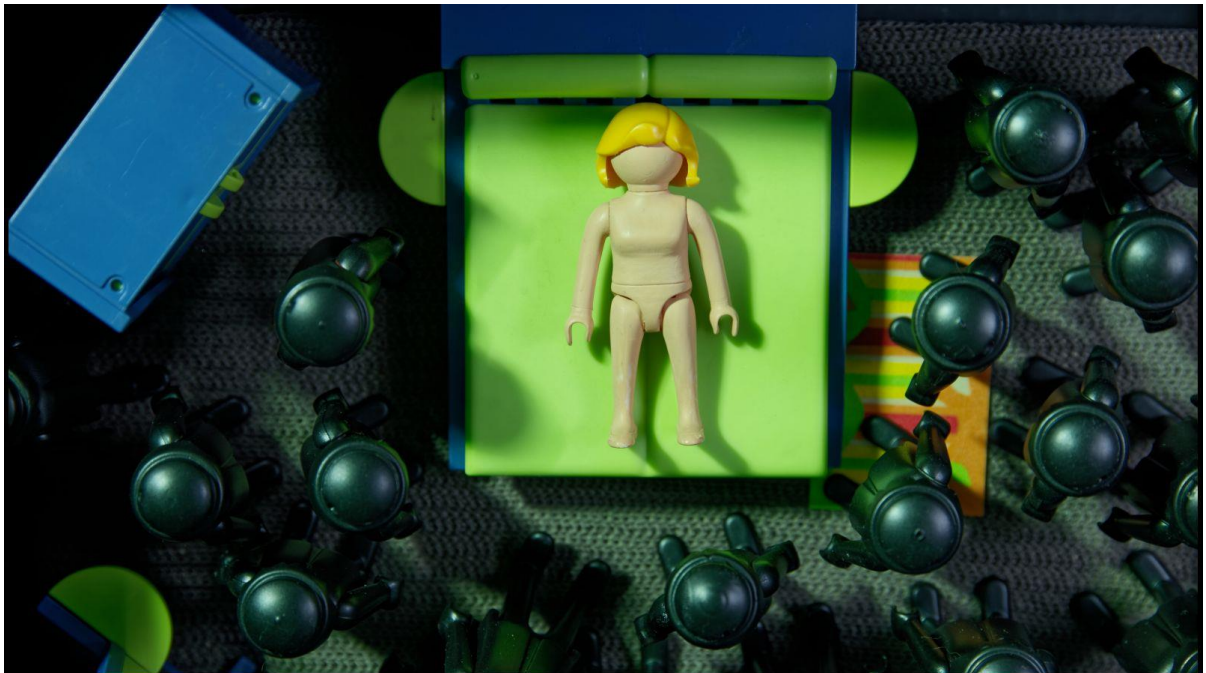


# SILENT FLESH

by Monica Mazzitelli

*An artistic docu-drama about the female body as commodity*



## *Storyline*

*Stories of women whose body has been sold for sexual purposes, narrated through both conventional artistic representations - watercolor, modern dance, choral music, sculpture, animation, design - as unusual: textile dyeing, frosting, puppets, embroidery, yarn work.*

*Female feminist artists – express their creativity through works that lead us on a powerful and varied journey, supported by a huge and surprising visual and cinematographic force, oftentimes using animation.*

## *Project Description*

How can you tell the unspeakable? Is it possible to receive unpleasant narratives?

Art has often illustrated the critical moments of human history, even unintentionally, often giving voice to those who did not have one. **Silent Flesh** anonymously gathers stories – unfortunately both real and common – of young girls from all over the world, dramatizing them through different art and handicraft expressions.

### ***The Wedding Cake***

Among others, we will get to know **Anna**, from Eastern Europe, who was left by her husband with a lot of debts to pay to the Treasury. Without any possibility to face this emergency thru her ordinary job, she risks imprisonment and thus losing her young daughters. Understanding that the only way to pay the debt is to prostitute herself, she ends up in the hands of a pimp who gives her the money to pay herself off on the condition that she prostitutes for him for 5 years. Anna begins to travel throughout Europe and the Middle East, letting her daughters believe that she is a flight attendant. This story has already been filmed as a pilot of this project, with the title “The Wedding Cake” with the collaboration of a frosting artist, Adriana Rosati (see below).



### ***Joy, Happiness and Glory***

Through a score for four female voices and poetic animated illustrations of watercolor and china we listen to the choral story of **four Nigerian girls**. Deceived by a so-called *madam* who promises she will borrow them the money to take a journey to Italy where she would help them to find a job as hairdresser or shop assistant. They decide to accept the offer thinking it would be their opportunity to put some money aside in order to finance their studies, once they get back home. Before leaving, they are forced to do a violent voodoo ritual that aims to terrify them with the threat that the medicine man would be able to kill them any time he wanted to – no matter

how far away they would be – if they attempted to run away without pay off their debt to the *madam*. We follow their journey through the desert where they face hunger, thirst and rape, until they arrive in the Libyan concentration camps. It is there that the *madam* throws them into prostitution for the first time, saying that they need to pay more money if they want to reach Sicily by boat. The journey is a nightmare full of dangers, many boats sink with their load of passengers, including three little girls who carry tragically ironic names: Joy, Happiness and Glory. And the arrival in Italy is not a salvation, but the beginning of a slavery in street prostitution. However, the narrative is poetic, transfigured by the singing voices and abstract watercolor images.

### ***Lover Boy***

As a child, **Sofia** was sexually abused by her maternal grandfather, just like her mother had been when she was a child. When her grandfather started to molest Sofia, her mother –who had turned into an alcoholic– that was unable to protect her. Sofia believes that everything will be different for her when she meets Alex, a slightly older boy who tells her he loves her and wants to build a life with her. But after a few months, through a subtle but constant grooming,



Alex initiates her into pornography and prostitution, telling her that they need money to be able to fulfill their dreams of living together, having a family. He alternates sweet behaviors with abuse, more and more, and degrading. This story is told with artistic puppets.

### *The Tunnel*

**Jimmy** tells his story of addiction to pornography, that is illustrated by an embroidery that grows progressively, thru an animated time lapse. He tells of how he started seeing dozens of videos a-day during a time when he was unemployed. As he saw those images and situations,



his brain became less and less reactive to stimuli; therefore, to have an erection and ejaculation he was forced to go more and more beyond the limit. The videos with images of sexual violence and physical and mental humiliation on the girls, which he had initially avoided, had become the only ones that could give him a sexual stimulus. But after a couple of years of intense masturbation, even those stimuli no longer worked and

he searched for something even more violent online, with physical torture on ever younger girls. In the end, he switched to buying illegal content: child abuse, incest. Finally, he had come in contact with a man in an Asian country. For a high but still affordable price, he sold Jimmy the possibility of deciding live (through the webcam) what type of abuse or torture this man would exercise on his own daughter, a 3 years old girl. It was on that occasion that the police had caught him and imprisoned him. His story is a painful monologue, written from prison, after a long process of psychic rehabilitation therapy.

### *Dancing against her*

**Rosa's** story is told through a choreography that is filmed both in flat and in VR with a 360° camera, having the girl's perspective as POV. Rosa is 15 years old and she was introduced to pornography by a man who contacted her on Instagram. He told her that she was really sexy and instead of chasing just likes from her followers, she could make money out of the same images she published on Instagram on other sites. He suggested that she would come to his studio and pose for some erotic photos, for which she would get well paid, he said. After a session of studio photos in erotic poses, he proposed that she take more photos, this time with a male partner. She was very uncertain but in the end she felt compelled to accept, but when she arrived on the set the second time she found herself in an unexpected and threatening

situation: it was no longer photos but video, and she was the only woman among six men, much older than her. At her embarrassed protests she was silenced with a few words about the fact that she would get a lot of money, and then she was immediately forced to participate, without having any idea what would happen. The scene turned out to be nothing else but a gang bang, during which she was sexually assaulted by all the participants. Initially she was too



intimidated and in awe not to try and play along, but gradually the physical, mental and moral suffering were so great that the girl started to shout out no and begged them to stop, but her denials worked on the opposite as an incitement to continue on, in an increasingly degrading way for her.

As a spin-off of the film version, this narration is conceived – in the 360° version – also as a modern dance performance to be replicated in theatrical form. The spectators are seated in the middle of the scene, on swivel stools, at a distance from each other, wearing a virtual reality headset. From that position they will be able to see both this choreography in the immersive VR version and (still sitting on the same stools) attend to another choreography/live dance performance, close to the dancers.

### *Background*

In a society with narcissistic consumer habits where almost every type of good or service can be purchased, the female body is also objectified and considered an affordable commodity.

There are various forms of prostitution. The most common is the purchase of sexual power on a body using money – that is, paying for consent to the power of access to a person's sexuality. If the act is consumed in private it goes under the name of prostitution, if consumed in front of cameras –to make it accessible to an audience – it is called pornography, a compound deriving from the Greek words *pòrne* (prostitute) and *graphè* (illustration).

But there are other forms of payment for obtaining sexual power over a person that do not involve an exchange of money but only of goods, favors, travel, drugs, etc. In recent times, *sugardating* has grown exponentially: it consists of web platforms that put very young girls (and boys actually) in contact with very mature men (*sugardaddies*). The idea is that the girls are available to “hang out” with the men and in exchange for their “company” – which ultimately consists of a sexual act – luxury goods such as designed accessories or clothes, dinners in elegant restaurants, weekends in hotels. In western countries it is often on these sites that girls make their debut in prostitution, according to alarming information reported by the North European investigative police.

One should not forget and neglect those quite frequent case that happen for those who live in extreme poverty (all over the world), where consent to sex is forced –even from one's partner– as exchange to receive money to buy food or what is necessary for the maintenance of one's children.

### *Directress' Vision*

The goal is the creation of a product that – regardless of its definitely well-documented and realistic content – has a high artistic value through the use of a very varied language both in inspiration and execution. Each of the collaborators involved (in most cases women) find their unique poetic voice to operate a transfiguration of the narrative content into a work of high aesthetic value, using contemporary and innovative forms, capable of revisiting even the most classic and ancient forms of fine craftsmanship.

### *Directress' Objective*

The director has studied prostitution and pornography from different angles and perspectives for several years now. Not only has she read/participated in/watched hundreds of articles, films, interviews, seminars, conferences, meetings and the like, but she has also been a volunteer worker for the organization [Talita](#), and support woman for the organization [Rise](#) where she supports women in their trauma processing. Her goal is to create a work of art to tell about how the situation is, in the hope of being able to make a difference by influencing the general view on prostitution and porn. She wants to create commitment to these issues by giving the opportunity to experience the feelings of vulnerable women, stimulate political debate in Europe –where many decisions that influence the rest of the world are made– but would be happiest if the debate and discussion spreads to the whole the world. Her goal is reaching out to all continents and present the film, in person whenever possible.

The international intent is not only a way to state that the stories of abuse on the female body are very much the same regardless where women come from, but also that women in all parts of the world, from New Zealand to Iceland, have had their way of storytelling thru art and handicraft. Making art has been often part of their shared and socialized expression, not only an individual creative process.

In addition, there is a willingness to provide a form of moral compensation - at best perhaps an uplift - for women who have suffered severely, a transfiguration of their suffering into an art form.



*“The Wedding Cake”, the project pilot that has turned into a festival success*

The pilot of this project, called **The Wedding Cake** was completed last January. Its success was immediate: at the first festival in which it competed - the Reykjavik Feminist Film Festival - it won first prize, and then it was also selected for the most important Swedish film event, the Gothenburg Film Festival. In the following months it has already gained some 50 other selections, winning and obtaining awards, special mentions and nominations. The short can be watched thru a private link [here](#).

### *The Directress*

Monica Mazzitelli is a Roman director and writer who has lived in Sweden for some years. She has shot more than twenty narrative and documentary short films, videos and promos, which have been selected by over a hundred international festivals, winning about twenty awards and nominations.

The most successful work so far is a documentary called "Dignity", shot in Mozambique, that competed at 60 festivals where it has won prizes and awards, and now “The Wedding Cake”, with 40 selections and many nominations and awards.

[This is her showreel.](#)

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