

4 GenWomen

Transmedia project (photography, short film, interactive video) by Paula Onet

2012 – on going

LOGLINE

4GenWomen is deconstructing beliefs within families with 4 generations of women. The project started in 2012 and it is still on going, exploring the visible and invisible family heritage and transmission in different countries around the world. Until the present moment, it gathers families from three countries: Romania, Spain, Turkey. The project continues in 2020 with other families from France and Czech Republic.

SINOPSIS

The exhibition consists in three parts, united for the first time in an exhibition. The four generations Turkish and Spanish families are presented in an observational photo-video documentary and the Romanian family is shown in an interactive video installation. The multimedia documentary 4GenWomen creates an intimate, virtual space and time of shared intimacy between the families themselves and between them and the viewer.

The Turkish family



During my residency in Turkey, I met a Muslim family with all the 4 generations of women living in the same house, on different floors. I spent with them every Sunday during 3 months, finding ways of communication despite the language barrier and documenting their daily life in photography. I discover with them how much one generation needed the other in the daily schedule and how they deal with the love & hate relationship of sharing the same space with 4 generations. The result is an observational photographic-documentary.

The Spanish family



I met the 4 generations women family Gregorio-Ortuño during my residency in Valencia, Spain. They all lived in the same house, a space where 11 people dream, work, study, rehears their instruments, fight and laugh.... Filming them was like living a symphony on quotidian movements in a concert where life count its rhythm on the notes of 10 instruments. You can discover this family in an observational photographic and video documentary (12 min) that can be seen to the following link: <https://vimeo.com/paulaonet/4genw-sp> .

The Romanian family



Continuing my research within families with 4 generations of women, I wanted to understand how their values are transmitted and transformed from generation to generation. Capusan-Dermengiu family from Romania was very inspiring for me, especially the story of Maria Dermengiu (the second younger generation) who broke the family tradition of working in administration and law and gave up everything to become an artist. I asked them the same questions in separate interviews and then I create an interactive video from their answers. The demo (non-interactive) of the final video (29 min) can be seen to the following link: <https://vimeo.com/paulaonet/4genwro>

The video dedicated to this family questions the moment when the family are values starting to break and how we create our own ones. In order to find out, each of them are asked the same questions in separate interviews. During the exhibition, they are placed back together in an interactive video installation. In this "virtual inventory of values from one century", you can

choose the questions in your order of preference and hear their answers one after another in different screens. Beyond understanding the transformation of values, the exhibition is also an invitation to listen your previous generation, take understand and get close to them and then take the distance to create your own system-value.

The display in the space

The 4GenWomen exhibition occupies one entire room. Three of the walls contain audio-visual material and the other wall has text on it (exhibition description and artist's vision). On the left wall, on the viewer's eyes height, there are 15 pictures from the Turkish family placed in wood frames (15x18 cm) and lightened with a small light above each one. Same for the right wall but with 15 pictures from the Spanish family and one extra tablet (which has the same wooden frame shape as the pictures) with the observational film of the Spanish family (12 min). This table has 3 headphones attached, the sound is very important for this video.

In the middle wall, there are 4 screens hanged, each of them belong to one woman from the 4GenWomen family from Romania. At a comfortable distance, there is a bench where people can sit and watch the 4 screens. In front of the bench, there is a tablet on a stand. On this tablet, there are the 10 question from which the visitors can choose. Once selected a question, the women start answering one by one on the separate screen. Whenever it feels like, the viewer can go to another question by simply clicking on it.

Due to the lack of technical resources, the interactive video was also shown in a single screen.

For technical aspects, please contact paula.onet13@gmail.com

Artist's intentions

I am a feminist. I find fascinating the discovery of the transformation and adaptation of what "womanhood" means among time. In the last century (which covers exactly 4 generations), woman's status and identity have been constantly changing and defining, going through a big range of transformation. This challenges even the authentic "root-knowledge" of one's culture because every generation seems to reinvents itself. What makes it even more provocative is that all the generations still co-exist, sometimes even under one roof (like the Spanish and Turkish family).

In defining "womanhood", I am searching for a contemporary, popular dictionary of ordinary people from different cultures. Now we have the chance to learn the history "live", as long as it is "alive". I hope the project will sparkle conversation within families through generations.

On one side there is the authentic culture transmitted by our mothers and grandmothers orally, an everlasting tradition in the history of humanity. On the other side, there are the new cultural values that are being born by the need to adapt to the actual lifestyle. If you take marriage for example, our (great)grandmothers married at early age, mostly in “arranged” unions. Their granddaughters (my generation) practice late-marriages, concubine or celibacy without being judged (depending on each culture).

Beyond that, what are the universal values that never die? Man are confused in approaching women. Women are confused in the fusion of the old and new values. Judgments about sexuality, feminism, religion, labour and motherhood are very present in our (still) patriarchal-oriented societies.

I also believe that that nowadays, due to the fast evolution of the technology, the learning process has become bi-directional more than ever. We need our elderly as much as they need us, as the changes happen at a fast speed.



Postcards of previous exhibitions in Valencia and Bucharest