

# Mattress Performance (Carry That Weight)

Emma Sulkowicz



When someone is raped and there is no repercussions for the rapist, how do they fight back? If there is no concrete proof how do you get justice?

Mattress Performance (Carry The Weight) piece of endurance performance art by Emma Sulkowicz was performed in 2014 and 2015, (incidentally, during this time I was dating the man who would go on to rape me in September 2017) I remember seeing it during the media buzz and I remember it made me uncomfortable. I judged the artist because a part of me still believed that the more effort you put into getting attention the less attention you deserve, this is because I was raised by people of a generation who were embarrassed to talk about trauma and who subscribed to a stiff-upper-lip attitude around suffering.



I worried about the victim and I worried about the perpetrator because I couldn't accept that there was no way to really know who was lying and who was telling the truth, I didn't want to accept a world where one of these people was lying and one was being honest and suffering because of the lies of the other. I didn't want to believe that someone could rape someone and then lie about it so brazenly, I found it easier to stomach that Sulkowicz had lied than the rapist. I didn't voice this because I knew there was no way to know, but I remember I thought it.



I didn't understand how to appreciate

this artwork until I was raped, 5 years after Sulkowicz. I feel guilty for the things I thought, especially because I know now that there are people who don't want to believe that I was raped, and who would rather believe that I am a liar, because it's easier to stomach. I don't know if my rapist denies it outright, but I do know that he threatened to take legal action against me for telling mutual friends what happened, and I do know that initially he claimed to be too drunk so that he did not remember the rape.

There is nothing I can do to prove that I was raped, there is nothing he can do to prove that he did not rape me. The only people who know for sure what happened are him and I, so there is no legal way to exorcise the pain that it caused, and there is no way to get justice.

I have said everything I ever want to say about it, but I still feel it, it's a spike in my neck, talking is useless and everything has already been discussed, I wanted to trap it somewhere, it is an event in a place in time which is unfair and will remain unfair forever, but I don't need to carry it like Emma Sulkowicz had to, I wanted to put it somewhere where it becomes a memory that I can view from a distance.

This is why I made my piece 'Red Painting/One Year and One Month/To Lose'. It didn't start out as a piece of art it started out as an exercise I set myself for therapy. I wanted to take every intrusive thought and memory into something I could see in front of me in an effort to reduce it, I used screenshots of messages and conversations which happened on my phone for this, because reliving it as I tried to explain myself after the rape was something which didn't let me move on even though I thought I was doing the right thing. I painted it orange and red like the colour of the pain in my shoulder and I blocked out the words I didn't think I needed, and some words I did, because my rapist threatened with legal action and unfortunately art doesn't exist where the outside world can't see in. I covered it in resin so it was trapped like a dead bug, its stuck in time now even though I'm not.

I didn't consider Emma Sulkowicz's piece when I made mine, but although it wasn't a direct influence in what I made, and although our artworks don't share aesthetics or intentions, Sulkowicz's is important to look at when looking at my piece because of our shared experience and our shared need to say what needed to be said despite there being no way to prove it as true or not, expression of frustration and of hurt and of anger and indignation.

