially within the experiential context you are creating."

I investigated the perfume further and Massey Tutor Lee Jensen introduced me to several more interesting products including 'Secretions' which smelled of blood, sweat and semen (Author's Journal).

Deciding to move the project to a gallery setting was informed by:

- the greater chance of people who make decisions (on national policy, for example on trafficking) seeing the work and being influenced in a positive way; and,
- in a gallery, it is possible to be more direct, riskier, and present information that is difficult because people are more prepared to be confronted.

The man doll, this project is concerned with, still referencing Freud's theory of the uncanny, invokes an initial response of irony and amusement, but that changes when the pile of dolls on the floor is registered by the viewer. It is not expected that dolls would be so abandoned, left unmade, carefully sewn but then tossed, kicked and left in a pile on the floor. It has caused one viewer to burst into tears. The familiar/*heimlich* had become *unhemlich*. Rather than just being out of place they had become frightening. They aroused an inner concern but is the response the right sort of response to arouse? Comments indicated that people did not want to take the dolls home - the connotations were too awful.

7. CONCLUSION

In this exegesis I have briefly outlined the issue of modern human trafficking, particularly for sex. I have discussed dolls in art and examined how Freud's theory of the uncanny has been applied. I discussed two exhibitions: 'Mixed Up Childhood' and 'Disturbing Innocence'. Artists such as Hans Belmar, Morten Bartlett, and Jennifer Rubell, have been referred to. Reference has also been made to photographers, Sally Mann and Robert Mapplethorpe. Textiles as a form of activism and the making of dolls as a means of provoking a response, in an activist context, has been explored. Art practices that may prompt a viewer to act have been looked at including irony, humour, and extreme confrontation.

The work of Felix Gonzales-Torres, Barbara Kruger, and Peggy Diggs has given food for thought. My investigations of text in art and art activism have resulted in ongoing experimentation with messaging in the form of posters and postcards. The dolls have clearly provoked a response and that is certainly a form of activism. The question that remains unanswered, to a degree, is can these modes of art as activism cause people to act? Is just becoming affected and informed enough?

As the project has evolved, it is clear that there are many possibilities open too me. One is to continue to work within the context of the gallery, creating hard hitting and confrontational works. The other is to build on the project as it first began, with a much gentler tone. The take-away dolls would have a link to a website. I have a website yarntoyarn.com (which is still under development) where the 'finder' of the doll could discover the story of a trafficked person. The dolls would not be monetarised in any way. They would be freely given and the finder might donate or not, as they please. The place where the dolls were left would be important to signify the value of the dolls as a replacement or symbol of a human life. Rather than having the URL for Hagar on the ankles, I am considering using the URL yarntoyarn.com.

Human trafficking is a difficult subject. It is distressing and overwhelming. The temptation is to walk away and say it is too big, too much, and too far away. But every small thing that a person can do can make a difference. Through this continuing project, like Peggy Diggs, I hope to make a difference.

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