

The Emotions of Rape

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Purpose

The Emotions of Rape was created to bring awareness to the amount of unreported rapes that occur in the United States. On average, 207,754 people are raped or sexually assaulted every year, and only one in three instances are reported (Truman, 2011). This design translates the emotional and traumatic stories of rape and sexual assault victims into a visual display on the body. I used a critical social science paradigm to inform the inspiration for the piece and to ignite social change and awareness (Neuman, 2006). Through this piece, I aimed to enable these victims of abuse and share their voice and experiences in a three-dimensional form.

Process

Quotes from victims' stories or poems on survivorstories.tumblr.com inspired design choices for the garment. One victim

Page 1 of 2



wrote that the man who repeatedly raped her throughout her childhood said, “The more you struggle, the more I like it.” The large voluminous skirt represents the overpowering nature of a rapist. When walking in this skirt, the hanging bands and strings swing through the legs making it a struggle to walk as they twist and tangle. The skirt weighs on the wearer as she moves, similar to the constant reminder and feelings of guilt a victim experiences after they have been abused. Another victim wrote, “I stared at the wall as he continued,” which inspired the use of white material to represent feelings of blankness an individual can have during and after assault. The gathered, hanging bands were inspired by the quote, “My skin crawls from the disarray.” The hanging bands were gathered individually in varying lengths to represent the tense feeling of being molested. “They called me a slut,” inspired the simple, form-fitting, crop top because abusers often blame the victim for their provocative clothing.

Techniques

This ensemble employs draping, fabric manipulation, and hand sewing. The top and skirt were draped on a dress form. The elastic bands hanging from the waistband were created by experimentation with manipulation of the fabric. The top was sewn by machine, and the skirt was stitched by hand and machine. The designer experimented with the amount of gathering on the elastic bands several times. Each elastic band had a string in the middle that was used to gather portions of the band.

Materials

The garment was created from 100% recycled materials. The top and skirt were created using recycled high school band uniform elastic strips. The underskirt support materials were created from crumpled recycled pattern paper. Muslin was used from previous draping projects to create the waistband. A four-inch hook and eye secures the skirt in the center back.

References

Neuman, W. L. (2006). *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Truman, J. L. (2011). *National Crime Victimization Survey*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.