

## ALICE ANDERSON'S CHILDHOOD RITUALS

A study of troubled ritual performances reflect one artist's upbringing in a new exhibition at London's Freud Museum



This spring twisted ropes of red hair will be wrapped around London's [Freud Museum](#) in an installation by artist [Alice Anderson](#). Renowned for her use of this material as an autobiographical reference to a troubled childhood spent between Algeria and France, Alice's transformation of this landmark is a response to a ritualistic set of performances started in 2010. A new series of sculptures, fetish-like figures wrapped in red hair, will be on display inside the Museum. Playing on ideas of femininity and weaving, Alice's work seeks to confront and confound Freud's positioning of these concepts in psychoanalytic theory.

**Dazed Digital: Your Childhood Rituals, soon to be staged at the Freud Museum is a continuation of performances you have been creating since 2010. Do you see this work as a climax to these performances?**

**Alice Anderson:** The performances made in 2010 were re-playing the rituals that I used to do in my childhood - at least as I remember them... I was alone at home waiting for the return of my mother. Probably to calm my fears and my anxieties, I used to undo threads from the seams of my clothes, and wind them around parts of my body or other objects in the house. The *Power Figures*, which are going to be part of what I am showing at the Freud, are the result of the childhood rituals.

**DD: You take the loom of Anna Freud as your starting point for the exhibition. What is the relevance of this?**

**Alice Anderson:** We've found out that Freud stated once that the activity of weaving is a cover for 'genital deficiency'! I wanted to embrace this so-called "feminine" activity of weaving... and subvert the Freudian associations of "genital deficiency" by creating a grid made of dolls' hair.

There is an interesting conjunction of the masculine associations of the grid, with its claims to disembodied abstraction, with the corporeal, feminine associations of the dolls hair. In the same way that the hair subverts this patriarchal 'seat' of psychoanalysis as it is inserted into the context of the museum, so too does it problematise the formalist ideal of self-referentiality. The mise en scene shows a Mother Doll working at the loom making a grid for her Daughter. Dolls hair is arranged geometrically like the rationality of the grid in a manner which is entirely new in my practice.

**DD: What does red hair represent to you? Something autobiographical or totemic?**

**Alice Anderson:** Red dolls hair refers to my childhood memories. More precisely they represent the moment when I started to use hair instead of thread in my childhood rituals. Today, the dolls hair that I am using, has been modeled on my own hair. Even though the hair is not literally my own, it still makes an intimate reference to my body. It is a kind of autobiographical "material". Hair represents a significant cultural role and it functions as an important signifier of gender and sexuality. When I produce an "architecture" in a space made of dolls hair, I am orchestrating an intimate gesture, which I present on a large scale.

**DD: Your works are intensely personal, do they feel like extensions of yourself?**

**Alice Anderson:** Yes that is why each piece functions as a world in itself. The works are based on my own existence (my own childhood memories) but endows my enquiry with universal significance. I'm getting to the point where I see how an autobiography can be fictional. Memory functions as the 'master of fiction' the act of remembering generates an imaginative and fictive account of the past. The conception of recollection does not operate along a linear or objective trajectory.

Text by Natasha Hoare

*[Alice Anderson's](#) [Childhood Rituals](#) is at the [Freud Museum](#), London NW3 from 15 April - 5 June*