

DEVOTIONAL IMAGES

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Devotional images, is the term for images designed as aids for prayer or contemplation. The images „generally show holy figures extracted from a narrative context to form a highly focused, and often very emotionally powerful, vignette. [...] These images have a strong emphasis on the grief and suffering of Christ and the figures close to him. Their use was encouraged by movements [...] which promoted meditation on the sufferings of Christ by intense mental visualization (“imitation”) of them and their physical effects.“ (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andachtsbilder>, 12.11.10)

Project Description

The idea for the project **DEVOTIONAL IMAGES** developed from my art project **SCARS** that was realized in 2008 in public space. The historical image type of the devotional images, which has primarily religious connotations, is distorted in the ensemble **DEVOTIONAL IMAGES** and shifted from the religious to the social level. In the context of my work the devotional image becomes the image of an internalized contemplation, which refers to themes from the lives and suffering or the passion of survivors.

Implementation

For **SCARS** I looked for everyday objects from people who had experienced sexualized violence as a child or adolescent. Survivors gave me everyday objects (e.g. toys, letters) and made them available for further artistic use. These everyday objects function as representatives and placeholders in public for those affected.

In conjunction with the project **DEVOTIONAL IMAGES** I photographed these objects and developed them into a photo series. There are plans to transfer the subjects to velour carpets, e.g. with a size of 70 x 100 cm. The choice of this household textile as carrier material reflects the reality around sexualized violence: it is not the evil stranger with chocolate that is the sex offender. 95% of all sexualized violence takes place at home or in close association.

This fact also results in the ambivalence in the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator, since the perpetrator is usually someone loved and on whom the victim is dependent – a dilemma that also emerges in the painful process of coming to terms with the experience. When the victim seeks closure or liberation in therapy, for instance, by burning objects from their childhood, throwing them away or burying them, all these rituals hold a feeling of having to devalue or destroy a part of oneself.

By giving away or making a gift of everyday objects in conjunction with the art project **SCARS**, many of the survivors carried out the ritual of remembering again and consciously giving away their past. It was thus the attempt of a ritual closure, but in this case not one containing destruction, but rather appreciation – because the carriers of their fate were now transformed into an art work. This happened in that the objects were used in the installation **THE BLACK ROOM** in the project **SCARS**. Now they are to receive appreciation again by being transformed in the course of the planned project into **DEVOTIONAL IMAGES**.