

The video *Untitled ("are you ok bob?")* shows the face of the artist as she experiences a self-orchestrated 'rape representation'. The scene was arranged and choreographed by the artist, it was also un-simulated and enacted by a stranger who came to her home.

"The raped woman is nearly always depicted with her face downcast and her eyes averted. The most confronting aspect of *Untitled ("are you ok bob?")*, isn't watching as a woman is struck or penetrated, it's seeing her look back out at us from the experience. Caught in her gaze, the viewer is not only forced to bear witness to her subjectivity, but implicated in her desolation.

The title *Untitled ("are you ok bob?")* refers to the first words that were spoken by me after the act, off camera. 'bob' was the man's pseudonym, and the comment was unscripted. My intention with this title was to reference the orchestrated nature of the event – who is using whom in this situation? – and also to highlight the way in which women are still encouraged to put others' emotional wellbeing before their own.

Women who prioritise the emotional well-being of others; women who cannot extricate themselves from grief or abuse because they've been taught to bury their needs, - these things aren't just socially encouraged, they're the residue of female subjugation. Throughout history women have endured and internalised. Gestures of externalisation and violence were a male privilege. Today when a woman represses (or internalises) her needs, she is likely manifesting the scar-tissue of that history.

Self-sacrifice isn't only referenced in the title; it's referenced in the way that the work was made. Eventually suffering became a weapon, "there's an entire lineage of women who consciously disrupted the status quo through enacting their own sorrow... [from Sylvia Plath to Lana Del Ray]" (1).

In this video I was using endurance to protest the need for that lineage.

Central to this work is also the idea that rape is more than an unwanted sexual act, that it is the foundation for the entire institution of the patriarchy, and hence it is the crucial battleground for dismantling male power (2).

If rape is the ultimate weapon of male-domination, then anything outside of being permanently impacted by the experience, undermines male weaponry. To choose to put yourself in this situation, to show (even symbolically) a woman enduring the scene in *Untitled ("are you ok bob?")*, is conceptually challenging because it threatens our assumption that man's power is insurmountable. And in the ideology of patriarchy that is the deepest offence possible.

It serves the patriarchy to indoctrinate us with visions of looming female victimisation and defeat. In fact, she often rises, and moves forward, despite the trauma she has experienced.

Our horrified reaction to the subject of rape isn't just about our desire to eradicate the epidemic, if it was it would go hand in hand with legal reforms, political prioritisation, and a genuine support for victims. It's essential to the patriarchy that rape is taboo, because demystifying the act challenges shame and erodes the fear that is needed to suppress the majority.

Are our cultural approaches to the subject an unconscious championing of male power? How much do our social constructs contribute to (and perpetuate) the trauma of women post rape? Is 'victim blaming' an embodiment of what we expect emotionally from women today, that they carry an unwarranted amount of the emotional burden? Why do we equate penetrability with vulnerability? Is it possible to disempower the perpetrator?

I was also interested in what we do with images that are in some sense anthropologically impossible; is it possible to create a scenario where one owns the image of one's own victimisation, and in what ways must the viewer sublimate in order to process the emotional implications of such a situation. In the ideology of the patriarchy we are forced to choose: devastated women or guilty slut / demonic villain or persecuted man. In this work similarly we choose: so perhaps the question is not 'who is using whom in this situation', but 'why are we forced to choose at all?'

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1. Audrey Wollen 'Sad girl theory'

2. Describe rape as the foundation of the patriarchy / As Susan Griffin states "women live their lives according to a rape schedule". Space is metaphysically owned; and the night belongs to men. Singularity; walking alone; choosing to be alone; - these things persist culturally as a male domain because of this issue.

* Didn't include the experience of the raped man, because using the image of the raped woman to examine female subjugation.

* Not referring to all women when discussing the 'self-sacrificing female'. Referring to, social pressure on mothers, and often on women in relationships/ men can also inherit 'self-sacrificing' inter-generational emotional inheritance, though less common and not simultaneously compounded by social pressure.

* I've never had rape fantasy and I didn't enjoy making the work physically.