

INTRODUCTION TO AUDIO PRESENTATION :

First is a typical verbal exchange between us, Marie-José Sat and Sonya Rapoport. In the transcript of this audio excerpt, Marie and I are discussing how Muslim women, who were made to believe that genital mutilation is prescribed in the Koran, would not accept that it is not so. In the same way, Sonya finds herself unable to criticize the concepts of the Jewish God even though she has reservations about religions in general. Marie, born a Catholic and a non believer, has no such problems in criticizing her birth faith or any other faiths, religions or God figures.

AUDIO PRESENTATION TRANSCRIPT:

Marie: It really doesn't matter if it's the Koran or the Muslim religion or whatever it' is that is partaking because it is really men transforming whatever religion they have and their thinking about women, and their own fears. Sonya: Now if you can accept this... Marie: I'm trying to... Sonya: Now if you can accept this that you told me that the women are not listening that it is not in the Koran, there's an emotional response that they cannot, that they've been indoctrinated, that it's part of their lives to believe that it's [genital mutilation] a religious edict. Do you follow me? Then you must understand that my response is very bifurcated. Marie: But they're uneducated and they are not making a work of art, Sonya. You're educated and you're doing a work of art. Sonya: I cannot be too critical of the Jewish God in my piece. That's it! Now if you can figure out how to defy and it's not too blasphemous, I will accept it, but I cannot use the piece - that one little sentence I cannot go along with. Marie: Which little sentence? Sonya: That I'm anticipating you're putting in. (laughing) Marie: That God's lying or that God is a bastard, or God enslaved Adam and Eve or... Sonya: Well, why don't you figure out what you want to put in there. Marie: I don't know what I want to put in there. I'm trying to work it out. Sonya: You're trying to be very logical how can we prove that Eve is not guilty. That's the essence. Marie: That for one thing and how can we propose a different reading of that same Genesis and in the same time expose the kind of reading that has been made of it and has produced the sexism, and the fear in men and the myths and all that about women and the Malleus.

INTRODUCTION TO VIDEO :

The art web work, BRUTAL MYTHS, is based on the misogynous mythology of the Malleus Maleficarum, The Hammer of Witches, a medieval witch-hunting manual. It exposes the seven methods "by which women infect with their witchcraft the venereal act and the conception of the womb". Presented is a sequence summary of method #3: "To remove the members accommodated to that act" and its associated myth: "The Vagina Eats up the Penis".

VIDEO PRESENTATION TRANSCRIPT:

Brutal Myths by Sonya Rapoport and Marie-José Sat ARE WOMEN THE GUILTY DAUGHTERS OF EVE? Visuals are of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Excerpts from the story of GENESIS lead to the theme of BRUTAL MYTHS: Man, destined to toil in the fields, plants herbs embittered by his anger against woman who is responsible for his plight. XVth century Europe had been plagued with years of religious and civil wars, and resentment of the dangerous woman reached its peak in gruesome witch trials. Pope Innocent VIII denounced an epidemic of Demonology, a contagious infection spread through Bitter Herbs. In 1487 Innocent VIII endorsed the Malleus Maleficarum: The Hammer of Witches, a witch-hunting manual accusing women of destroying men by planting Bitter Herbs throughout the field. The field soon became a Garden of Herbal Evil where Bitter Herbs germinated Brutal

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Independent Artists

BRUTAL MYTHS: COLLABORATIVE CREATION AND INTERACTION

SUMMARY In this poster session, we propose to illustrate our use of the Internet as a medium for presenting our interactive artwork: Brutal Myths. This piece is inspired by the Malleus Maleficarum: The Hammer of Witches, a medieval manual for witch-hunting from which fallacious myths were derived. Brutal Myths is about misogynous mythology and the physical and mental mutilations that developed as a consequence of their perpetuation. Our collaboration as artists is part of this project.

OVERVIEW

Our presentation consists of three parts: 1. an audio recording excerpt of a verbal exchange between the two artists while creating the web work; 2. a videotape transcript of the interactive sequence of one of the seven myths depicted: the Myth of Castration; 3. the fears and frailties in men that are presumed to be the source of those myths.

INTRODUCTION :

In constructing our web artwork, BRUTAL MYTHS, we realized we had planted the seeds of interaction between two people of widely different backgrounds. Among the major differences were our attitudes toward religion, beauty, marriage and the concept of what is a work of art. We both learned from each other, while having to accept our different positions on issues we could not compromise on. But overwhelmingly, we both evolved and felt enriched by our collaboration. The video sample of our piece shows how our cultured differences have been tilled into an artistic statement.

Myths about women in the hearts of men.

THE HERBS AND METHODS:

Seven Methods By Which The Herbs Infect With Witchcraft The Venereal Act And The Conception Of The Womb As Proclaimed By Pope Innocent VIII And The Malleus Maleficarum Click among the herbs from the Garden of Herbal Evil: **TORMENTIL** inclines the mind of men to inordinate passion **HEMLOCK** obstructs men's generative force **CLEAVERS** removes the members accommodated to that act **HENBANE** changes men into beasts by their magic act **VIPER'S BUGLOSS** destroys the generative force in women **BIRTHWORT** procures abortion **DEADLY NIGHTSHADE** offers children to the devils, besides other animals and fruits of the earth with which they work much harm.

A click on the herb Cleavers links to: **THE GARDEN OF HERBAL EVIL** where man plants the root of the herb **CLEAVERS** which purportedly removes the members accommodated to the venereal act. Cleavers has largish claws that grasp and strangle; its sharp edged leaves feicheth blood; the slender roots are full of strings; it germinates the Myth that the: **VAGINA EATS UP THE PENIS**. Related images are: Lot with his daughters who rape him and an image of a Magdalenian carving of a phallus growing from a vulva. Genital Mutilation is the response to the myths of castration and clitoris growth competing with the male member. The purpose of the genital mutilation is to preserve a girl's virginity for marriage. The vaginal stitching up provides enhanced pleasure for men only An uncircumcised woman is considered dirty, oversexed and unmarriageable. The affected function for potential for sexual pleasure is destroyed and replaced by a future of pain, disease and misery. Visuals include the Inquisition Pear torture, description of female genital mutilation as practiced in Africa, a mutilation victim, and sex therapist Annie Sprinkle demonstrating to an audience that "a cunt has no teeth" on stage at New York Avant-Garde Theater.

The next link is to **DESTROY THE MYTH** Eve is compensated for her guilt as the Mother of all Mankind. She is supported by the liberating serpent. Eventually God enriches the soil in which man can plant a Blissful Garden: "Let each one of us dig down after the root of evil which is within one, and let one pluck it out of one's heart from the root." The Gospels

A click on **HEARTSEASE**, one of the seven blissful herbs, provides the link to the method that destroys man's vulnerability and eases his heart's fear of castration from the herb **CLEAVERS**.

John Wayne Bobbitt's image is the featured example of castration. His wife Lorena claimed physical and sexual abuse. A nail voodoo fetish figure with a mirror deflects the malign influences and incubates the herbal cure.

Herbal pharmacists from the XIIIth century prescribe an **INTERACTIVE MEDICINAL REMEDY** performed with the cut-out printed herbal image in the next link. the cut-out is to be boiled in water Breathing the steam prevents loss of member and vulnerability to the external genitals.

MALE FEARS: THE SOURCES OF THE MYTHS

The Malleus Maleficarum, which was the inspiration for this piece, spelled out for us the collection of sick phantasms and anxieties that some men could feel towards women. Interviews conducted with a few men (which will be included in a future version of the art-work) confirmed us in the view that "men have a greater fear of—and thus, need to dominate and control—women than women have of men" (A History of Their Own, Bonnie S. Anderson & Judith P. Zinsser, p11–12).

As Nancy Chodorow wrote: "Boys and men develop psychological and cultural/ideological mechanisms to cope with their fears without giving up women altogether They create folk legends, beliefs, and poems that ward off the dread by externalizing and objectifying women." The prejudicial myths about women therefore have their origins in those anxieties

We believe that the principal fears in men are as follows, we indicate for each the present day news item we chose to illustrate it by in the art work:

1. Inability to control their sexual arousal, desire and needs: arrest of Douglas Krout, convicted child molester, captured after a 100 mph chase. The girl, 11, returned after he threatened to "blow her brains out" if she told what he did.
2. Proving maturity and manhood: Grant Butcher had 65 amateur fights in 3 years and 29 pro-fights in 4 years. At 37 he has brain atrophy and is in a convalescent hospital for the remainder of his life.
3. Fear of castration of the exposed organ: John Wayne Bobbitt, castrated by his wife, Lorena Bobbitt who severed her husband's penis, after years of abuse, when he came home drunk and raped her once more.
4. Fear of impotence and orgasmic potential: the myth of Don Juan, depraved nobleman, irresistible lover and seducer of women
5. Need to return to the mantle of woman's womb: the fetus in the womb is an image of the "happy time when he had space in her, and she in him, when he owed his whole life to her" that haunts men.
6. Insignificance of father's role compared to mother's: Susan Smith is serving a life sentence for drowning her two children Her parents were divorced when she was
6. Her own father committed suicide. Her step-father abused her from childhood to present. Her latest boyfriend left her because of her children
7. Incertitude of paternity. Larry Hillblom, DHL billionaire, resided in Saigon where he fathered hundreds of children to teenage virgins.

As a consequence many of our social practices and customs derive of the patriarchal power system to ensure control over women and reassure the male fantasies that female malignant instincts towards them are under check. Hence, marriage and social customs still restrict drastically the sex lives of women, whereas men's sexual achievements are generally celebrated as a proof of their virility, women would be viewed as "whores". Until recently, strict laws condemned the adulterous woman, in order to keep her husband certain of the paternity of his children. Men inflated their power both outside and inside the home while women, uneducated and without social standing outside marriage, were to remain his subservient in the house. The horrid genital mutilation practices on women are the demonstration of the fear of castration and/or competition with the penis: all proceedings include a "brain-washing" course to teach women to obey and fear men as their hus-

bands and masters. This work intends both to denounce the mutilations inflicted upon women and to attempt to allay men's fears by destroying the myths that surround their perception of women, therefore eradicating men's needs to control and dominate women. This is our contribution as women to the development of the Web as a new artistic and technological medium, in the possibly non utopic hope it might be free of sexual prejudices and differences.

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