

Wolfgang Bauer - *Spring Awakenings*: About My Paintings

The concept for my latest series of paintings evolved from interdisciplinary studies of German literature, philosophy and anthropology. Initially inspired by the iconoclastic Frank Wedekind play *Spring Awakening*, my work explores facets of childhood development within the sex negative, patriarchal family structures of Western society. I painted the protagonists life sized, making direct eye contact with the viewer, in the attempt to elicit a discourse of sorts between the viewer and the painted characters. I want to engage the viewer as a *re-actor* in the narrative of the presented situation, with the viewers' own social, cultural, political and religious backgrounds as the determining pertinent variables. Subsequently, the portrayed characters function as catalysts of each viewers individual socialization, prompted by patriarchal family structures within Western society.

My aim is not to judge the society I am part of, I merely want to provoke thought to find acceptance for "the Other" who is different than the accepted "normal" individual.

Boys will be Boys is a study of the conventions of dress depicting a boy wearing his mother's shoes. This work negates any gender's exclusive right to monopolize socially constructed, sexist gender markers. For example: If men are emasculated when they behave in ways that *feminize* them, then what does that tell us about women's position in society? Why might we act differently to a boy who wears his mother's high heels, than to a girl who wears her dad's sweater?

And the Winner Is ? Do some parents use their children as tradable collateral in divorces? Through the image of the mutilated *doll-baby-corpse*, I want to show how children might emulate destructive, parental behavior.

Mars - A boy is handling a doll like a weapon. The painting focuses on how boys are pressured to conform to indoctrinated, masculine modes of behavior. How else might a boy hold a doll "naturally"?

Olympia and ***Olympia Pregnant*** explore the prolific, yet often ignored issues of child prostitution, incest, and pregnancy.

Hierarchies (image 05) examines problematic stages in the *construction of masculinity* within patriarchal family arrangements. The father already adjusted to oppressive structures of power, towers over his defiant bruised son, in an attempt to compel him to conform. The small picture of the grandparents signifies the continued, generational oppression passed down from father to son. Think of the pressures children are subjected to early on in life. Can your five year old spell yet? One hour homework at five years old...did childhood get lost?

Mother is inspired by my mother's "post-second-world-war" childhood. The young girl's eyes are inundated... with what? In Austria, 1943, my mother at twelve years old carried the burden of responsibility of being the oldest of four children in a time that had no mercy for the weak and vulnerable. Her childhood was stolen from her.

Patriarchy brings the elements of the series together. Gender markers such as women's red high heels and men's black leather shoes, combined with representations of childhood, such as the doll that is missing a leg, feeds into the discourse and concludes the series ***Spring Awakenings***.