

Are the artistic female representations, in the last century, aligned with the social and cultural structure evoking a docile and domesticated feminine figure or have the artists been driven to portray more the woman's rebel desire to emerge from their oppressive conditions?

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**Introduction: dedication; autobiographical introspection; self enquiry;
theorization of new practice.**

To my grandmother who was psychologically and physically abused and denigrated by an authoritarian husband. To her that when she was not beaten she was impregnated, as a sign of 'love' and punishment....and often beaten while she was expecting, as a sign of correction and discipline.

Are the artistic female representations , in the last century, aligned with the social and cultural structure evoking a docile and domesticated feminine figure or have the artists been driven to portray more the woman's rebel desire to emerge from their oppressive conditions?

My research questions and analyses the phenomenon of patriarchalism and the consequent submission of women in Western society, which has become a fervent font of discussion for theorists and a subject of interest for artists practice. My investigation adopted the autoethnography methodology in order to express my position from my perspective with the aim to transfer my observations arisen from my experience and contribute to expand the topic womanhood and all the issues related. In principle I try to figure out the 'origin' of women prostration and exploitation by man at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, even the gender roles domination dynamics at detriment of women, in terms of history and anthropology, roots in something more archaic like the Prima Nocta practice, Holy Inquisition, Pharaonic circumcision, Concubinage, Scarlet letter adultery. My experience as witness of an hostile and suppressed domestic ambience, has been relevant in the conduction of my gender studies and marital issues and it represented the triggering engine that contributed to invest my interest for the gender roles accompanied by the urgency to

investigate more extensively and finding a confirmation beyond the South Italian culture male predominance, supported by bias and cliché'. Moore asserted "Stereotypes for femininity include expectations to be domestic, warm, pretty emotional, dependent, physically weak and passive. By contrast, men are thought of as being more competitive and less emotional than women" (E.A. Bloomfield, 2015:15) Exploring the development of social behaviours and attitudes towards women, in public and domestic environments, with the related variations, "Such gender rules and expectations are socially constituted and socially changeable" (I.M. Young-2005:24) has been my methodology to inspect and mostly compare the differences between more kinds of representation: a woman engaged in the affirmation of her own identity; radical, provocative and mostly fearless in contrast with a tamable and docile woman depiction as reflection of resignation and obedience to the role 'assigned'. There are 2 different forms of activism, which could represent a woman belonging to the past or present and from different cultures and backgrounds, indicating a scenario where an abuse dynamic on both sides is not excluded and finalised to a unique purpose, but on the base of those factors why one is probably more acclaimed/diffused/responsive in comparison with the other form?

Why does the desire of rebellion seem to 'prevail' on the mortified acceptance in the artistic representations, enough to create social, political and artistic movements? In terms of social function would it be more fruitful to show the feminine determination and abilities or rather would be accurate to communicate the factual territory of prohibition and the impact of it on women?

To clarify the 'concept' it is right to intervene with an example that may be pertinent. Religion A Religion B : "The philosopher Kierkegaard in the 19th century distinguished two types of Religion: Religion A and religion B. The first of a purely nominal type is the practice of

attending a church without having genuine faith in the Lord. the second, on the other hand, a profound commitment to God is a transforming experience.”(Our Daily Bread,1994) The first is more inclined to embrace a system, the other one with a more individualistic essence and I wonder if the first concept, may it be ‘applied’ or better associated to photography, could be it interpreted as a strategy to attain a more consistent consensus by the audience with the shock and awe effect? “Some artists are known for their shocking or taboo imagery. Unfortunately, when this is the case, an immediate emotional response is all they can offer” (T.L.Glower,2014) or is it just a major way to pay more attention to the problem and offer a solution showing ‘intransigence’? Could a second alternative instead push for a more individual reflection, demonstrating an autonomous critical thinking, without the burden of necessarily having to adhere to feminist ideology, but have a response in terms of involvement also by the male audience that results to be the first cause of women oppression? According to Stuart Hall who define the “system of representation”(S.Hall,1997:19), my “thought” embrace a variant of his concept representing the “mental representation” (S.Hall,1997:17) as fruit of cultural codes where a series of elements which intersect with my conceptual map, ”in your mind's eye”(S.Hall,1997) have built my identity and influenced how to “Construct, meaning and transmit it”. (S.Hall,1997).

Ideologies on origin and functions of Patriarchalism phenomena

The origin of Patriarchy is still being examined by historians, sociologists, economists etc...however the hypothesis more accredited collocated the born of Patriarchy with “the development of agricultural societies”(P.Sorace,2019-2020: 60) The Philosopher John

Zerzan affirmed "Men claim the superiority of their work over that of women; later the craftsman will assert his superiority over the peasant and finally the intellectual will assert his sovereignty over the workers. The hierarchy is established in the individual unconscious in a system validated also by religion, morality and philosophy" (S.Pasquinelli,2008) It is inevitable to argue on the fact that capitalism has been decisive in reinforcing the male supremacy, creating imbalances in gender equal opportunities and the chasm created with the social stratification. But as Naomi Klein affirmed, the patriarchy had the "versatility" to affirms its power also in opposite situations ``Disaster patriarchy" (Eve Ensler,2021), that indicates when a crise occur the man draws own advantages.(referement to the pandemic) "men exploit a crisis to reassert control and dominance"(Eve Ensler,2021) Perhaps it is only after the affirmation of potency roles that social status arises in multiple forms and fields increasing the 'privilege' to marginalize women. Patriarchalism is a social distortion that contrary to what it's believed affects not necessarily the most culturally disadvantaged social classes, but it has manifested in more context; in fact Kate Millet observed "Through institutions such as the academy, the church, and the family, each of which justifies and reinforces women's subordination to men" (Abeda Sultana,2010,page.3) However in the last century the battle to gender inequalities aroused more attention, in terms of protests for rights, diffusion of feminists theories, fierce debates, concepts in contrast, moreover some apparently sexist, but perhaps only in order to reflect a reality perceived, have been conceived by women themselves. According with Sara Morace "Women have seen their prestige and freedom stolen, and have often chosen to be part of a society that is so patriarchal, but which guaranteed them personal safety" (P. Morace 2019-2020,page 63). It seems to "justify" the patriarchy and narrate the fact that it has founded its own roots and

arises on the basis of the woman's needs to derive responsibilities and the desire to maintain arbitrarily a secondary role. Lerner, a theorist, who pronounces on the concept of subordination, is keen to clarify instead that . "Patriarchy implies that "men hold power in all the important institutions of society" and that "women are deprived of access to such power". However, it does not imply that "women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence, and resources" (Abeda Sultana, 2010: 3) There are disparate ideologies on gender control, notorious are the statements of more 'thinkers', included into the content of *"On Female Body experience "Throwing like a girl" and other essays"* (I.M. Young-2005) which describe ,from a sexist perspective and in a reductive way, the woman's identity and the relation with her body. "The true woman is one who gets pleasure from self-sacrifice, the abnegation of pleasure." (I.M. Young-2005) or "Pregnancy is a deviant condition, a temporary inconvenience instrumental to the social value of babies." (I.M. Young-2005) *On Female Body experience "Throwing like a girl" and other essays"* offer an egalitarian point of view and support to feminist theories but does not fail to report in the content the most flared theories and perspectives, even unethical, in comparison, as documentation of the cross-section of society on gender topic, the counterpart. Without opposition the positions can't be ascertained and reinforced. Young deconstructs and analyse exhaustively definition of gender, sex distinction, subjectivity, identity, separation between sexuality and motherhood referring to the influence of social norms and conventions recalling the thought of Judith Butler who affirmed that "Gender identity is not an internal essence that is expressed through behaviour, but is instead an effect of repeated behaviours that imitate gender norms" (I.M. Young-1991) According with her affirmation the relation of binomial woman-subordination/ man-supremacy depends by the social structures, where the human being responding to the

expectations of society structured by norms and conventions. A concept also supported by Jaclyn Friedman ``The perspective of “care” (E.L. Papadaki,2019)

Forms of activism applied to the photography

The ‘lack’ of what I named “inverse-soft activism” not want to take the guise of a negative critique, regarding the methodology adopted to represent the role of women under rebellious ‘circumstances’, in fact as Guerrilla Girls affirmed “The world of art doesn't have to be an Olympics, where few win and everyone is forgotten....it’s not just about egos, competitions, fame, and fortune. It's also about cooperation and collaboration”

(A.Girshovich, 2005) It is a practice in which I believe and that have demonstrated and certified as a fair and educational method to attract attention to the problem of female oppression and push to revolutionary actions, denouncing and breaking the female stereotypes, instead this ‘concept’ arises from a need to investigate by availing of the contradiction that emerges between representations and performances of independent and subversive women “Many feminist artists strategically tackle this imbalance by creating artworks that portray female subjects as strong, creative, rebellious, complex and unique individuals” (ACCA Education,2018) but which at some points did not reflect the majority that still were trapped in the stereotype of weaker sex .The artist Natalia Sielewicz in fact dwells on this reality and affirmed “In Poland there is a new wave of a very effective and visceral type of feminist painting. To a certain extent, it’s paradoxical while 80 per cent of students in the art schools are women, there are almost no women leading the painting departments” (N.Walsh,2019) The same artist stated: “I asked myself a question ; how can I paint a medium allegedly so outdated and conservative - subvert the binary positions of sameness/

difference, nature/ technology, domination/ passivity and visibility/camouflage?" (N.Walsh,2019) From my perspective instead to face the womanhood issues, I feel the opposite force, I needed for a moment to detach myself from what could conceptually the contemporary art mean 'Kneen on exploring the above problems and phenomena through deconstruction and ambiguity" (N.Walsh,2019) and back to the origin, passing through the memory and a systematic process of documentation, experiment a soft line practice and sensible approach in attempt also to get close to the optic of woman as victim of moral rigidity, driven by cultural limits of exasperated domestic devotion, maniacism,pathological perfectionism, attached to the conformism, potential bigotry in compliance with the social code imposed by the society. My aspiration would be to trigger a self identification response that, in terms of psychology, would never happen with a more protesting, 'aggressive' and 'intimidating' form of art. I believe that self-identification factor should be one of the fundamental components to exercise a social function through the images; as observed in the psychological field studies, the phenomena of "Self-related" involve as primary functions: "representing, effecting, and changing" (P.Taghard-J.V.Wood,2015). My studies and my position take cue from Betty Friedan's theory "; *The Feminine Mystique* (B. Friedan,1963) "describe the societal assumption that women could find fulfillment through housework, marriage, sexual passivity, and child rearing alone.(L.B.Churchill,2020), nothing else to conquer outside the domestic walls. ``The problem has no name" (B.Friedan,1963:15) is the initiator valve to evince this 'unmotivated' state of dissatisfaction of women who were incapable to express this malaise caused by male hegemony. According to Friedan behind that there is a mechanism "functionalism" (B. Friedan,1963) which recognizes the institutions as responsible of promoting an education system where women were directed to the specific role of

housewives and induced them to believe in that role model as personal realisation, a sort of concealed imposition. "The housewife convinces herself that she must always watch after her children, lest they be deprived of something in her absence", "togetherness"

(M.Sutton,2021) The book had a big resonance between the women who recognized themselves, behind at first bewitched by this prototype of a 'arrived' woman to then discover the big illusory deception. *Do[o]mestic Bliss* (2021) by Cristina Rizzi Guelfi is a series inspired to the book "Feminine Mystique"(Betty Friedan,1963)

"Tucked within colourful magazine pages, the periodicals promised the modern mid-century housewife would find exactly the right information that would give her the knowledge to excel in her role as a suburban wife and mother.

In the In midst of all this happy homemaking, some quiet rumblings among some unhappy housewives across the country began to be heard by the fall in 1960. It would begin the slow death knell for the suburban housewife" (Guelfi, 2021)

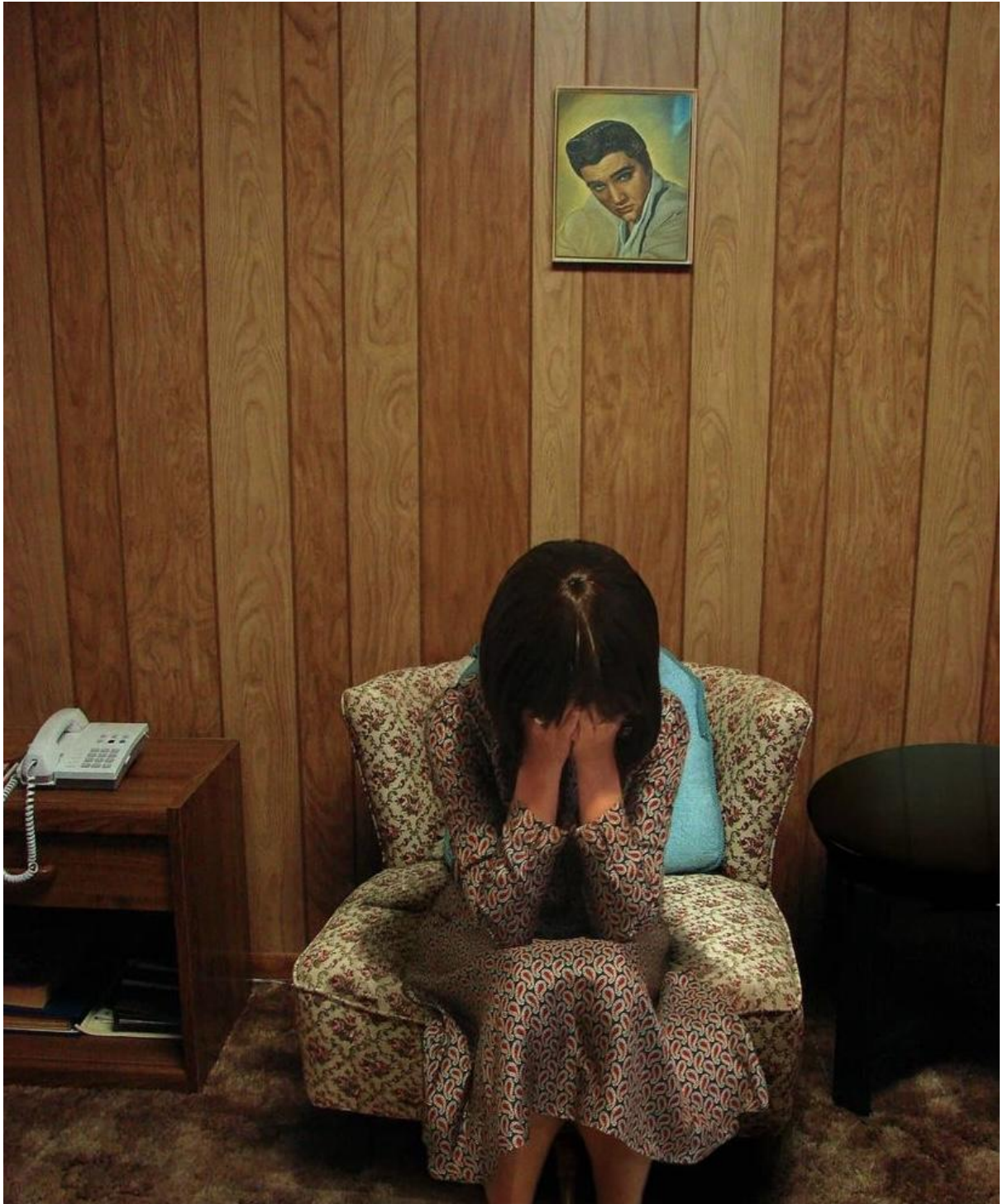
The project evokes a period of time antecedent the 60s and a woman's disenchanted vision shaped to accomplish the man and society expectations. At times a woman is depicted unaware of the danger to which she is exposed, alternated with moments in which the sense of defeat surfaces, the conflict between being the vaunted woman that society demands and exhaustion of the energies in order to indulge this criterion.

"The mystique of femininity is a deliberate design of persuasion and conditioning that has led millions of Americans to segregate themselves in the American residential suburbs."(V.Monteleone,2020) "His approach to photography provokes the contemplation and reconfiguration of clichés through the playful revelation of

bizarre and mysterious.” (Elliot Linden,2020) The inverse-soft activism that I would like to apply in my practice want aspire to a different approach to audience, focusing to describe the credible woman’s position, to express the female naivety to distinguish, acquiescent, permissiveness, the unconscious desire, the veiled awareness of being crushed by the weight of patriarchalism,starting from the premise of being faithful to the reconstruction.







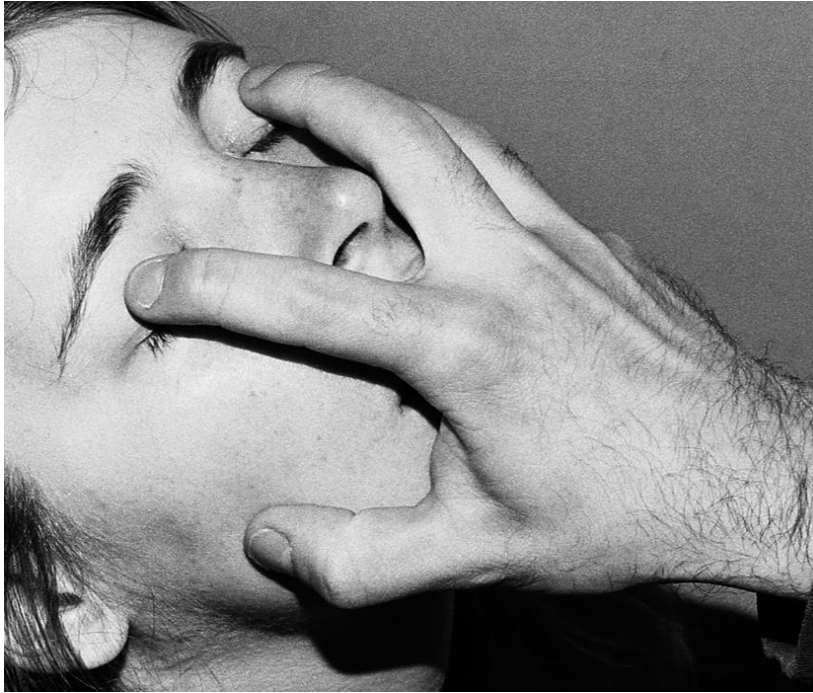


Exploration of woman body, confined space and behaviours in representations

“How do girls and women constitute their experienced world through their movement and orientation in places? What are some of the feelings of ambivalence, pleasure, power,

shame, objectification, and solidarity that girls and women have about bodies, their shape, flows, and capacities?" (I. Marion, 2005:20) Iris Marion Young in the volume, "*On Female Body Experience-Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays*" (I.M. Young, 2005) questions referring to The "lived body" (I.M. Young, 2005:27) concept "Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality" (I.M. Young-2005:38) which describe the paradox of the 'abstract' liberty which potentially could be exercised by the women but which result to be latent by the impediments dictated by the diffusion of inequality of gender. The social stigma that undermines and restricts the woman intellectual faculties. The photographic project that best embodies this thought and the state of constriction is "*Stable Vices*" (J. Piotrowska, 2021) The images are inspired by Carol Gilligan's book "*Joining the Resistance*" (C. Gilligan, 1991) who coined the principle of Ethics of care- Ethics of justice ("care-based morality (usually found in women) and the justice-based morality (usually found in men)" (Mounsef Adamy, 2020) and analyse and deconstruct the domestic sphere arriving to the conclusion that the male domination is now deeply inculcated and has been consolidated into domestic settings so no longer appearing as a cultural aspect but a legitimate behaviour that determines a condition that inevitably women are forced to live. "Structures of domination become invisible because they have been internalised, incorporated into the psyche, they appear not as manifestations of culture but as part of nature – part of us" (L. Zenghova', 2021) The body of work incarnates the outburst of no longer permissible tolerance and of stifled resistance against the 'invisible' domestic oppression; the shelters are the refuge in an unprotected and toxic context. There is palpable the sense of discomfort and frustration expressed throughout exasperated and disturbing gestures. *Stable Vices*' title derives from the stereotypy behaviours of equine species, a sort of obsessive compulsive disorder, as a response to forced confinement and mistreatment, making an observation and connection with human

resilience that finds a way to erupt in circumstances of abuse "dysfunctional environments' rather than the dysfunctional behaviours which are in reality, a very natural response to oppression." (B.Hutton,2021)







Completely detached from the dimension of sufferance, *Traces* (W.Gesiska,2015-2017), is a project by Weronika Gesiska , recollects a series of retrospective images focusing on family nucleus scenes rather than the woman's individual role. She interrogates the veracity of those immortalised behaviours and through the manipulation she tries to modify the initial 'intent' of showing a well-being environment, giving to those her perspective and materialising her doubt about their inauthenticity.

"What comes out are fake halo images, perfect smiles and places so incredible that they are, maybe, not even real....I try to erase, as much as I can, the difference between an original image and my own alteration, creating a completely new history at the same time"

(The Guardian,2017)





This attempt of demonstrating how ,in the compression of time,a memory could be

distorted find an affinity with my aim to apply the line of inverse-soft activism in my practice, with the ambition to arouse and capture how the contemporary society perceives the images of a woman apparently in harmony, but from which could be detected the spectrum of gender oppression, and how much it can generate a 'modern' moral indignation and trigger a process of evaluation in terms of confrontation, progress and emancipation between the social structure of the past to contemporary times but also to grasp instead what has persisted over time. The flow of time/perception/perspective and the still existent social pressures, stereotypes, gender inequalities bonded to the woman.

Male Gaze, Objectification, body alienation, distinction of stereotypes and perception in culture mass

Ann Bloomfield conducted a study (*"Gender role stereotyping and art interpretation"*.- E. A. Bloomfield- 2015) and denoted how much, male and female individuals of contemporary society are still oriented towards identifying and associating symbols to the male or female entity. "gender symbols"(E. A. Bloomfield, 2015) "Anything in culture can be a sign and send a specific message" (St. Bonaventure University:3) Barthes declared, in attempt to explain how much the sum of all social codes, which give life to beliefs and stereotypes, influence our interpretation of an artwork. Returning to the theory discussed by Hall regard the function of representations: "Meanings also regulate and organise our conduct and practises -they help to set the rules, norms and conventions by which social life is ordered and governed" (S.Hall,1997, pag.4) "cultural circuit" (S.Hall,1997) I have analysed images which presenting female stereotypes and I have come to conclusion

that these differ from one another. I made a distinction of stereotypes that in my opinion could be classified in more types because appearing under multiple forms; in chronological order (except the last one, which could be associated with different historical periods) : Stereotypes in Disguise, Broken Stereotypes, Intentional Stereotypes, Rare Timeless Stereotypes. Stereotypes in Disguise: pictures relative to the feminine mystique boom before the stereotypes could have been felt by society. Broken Stereotypes: the stereotypes that feminist art has sarcastically or parodically used in an attempt to break them. Intentional Stereotypes: contemporary stereotypes referred to the stereotypes persisted in the time adopting an inverse technique that is to represent the opposite as a means of affirmation against the stereotype. Rare Timeless Stereotypes: stereotypes of visionary artists identified in "unsuspecting times".

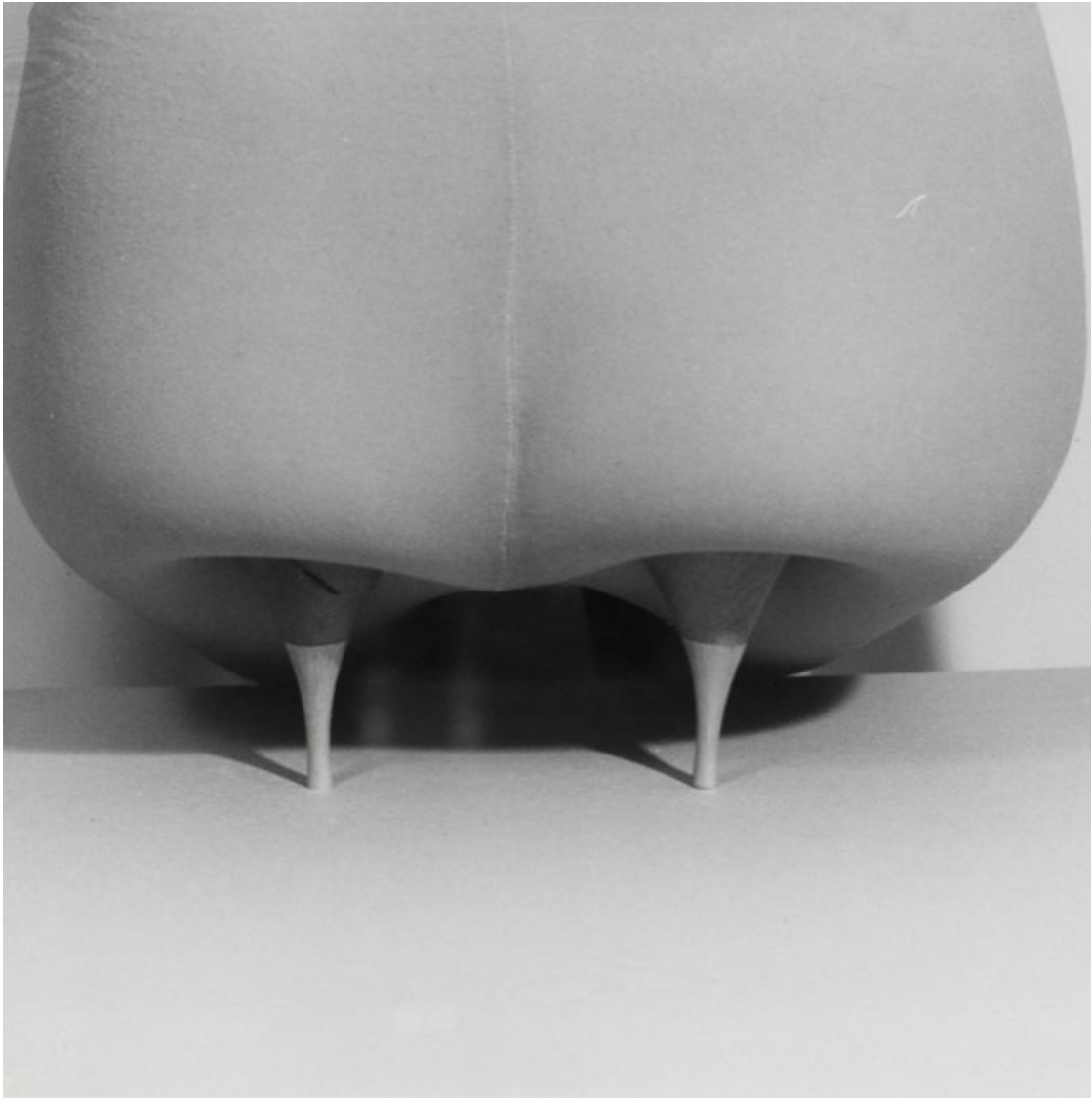
The intervals between one time and another could be filled by the evolution in terms of conquests; the construction of consciousness of one's own body, identity affirmation, capacity recognition and could include concepts like "Feminine mystique" (B. Friedan, 1963) "coming to voice" (P.H. Collins, 1990) Challenging boundaries (A.S. Chan, 2010:12) "A New Politics of the Body" (L. Mulvey, 1991). The latter is specifically referred to the practice of Cindy Sherman whose images evoke an "accumulate connotations of sexuality" (L. Mulvey, 1991) using the male preconception, called by feminists as attack "Projection of the male unconscious" (R.M. Puglisi, 2003) of the object woman as a weapon to break it. However Sherman undergoes an inner and aesthetic revolution and the nostalgic women made room for monstrous masks.





There are artists like Penny Slinger, Birgit Jürgenssen, Carolee Schneemann, Helen Chadwick, Natalia LL who in 70s used bodies as real “radical” propaganda to fight the stereotypes.











But how does the stereotype arise? Some studies affirm that it takes shape in pedagogical age, Renzetti & Curran stated "Freud also portrayed the gendered behaviours acquired in early childhood as fixed and stable over time" (E. A Bloomfield- 2015) and arised by the necessity of society to simplify a system of complicated relationships creating the categories. The stereotype in disguise indicate a context where the feminine social position, intended as collective brainwashed, does not permit to identify a stereotype and a non-disclosure of it means that those stereotypes remain 'non-existent' and the images have become the symbol of female cliches only later with the advent of feminist

movements. An example is the typical advertise of 50s which were launched in attempt to domesticate but is a receptor of women as mediocre individuals “The attractive young woman who is simultaneously independent and idiotic, doing silly things in hysterical fashion because apparently that is all she is good at.”(S.Usborne,2016).



Women don't leave the Kitchen!

We all know a woman's place is in the home, cooking a man a delicious meal. But if you are still enjoying the bachelor's life and don't have a little miss waiting on you, then come down to Hardee's for something sloppy and hastily prepared.



THE IDEAL GIFT
FOR ALL OCCASIONS



*"Oh darling! How lovely... I've just
longed for a **FOWLERS VACOLA**
BOTTLING OUTFIT for years!"*



People try it...and they like it

Time for a break! Try Carling Black Label Beer. It's the friendly beer at the friendly, popular price. So many people everywhere are trying—and liking—Black Label, that it's America's fastest growing beer. Carling is one of the six leading brewers of the nation...a remarkable nine-year sales leap from 62nd place. Won't you try Black Label? You'll like it too.

Every day more people say, *"MABEL, BLACK LABEL"*

CARLING *Black Label* BEER

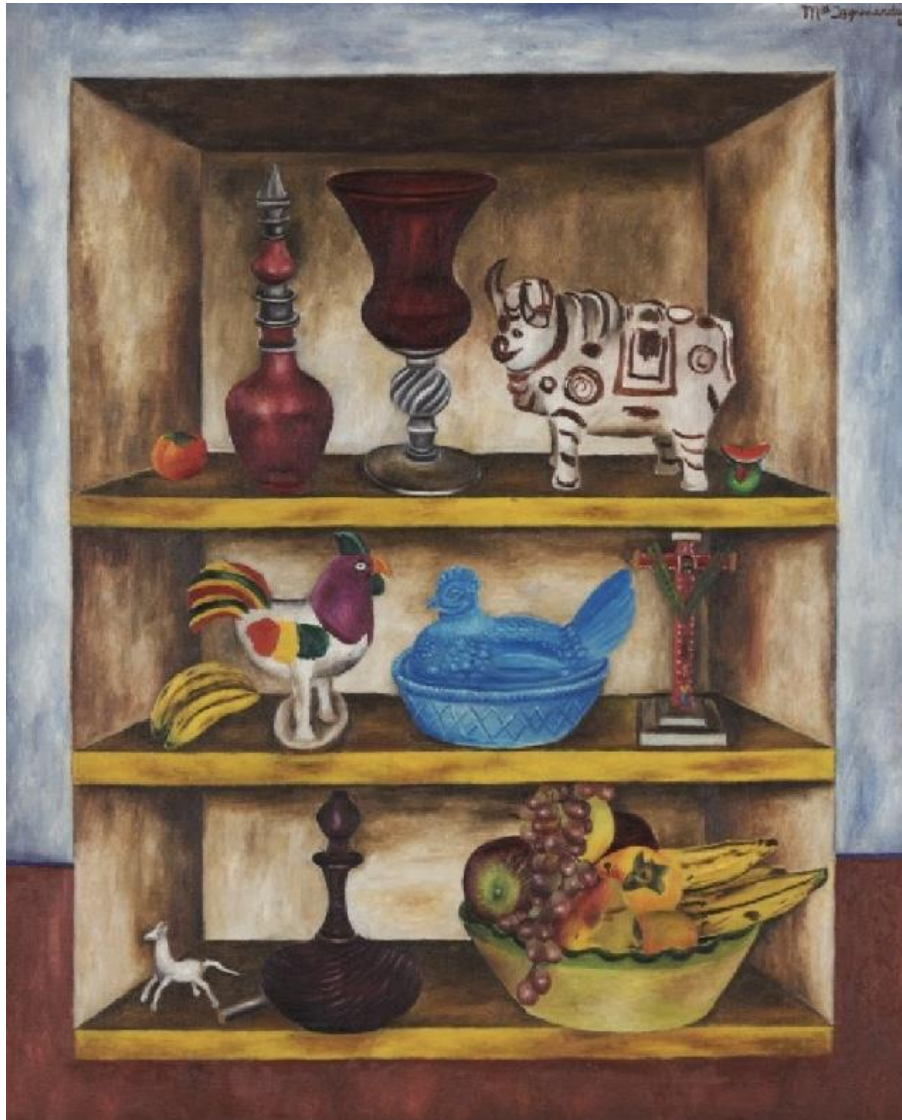
Intentional Stereotypes: The contemporary society is committed to combating gender prejudices directing the interest to a fusion of genders, I have noticed for instance how much the fashion industry focused on this concept of fluidity/genderless creating same couture pieces for both genders in order to override the obsolete dress code rules.

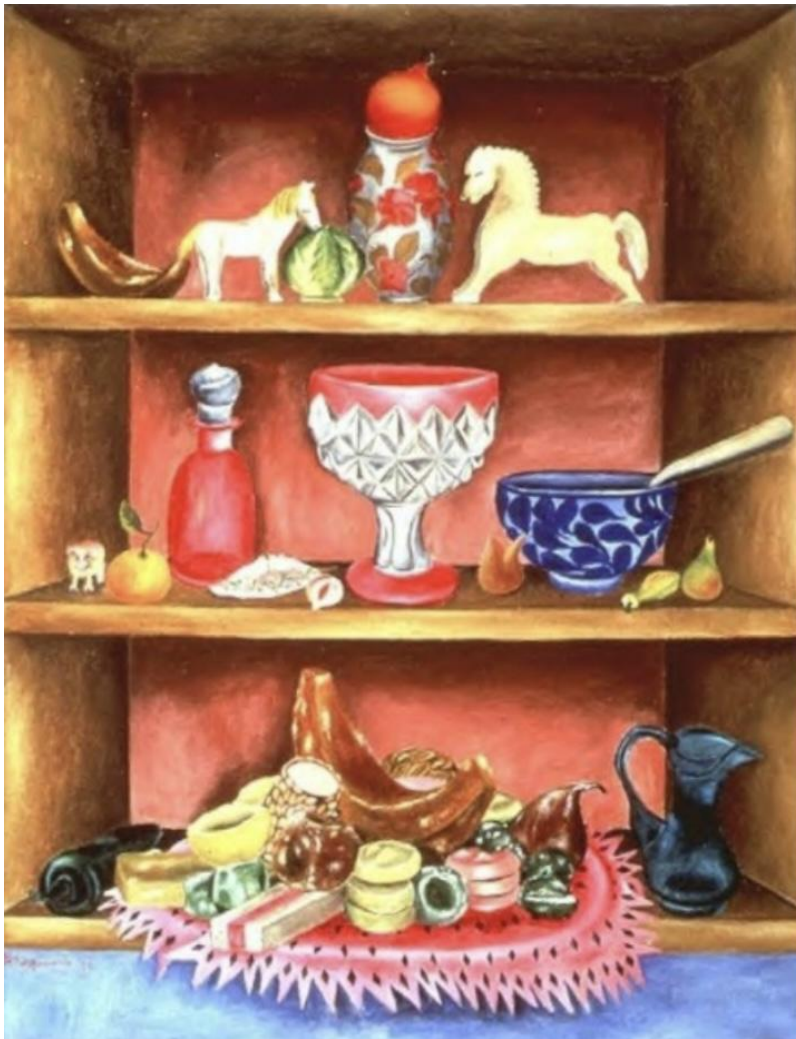
More and more women are portrayed in men's clothes and performing masculine duties in order to affirm physical and intellectual faculty of women and break the stereotype of a woman capable of accomplishing only certain activities.



What I have named Rare Timeless Stereotypes it is a self-observation which indicates artists committed to fight the stereotypes on feminine bodies and sexuality in a moment when the society seemed not to feel the necessity, at least not explicitly. The difference is evident above all from the criticism where semiotic analysis of representation is involved. For instance the artworks of Frida Khalo and Maria Izquierdo seem to flow on 2 opposite and parallel positions, despite the same cultural context and production period referements in common.

“It has been remarked that Izquierdo’s cupboard still lifes reflect a feeling of confinement which often occurs elsewhere in her work. Not surprisingly, critics have speculated that these images are metaphors for the constriction of her own life in Mexico as child, as a young woman, and later” (E.L.Smith, 1993. pag.108)





My observations are based on my self-questioning and my knowledge, indicating specific periods and according to the inherent social structures, therefore they can be deliberately judged, contested, supported or annulled.

The art has been absorbed by the “mechanism” of Gaze, regard the woman bodies representations, with its derivative, Objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) more specifically Sexual Objectification (Dawn M. Szymanski, 2011) “In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female “Male Gaze” (L. Mulvey, 1989) Kant *Lectures on Ethics* “Into a thing” (E.L. Papadaki, 2019) creating disparity between the gender roles. Concepts that then branch out

in voyeurism “object for voyeuristic consumption by both male and female viewers”

(D.Vitova,2019) narcissism and fetishistic scopophilia, Freudian term, resurfaced by Laura

Mulvey (D.Vitova,2019) John Berger,the father of the term Gaze, attributed to the woman the attitude to perform an “accomplice” function “men act and women appear”

Fredrickson and Robert’s Self-objectification Theory (R.M.Calogero,2012)

(J.Berger,1972.pag,47)“Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at.”

(J.Berger,1972.pag,47) “objectifies her own self-image”.(A.Sengupta,2017).

The instrumentalization of women’s bodies finds space, reflecting the controversial society, especially in the modern era of mass media and social networks demonstrating for instance how the encouragement to the normalisation of the body is boycotted to be replaced by a specific canon of beauty, risking to create a destabilised relationship between women and their own physicality ,(Body shame versus Standard beauty ideal). The female body has always been a subject of interest, discussions and often demonetized, like for instance, the phenomenon of the Pin-Up in mass culture. “The tension between autonomy and the presence in the public space of the women’s body on the one hand, and the commodification of the female body on the other ” (G.Giuliani,2007). The figure of Pin Up represented the lynchpin of an era that was preparing for broad horizons regarding the consciousness of a woman’s own body and sexual emancipation, however the conservative epoque foresaw a standardised model of ‘woman’ that complied with the morality, traditional canons and social rules.



Nowadays the same images would be considered chaste, in conformity with the variations of modern codes of ethics, and probably would not fit in the contemporary scale of objectification concept which implicate the phenomena of dehumanisation, that represent nothing other than the decay of the moral values of society. *Nemo liber est qui corpori servit* ("No one is free who is a slave to his body") cited Seneca Minor (B.C.). However for a body, exposed by the mass media and art, intended as a showcase and stimulation to the desires of flesh, contrary in the religious context it had to be deprived by the carnal lust and exhibition aim, because associated with spiritual perdition through the sinner acts.

So a body that in the ambiguity of the good proposals behind the social perseverance in order to gain respect for it, has always constituted instead to be a defamed 'territory'.



The Religion as symptom of Patriarchalism

The artist Aimilia Balaska, exploring the subject of female social castration, focuses most of her photographic practice on the sense of oppression deriving from religious and domestic environments.

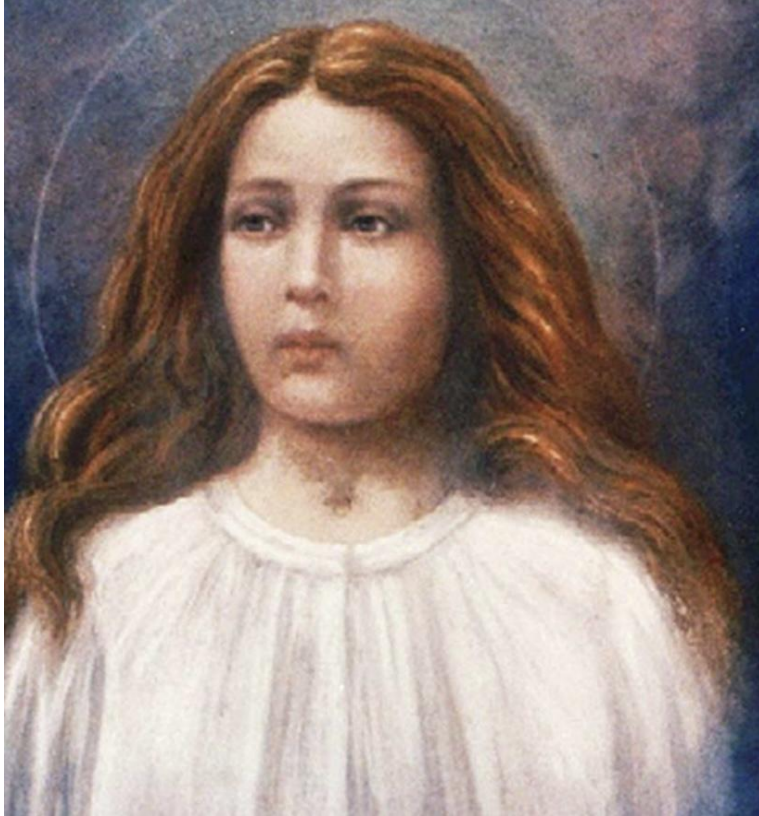
“I started to explore themes like the influence of religion on humankind the entrapment within social establishment the role of the woman on it as well as the concealed immorality “

(A.Balaska,2019) The title *Miasma* is referred to the the flow of poisonous and contaminated air that comes from putrefying substances. The images are eloquent in describing the suffocating religious context and evoke the effects of it on humankind.



Blatant is the patriarchal orientation of certain religions that have contributed to saturate the image of women over the centuries. However, the feminism discredited certain holy images of purity and chastity associated with the ideal of real woman, making it lose the

credibility, for instance the figure of Santa Maria Goretti "the antithesis of feminism"(C.Siccardi,2018)



The reaction of a fervent conservative community was predictable accusing feminism of embodying the evil of a society that contributes to the impoverishment of the spirit.

"The evil that the feminist movement has done over so many decades is incalculable: divisions within family nuclei (primal cells of society); male insecurity; suffocation of the father figure....exponential increase in promiscuity and libertinage;"(C.Siccardi,2018)

However, far from me to support certain statements, I have admit and accept the fact that at some points feminism has been counterproductive, generating for example sentiments like the misandry as response to a male domination. "The term "feminism" acquires a negative connotation....on the one hand the feminism of equality, on the other what is naively mistaken for such. The second is a mix of ignorance, misinformation and a pinch of misandry. A phenomenon that focuses on the figure of the "man-beast" which manifests itself with embarrassing generalisations and baseless controversies. (Pianeta Terra,2021)I totally agree with the affirmation: "Complete and utter hatred or contempt for the opposite sex, whether in the form of misogyny or misandry, is an irrational or polarising condition.(Spiegato,2021)

For certain religious strains the woman's body is represented, mostly as a bank of ova, aimed at the sole purpose of reproducing a lineage. This happens in the Church of Mormons where infertility becomes a handicap leading to repudiation.

"Three Mormon Towns" (1953) is a project of Dorothea Lange in collaboration with Ansel Adam produced in the 50s which documented the dawn of what then at distance of years has increasingly taken the appearance of a sect that behind religious pretexts revealed to be a profit organisation that violates and exploits women. "Three Mormon Towns' was a study of contrasts — of old and new, of quiet villages and a growing city, of deep roots and transient highways. In this series, Lange memorialised the dignity and simplicity of agrarian life in light of postwar urbanisation." (Brian Maffly,2011) Behind those images was hiding something else which the rest of society and the photographer themselves were unaware of and which then leaked years later. In fact their hostility in seeing themselves portrayed in the

volume *"In a Rugged Land"* (Swensen 1953-1954) represented in my opinion a wake-up call regarding their social closure and lack of transparency. "When the residents found themselves in Life magazine, they were not necessarily happy" (Brian Maffly, 2011). From a completely different perspective and with the context of today we could give a different significance to those images and to evaluate not only the 'great individual' character as a social aspect but also detect codified details of a community that turned out to be oppressively patriarchal, that was initially ignored.





Description of my practice and conclusion



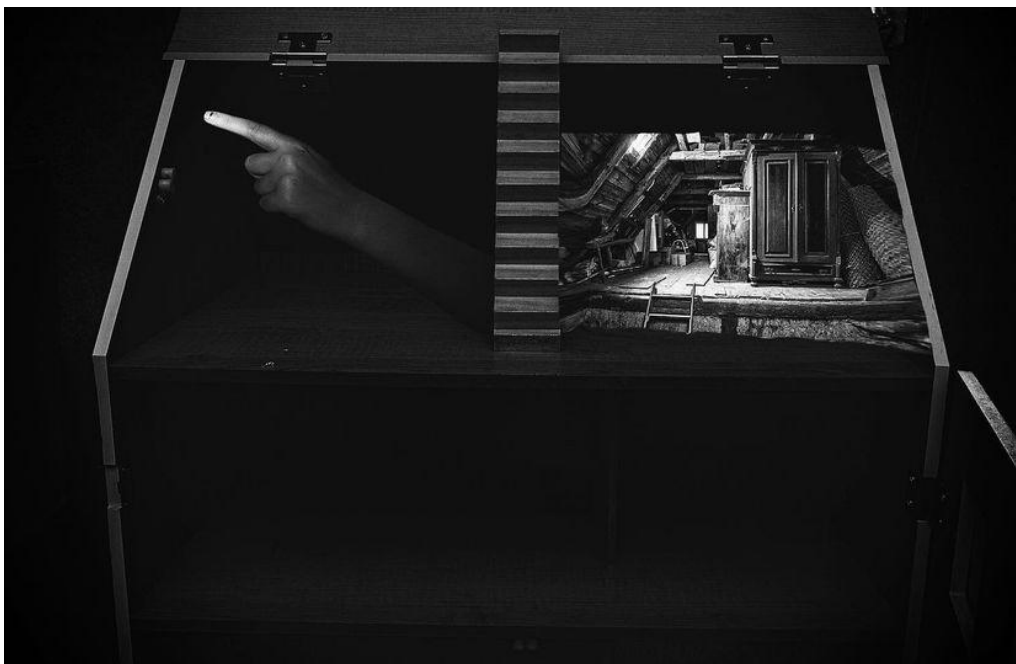
The image above is my vision of a house intended as not a safe shelter but a threatening context where the woman is exposed, the realm of patriarchy where it manifests the cruel vexation against the woman and induces her to morally collapse. The grimace on entrance assumes 2 significance: the mocking patriarchy that makes scoffs on female weaknesses and a necrotic smile as a symbol of imminent falling apart.



The image represents a memory of ascertained emotional dependence and it describes the woman's vulnerability. The stairs were a ritual place where remorse and tears were consumed.



The metaphoric manifestation of discomfort for being always associated exclusively with woman maternal resources. The fertile womb is rejected in reaction to this stereotype.





The trapped ego in the restricted domestic space, the sense of judgement and guilt in an ambience which apparently connote the tidiness but it's wrapped instead in a halo of moral filth and devoid of possibilities for the female gender.



My vision of a woman's feelings when is exposed to society . The inevitable fall.



The desire to emerge and the constant presence of man as impediments to pursuit gender autonomy.



The progressive decline as a predestinate presage since the early age



In vain, tentative to hide ourselves. Being categorised is still a deviant attitude of society from which it is difficult to escape.



An allegory to describe a marital crisis.

My first stage of practice wants to reflect the toxicity of a domestic space where male dominance represents to be the pillar of this environment. I have tried to translate to images

everything I have been an eye and emotional witness during my childhood and adolescence, in a familiar context where the women were annihilated by her own sacrifice to comply with the exigencies of men, expressing a sense of discomfort, endurance, desire to emerge. The technique used is the collage inspiring to artists like Hannah Hoch and Martha Rosler which through their art were visual discursive regard the feminine gender.

The black and white was to intensify the signify and give a retrospective touch in order to narrate my past experience with patriarchalism. I have used symbolism and recalled the surreal art to describe a surreal reality. As person who was raised in a very conformist context, where the phenomena of patriarchalism was strongly perceived, I feel to have a commitment to invest my art in attempt to perform a social function that does not only focus on looking to the future in progressive way to attain more rights, the decision to adopt a different line does not mean that I disagree with feminist art, but also achieving the attention, through a self-identification process in order to push them towards the "*Liberating Knowledge*" (J. Barr, 1999) in name of all women who are still attached to cultural beliefs, dogmas and penalised by those despite the goals achieved by women activism.

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