

Kris Cruse
Professor Hebron
Art 325

Artist Statement - *Me Too: Takedown of Corrupt Power*

Me Too: Takedown of Corrupt Power is an exploration of vulnerability, exposure, and resilience in the face of systemic abuse, with a specific emphasis on the **Me Too movement** that was further amplified by the journalistic work done by **Jodi Kantor** and **Megan Twohey** against Harvey Weinstein. This multimedia project delves into the courageous work of both Kantor and Twohey, yet also examines the significance of the collective voice that was strengthened by specific women's fearlessness in reinforcing the article's validity by becoming name sources. Their New York Times article catalyzed a global spectacle through the *Me Too* movement. Through installation, performance, video, and sound, I showcase an immersion into this pivotal story's tension and bravery that drastically changed Hollywood, workspaces, and legislature—resulting in uncovering the concealed abuses of power.

At its core, this project is centered on the intersection of the individual and the collective, specifically how singular accounts, when voiced together, have the capability to dismantle powerful institutions of complicity and silence. The installation environment consists of a few main elements—flooring, videos, the performer, and audio. The first is newspapers that cover the floor, surrounding the viewership in an environment that represents the groundbreaking revelation of the impact of this article. The sound of shuffling papers beneath each step serves as a physical reminder of the lengths taken to unveil the fragility of truth. Alongside two walls were prints of articles and magazine covers of Harvey Weinstein that followed shortly after Twohey and Kantor's writing; on the back wall of the room where the second channel video projects, the cutouts of big ransom letters spell out "Me Too" in a specific color palette, furthering the notion of integral anonymity in this case that resulted in the ending effects of the article.

The palette of black, white, and red utilized in both the digital prints plastered on the walls and the video projections is integral to the conceptual framework of this artwork. Black and white represent the literal qualities of newspapers and journalistic reporting. At the same time, red adds a visceral emotional charge, symbolizing the passion and power directly tied to the timeline of events concerning the movement and the process. This deliberate color choice draws inspiration from the propagandist Soviet-era posters and text-based works of Barbara Kruger, Suzanne Lacy, and Jenny Holzer. By referencing these impactful artists, the work aligns with their contemporary art practices that exemplify the need to highlight societal issues, stir collective action, and amplify marginalized voices—principles that are central to this piece.

My performance in the piece activates the work despite being at a standstill, asserting the seriousness of my position. I exist in a nude bodysuit with a projection of the words "Me Too" fading in and out of my body. In this nature, the presence of my body symbolizes the vulnerability of coming forth with one's accounts while simultaneously embodying all the voices and strength of survivors. Stepping forward with a story of sexual misconduct is difficult due to the pervasive culture of silencing victims. Behind my body lies the video that condenses the

impactful timeline of Twohey and Kantor's work and the aftermath of their specific work. My body casts a shadow onto the main video, mirroring the silhouettes in the media, furthering the notion of my insertion into the story. Each video contained auditory elements, such as the layered audio of 30 voices stating "Me too" on a continuous loop attached to the projection on my body. Within the timeline video, audio of a telephone ringing cues the start of the piece, alluding to the primary phone call tip the journalists received. Additionally, the video contained found footage of Weinstein, news programs, and phone calls to expose the lengths that were undertaken for the success of the survivors.

This work compels viewers to confront the history of systemic abuse, collective resilience, and the power that comes with truth and justice. Through the immersive installation, performance, and sound, I amplify the timeline and voices of those directly associated with the takedown of Harvey Weinstein, a powerful entertainment industry mogul, all the way towards further amplifying the Me Too Movement. *Me Too: Takedown of Corrupt Power* is a call for accountability, empathy, and a beacon of cultural change.

<https://www.artbykriss.com/art325> (Documentation under "Video Unit")