

No Say
Friday, December 8, 2017

Kendra Pallin
Professor Stewart
GLHTH 302 Global Narratives of HIV/AIDS

(218)-591-9438
Word Count: 714
MLA

“All language art begins with words as shapes, groups of words shaped into a visual form.” (McCabe, 2012)

This quote, taken from Chris McCabe’s 2012 review of *The Humument*, encompasses the very essence of Tom Phillips’s great work. In fact, and as McCabe (2012) explains, *The Humument* works in this very tradition--satisfying not only our visual senses but our literary ones as well. This same tradition, along with Maria de Bruyn’s HIV/AIDS archival collection, inspired Pallin’s work *No Say*.

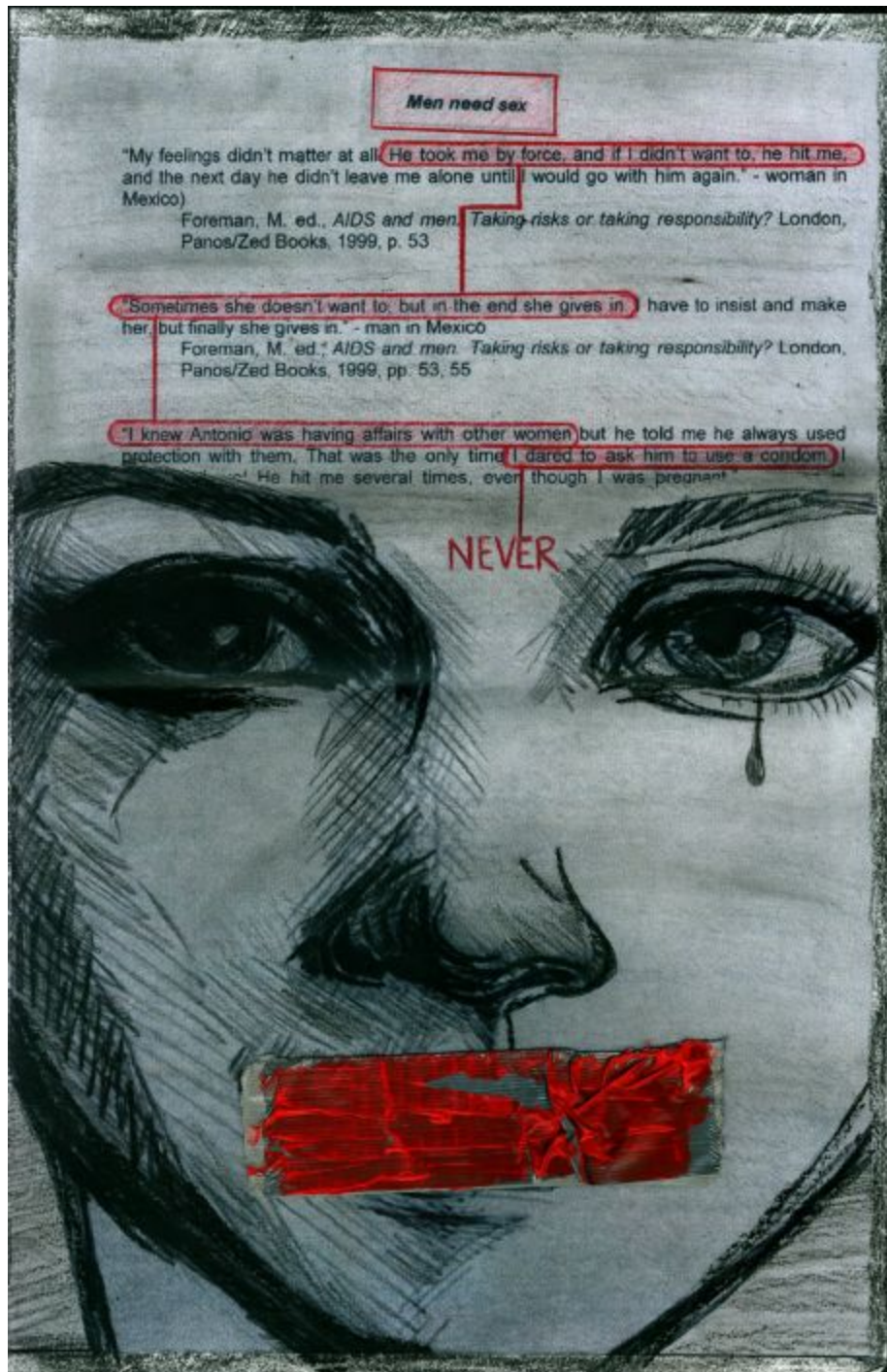
The original document can be found in box 6 of Maria de Bruyn’s collection, which highlights the ways in which men view sex and their relationships with women. Given this contextual information, therefore, *No Say* depicts the clear link between gender inequality and a woman’s risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. The solo piece by Pallin, both to be archived in the Rubenstein Library at Duke University and held within a broader collection, exposes gender inequality as one of the main social drivers of the HIV/AIDS epidemic among impoverished and developing nations. Even more, her piece serves to highlight that it is a gender-based unequal power that creates barriers against safe sex practices and compromises a women’s right to choose safer and healthier sex practices, namely contraception and the right to say “no.”

The original piece, titled “Men Need Sex,” can be found unedited as a composition of quotes taken from interviews regarding perceptions of sex and women across various different cultures. As a result, written testimonies from mouths of men and women are an essential part of Pallin’s work and comprise the upper half of her art piece. Within the text and inspired by the style portrayed in *The Humument*, Pallin has carefully selected and uniquely woven together testimonies from one man and two women to highlight specific injustices faced by women in developing countries. More specifically, Pallin’s choice of highlighted text emphasizes the use of violence and force during sexual encounters, the role of unfaithfulness in spreading HIV, and the inability to advocate for condom use as experienced by women in these nations. Not only does Pallin’s work provide a platform in which women are given a voice, but it recognizes the need for a space in which their desire for sexual freedom is recognized. In doing so, Pallin expertly transforms the power and injustices done by men into the voices of women. Pallin’s piece begs its viewers to remove the injustices that have long hinder women’s voices. Even more, Pallin’s piece begs onlookers to remove the duct tape that falls upon their own lips, to take a stand and become a voice with those who have no say.

The portrayal of words along with the depiction of a woman’s face, her voice held silent with duct tape, offers a face of the women who are often deemed faceless by the men who silence them. At first glance, the striking frontal profile is the first thing Pallin intended viewer’s eyes to fall upon. As onlookers’ eyes adjust to the portrayal of pain,

they begin to recognize the red strip of duct tape placed across her mouth. Pallin used darker tones as a way to represent the power divide as the color black is both visually heavy and often associated with power, authority and strength. Moreover, darker tones allowed Pallin to create a face shrouded in shadows and darkness further emphasizing the atrocities faced by women. This image, powerful in its own way, is complimented and made whole by the highlighted text. Pallin presents each viewer with a face of HIV, a pain-stricken woman, placed inside the context of men who *need* sex.

Without a voice, hence the title *No Say*, these women have no voice in protecting themselves against a virus that has pillaged their mothers, sisters and soon their children. Stopping the spread of HIV demands that women's rights are realized and that women are empowered in all aspects of life, including their sexuality. Doing so starts with providing a platform for discussion and a source of recognition for the ways in which we can remove the tape from our own lips to speak out about the atrocities faced by women. This is exactly what Pallin's art work hoped to capture.



PANOS/IRIS East Africa Regional Workshop for Journalist on Law, Social Policy, and Reproductive Health Materials. August 1999, Page 5. Box 6. Maria de Bruyn papers. David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library. Duke University, Durham, NC. 17 Nov 2017. (MLA)

Work Cited

McCabe, Chris. "A Little White Opening Out of Thought." Poetry Review, Vol 102, No 3. (2012)