

How can street art create social change? - Gender Based Violence.

S.o.S, a UK based Inclusive Artist is coming to Austria to talk with parliament's Petra Bayr, "Sprecherin für globale Entwicklung" and founding member of "Stop FGM" and colleagues in the Socialist Party in Vienna on the 12th November 2015. They will be discussing how art and social change can work together to begin a new dialogue and understanding with the public over very sensitive issues relating to Gender Inequality. S.o.S will collaborate with fellow "artists," including Chinagirl Tile, in order to bring her well known art installation which subverts a famous character to Vienna. Whilst she is here, she hopes to interact with the public too through painting a large mural at "**Kulturverein WERK**" Spittelauer Lände 12, Stadtbahnbogen 331-333 1090 Wien. S.o.S hopes her art installations will raise awareness and open a debate about a practice which most Austrians might not think has anything to do with them due to the cultural implications of the topic. Also many people do not even fully understand what F.G.M is. She has recently graduated with first class honours in a Masters course in Brighton University in Inclusive Arts Practice, (IAP). IAP is the implementation of art interventions for positive social change in a variety of artistic disciplines. She says, "I specifically chose this Disney styled characterisation of Alice as she's very popular and surprisingly (for Disney) not a princess who needs rescuing. She is a young girl going out into the world exploring; much the same age as a girl who would be subjected to this FGM gender-violence."

The issue of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and many other issues of gender based violence is one that the European Union take very seriously, FGM is officially categorised as a brutal violation of human rights. The most recent study of Female Genital mutilation in the EU and Croatia was undertaken in 2012, but as yet we do not have an exact study of the amount of girls at risk in Austria nearly four years after the study highlighted that potentially thousands of girls are at risk here. S.o.S says, "The fact that my artwork was received really well in London, then internationally through social networking, got me thinking that I should repeat the idea again around various cities in Europe to raise awareness in a site-specific way, whilst connecting with people who work in the field of FGM in each country. Lots of artists feel like moving on once an image is created, but with my Alice against FGM piece I have had so much positive feedback from both men and women about how iconic and powerful Alice is, I thought she could definitely help to raise awareness of gender based violence in a new and subversive way."

The artist will be calling for Austria to begin to quantify the amount of girls who are really at risk as a first step towards helping victims through actual policy change. S.o.S feels that as an artist, she would like to get the facts right, but trying to find up to date information about the situation in Austria, has been practically impossible for her. She says, "The main issues in the EIGE (European Institute for Gender Equality) report clearly show where we are falling down when we look at how to help girls under 18 who are at risk in Europe...we actually don't really know the full scope of the problem. Only 7/28 countries actually have an up-to date prevalence study! There are hundreds of thousands of young girls at risk across Europe and each country needs to begin to take some local responsibility." The report says of these young girls, "it is unlikely that their needs will be acknowledged and met, nor will their protection be prioritised, unless steps towards calculating their numbers in the EU are taken." <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/eige-report-fgm-in-the-eu-and-croatia.pdf>

On International Women's Day 2015, S.o.S created a piece in Leake Street Tunnel, London (affectionately known as Banksy Tunnel) featuring Alice in Wonderland, who is in her 150th year Anniversary in 2015 as part of Femme Fierce All girl street art festival. An article written about S.o.S can be found here: <http://inspiringcity.com/2015/05/24/alice-looks-round-the-curtain-as-s-o-s-seeks-to-raise-awareness-of-fgm/>

Ayaan Bulale, Femme Fierce Founder says, *"Femme Fierce is the world's largest street art festival and SOS is one of the artists who created a truly outstanding piece on the day. She created a mural depicting Alice in Wonderland peeking out in horror from behind a curtain embroidered with scissors and roses to raise awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as we were supporting Plan UK's campaign to eradicate this horrible practice. SOS's mural has become the talking piece as its use of an innocent character such as Alice to highlight such an evil practice is a stark contrast to how and what we normally associate Alice with."*

More information and images can be found on the artist's website of The Alice in Wonderland intervention: <http://iamsos.com/gallery/femme-fierce/>

How can street art create social change?

1 By continuing its message (even after it has been painted over) via social media and on-line sharing & blogs.

2 By reaching individuals who may not have otherwise engaged with the message.

3 By transforming spaces into the type of space that more people would like to see.

4 By engaging youth into art-making via workshops which impart a sense of confidence, team work and enabling skill sharing.

5 By enabling women and girls to make their mark, be heard, and in-turn transform our environment and our perceptions

Further information on next page about where we will be creating the artwork...

The Artist with her Alice against FGM Artwork



Sarah will be painting live on Saturday 14th & Sunday 15th at "Kulturverein WERK" Spittelauer Lände 12, Stadtbahnbogen 331-333, 1090 Wien and the pieces will be available to photograph on those days. You are invited to attend and have a conversation.

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Artist Website: www.chinagirltile.com

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PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW