

BACHELOR THESIS ABSTRACT

PHOTOGRAPHY IN SOCIAL ADVERTISING

Series of advertisements
for the project: **BETTER
BALANCE OF POWER
BETWEEN GENDERS**



1. INTRODUCTION

After a historical overview and analysis of some of the world known photographs and advertisements with social agenda, I noticed that in Slovenia social advertising is still in a very early stage of development. However, that does not mean we have no issues open for debate. For my final thesis I have chosen to point out the subject of gender inequality, which is still a big issue in our society, but somewhere along the way, we have just looked away and stopped talking about it.

In 2014 the Slovenian Ministry of labour, family, social affairs and equal opportunities have in cooperation with Norway Grants executed a social campaign under the name Better balance of power between genders. Hoping to reach a wider audience, the project contained many different lectures, conferences and workshops, and was mentioned in many newspapers, magazines and online articles. This was the first time I started to really think about the subject of gender equality.

I openly welcomed the project, but couldn't help to notice it was not very well covered visually. Using photography as my main medium of communication, I decided to present this project as a part of my bachelor thesis at the Academy of Fine arts and Design in Ljubljana, Slovenia. I photographed and designed 8 advertisements. Each of them showing a different area of private or professional life, where gender inequality is still very present. They are shown from a women's perspective, since they are normally the ones on the receiving end of inequality.

After an excessive analysis I brought to light a specific problem within each area, that I believed was the most troublesome in today's society. I used photography to point out the issue and copyright as a call to action.

2. PHOTOGRAPHY IN SOCIAL ADVERTISING

Social advertising first came around in the 1960s. The whole concept developed from a question: »Why can't we sell soap, like we sell brotherhood?«.¹ Gerard Wiebe noticed that social ads are in fact much more successful when they follow marketing techniques from commercial advertising. About 20 years later, this idea is adapted by Kotler and Zaltman, who first present the term social advertising². The end result is what primarily differentiates social from commercial advertising. For social advertising the main goal is to actively change our behaviour.

But even before the term social advertising was publicly accepted, people were interested in raising awareness about certain social problematics. As far as my analysis goes, one of the first photographs to promote these issues were used around the 1860s. US environmentalists were actively trying for the parks Yosemite and Yellowstone to get protected under the status of national parks. At that time there were quite a few people in the USA who were pointing out the damage people were doing to nature and one another. Sam LaBudde was documenting the mass killings of dolphins, Jacob Riss was photographing how people lived in the slums of New York, and Lewis Hine published one of the first posters containing photography and titled it Making human junk.

1 G. D. Wiebe, Merchandising Commodities and Citizenship on Television, *Public Quarterly*, vol.15, 1952

2 Social Marketing: An approach to plan social Change, *Journal of Marketing*, July 1971 / Kotler, Zaltman, pages 3-12

3. BETTER BALANCE OF POWER BETWEEN GENDERS

The main focus of Better balance of power between genders project was to increase awareness and educate about gender equality.

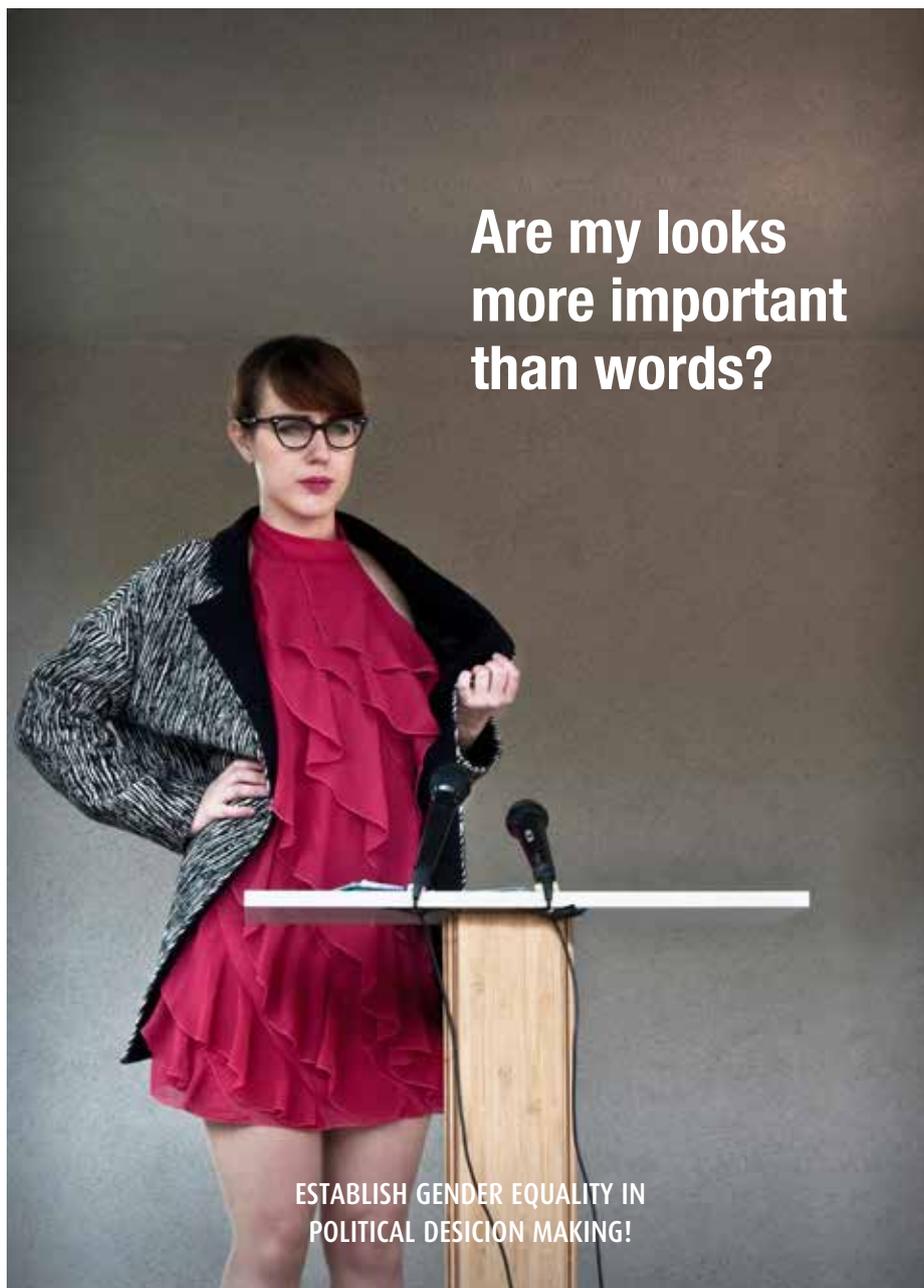
For my focus group I have chosen young adults, who are still trying to find their place in the world, forming their opinions, behaviour and ways of thinking. In addition to that, I think it is important to raise awareness of these problematics, before people fully come in contact with them.

Each advertisement is displaying a different female character, who looks, excluding the clothes, exactly how they do in real life. This shows us they are everyday people, they are us, we can relate and share the same reality. Inequality can be present anywhere and can happen to anyone, therefore these photographs appear as snapshots of a woman's everyday life. They can either present actual reality or the way women feel while experiencing these issues.

The photographs are accompanied by primary text in the form of a question and a secondary text in the form of a call to action. The ads were meant to be shown as city light posters, but are adapted to a smaller format for this paper.

POLITICS

The distribution of genders in politics is nowhere near equal. Not here and not anywhere around the world. Unfortunately just like women in business, female politicians are often not taken as seriously. During political speeches of women, we tend to be more concentrated on what she is wearing than what she is saying. And it is absolutely absurd to not pay attention to what the leaders of our country are saying solely because of their gender.



ECONOMY

Somehow, somewhere in history, we were thought that a women should primarily look good, and that it is in fact more important for her to be beautiful, than use her brain. We look around and see advertisement that are displaying women only as objects of desire everywhere. But why would women have to hide their gender in order to be taken seriously?



ECONOMIC INVOLVEMENT

A woman's family plan should not be an issue in employment. But at job interviews women are sometimes still asked whether they are married, have kids or plan on having more. Even though the law today prevents that kind of discrimination, some employers still believe hiring a woman to be a risky investment. And so some women today, still have to decide between making a living for themselves or raising a child.



HOUSEHOLD

There was a time when women tend to stay home and take care of the family, but today it is important for her to be professionally successful as well. Meaning the distribution of household work should be equally split. But the stereotype of a women being the housewife is still present, never mind the fact both partners now normally have jobs. Unfortunately women don't have 4 hands and we can not do everything ourselves, so sometimes we have to give certain things up.



**Do I have to
do everything
myself?**

**BALANCE PROFESIONAL AND PRIVATE LIFE OF
BOTH GENDERS BETTER!**

EDUCATION

Children learn very quickly the gender roles they are supposed to play and pretty soon they notice that the saying: “You can be whatever you want.”, does not always apply. And as we grow up, we find out the playground rules don’t change very much later in life. Children are not the ones to feel the impact of gender inequality, but we need to realise far more, that if we want to implement change, we need to start with raising and educating our children.



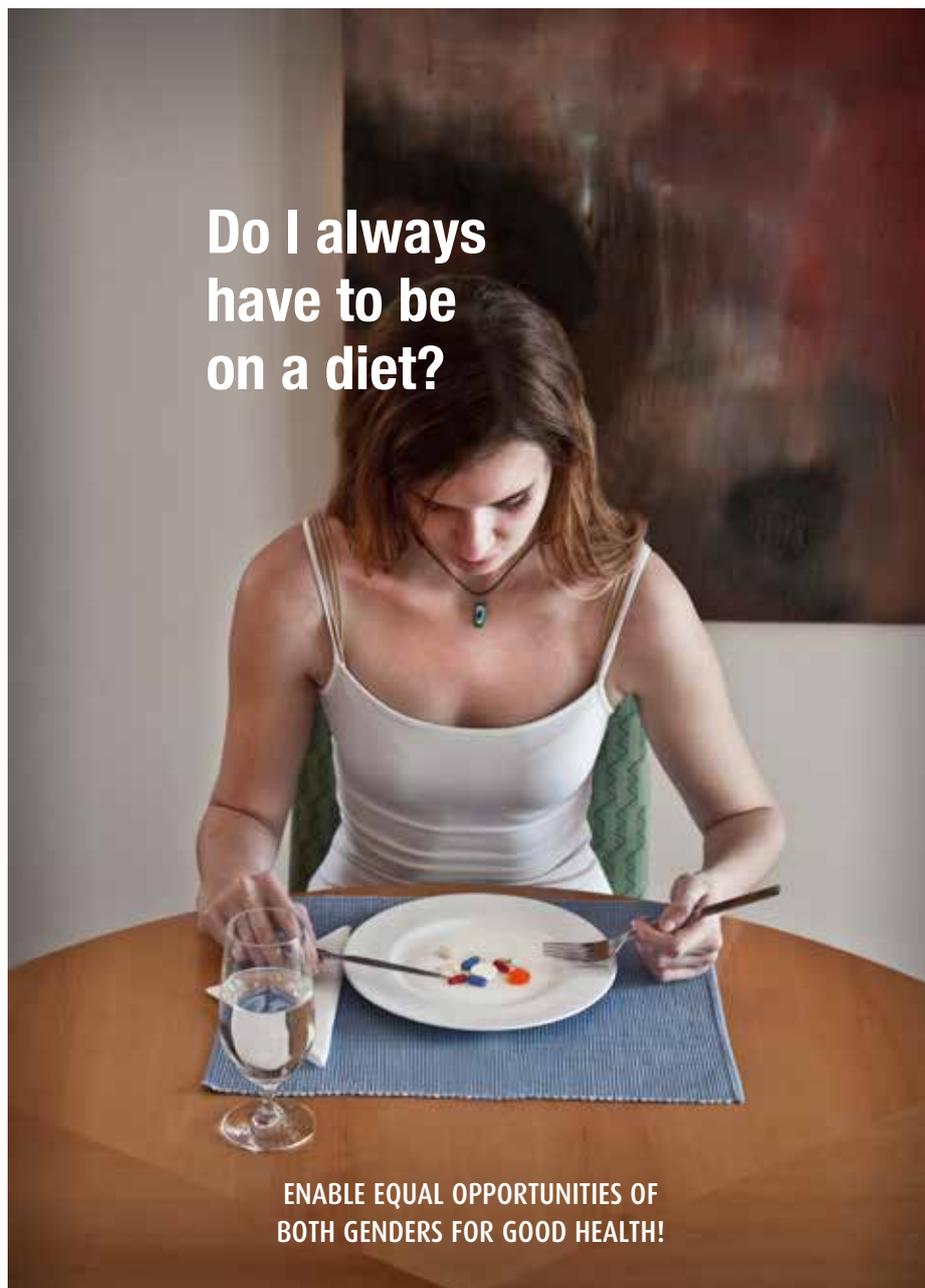
STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes are never picked up on naturally, but are passed from generation to generation. They are the main reason for inequality and can be present in almost all areas and stages of our lives. Very early on we are thought of what is expected from us as boys or girls, and if we fail to fit within those expectations of what a certain gender should be like, we can in fact be treated differently or even be excluded from society.



HEALTH

Gender inequality is in fact one of the reasons for a high percentage of eating disorders, exaggerating with physical exercise or general unhappiness among young adults. Women generally tend to live healthier lifestyles than men, but in order to live up to the standards set for their body image, they often tend to lose weight so excessively, that it can start to seriously effect their health.



**Do I always
have to be
on a diet?**

**ENABLE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES OF
BOTH GENDERS FOR GOOD HEALTH!**

VIOLENCE

Right after domestic violence, sexual harassment is the most widely used form of gender based violence. It happens so much, we've almost started to become immune to it. We try to look the other way and ignore it. Although there may never come to a physical contact, harassment is still very unpleasant. And just as much as it is not alright to harass, it is also not alright to just keep looking away.



**Do I just
ignore this?**

STOP ALL KINDS OF GENDER VIOLENCE!

4. CONCLUSION

Social advertising is important for raising awareness about some problematics of today's society. Photography as a medium for presenting this message, turns out to be very efficient. The subject of gender inequality in our time and space is still very present, yet very difficult to visualize. In my own photographs I have tried to introduce concrete situations, moments and feelings, because I feel we can relate to them most. Even during my work on this project I wanted to encourage my peers to think about and discuss the subject with one another. And I will keep trying for my message to reach a population as broad as possible.

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