

### **Psychological Statement on the Short Film” “Puppet Show**

The film „Puppet Show“ accomplishes something seldom found with regard to this topic: It is precise, but not voyeuristic - and while for the most part aggression and disgust are generated against the “perpetrator”, this story concentrates wholly on the victim – takes the viewer to the emotional level of a traumatized person and does not let them go. “The viewer becomes the distraught mother, experiences the speechlessness and the pain of a child fallen victim to sexual assault and can relate to how difficult it is for the partner of a traumatized person to deal with this situation.

“Puppet Show” sensitively and quietly tells the story of a little girl, a young woman. Just as quietly as sexual abuse takes place thousands of times behind closed doors in Germany. The thematic and atmospheric link between two stories fuels the insecurity. Is it reality, the past or just the imagination? This skillfully created state of insecurity is symbolic for the often strong insecurities of a sexually abused child. Many children no longer trust their own feelings and perceptions. Am I just imagining it all? Papa can’t possibly do something so horrible – he loves me, doesn’t he? Even the supposed dual role of the man in the film makes the viewer realize that it is not immediately obvious who is the perpetrator and who the loving friend. Abusers – men and women – have many faces and are usually talented in keeping up a façade as anxious father, funny uncle or caring mother.

“Puppet Show” often creates the impression of looking through the eyes of a child perceiving their surroundings. In the beginning, the man’s face is hidden. Abused children often try to at least avoid the eyes of the perpetrator. Many victims take mental refuge in another world during the abuse. This frequently goes so far that the children developing resulting personality disorders – the psyche can no longer be one. Because abusers often trap their victims in a tight web of threats and secrets, it generally takes a long time before the affected children are able to confide the abuse. Many children remain forever silent. Trapped by themselves in this destructive world, they are alone, with no allies. The only witnesses to the horrible acts are the puppets and stuffed animals in the nursery. In the film, the child re-stages the hurtful experiences on a puppet and does something the abuser cannot – it tries to put a bandage on the puppet after the destructive act to make it better. The puppet, the film’s namesake, has a central significance. An ally, victim and synonym for the helplessness of children. Many perpetrators see their victims as puppets. Helpless shells they can use for their own gratification. The pain of victims does not interest them.