

Paper from the Conference “INTER: A European Cultural Studies Conference in Sweden”, organised by the Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden (ACSIS) in Norrköping 11-13 June 2007. Conference Proceedings published by Linköping University Electronic Press at www.ep.liu.se/ecp/025/. © The Author.

Suffering and Peril – Echoes of a Near Past: About the Art Exhibit “The Silence of Abuse”

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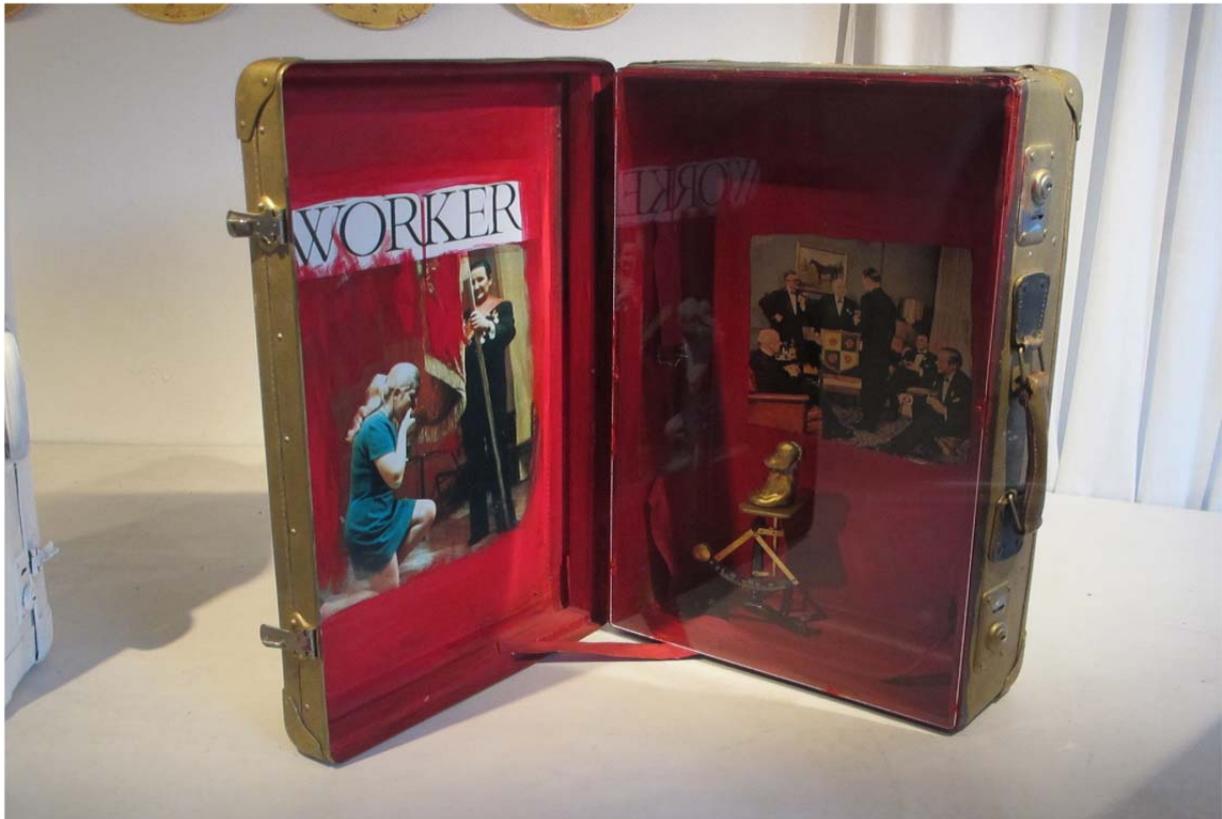


Joanne Posluszny-Hoffsten's exhibit “The Silence of Abuse” JR. Konsthall, Linköping, Sweden 2010

Mahatma Gahndi once said that if one takes action one is unsure of the outcome. However, if no action is taken then there can be no change.

THE SILENCE OF ABUSE

In my art exhibit "The Silence of Abuse, The Burning Flame of Hope" it was my intent to express through my art the emotions of the abused and the downtrodden. In creating these artworks I have used photographs of people who are in situations of conflict and abuse throughout the world. One photo, for example, shows a Japanese woman holding her crippled son, another, Chinese workers pulling heavy burdens while being tied together and several others portray Swedish couples entrenched in drug and alcohol abuse. In two sculptures I have shown a black man gazing out in despair and a woman being embraced by her friend, after leaving her home where she had discovered her dead husband's body-in a picture from war torn France from World War II. The situations I show vary, the locations are diverse, yet the message is the same. When people find themselves in situations which are so difficult that they are unable to react, they no longer dare to speak – they fall silent. It is the silence of abuse. As Ghandi proclaimed– "there can be no change."



Joanne Posluszny-Hoffsten, "The Worker" from "Silence of Abuse Exhibit"

SUITCASES, CROSSES AND SKATEBOARDS

In "The Silence of Abuse" I have used suitcases, crosses, skateboards and shrines to tell the tales of victims who are often isolated and trapped. Working on this project with Dr. Barbro Wijmo, a specialist in women's psychological problems at Linköping University in Sweden, I was able to gain new insight into the problems of the abused. This exhibition has been shown in Linköping, Sweden at Jr. Konsthall, at the Fullersta Bio Konsthall in Huddinge a superb of Stockholm, Sweden, where it was seen by record crowds and will travel this November, 2011 to Krakow, Poland.



Joanne Posluszny-Hoffsten, "Installation photo of Silence of Abuse exhibit" Fullersta Bio Konsthall, Huddinge, Sweden

RAISING AWARENESS TO ISSUES OF ABUSE

Dr. Barbro Wijma felt that if I created this exhibit it would hopefully raise awareness to the issue of abuse, especially abused women. We both hope that this exhibit would encourage the sufferers to seek help and the public and governmental agencies to give this problem more financial aid. One of the points I make and which Dr. Wijma encouraged, is that help can be found – situations eventually can be turned around. There are several positive pieces in this exhibit, such as the "The Kiss Globe." The "Kiss Me Globe" has hundreds of gold and red kisses attached to it. Through this work I think that all of us need to be loved, listened to and even kissed. Through positive communication many problems can be solved, be it on a personal or public level.

PERSONAL PROBLEMS – NATIONAL ISSUES: EVERYTHING IN THE END IS PERSONAL

The Berlin Wall fell over twenty years ago. However, the days of Communism and Fascism and the memory of the second World War are still fresh in the minds of many inhabitants of the nations that now belong to EU.

HEALING OR HATE

Memories of past events can give way to healing or hate. The political decisions which a nation makes are often the result of the conflicts or alliances which the nations have

experienced in the past. Huge political moves are often very personal-as personal in some cases as an individual's who become embroiled in different types of social conflicts within the family, at school or at work. Everything is in the end-personal. Many who are "abusers" are victims themselves. They are often people who have become disappointed and hardened by life-perhaps those who have no jobs or suffered horrible childhoods. The abuser is one who then lashes out at those in his or her surrounding.

WE REPEAT OURSELVES THROUGH BONDING AND HABIT

Our moves-our choices on a personal level or as a nation are often in a set pattern which are hard to break out of. We repeat ourselves due to bonding and habit. We often seek the answer to problems in ways which have become familiar and habitual, even though we know other ways could be more positive.

There are ways out. There are golden paths and answers. New solutions can be found, new paths can be taken-be it by an individual or an entire nation. The silence of abuse can end and be vocalized. Victims can find their voices again- and go forward.

TO MAKE HELP AVAILABLE TO THE VICTIMS OF ABUSE

Dr. Barbro Wijma and I both felt the message that the abused can climb out of the victim role and triumph by creating a positive situation for themselves was essential to be made known.

Help and hope are both available. It is very important that the problem of abuse be focused on and that an understanding of the problems be made more available to the public. Especially in the cases involving women and children more support should be given in helping these victims, so that they can find a way out of their situations of abuse.



Barbro Wijma and Joanne Posluszny-Hoffsten in front of "Silence of Abuse exhibit " Fullersta Bio Konsthall, Huddinge, Sweden

TO TRIGGER REACTION

Through this exhibit I wanted to show the public the seriousness of the situations of abuse. I also wanted the viewers, who are perhaps victims themselves, to recognise themselves in these situations, in order to trigger a reaction in them. I want them to take a step forward out of their misery.

The artworks in this exhibit are mainly about women, but also about children and men. The art is serious but at times has a tinge of humour.



Joanne Posluszny-Hoffsten, "Fashion Victim" from "Silence of Abuse Exhibit"