



Creative Intervention

Messages and Misogyny: A Creative Intervention Portraying the Embodied Experiences of Internalized Misogyny

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I painted this watercolour when I was 15 years old, during an intense and painful period shaped by what I now understand as internalized misogyny. At the time, I did not have the language to understand what I was experiencing. I am sure that much of my childhood pain stemmed from what it means to be a woman. As an academic and social worker, I recognize how systems of oppression (particularly misogyny and diet culture) shape both our inner landscapes and our collective wellbeing. Revisiting this painting is not just personal; it is political. It reflects my longstanding commitment to social justice, and how creative expression can hold pain, resistance, and critical reflection all at once.

I am revisiting this watercolour as a creative intervention because it portrays embodied experiences of internalized misogyny – a system which often disciplines women and girls (as well as non-conforming feminine genders) that we are less-than. Misogyny works discursively; it is often inscribed through overt and covert societal messages.

My watercolour painting displays two feminine bodies with black blobs in the centers of their bodies. These blobs symbolize misogynistic messages which I have experienced.

One body is on the left. A “message” (black blob) is either entering or exiting her. The other body, on the right, who also has a message, has red flowing through her. The red symbolizes being cut deep by societal oppression. Surrounding the feminine bodies are abstracted deltas (triangles), which allude to how oppressed people can take discursive responsibility. Colourful lines of blue, green, yellow, and red surround and connect the figures, evoking energy or emotion. Misogyny is both an external force and an internalized logic. These symbols are scattered, disorganized, disjointed, and destabilized, much like the process of unlearning patriarchy. This is not a narrative of resolution, but one

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of emergence, calling on individuals to reflect on the physical and embodied experiences of oppression and marginalization.

With this piece, I am hoping you will think about how social injustice shapes not only our institutions, discourses, and social interactions, but also our inner landscapes. The work hopes to raise awareness of how feminine identifying individuals deserve holistic wellbeing through equitable structures and society. Our wellbeing is a collective and political concern, and our resistance to misogyny is a way that we can enhance our wellbeing (Dominelli, 2002; Silvermint, 2013). In viewing this painting, I invite you to reflect on how misogyny leaves scars on our bodies and minds (Bordo, 2023; DeKeseredy, 2011) and how oppression shapes the knowing of ourselves. I also want you to consider resistance to internalized oppression as a way of working towards wellbeing.

References

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