

SYNOPSIS :

« alles wird gut »
(everything's gonna be fine)

A mixed media art project
(sculpture, photography and video)
against child abuse and pedophilia

by
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We read about it in newspapers, hear it on the radio and see it on television; cases of child abuse are common and shocking.

Each day, all over the world, in our own neighborhoods as well as further afield in Thailand, Belgium or Austria, children are sexually abused and violated by adults. The reported facts are so cruel that it's easy to turn a blind eye and think of pleasanter things. Some of us, however, do not turn away.

I am among those unable to overlook pedophilia anymore. It started with Julie and Mélissa, the two girls kidnapped by Marc Dutroux and then raped over a period of many months. They died of hunger in 1996, imprisoned in his cellar. Since then, the image of the suffering of these girls, two representatives of child abuse across the world, has been imprinted on my brain.

My return from Bangkok ten years later, after a report on UNICEF's work with HIV infected Thai and Cambodian children, was the icing on the cake.

The fixed smile of the Phnom Penh street children was stuck in my mind, a smile which doesn't fade when they sell their bodies for a couple of dollars to tourists who "like children."

I was sitting there, on this plane filled with fat and smirking men which transported us back to our daily lives. The truth was evident; it was as if each one was wearing a souvenir t-shirt bearing the words "temporarily satisfied sexual tourist." I knew immediately not only that I needed to do something, but also that I had the means to do it. After all, I am a photographer and an artist. My images, therefore, could be a weapon against pedophilia.

I took the photos of scenarios I'd created especially in the studio. I constructed sets modeled on dollhouses, with little figurines and accessories. I didn't solely want to consider pedophilia or incest, but child abuse as a whole. The act in itself, I do not show.

I chose to treat these forms of child abuse in dollhouses because above all they represent an idealised world. Combined with the fact that it is "only" the children who are made out of plasticine, the choice of materials provides a clearer focus on the act of abuse.

I think this way of presenting things is much more effective than a photo report, even though the characters are fictional. In addition, the photos show in an ethical way what a reporter cannot in reality without being unethical.

How many children are mistreated or sexually abused every day? No one really knows. There are obviously statistics but researchers are unanimous: the exact number of cases is immeasurable.