

SUMMARY OF MY SPEECH AT THE OPENING

WOMEN IN THE DARK describes the place assigned to women in a society - a forgotten and repressed place. The extent of darkness is different in each country, as is the response to women who attempt to get to the light. However, the painful experiences of one's own insignificance and its dramatic, inhuman, profound and far-reaching consequences are very similar. This darkness lies like a shadow over the life of women and makes them vanish into it. It is this obvious and intolerable situation that makes me stand up.

WOMEN IN THE DARK is an international art project, as discrimination and violence against women is a global problem.

Women that live in the dark of a society get the opportunity to share their experiences, hopes and wishes by writing on white shirts - in India we chose dupattas - with a red permanent marker. A central part of my work is not only the possibility of anonymity, but that the women who express themselves are accompanied by supportive experts and counselors, if they so wish. With the collected clothes, texts and photos, WOMEN IN THE DARK goes public. The project has so far been launched in Zimbabwe, Seychelles, Mauritius, China, Switzerland and India. More countries are planned.

Reaching this goal is only possible in collaboration with organizations that are well-connected in the respective country of the exhibition. Their recruitment of participants is the basis for a successful implementation in the specific culture. Project-Representatives oversee the project in their countries and communities.

In my project, I use clothes as an art medium, because they are laden with social, historical and cultural implications. Female garments also reflect gender biases. The writing with red permanent markers, which run like a bloodline over the white space remind of violence, discrimination and other painful experiences. But red also represents love and life.

The three metaphorical installations in Victoria Memorial Hall: WAVE OF VOICES, RESISTANCE and ECHO visualize the experiences, hopes, dreams and desires of 216 Indian women, written on dupattas.

Today, we celebrate the collaboration with Swayam, one of the very committed NGOs in India that supports and promotes the empowerment of women rights and gender equality. We also celebrate the solidarity by the organizers and visitors and all who believe and want the world to be a better and safer place also for women and children.

We are here today to name and acknowledge suffering and injustice, pain, fear, sorrow, loneliness, deprivation, violence, inequality and discrimination of women in India and all over the world. And we are here today to listen, read, feel and share the burden of the women who spoke out, as well as of the ones who still live in the dark.

We are here today to celebrate the given opportunity of Victoria Memorial Hall, one of India's most spectacular museums, to go public with a feminist art project. We are here today to celebrate the power of art.

Discontentment let RESISTANCE and courage of women grow in an unstoppable motion of hopes and requirements. The unheard pushes itself into the public eye as a WAVE OF VOICES through houses, rooms, along walls, up to the ceilings and breaks over to finally find its way out of windows as an ECHO into the streets of Indian society.

Values are always deeply rooted in culture, religion and tradition - that also means in identity. As humans – women and men – we are challenged in dealing with seemingly insurmountable conflicts and contradictions.

But we are here today because a needed discourse about equality and freedom starts now with OUR courage, OUR values and OUR VOICES.

Franziska Greber, 24 November 2017, Victoria Memorial Hall Kolkata, India.