

Tuva Holm Nymo

Suggestion for social feminist education

I tried to be a joyful feminist, but I was very angry
Agnés Varda, Les plages d'Agnés, 2008

Master's thesis in Fine Art

May 2024



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Norwegian University of Science and Technology
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As a woman I am creating this work, as a friend, as a sister, as a daughter, as a granddaughter, as an equal. I am dedicating this work to all the strong people in my life, who have raised their children to be loving, caring and good.

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Abstract

Inspired by the strong women around me, I wanted to create a work that would let their frustrations and fury be heard. As a woman, trans, non-binary, you are born into a world with a disadvantage. The disadvantage being that you are not a man, preferably a white cis man. Simple.

Introduction

This is an accompanying text to my graduation project after seven years of education in Fine Art. I want to clarify for myself and the reader that I am not a sociologist nor am I studying gender politics, yet I will be carefully tapping into these areas to explore how my work connects with patriarchy today – and how suggestion for social feminist education could be a starting point for us all.

I will try to explain the joys of being an angry woman, the horrors of being a woman. I will reminisce to times where I felt lost and furious without knowing the reasons why – reasons I have later discovered to be feminist fury.

I am looking into feminism and fury in connection with patriarchy. I use mechanical toys as a base in my project, where I am creating my dream toy; angry feminist tigers roaring in rage and fury. My work is a suggestion for social feminist education, and the suggestion is to be angrier.

Telling tales of feminism is hard, as feminism is often understood as white cis feminism. Therefore, I want to start my text by clarifying that when I am now going to write about feminism, I expressively mean inclusive and intersectional feminism – feminism for all. True equality. True rage.

Patriarchy and why we should be more pissed off by it

1. Patriarchy is officially defined as a system of society or government in which the father or eldest male is head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line.
2. "the thematic relationships of the ballad are worked out according to the conventional archetypes of the patriarchy"
 - a. a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.
3. "the dominant ideology of patriarchy"
 - a. a society or community organized on patriarchal lines.
4. plural noun: **patriarchies**
5. "We live in a patriarchy"¹

In many western countries traditional patriarchy is considered abolished as gender inequality has been more evened out, or 'reached far enough' as some men would say. However, we still see a strong male dominance and gender inequalities in all modern societies today. If proof needs be, you can see it in numbers, as gender data gaps – where women are living in a world designed for and by men.² Even in countries claiming to be communist, such as Cuba, where the ideology is overall equality, the male dominance is in the streets and in the social life. The male is dominant, and women are seen as property. When I am now writing about male dominance and gender inequality further in this text, I will use the term patriarchy – stating that it is a modern patriarchy I am speaking of, patriarchy today.

Why should we be more pissed off?

The fact that scientific studies on medicine and everyday design objects such as seat belts, are based on the average white man as a default - leading to dangerous and fatal consequences for women³. How a misogynist man known for "grabbing'em by the pussy" became president in the US and the most powerful person in the world, and is up for being re-elected this fall (2024). How 1 in 5 women in Norway have experienced being raped by a

¹ [Oxford Languages, definition](#)

² Perez, Caroline Criado, Invisible Women, 2020

³ <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2021/02/11/medicine-is-made-for-men/>

man *at least once*⁴. The dark numbers of unreported cases make the number much higher. How sexual violence towards women by men in Norway is rapidly increasing, developing a national rape culture⁵. How women feel the need to pretend to be on the phone with a boyfriend during a taxi ride, giving the illusion that he is waiting for her and knows where she is at every given moment during the ride. How women feel the need to buy a rape alarm to put on their key chain, just in case. How women feel the need to not listen to music during a run, to always be alert. I could go on for pages and pages, ages and ages, as to why we should be more pissed off by the patriarchy. I am furious, and we should all be angrier.

Suggestion for social feminist education

We live in a world where we are witnessing extreme violence every day through social media. Russia's war in Ukraine and Israel's ongoing genocide in Palestina, is just two of a wild number of horrifying injustices we are witnessing daily through social media such as news channels, Instagram, tik tok, and so on. We are constantly being exposed to violent content, as more and more of the wrongdoings going on in the world are recorded through our phones. Which is great, because it is so important not to ignore what is happening in the world right now. However, a phenomenon we are seeing and hearing about more and more is the psychological term 'desensitized'.

Desensitized means that we extinguish an emotional response to stimuli that formerly induced it.⁶ We get numb to all the horrific things happening in the world – as a chemical response. Desensitizing is an excellent defense mechanism, where it makes us neutral, tired and unaffected by injustice and cruelty. Because it is too much to take it all in. There is a balance to everything, and you can't constantly actively care without going into a deep depression. You must choose your battles.

My suggestion for social feminist education is to be angrier. To become un-desensitized. To not let the numb feelings keep us from being outraged from the injustice patriarchy is inflicting upon us.

In my graduation project titled *40 Tigrrrrrrrrre* I am working with toys as suggestion for social feminist education. By social feminist education I mean the social education you get

⁴ [Nasjonalt kunskapscenter om vold og traumatisk stress \(2023\): Omfang av vold og overgrep i den norske befolkningen](#)

⁵ [Dagsavisen, 08.03.23](#)

⁶ [Desensitized, definition](#)

as a child; through socializing, TV shows, colors, clothes, interior, toys, and any other example related to the initial stages of shaping an individual. All these things that a child is exposed to are likely to shape the child. By adding *feminist* before *social education*, the education will be an equal one. That is my theory.

We are living in dangerous times, where a former president accused of rape and assault still has a chance of being re-elected. Where the right-wing, known for their misogynistic and racist opinions, are becoming more and more popular. Incel groups are on the rise, with men feeling mistreated by society because they don't get to have sex with all the women they want to have sex with. An interview with a certain young representative of a Norwegian right-wing party claimed exactly this – that the Womens' movement has gone too far at the expense of young men, stating that the boys aren't getting access to all the women sexually, and it is becoming a political issue.⁷ I believe this interview to be a manifestation of incel networks in Norway. The tip of the iceberg. The fact that a young male politician in Norway can even say those things, and that there is a great network of mostly men supporting their political party⁸, is terrifying. It gives a reminder to when, in 2018, an allegedly misogynistic 'incel' man murdered 10 people in Toronto in a van attack - believing he is denied his right to sex with women by society, and acted violently towards society thereafter.⁹ This is just one out of many violent incidents inflicted upon society by incel networks with death as a consequence, and it is terrifying.

Once upon a time, it was seen as unladylike to be publicly angry. I sense that it is still, at least in Norway, seen as unattractive in many groups. Angry feminists. I believe many to connect the word feminist and feminism with women hating men. That is problematic, and wrong. Feminism is about creating a fairer world for men and women, where equality is in the center.

I had several conversations with friends about whether I should use the word feminist or not in my project. It seemed to be a hot topic. 'Feminist' is a highly loaded word. Historically, white feminists – as I called white cis feminists in the introduction of this text – have, as the author and blogger Mikki Kendall states; “rarely looked at feminist issues such as food insecurity, education, the fight against racism, ableism and transmisogyny. Mainstream feminism has historically focused on increasing privileges for the few, not basic survival for the many.”¹⁰ This is important to mention as it is a crucial part of feminist

⁷ [Tv2, 23.02.24](#)

⁸ [Nrk, 19.01.24](#)

⁹ [The Guardian, 22.06.18](#)

¹⁰ Kendall, Mikki, HOOD FEMINISM, Notes From The Women White Feminists Forgot., 2020

history and cannot go unrecognized while working with the topic. However, I have chosen to use the words feminist and feminism actively, while stating that I mean inclusive and intersectional feminism when talking about it. I aim for it to be understood the way I mean it; equality for *all*.

The title for my master thesis *Suggestion for social feminist education* is a reference to the book by Nigerian author C.N. Adichie *Dear Ijeawele, A feminist manifesto in fifteen suggestions*¹¹. In this book Adichie writes a letter, that later in 2017 turned into a book, to her friend who is asking her for help on how to raise a feminist child. The book consists of fifteen chapters with fifteen suggestions on how to empower a child to become a strong, independent feminist. This is such an important feminist work and has had a profound impact on me.

Toys and how that connects with patriarchy in our culture

When I was a child, most of the girls had 'BABY born'. 'BABY born' is a million-dollar business profiting from parents buying their kids, usually girls, true sized baby dolls that you can burp, change diaper on, and which need nurture and feeding. According to their official website, they have sold more than 24 million dolls.¹² Just a rough guess, I think that 23,9 millions of these baby dolls have been given to young girls, not young boys. This is however speculation, but I would not be a stranger to bet money on it.



¹¹ Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi, *Dear Ijeawele, A feminist manifesto in 15 suggestions*, 2016, 2017

¹² [Baby Born Official website](#)

Photo of 'BABY born doll' and 'Emma Me – Sminkehode', from toy store Ringo

It is an alarming experience going into a toy store, which I have done numerous times while working on my graduation project. Consumerism set aside, the sections are usually blue, black, yellow for boys and bright pink for girls. The toys usually targeted for boys are Lego, guns, cars, monsters, robots, and warriors, while the toys usually targeted for girls are baby dolls to nurture, cute kittens, houses to decorate, kitchens to cook from, and toy vacuum machines (I remember playing with one when I was a child). The traditional toys marketed towards young boys gives them an outlet for anger, while the girly toys do not.

There are of course exceptions to these toys, and I am obviously generalizing to make my point clear. Which is that the patriarchy is very much part of our childhood, where a man is learned to be strong, more violent and angry - and the girls are learned to nurture babies, put on make-up, clean, cook and decorate. We are born into these misconceptions and expectations and dividing of gender roles, involuntarily polluted by patriarchy from the day you are born.

However, there are reasons to argue the biological aspects of genders – and I am highly going to disregard these arguments in my text and in my work.

As a resistance to gender segregated toys and as a resistance to the patriarchy, I – as a girl and woman – wanted to make my own dream toy; angry feminist tigers roaring in rage and fury.

Going back to consumerism. Consumerism and capitalism are hand in hand playing an active role in the shaping of a child, where it capitalizes on the girl and woman to be. By this I mean the push of consumerism – giving your doll a dozen different clothing pieces, make-up, hairdresser kits (will never forget the day I cut off my mum's doll's hair), doll toy brands collaborating with fashion brands pushing the idea of a capitalistic lifestyle, and not to forget pushing an image of how the child should be in terms of societal expectations to how your body, your skin, your hair – to name a few - should look like.

We also must consider the economic consequences of being a woman. Of course, sanitary products such as menstrual pads and tampons must be mentioned, but the bigger cost is the expectations to women implemented from an early age in terms of clothes, make-up, skincare products – the image of the perfect woman. Women are strategically pushed by a consumerism capitalistic driven society to spend more money and energy on these things, leaving us with an economic disadvantage compared to how society targets men. Again, I am infuriated.

Translated Guinea Pigs

I have always had a playful approach while working on my projects. I try to use humor and absurdity while exploring and challenging societal ideas, misconceptions, and topics important to me. My artistic practice is experimental, where I work with different media depending on each project. Previously I have worked a lot with childlike, naive-looking drawings and paintings, and I have also worked with more abstract sculptures, installations and video performance.

Translated Guinea Pigs is a project that sprung out from the pandemic that broke out in 2020. Due to the shutdown of society, we were forced to explore other ways to show our works. This led to an exhibition we called *Reconnecting...*, where we – my classmates and I – decided to make a digital audio exhibition. I had no previous experience working with audio, and – even though only the audio and a still photo was exhibited online – my project turned into the spontaneous experimental video performance *Translated Guinea Pigs*.

In this work I wanted to explore the insanity of an isolated home, as we were all spending a lot of our time inside our apartments. Luckily, I had company. Unfortunately, they were losing their minds as well. As well as the insanity plea, I explored the ethics and morals of ownership in terms of owning land, water, houses, and specifically for this project; animals. The work is exploring the consent not given from my co-habitants (Artemis and Amfi, guinea pigs) - and if it is right to own basically anything.



The project description goes as follows; *Several weeks into quarantine the three artists find themselves delving into involuntarily self-reflection, portraying and wondering upon their new everyday.*¹³

Sneak feminist riot revolution

In my current graduation project, I am working on feminism and being angry and angrier through fluffy tiger robots. This work is related to ownership as well.

The tigers come from an idea I got during my many travels to Havana, Cuba, the last years. Cuba is a country special in many ways that are too complicated to go deeper into in this rather short thesis. However, one thing that is special in the Latin-American and South American countries is how the feminist movement hasn't come that far.

Cuba is a beautiful and exotic place known for its' old American cars, Spanish colonial architecture, Cuban cigars, Salsa, and Caribbean beaches. It is a country standing still in time, and together with it is the outdated culture of catcalling and harassment of women walking alone in the streets. What is so problematic is that you are not harassed or looked at if you are walking with a man by your side. I asked my Cuban friends about this behavior, where they told me that this is a way of showing respect. To the man.

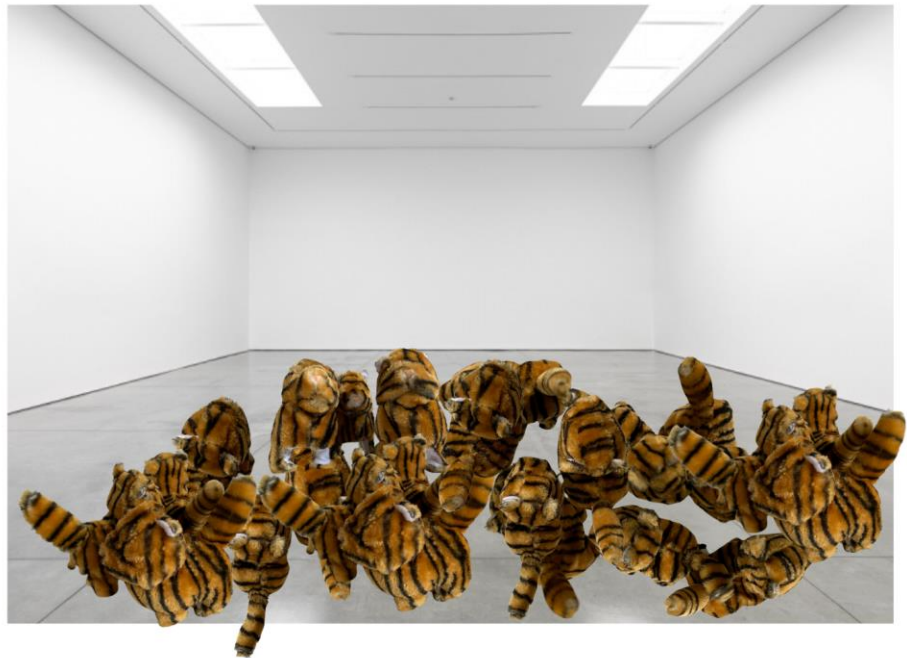
I had spent around five weeks there when I found myself being exhausted, and quite frankly, desperate. I was looking for some sign of rebellion, a sign of a sneak feminist riot or – Cubas favorite word – *revolution*. That is when I, in my delusional state, saw the tigers. They revealed themselves to me everywhere, like an uprising of a roar from the women in the streets. Everywhere I saw tiger calendars, tiger wall rugs, tiger towels hanging from the balconies, tiger printed clothing. It felt so strong, and it gave me hope when I needed it the most.

I like the idea of sneaking your message; the symbolic signs of resistance. That is what I am trying to do with this work as well. I want to create the tiger feminist riot I so longingly needed in Havana, in the exhibition space. I want it to be bold and loud, and sneaky. I want to encourage us to be angrier about what is happening with our sisters, mothers, grandmothers, friends, family members, acquaintances, strangers.

¹³ [Translated Guinea Pigs, video](#)

40 Tigrrrrrrrrre

After already deciding on tigers as part of my next project, I started doing research that, to my surprise, supported the idea of the fierceness of feminist tigers. According to various reliable and unreliable sources on the internet and the general word of mouth, the tiger symbolizes strength, furiousness, resilience, courage, vitality, protection.^{14 15} To me, this sounds like true feminist qualities.



Digitally manipulated photo based on the first three tigers made
<https://vimeo.com/917110602?share=copy>

The title of my graduation project is *40 Tigrrrrrrrrre*, where I am putting the Grrr in the Norwegian word 'tigre'. In this project I am working with toys where I am creating my dream angry furious feminist tiger toy. I am playing with the sneak riot idea, previously mentioned in this text, that I got in Havana, Cuba, when I was in desperate need of a feminist rebellion.

The work consists of 40 tiger robots, who are noisily moving around in a randomized pattern in the exhibition space, screaming and wagging their tails. The tigers will be humoristic and gravely serious. They will walk around screaming among the audience in

¹⁴ [Tiger symbolism](#)

¹⁵ [Tiger symbolism](#)

the exhibition space. They will bump into walls and possibly other artworks. Perhaps they will fall over in despair, where I hope an interactive audience will help them get back on their feet.

All social movements are born out of anger. It can be a useful tool for change, like the #MeToo movement in 2017 that caused a global stir which led to change – and still is.¹⁶ What I want to do with this work is to point out the collective rage towards gender inequalities, sexual violence against women, and patriarchy itself. My suggestion for social feminist education is to be angrier, and that is what I am encouraging through this project.



The tigers will be sewn by me after a pattern I have designed and fitted for the robots. By now, I have hand-sewn five tiger prototypes, and in total I will sew 40 tigers. I am working on finding the perfect fabric, which is turning out harder than imagined as faux fur textiles are hard to come by in the perfect color and length. I am testing out different textile samples at this point, where I most likely will end up hand-coloring the stripes on the fabric I end up choosing.

I want them all to look sort of the same, only with slight differences as I am not a very good seamstress. Sewing has been seen as a traditional Womens' craftmanship, where traditional “female qualities” such as being delicate, patient and a perfectionist, are valued. By sewing without knowing how to, without wanting them to look perfect or ready-made, I am opposing to this idea of female delicacy and perfection. The tigers will be indelicate, impatient, bold, loud.

¹⁶ [Global Fund for Women, #MeToo movement](#)

I am working with an engineer specializing in underwater robotics, overqualified in helping me with technical issues such as which wires to cut, how to place a sound recorded file and connect it to the tiny speakers in the head of the tigers. I am also collaborating with a friend and former classmate that is working with sound, who will help edit the sound recordings.

I will sound-record 40 people screaming in rage, frustration and desperation. As this text is written before the work is finished, I have yet to find out how the recorded screams will work, or if it will work. If everything goes as planned, the 40 sound recordings will each be unique to its tiger, and each tiger will be named after the person screaming. Their scream will fade into a tiger roar.

The only qualification to participate in this project by screaming, is that they identify as feminists.

I am considering two approaches when I am going to sound record a person. The first approach is to sit down and talk. Talk about feminism, experiences if they want to – to see where it takes us, and to provoke the outrage I will later sound record. The second approach is to create a script that can be read out loud by me, or the person can read it by themselves. The script will act as a trigger if needed, to provoke fury.

I hope that screaming in rage out loud can have a strong effect on the participants. Maybe it will resolve some much-needed frustration. Maybe it will create more frustration. Maybe it will make them angrier, as I suggest we all should be. How many times do we really let ourselves go and scream out of anger?

Conclusion

This work is the manifestation of all my works throughout my art education. It is the core, the backbone. An infuriating topic so important to me, and others. Which is why my suggestions for social feminist education is to be angrier. Even though I am not a joyful but rather furious feminist, I am hopeful. Hopeful that all of us will feel safe in this male-dominated world. And that it will stop being a male-dominated world, but an equal one. A world where scientific studies are based and specialized on all different genders and ethnicities, not just the average white male as a default. A world where patriarchy and male dominance is an unfashionable thing of the past.

The project does, however, not end here.

Reference Library

Books:

Varda, Agnés, *The Beaches of Agnés*, 2008

Perez, Caroline Criado, *Invisible Women*, 2020

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi, *Dear Ijeawele, A feminist manifesto in 15 suggestions*, 2017

Kendall, Mikki, *HOOD FEMINISM, Notes From The Women White Feminists Forgot.*, 2020

Links

[Patriarchy, definition, Oxford Languages](#)

[Medicine is made for men, 11.02.21](#)

[Nasjonalt kunskapssenter om vold og traumatisk stress \(2023\): Omfang av vold og overgrep i den norske befolkningen](#)

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