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MQ, Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Wien

Laia Abril: On Abortion

What do a picture of a coat hanger, a pair of handcuffs attached to a bed frame, and a blurry portrait of a woman have in common? In context of the term *abortion*, these pictures immediately evoke numerous associations; they are also extremely violent.

Under "natural" circumstances, a woman would normally get pregnant around fifteen times during her childbearing years, which would result in up to ten births. Only seven of these children could expect to live beyond childhood. For centuries, people have searched for ways to delay or abort a pregnancy. Today there are certainly safer and effective methods of abortion, yet women all over the world are forced to still depend on old, illegal, or risky methods.

"If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down." This statement by an American politician in 2012 shows how strongly the self-determination of one's own body was fundamentally questioned just a few years ago and how in most countries of the world it continues to be. For example, in 2016, for the first time in history Pope Francis permitted Catholic women who had had abortions to ask for forgiveness in confession. What may seem to be progress nevertheless perpetuates forms of stigmatization and guilt, illustrating the basic global predicament.

Millions of pregnant women in all countries and religions are prevented by laws and social constraints from accessing abortion technology. They are forced to carry their pregnancies to term against their will. This includes minors and victims of rape, and in many cases, the fetus is unhealthy or the pregnancy poses a health risk. In countries where abortions are illegal, childbearing women are frequently criminalized and prosecuted. For example, abortion is forbidden in El Salvador, and violators are punished in prison. The women who are found guilty can also be accused of murder, which results in considerably longer prison terms of between thirty and fifty years.

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This example reflects the strict and uncompromising attitude in many countries on the question of abortion.

Unfortunately, healthcare providers often violate the confidentiality of their patients—even if an abortion is medically necessary to save a life—and have been known to denunciate women who have tried to perform their own abortion. In addition, in countries where abortion is illegal, those who help pregnant women risk both their freedom and their lives.

A History of Misogyny by Laia Abril (b. 1986) is a long-term visual research project that works with historical and contemporary comparisons. In the first chapter, *On Abortion* (2016), Abril documents and conceptualizes the dangers and harm that results when childbearing individuals do not have access to legal and safe abortions that are free of charge. Using her meticulous research methods, Abril delves into the past to explore the long and continual erosion of the reproductive rights of childbearing people up to the present.

Her collection of images, audio material, and texts from her research that began in Vienna, at the Museum of Contraception and Abortion, weaves a web of questions on ethics and morality, revealing an array of social causes and abortion-related stigmas and taboos that have long remained invisible.

FOTO ARSENAL WIEN presents around 120 photographs, videos, and installations by the Spanish artist in her first solo exhibition in Austria and in a German-speaking country.

With the support of the Museum of Contraception and Abortion:
<https://www.muvs.org/en/> .