

**CONTEMPORARY
-SELF-
PORTRAITS**

Course Material from Turku University of Applied Sciences 94

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From Paper to True Collaboration

by Taina Erävaara

When a group of talented and enthusiastic people, who are committed to their work, come together to plan something challenging that is different from anything tried before, the result can be either a total catastrophe, or it can lead to something of real value, which can be shared with others. As the Project Manager, I can proudly state that we dared to venture beyond our own, traditional boundaries and it was worth the effort. As our external evaluator, Pauline O'Connell noted The *Contemporary Self-Portraits* was an umbrella project that enabled a creative expansion of each partner organisation through collaborations with individuals and outside groups, thus enabling the five partners to operate autonomously.

Contemporary Self-Portraits began when the partners were invited to the project and met face-to-face at the long negotiating table at the Arts Academy of the Turku University of Applied Sciences. Each participant brought their own expertise to the project during the planning phase and that same dedication and creative enthusiasm characterised the project throughout its course. During the two years of the project, the consortium composed, in a very unique way, a functional, dialogic and committed community, where the different parts completed each other. Everyone brought their special expertise to the implementation phase of the project, supporting the development of self-portraiture and autobiographical methods. All partners were able to effectively reach new regional partners and organised impressive workshops that each represented the singular style of the responsible organisers.

During the course of the project, we carried out self-portraiture processes and created spatial and temporal self-portraits. These portraits tell their own stories about contemporary identities in Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia and Sweden. Nearly 3,000 people participated in the workshops and were able to present their own portraits and life stories, and were also seen and heard in a way that was fascinating and inspiring to them.

The self-portraits from the workshops were created in the form of, among other things, photographs, autobiographical texts, collages, sculptures, audio recordings, medals, characters, drawings and shadow art. The resulting works evoked various feelings



Front: Lisa Lundström, Pia Bartsch and Kaisa Adair
Back: Sofia Johansson, Ailbhe Murphy, Laura Toots, Vesa Aaltonen, Liana Benke, Taina Erävaara, Katarina Pierre and Anthony Hobbs



of emotion, from affection to confusion, and from tenderness to joy. Although it is impossible to introduce all of the created works, the partner consortium has selected some of the offerings from the workshops to share. This publication is composed of six parts, each with its own perspective on self-portraits, and relates information about the self-portrait workshops, processes and their outcomes. All in all, it brings forward both the projects diversity and its unique features. Besides this collection of articles, each partner lays out the highlights of their workshops in their own companion publications, which are available separately.

Warm thanks to all the participants in the workshops who, in their own spontaneous and enthusiastic ways, ensured the overall success of these workshops. The artists who led the workshops shared their own expertise, developed new self-portrait working methods, and were involved in making these creative workshops such unique experiences. It has been our great pleasure to work with the artists and experts who were involved in this project. Without them, we would never have witnessed these impressive and unforgettable exhibitions in each partner country. The works assembled for a joint exhibition at the Bildmuseet and the final seminar in Umeå brought out just how excellently the different aims and contexts of the workshops were achieved in different locations, which also produced an unforgettable self-portrait collection.

Our hope is that this publication will inspire readers to familiarise themselves with work in self-portraiture and autobiographical themes. We further hope that readers will attempt to experiment with their own self-portraits or use the methods discussed here in their own work with their target groups.

Taina Erävaara

Contemporary Self-Portraits Project Manager

www.contemporaryselfportraits.com

The Contemporary Self-Portraits project has received funding from the EU Culture Programme from the years 2012–2014. The project was coordinated by the Turku University of Applied Sciences, Arts Academy in cooperation with our partners from Bildmuseet (Umeå, Sweden), Estonian Academy of Arts (Tallinn, Estonia), ISSP – International Summer School of Photography (Riga, Latvia) and National College of Art and Design (Dublin, Ireland).

Diverse Faces of Riga

by Liana Iveta Benke

The *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project was an opportunity (and a challenge) for the Association ISSP (International Summer School of Photography) to work with a completely different target audience – suburban residents of Riga. By choosing to hold workshops in different suburbs of Riga, the workshop organisers hoped to involve a wide variety of people, many of whom had no previous experience with community art. The aim was to provide a voice to a diverse array of Riga residents, giving them the opportunity to reflect on their own identity and the surrounding society, while creating a contemporary portrait of the city through the eyes of its people. As part of the Riga 2014 European Capital of Culture programme, we were able to broaden the reach of the project, also including a portrait series by local photographers and an extensive *Riga Self-Portraits* exhibition in July 2014.

The visual results of the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* workshops – over 300 self-portraits of Riga residents – truly reflect the diversity of the city's population, bringing together different generations and ethnicities living in the city. Many workshops took place in three languages simultaneously – English, Latvian and Russian – showing that communication comes naturally when there is a common creative task. While community centres in Riga offer some opportunities, most creative processes are still concentrated in the city centre. Through the workshops, exhibitions, as well as displays in the urban environment, and pop-up events in the project neighbourhoods, we hoped to attract as many Rigans as possible, both as participants and viewers.

Many of the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* workshops organised in Riga provided a chance for local Latvian artists and photographers to gain experience in community art and carry out workshops based on their own methodologies. Photographer Andrejs Strokins, and filmmaker and photographer Kaspars Goba, used the historical multigraph technique, allowing residents of the Bolderāja neighbourhood to take multiple self-portraits of themselves in a single shot. Documentary photographer Andris Kozlovskis invited teenagers and young people from the Āgenskalns area to take self-portraits in their rooms, showing the diversity in their own self-expression as well as their living spaces.

Throughout the project, ISSP and its members gained hands-on experience in involving and working with different local communities, while the local workshop leaders broadened their teaching experience with various new target groups.



Challenging the privilege of visual sense

ISSP also invited Latvian photographer Iveta Vaivode to design the methodology and implement a self-portrait workshop in a Riga suburb in July 2013. Iveta Vaivode (born 1979) is a practicing photographer and photography educator, and is among the most well-known of her generation in Latvia. Having started her career as a fashion photographer, she has turned her sights towards more personal and documentary projects in recent years. She has been teaching photography since 2008, and is currently pursuing her MA at the Aalto University of Art and Design in Helsinki.

Iveta chose to work with visually impaired people in Strazdumuiža, an area on the outskirts of Riga which, since the Soviet period, has housed a rehabilitation centre, boarding school, cultural club and special housing for the visually impaired community. The participants were invited to apply through local radio and recruitment by team members. Eight people of various age groups took part in the workshop, which took place over four days. The participants created their self-portraits, both as photograph's and as clay busts, and the process and results challenged the privilege of visual sense in our society. Iveta Vaivode was invited by the project to reflect on why she chose to work with visually impaired people, and the experiences and results from the workshop at Strazdumuiža. The following reflections from the organised workshop are written by her.

Workshop at Strazdumuiža

Traditionally, self-portraits are associated with the visual arts and sight as the main tool of perception. The same applies to the medium of photography itself: due to its two-dimensional nature, it is almost impossible to perceive an image without the gaze of a human eye. We need only 7 seconds to form an impression of a person when we meet them for the first time, influenced by their visual appearance. How would we identify ourselves if we simply couldn't see the reflection in the mirror? How would we reflect on ourselves if there were no possibility for comparison?

Within this workshop, I tried to challenge the idea of creating self-portraits by using visual abilities. We asked visually impaired people to participate in the workshop, creating their self-portraits in clay. I was interested in what happens when we don't have a visual reference of ourselves, and the perception of ourselves depends on other senses. During the workshop, I could observe how the participants transferred their identity to the clay, by repeatedly touching their own faces and then the rough material.

Despite the difficulties the participants overcame, the results – and the sense of symmetry and proportion of the portraits – were inspiringly good. With every touch of the clay, the participants gained more confidence and will to express themselves. The result was important, but even more important was the process itself, throughout which everyone could share similar thoughts, feelings and experiences. Just as we could see human portraits emerging from the shapeless material over three days, the same process happened with the participants. They had a chance to tell their life story and channel it into a self-portrait. Every thought and every word is a pattern in the sculpture. What started as an artistic exercise ended up as a deep and self-reflective kind of therapy. The clay portraits provided the participants with proof that even faced with visual disabilities, they can succeed, be appreciated and valued.

During these three days, I witnessed how the uncertainty of the participants evolved into self-confidence and joy in their successes. The passion for the process was so great, even though the participants would never be able to appreciate the result in exactly the same way as we could. The workshop was an experiment that diminished the importance of sight regarding our ability to perceive the world and express ourselves within it artistically. The portraits, created with such purposeful accuracy and tenderness, verified the thought that it is of great importance to involve disabled people in art processes, even if their ability to explore them is limited in some sense.

As a part of the workshop, I also asked participants to photograph themselves using a self-release cable. During the process they seemed indifferent, almost if the world of photography did not exist for them. The task was to take 10 shots of themselves – some changed their pose, but most of them just counted to 10, pressing the shutter release button for every number and not moving a muscle. After I selected one portrait of each participant, I tried to describe to them what kind of person I saw in the photograph. I was analysing their poses and gestures, and trying to provide an idea of how other people might perceive their identity just by looking at their portraits. The discussion evolved into conversations on how they feel about each other and themselves.

I hope the participants learned something about photography and art, but most importantly, I hope that they learned more about themselves. The self-portrait genre is deeply self-reflective, providing the chance to examine our role in life, to say the unsayable and to determine who we are, or who we want to be.

www.rigaselfportraits.com



Juris 1



Juris

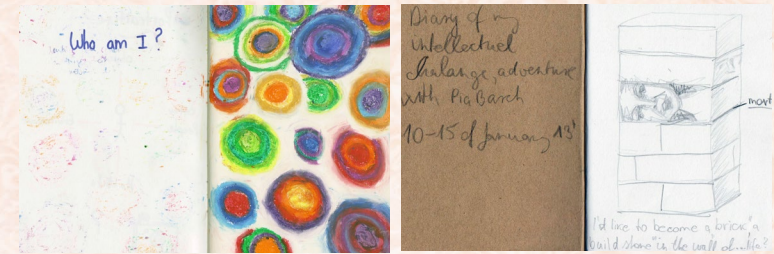
Self-Portraiture and Arts Pedagogy in a Community Context

by Ailbhe Murphy

Historically, an artist's self-portrait distinguished them – only artists and their wealthy patrons had the means to have their likeness painted. Photography levelled the playing field; digital photography has opened the floodgates. In an age where technology has transformed the way we live, and interpret our lives, images of the self are more malleable and transferable than ever before. The ubiquitous 'selfie' is a commodity in a global social network; the Internet is the portrait gallery of the twenty-first century.

Samantha Littley, Curator remix. post. connect. The University of Queensland National Artists' Self-Portrait Prize 2013

The *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project was an interesting proposition in the context of the southwest inner city community of Rialto in Dublin 8. The project's community partners in Rialto are Fatima Groups United (FGU) and the *Rialto Youth Project* (RYP). Fatima Groups United is the elected representative body for a number of local community organisations and the *Rialto Youth Project* is one of the longest established youth projects in the city. Both organisations have initiated many community-based arts and cultural initiatives with adults and young people in Rialto. Arts processes such as photography, filmmaking, street theatre, visual arts and drama have been harnessed as mechanisms for strengthening a sense of identity, both individually and collectively, and for articulating deeply embodied community experience and narrative at key moments of change. More particularly, portraiture has offered a means of conserving community memory and traces of people and place as important signifiers throughout extended regeneration processes in the area. The *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project offered an opportunity to extend this practice of self-description at a local level and to further explore the creative possibilities of portraiture with students from the National College of Art and Design.



CSP Workshop 1, initial sketches



CSP Exhibition January 2014

The National College of Art and Design is situated about fifteen minutes' walk from Rialto in one of the oldest inner city communities in Dublin, the Liberties. In recent years, the college has initiated several programmes aimed at expanding the academy beyond the walls of the college. Across all of its art and design faculties, NCAD has sought to build alliances with other third level art and non-art institutions, with statutory and voluntary agencies and with neighbouring communities. In the context of Rialto an evolving partnership between NCAD, Fatima Groups United and the Rialto Youth Project has been in development since 2009. A joint outline partnership document entitled *Rialto/NCAD Partnership Framework: Cooperative Design for Shared Agency* identifies seven potential programme strands for practically advancing the partnership.

Practical examples of direct community engagement between the college and Rialto community include students at both undergraduate and post-graduate level undertaking work placements in Rialto, as well as young people from the *Rialto Youth Project* accessing the facilities at the college as part of the RYP's arts programme. When Chris

Maguire, Lecturer in Fine Art and Anthony Hobbs, Head of Fine Art Media NCAD first considered the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project along with the other European partners, the existing set of working relationships between college and community in the Dublin context was recognised as being of particular interest.

Fatima Groups United and the *Rialto Youth Project* take a long-term approach in order to nurture a more embedded model of community-based cultural practice. Therefore, time is recognised as a key resource to building collaborative arts-processes in community contexts. So while time was not something we had in abundance for both CSP workshops in Dublin, we did have an existing support structure at a local level and between the college and community, which allowed the CSP work to continue beyond the workshop periods.

The Artist, Community and Time

Pia Bartsch from Finland was the lead artist for the Dublin CSP Workshops. Pia's background is in photography and community arts and she currently works as a community artist at the Saari residence near Turku, Finland. Pia Bartsch's experimentation with different media is a notable feature of her practice. In addition to her art interventions in public space, collage, photography and drawing are all combined in the many notebooks she makes and in her studio work. Her interest in extending the photographic (and self-portrait) process into different community contexts along with her extensive experience of working with different groups made her the ideal artist to lead the CSP workshops in Dublin.

Pia Bartsch came to Ireland in January 2013 for an initial workshop period of five days and she returned that autumn for a ten-day period. In that first encounter we paid particular attention to orienting Pia and the NCAD students to the local Rialto context. We organised a series of lunchtime talks where local artists, activists and community workers critically reflected on both historical and contemporary narratives of place and spoke about the role of arts and cultural practice in Rialto.

The lunchtime talks were complimented by Pia Bartsch's own presentation of her work and projects. Pia presented some outline ideas for both workshops but was completely open to negotiating and fine-tuning the creative direction of the project once she met the adults, young people and fine art media students who were going to work with her.



Pia Bartsch with CSP participants in the F2 Neighbourhood Centre, Rialto and NCAD, Dublin 2013



The CSP project required a degree of flexibility on everyone's part. That flexibility, coupled with Pia Bartsch's facilitative approach, allowed for multiple points of entry into the project. In a community context, the adults and young people's availability was subject to other life and work commitments, which brings its own challenges for a short-term artistic engagement. Over both workshop periods the make-up of groups altered and because some groups were run on a drop-in basis, the participant numbers were constantly changing. Pia's experience of working in community contexts meant she could absorb that degree of flux. Pia worked with local artist Mirjam Keune who in turn invited new members into her existing art group for the CSP project. Similarly, the young people's involvement was realised with a lot of additional support and outreach work by youth workers Erika Cox and Katia Hancke. The flexible nature of the CSP programme in Dublin was a key characteristic of its success in terms of enabling a wide participation between NCAD students, adults and young people from Rialto as well as being illustrative of the fluid nature of people's engagement at a community level.

Pia Bartsch with CSP participants in NCAD & CSP Workshop F2 Centre Dublin

In her approach to the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project Pia Bartsch set out to broaden notions of photographic self-portraiture and questions of identity towards including an exploration of personal narrative, relationships to people and place and personal explorations of community. Firstly, she engaged participants in making their self-portraits over a day using collage. Each participant was invited to share their thinking behind the images they had included in constructing their portrait. Encouraging this diverse mixed media approach, which for Pia includes street art as a direct intervention in public space, Pia then invited participants to consider how they might subvert traditional notions of the monument. She encouraged the young people from Rialto and NCAD students alike to reinstate something of their own experiences into the public domain in a series of small-scale, temporary interventions in public space.



Hannah O'Daly work in progress Workshop 1



Katie Corocran soundwork in progress Workshop 2

In the first workshop, for example, two students 'personalised' a series of public monuments in Dublin city through superimposing their own images onto the statues. In the second workshop this invitation to engage in public space led to a morning-long event in public space in Rialto, where the adult art group engaged members of the public in an arts process, which articulated their hopes for the coming year. In addition to these short-term interventions in public space, each participant engaged in a more extended process of self-portraiture. Working closely with Pia, participants shaped their individual responses to the notion of self-portraiture. Sound, sculptural elements, painting, collage, home crafts, digital media and drawing were among the media employed over the course of both workshops. This resulted in a series of diverse works, which were exhibited in the NCAD Gallery at the close of both workshops.

Arts Pedagogy in a Community Context

For young people, the arts, and portraiture in particular, offer a creative space to deepen an understanding of who I am, where I live, the world around me. The portraiture process allows some of those things that are difficult to say, to understand, to articulate, to be explored creatively, in a safe space.

Gillian O'Connor, Youth Worker, Rialto Youth Project CSP
Documentary Film 2013

It is important to point out that in the context of an area of the city which has experienced multiple disadvantages, the young people engaged in the *Rialto Youth Project* experience significant barriers to education. There is a disproportionate dropout rate from school and only about half of the young people engaged in the RYP arts programme have access to art in secondary school. The *Rialto Youth Project* operates from the principle that creative expression should be every child's right and they have, over the last number of years, developed an extensive arts programme. The *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project gave the NCAD students the opportunity to work directly with young people who are already engaged in the visual arts programme run by the *Rialto Youth Project*.



Making Workshop, Rialto Youth Project
Arts Programme 2012

A number of the Fine Art Media students engaged in the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project were also involved in delivering classes within the formal art education sector by engaging with local schools through NCAD's Access Programme. In this sense the

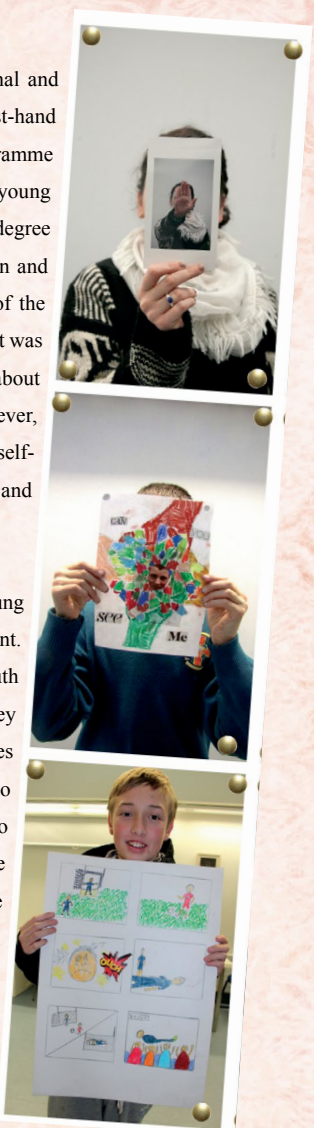
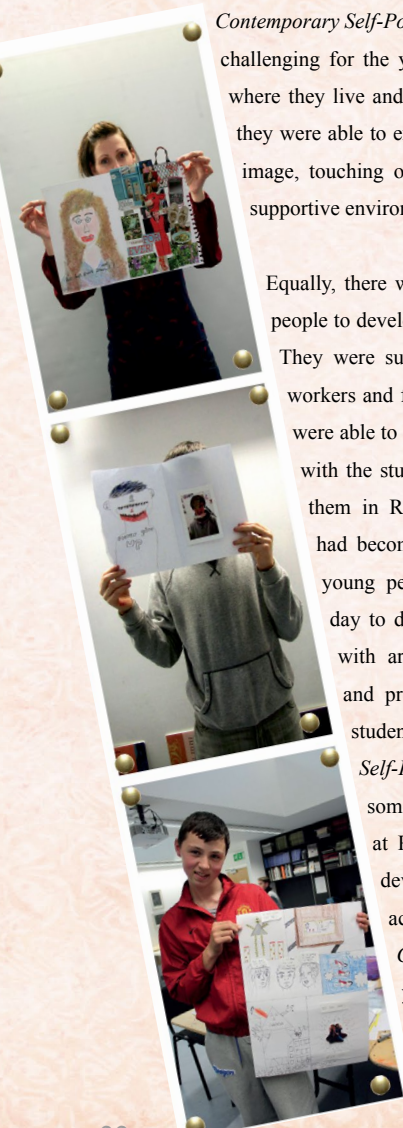
Contemporary Self-Portraits project in Dublin traversed both formal and informal art education contexts. The NCAD students experienced first-hand how an informal art education context such as the RYP arts programme differed from the formal curriculum in that it takes shape based on young people's interests. The students were able to directly experience the degree to which these young people are actively supported to participate in and shape the arts programme at *Rialto Youth Project*. In the context of the

Contemporary Self-Portraits project the notion of self-portrait was challenging for the young people, opening up questions about where they live and on how their area is perceived. However, they were able to explore these questions of identity and self-image, touching on issues such as bullying, in a safe and supportive environment.

Equally, there was also tremendous value for the young people to develop their work in the college environment.

They were supported to be there by the RYP youth workers and facilitated by Fine Art Media staff. They were able to explore different digital media processes with the students that simply were not available to them in Rialto. Working with the students who had become informal mentors really helped the young people become more familiar with the day to day reality of being an art student and with art college as a site of art education and production. Access to the college and students in the context of the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project helped bring alive some of the ethos of the arts programme

at RYP such as encouraging young people to develop their own artistic expression, the possibility of access to third level and so on. Over the lifetime of the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project those exchanges for young people and students were marked by this kind of reciprocal learning.



Expanding the Academy

NCAD is building on the long-standing relationships with community contexts in Dublin 8, in order to ensure that such relationships are understood and provided for, as integral to the learning process. The working out of such relationships can then be based on a parity of esteem, where art and design, understood as forms of knowledge, interact with other forms of knowledge, held by communities – of interest and of place. New learning methodologies will only arise in that sort of shared agency approach. The partnership with Fatima/Rialto on the recent CSP project and the broader idea of the Expanded Academy model being articulated in this seminar, are drivers in this larger process.

Declan McGonagle, Director NCAD, CSP Seminar
NCAD Jan 31st 2014

At the end of January 2014, NCAD hosted a seminar to explore the work of the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project in the context of local arts education initiatives in Rialto. The underlying principles and potential for collaborative working *in situ* and the expanded academy model were discussed during the seminar. The seminar was co-organised by the *Rialto Youth Project*, Fatima Groups United and NCAD on the occasion of the closing of the exhibition of the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project in the NCAD Gallery. The seminar also set out to discuss how such practice could be developed further, across disciplines and areas of practice, theory and dissemination and into national policy making for art(s) practice, education, urbanism and institutional/community development into the future.

The seminar created an important moment of critical reflection in the context of the closing of the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* exhibition. Those initial critical responses have been very encouraging. By engaging adults, young people and Fine Art Media students, the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project ensured wide ranging participation across community and the college. It provides a strong example of how a European arts initiative can generate multi-layered and creatively rich responses at a local level. In Dublin, the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project was greatly enriched by building on emerging relations of cooperation between the academy and the community via the Expanded Academy and the Rialto / NCAD partnership. That nascent inter-organisational framework proved to be rich ground to test, develop and sustain such initiatives.

The Ideal, the Neutral, the Dreadful Self

by Laura Toots

Being part of *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project has made the Estonian Academy of Arts (EAA) think about the importance of self-portraiture today, as well as motivate the EAA to articulate the significance of self-portraiture in its curricula. EAA used its expertise in contemporary art and particularly in the field of photography, to acknowledge the power of self-portraiture and help its target groups learn about self-portraiture as a tool for artistic expression. During the project, EAA worked with young artists and working communities, and focused on developing and offering new ideas and approaches towards self-portraits. Altogether, EAA organised four *Contemporary Self-Portraits* workshops.

Introduction to Self-Portrait in Contemporary Art. Part 2 was a workshop led by Finnish photography artist Wilma Hurskainen in March 2013. The target group for the workshop was young artists; ten fine art students participated in the workshop. The target audience was the staff and students of the EAA who are interested in, or already using, self-portraiture as an artistic method.

Wilma Hurskainen was invited because of her inspiring photographic work that has focused on autobiography and personal memories, for what she has persistently used herself and her sisters as models. Her kind gestures towards family photography manage to show close relationships in a fresh and captivating way. Additionally, and necessarily, her methods inspire people to think about the generosity of photographic medium, as well as the very basics of photography. The latter was important in this workshop because the group of participants consisted mainly of art students, who did not have a background in photography. It was essential to emphasise that the exposure, the chosen lens, photographer's viewpoint, the background etc. are as important parts of the photograph as is the person in the picture. Focusing on these aspects of a photograph seems to have been lost due to the very casual, contemporary attitude towards photography, where everything and everyone is being constantly and inattentively targeted with a lens.

During the workshops two assignments were given to the participants. The results were later presented and discussed with the group.

1. Two self-portraits Reveal / Hide

- Self-portrait that reveals something (autobiographical) about the photographer.
- Self-portrait in which a student is present as a model or an actor.

2. Three self-portraits imagining the ideal, neutral and the 'nightmarish' self.

The given assignments were daringly straightforward and demanded a great deal of sincerity from the participants. Along with producing an artwork at the end of the workshop, one had to contemplate about the aim of self-portraiture. Is it an analysis? Or is it a statement? A manifestation?

Keiu Maasik took part in the workshop led by Hurskainen. She states in her text below that she now acknowledges the performative aspect of making self-portraits and understands that the action of making a self-portrait can be more important than the resulting image. The real subject of self-portraiture can therefore be the action and / or situation of encountering oneself.

Keiu Maasik: My 06.03.2013

Before taking part in this workshop, self-portraits were more like an automatic means to me: when something intrigued me and I felt I needed to express it with a photograph of myself, I snapped a picture. During the workshop, I discovered a new method: assigning myself a random role to enact in a photograph, to see what comes out of it. Additionally, I started acknowledging the performative aspect of making self-portraits and the fact that the act of taking a picture may often be much more important than the picture itself.

All three photos in the series titled *06.03.2013* were taken on the same day. This reflects, among other things, why I find self-portrait such a fascinating phenomenon. There are so many different layers, roles, facets and traits hidden in an individual, and self-portraits can be used to release and visualise this multiplicity. Understanding this gives me the freedom to become whoever I want to be; I don't have to define myself merely as an art student, as a young woman or a patriot, for instance. These are just small nondescript parts of me, none of which define me as an integral whole.

We were given an assignment to take three photographs, portraying ourselves in a neutral way, as an ideal me and finally, as our worst enemy. It seemed easiest to take a photo of an ideal me, as I have always dreamed of becoming a rock star. It was Jimi Hendrix who planted this idea in my mind. Discovering his songs gave music the most important role in my life, which was later shared by visual art and creative activity in general. However, until then, I hadn't placed myself in that role visually. One of my visual sources of inspiration was posters of Hendrix himself, which have been hanging on my walls for years. I also drew on my long-time experience in taking photos of concerts and musicians, which has helped me memorise the classical poses, the light conditions at concerts as well as typical shots. With the act of personifying the musician, I hoped to free myself from a dream that still haunts me, at the same time paying a tribute to him. I indeed felt a certain sense of liberation after taking the photo.

When portraying myself in a neutral way, I wanted to leave aside everything redundant and only show physical characteristics that I share with other people. For instance, I decided to abandon my daily intensive make-up (foundation, powder, cheek blush, eyebrow pencil, light-coloured eyeshade, black eyeliner and mascara). Back then I used to wear my bright pink hair fixed perfectly with the help of hairspray, which does not correspond to my notion of natural appearance. It also felt important to me to tie my hair back, because long hair often automatically makes an allusion to femininity. I wished to create a gender-neutral look. I made the image into black and white, to only maintain what's important: the forms and light without the intervention of colours.

At first, the task to take a photo of myself as my worst enemy seemed to be the most difficult one, as I try to live my life seeing no-one as my adversary. It was a lucky coincidence that an unpleasant incident occurred in my everyday life at that time. I was living in a dormitory, sharing a tiny room with a foreign female exchange student. The conditions themselves had become almost unbearable to me in these two years. I had to give up my privacy and share my personal space with constantly changing strangers whose habits I often disliked. Furthermore, the exchange student decided the situation was not unpleasant enough: she had her boyfriend visiting for a week, with no other place to live but our room. No-one asked for my permission. They just walked in one day without any explanation. I felt like no-one else had ever made me more furious – and so I had found my worst enemy.



Keiu Maasik, from a series 06.03.2013

I only had to wait for the right moment, when my roommate was off with her boyfriend, to then become her. I fixed my hair the way she usually wears hers, pulled on a sweater she always wears at home, put on her headphones and took her copy of Nabokov's *Lolita* she used to read every night before going to sleep. I naturally posed on her side of the room, in her bed. The shooting was rather tense, as my roommate could have walked in any moment. Having taken this photograph, I sensed my anger ease, giving way to a certain malicious joy over the fact that I had secretly attacked my enemy by means of photography.



Keiu Maasik, from a series 06.03.2013



Keiu Maasik, from a series 06.03.2013

The Many Aspects of Self-Portraits – Workshops with Schoolchildren

by Lisa Lundström

During the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project, Bildmuseet organised approximately 10 different workshops. Of the various workshops offered to schoolchildren, *The Many Aspects of Self-Portraits* was the most successful and memorable series. At the conclusion of the workshop period, 560 schoolchildren had participated in Bildmuseet's self-portrait activities.

The workshops were developed in close co-operation with the Umeå School of Education's Art Teacher Training Programme and offered for schoolchildren during autumn 2012 (6 Nov–7 Dec 2012). The *Contemporary Self-Portraits* launched a new form of collaboration between Umeå School of Education and Bildmuseet, where the museum was used as a location for their practical teacher training. Instead of completing their internship at a random school, seven prospective art teachers were given the opportunity to complete their course in didactics at the Bildmuseet, where they were involved in a co-operative effort within the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project. The students were instructed and inspired to develop exercises and methods for self-portraiture to be provided to school classes in the municipality of Umeå. The processes were developed in close collaboration with teachers from the training programme and the Bildmuseet staff. The students were introduced to working with children between ages 8 and 18, and they explored the differences between working in a school and in a museum as an art teacher. During their internships, the students were encouraged to use non-traditional techniques in the arts, to combine digital and traditional art, and also to work three-dimensionally.

The students began their orientation with courses in methodology and theoretical studies in self-portraiture continuing on to practical exercises. The practical portion of the project kicked off with two motivational days led by the Finnish photographer Vesa Aaltonen. He introduced the students to examples from his earlier self-portrait workshops. The students participated in Aaltonen's workshop *Come as you are*. The

idea behind the workshop theme is that the participants are left alone in a photography studio in order to take self-portrait photographs using professional equipment and a self-timer. Each student was given a few minutes to try out different facial expressions and poses to express who he or she is. Afterwards, the workshop participants modified the photographs in Photoshop and chose their favourite shot. The students dedicated two days towards working on their photos. The last afternoon of the workshop the students came together for a presentation and a discussion about their selected photos.

My experience with the self-portrait we made at the university was positive. I'm usually very camera-shy. I think even school kids can feel this way.

I'm very satisfied with the workshop we did last week. For me, it was an entirely new and wonderful experience to be alone in a room with a self-timer, with the photos I took showing the 'real' me better than any other pictures that have ever been taken.

Getting creative with schoolchildren

In consultation with their teachers and a pedagogue from Bildmuseet, the students developed a workshop for schoolchildren at Bildmuseet's Creative Workshop. The Creative Workshop is a room, which is open for the public on weekends and for schools to book during the work days. The themes and the techniques used in the Creative Workshop vary according to the exhibitions shown at the museum. The students learned how to use the images in art exhibitions as sources of inspiration and starting points for their workshops. When the schoolchildren came to the self-portrait workshops, they were first introduced to the current exhibitions in order to give them some idea about the possibilities of self-portraiture. One exhibition on display during the workshop period was Dayanita Singh's *The Adventures of a Photographer*, where the photographer had taken portraits of middle and upper-class Indian families and individuals. They had chosen where to be photographed and what attributes to use in the story about themselves. Another exhibition on display was by the Swedish comic artist Nanna Johansson who had painted portraits of herself in different personas: herself as a man, herself as a fairy-tale character, etc.

The students set up three different workshop stations in order to be able to engage several schoolchildren at the same time as well as to expand their perceptions of what a self-portrait can be.

At the photo station, the schoolchildren were given the opportunity to photograph themselves in a photo studio with slightly more advanced equipment. They could draw a privacy curtain and take the photo of themselves with a self-timer, or they could have someone else help them take the picture. It was also possible to dress up in costume, put some make-up on and use various props. After the children were done taking the photos, they selected their favourite portrait from the taken pictures and printed it out in colour on photo paper. The printed photos were tuned creatively through colouring and adding clippings from newspapers and other materials to decorate the original pictures. This allowed the schoolchildren to examine questions, such as: *Who am I really (under the surface)?* and *Who do I want to be in the future?* The method employed provided the



Photos from the workshop Come as you are organised by Vesa Aaltonen for teacher students

children a playful way to show more than merely surface appearance without making it too personal. They could add feelings and thoughts, emphasise parts of their identity, reflect on who they currently or who they would like to become.



Schoolchildren dressing up for self-portraits

While waiting their turn for the photo station, the children worked at the other two stations. One of them was aimed at making audio self-portraits. The schoolchildren made a recording, presenting themselves, telling a secret or sharing something else personal. Each child was given time on their own to make the recording. The contents of the recording varied significantly, including, for example, something the child was afraid of, a dream about the future or telling the name of the one they had a crush on. The recordings were distorted, so that they would remain anonymous and unrecognisable when presented in the exhibition.



Inner self-portraits made of foam sealant and a booth for audio self-portraits

At the third station, the schoolchildren were introduced to foam sealant as a sculpting medium and were instructed to produce an abstract portrait of their inner selves. Although foam sealant is poisonous while still wet, it is completely safe once it dries into fist-sized clumps. The material resembles polystyrene foam, but it is much easier to work with: cut, shape, glue and paint. These inner self-portraits worked best for the older school children aged 12–18 who got carried away by creating abstract, symbolic and even ugly, inner self-portraits. The questions to be examined in this exercise were for example: *What does my inner monster look like?* *What does a portrait of a feeling look like?*

After the six-week workshop period and 28 workshops, the project concluded with an exhibition in the Creative Workshop facilities and the adjacent exhibition area, where the schoolchildren's self-portraits were displayed. The exhibition was held on the weekend of 8–9 December 2012 when the schoolchildren were able to show their creations to their families. The room was filled with photos, foam sculptures and audio portraits.



Impulsive school kids, reflective teens

After the exhibition, the teacher students were able to evaluate their experiences of working with schoolchildren at a museum. The evaluation was done by writing a joint report as well as by participating in feedback discussions a few weeks later. The written report revealed that the students found it interesting to work with schoolchildren of different age-groups because they reacted differently to the given tasks.

The way the schoolchildren perceived and engaged with the tasks varied among the different age groups. The students observed that schoolchildren in upper comprehensive school and upper secondary school (ages 13–18) influenced one another through peer-pressure when working with photography and audio recordings; however, they worked more freely when doing the sculpture task. They already possessed the ability to reach more profound comprehension of the given tasks and also took their self-portraits more seriously, analysing their selves and their identities. The younger schoolchildren in primary and middle school (ages 8–12) were more spontaneous in the photography and audio recording tasks, but had more difficulty in understanding the abstract sculpture task. Several of them tried to copy the sample figures. In general, the younger students acted more freely and creatively and wanted to discuss the tasks more. One lesson learned from the project was thus that the exercises needed to be adapted more accordingly to each age group, omitting one or more of the exercises for certain age groups to allow for more in-depth tasks.

For many of the teacher students, the workshop period was their first contact with schoolchildren and their first opportunity to lead workshops on their own. Giving guided tours of the exhibition and linking this with practical exercises was also completely new experience. In the evaluation discussion, some of the students observed how they had developed over seven weeks, improved their self-confidence and grown accustomed to interacting with children of different ages. Many also stated that the experience further reinforced their career choice to become a teacher. The students gained an insight into the art pedagogy applied in art institutions, which they could also consider as an alternative career possibility – something they had not thought of before. They agreed that using exhibitions as a source of inspiration was very effective as it supported the children's self-reflection and gave ground for discussions on self-portraits.

Self-Portrait & Well-Being

by Taina Erävaara & Ilona Tanskanen

Daily life is often busy, and there is not enough time to stop and reflect upon one's own activities. In terms of development, self-reflection is, nevertheless, extremely important.

I even stopped to reflect upon my dreams and aspirations with regard to my work.¹

Our age – at least in terms of working life in Finland – is characterised by rapid transitions from one thing to the next, be it a presentation, exhibition, initiative, project, meeting or assignment. Economic hardships have led to a situation in which it has become unfortunately commonplace that resources for artistic work assignments have been cut to the minimum and prioritisation for work assignments has been left for everyone to sort out by themselves. Time for thought, ourselves and one another is needed. Work based on self-portraits and autobiographies provides excellent tools for this. In a very natural manner it raises issues related to the everyday lives of artists and people working in the field of art, and opens up new perspectives into people's own well-being, as well as into humanity as a whole. As pointed out by one of the participants in a *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project's workshop: 'Building up a self-portrait is bound to increase self-knowledge, and self-knowledge increases an understanding of people.' Making something visible is a liberating experience, and shared stories are a source of strength.

Work based on self-portraits and autobiography allows one to stop and reflect upon matters in terms of work biography, for example, and one's work self. Self-portrait work provides a visual form to matters that may otherwise be buried under daily routines and remain beneath conscious thought. One does, after all, build one's selfhood throughout the course of an entire life. Simple tasks may help to open up new worlds and perspectives into oneself. Self-portraits may help to, among other things, discern the similarities and differences between private and work selves, and the way in which



Saija Hairo: Self-Portrait (2013)

different roles are intertwined. A visual self-portrait allows for distancing, and gives the opportunity to see oneself differently and even, perhaps, to liberate oneself. In addition to the artist's point of view, self-portraits and autobiographical texts can be approached from the viewpoint of the viewer or the reader. For an artist, self-portraits can also be a subject or a theme that recurs throughout his or her entire artistic production.

Self-portraits and autobiographical works have been in the public eye in many ways during recent years. The subject has been of interest to many, and various methods have been developed in Finland as well. A photographed self-portrait is an essential tool in therapeutic photography, for example. The Arts Academy of Turku University of Applied Sciences has taken a long-term approach to the development of work methods involving self-portraits and autobiographies focused on art activities, applied arts or contemporary art, rather than therapy.

As part of the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project in the spring of 2013, the Arts Academy organised a series of seminars and workshops under the title *The Unhappy Artist? Self-Portrait Methods as Promoters of Artists' Well-being at Work*. The Arts Promotion Centre of Finland's Branch Office of South-Western Finland granted additional funding for the planning and implementation of the workshops. In the art activities focused workshops, the artists working in the region and the personnel of the Arts Academy explored the relationship between the private self and work self with the help of autobiographical writing and self-portraits. In cooperation with specialised researcher Pia Houni of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the workshop leaders prepared a feedback questionnaire for the participants (composed of 22 artists and other people working in the field of arts). Some excerpts of the responses received have been included here.

¹ The citations in italics are excerpts from the responses received in the feedback questionnaire aimed at the participants of *The Unhappy Artist? Self-portrait methods as promoters of artists' well-being at work* workshop. This article is based on an article published in 2013 in *Taiteilijan työ. Taiteilijan hyvinvointi taidetyön muutoksessa*. Ed. Pia Houni & Heli Ansio. Helsinki: The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health.

Autobiographical Writing and Work Biography

A self-portrait makes it easier to form a picture of your work self and identity.

You find yourself exploring surprising aspects of yourself.

I realised that this was the point when one's self-confidence must be in good shape.

Self-portraits and autobiographical writing provide an opportunity for identity work, to marvel and study human life, further away from these work roles, for example. They provide an opportunity for interaction where we can share the joys of everyday life, things and feelings that make us content – sorrows, losses and conflicts as normal aspects of everyone's life and living, but not as aspects that need healing or removal. ²

The workshop led by senior lecturer of Finnish language and communications Ilona Tanskanen was based on the idea that writing and telling your story allow you to make explorations into your own experiences through the paths of memory. The goal may be



Mervi Rankila-Källström: Self-Portrait (2013)

a fully-fledged life story, and also, in particular, producing a text with a narrower perspective. Biographical texts may also function as tools or raw material for artistic work. Biographical texts may be written for oneself or for the purpose of being shared by a group or for publication.

Stories have an effect on people. Telling one's own or someone else's story in either oral or written form often brings to the surface something that, for one reason or the other, has not been expressed before or of which one may not be aware. Telling a story in a group gives the person telling the story a sense of being seen and heard. This is an important basis for artistic expression and identity and for one's perception of being a member of a particular work community. Seeking and finding one's own expression also broadens one's horizons in terms of interpreting and accepting other people's different ways of expression.

One dimension of autobiographical writing is, for example, its documentation in the form of journals or diaries. Autobiographies have, furthermore, been used for therapeutic effect and in therapy. The biographical form is used in literature for autobiographies, biographies and diaries written for publication as well as other textual formats, both fact and fiction, which take advantage of everyday text types: diaries, letters, blogs and memoirs.

Autobiographical writing provides raw material that can be used for further writings and works (either in the form of words or pictures). Autobiographical writing activates the memory and forges connections to one's own experiences, observations, feelings, knowledge and sensations. Natalie Goldberg's works *Wild Mind*, *Writing Down the Bones*, *Thunder and Lightning* and *Old Friend from Far Away* include excellent tips for writing. The following points are worth remembering in autobiographical writing:

- Reserve and limit the time and space for writing, e.g. ten minutes per theme
- Postpone other things until you are done with writing, i.e. prioritising writing
- Exercise writing, i.e. writing regularly
- Writing as a social event
- Avoid interruptions
- Feedback
- Flexible ways of working
- Accept honing and polishing up
- Reading
- Peer support.

Tips for making writing a smoother process:

- Reserve a time, place and space for writing.
- Walk or meditate to get yourself into a dynamic, yet calm state of mind.
- Write rough/unpolished text as freely and as free of critique as possible for ten minutes, starting from the theme of your choice.
- Don't get bogged down by normative rules or grammatical correctness – it is more important to keep your pen or keyboard in motion and for you to have a clear idea about your goal.
- While these rough texts are not read aloud in the group, you can use them for making texts in the workshop, for example.
- The objective is not to produce ready text, but rough text.

² Tanskanen, Ilona.. 2013. *The Artist of Her Own Life. In: I as Me. Making of 2000 & 11 Self-Portraits*. Editorial team: Taina Erävaara, Anttoni Lehto, Ilona Tanskanen and Otto-Ville Väättäin. Turku: Course Material from Turku University of Applied Sciences 81. p 86.

An autobiography can be begun by writing on one theme at a time, devoting ten minutes to each theme. Themes that can serve as starting points for a work biography:

- That's when I knew I'd become... / That's when I realised I wanted to...
- I started exploring the means of expression available in my line of art.../ I found it enjoyable to... / I found it easy to...
- A person with decisive influence on my career choice / The person who got me started on art
- My community/reference group / I am part of a community that gets worked up about similar things
- The greatest moment in my work...
- At a crossroads / Defiance / In the daily counter current
- Tomorrow I will... / My dream...



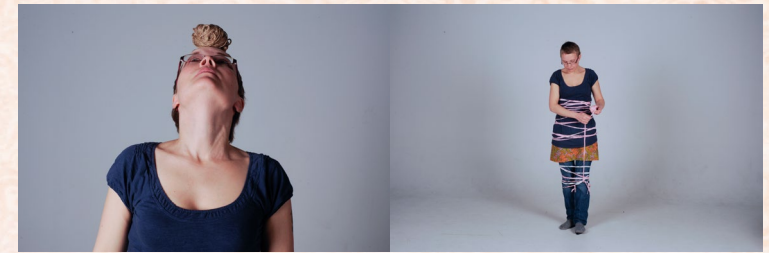
Marja Susi: Self-Portrait (2013)

When writing rough text, it is advisable to write about things, sensations, memories and associations as freely as possible – to go wherever your mind takes you. What is not advisable, however, is to be constrained by linguistic style. The most important thing is for the writer himself or herself to understand what is meant. The objective is simply to keep the pen in motion. Rough text can be used to write a haiku or a tanka, or even many of them. These texts can also serve as a starting point for visual self-portraits or become a part of them.

The reader of this text could begin self-portrait work right now by writing on the theme *My self-portrait now, A good job or I feel good* for three minutes.³

Private self – work self

Adopting a role, rather than just thinking about it, makes you more involved with it. The issue becomes visible. Overcoming oneself – it's just the camera and I. It was exciting and very liberating. Looking at both your own pictures and at roles through those pictures was a halting experience.



Lotta Leka: Self-Portrait (2013)

The day coincided with a stressful period. It gave me a chance to disengage from everyday work and unload emotions alone in the photo studio. Pretty awesome!

I surprised even myself with the pictures. I was my own familiar self, but at the same time a stranger. The strangeness born out of the pictures was a new and interesting element!

In the photography workshop led by photographer Vesa Aaltonen, the participants received instructions on independent photography, after which they were left on their own in the studio for a moment to photograph themselves with a camera and automatic shutter release. The participants were told to think about various everyday roles for the purposes of the photography sessions. How the identity changes between one's 'work self' and 'private self'. How do one's public and private image differ from each other? Or is there more than one identity? Participants were also instructed to think about props, clothing, etc. for the session. The most important thing was, nonetheless, to keep an open mind and to stop for a moment. Photographing oneself in the studio was first and foremost a journey into oneself. After the session, the photos were reviewed together and the selected photos were printed. The end result was the production of a small-scale work, a photo booklet, based on the self-portraits produced in the photography workshop and texts produced earlier during a workshop on writing.

The self-portrait can be a means of exploring a changing identity. Self-portraiture can act as the starting point for artistic work. Self-portraits are widely used as a therapeutic method, and anyone can experience the undeniably therapeutic effect of the photograph if they wish. Looking at an important photograph from our own past brings the moment of each picture back to life for all of us. The brain does not only recall concrete, visual information, memory is more comprehensive than that. The moment, mood, scents and sounds all come back to mind. People's typical characteristics come through. The

³ Goldberg, Natalie. 2009. *Hyvä kaukainen ystävä. Kuinka kirjoittaa elämäntarina (Old Friend from Far Away. The Practice of Writing Memoir)* Finnish translation by Vainikkala, M.- R. Helsinki: The Finnish Lifelong Learning

photograph is a simple way of returning to the past, to go on a journey through time from the present to what has been lived and experienced.⁴

Self-Portrait and the Well-Being of Art Workers

Maybe the thing I would rather have overlooked became visible. It came to me that things are there for a time and then recede, when it's time. If you overlook them, you just push them deeper, beneath the surface. It's best to accept the stages of life such as they are – there is beauty in roughness as well.

This was a wonderful workshop, but the most interesting part was studying the photos of my colleagues and 'meeting' them again in a completely new light.

The need to slow down was visible and perceptible. It remains to be seen whether the composure to slow down the pace of work is there, given the uncertainty of the future.

Participants in the workshop of organisational psychologist Mervi Herranen were instructed to take two photos from their personal collections with them. One of the photos was to be of the participant as an adult and the other of someone who had played an important role in terms of the participant's artistry or art work. In the absence of such photos, the participants could also choose a symbolic photo to stand in for the required images. The workshop began by selecting, from picture cards, a card depicting trust. This was used to think about trust in one's own ability to cope and changing one's own attitude. The photographs brought to the workshop were discussed in pairs, with a focus on the reflection process and challenging one's own thought patterns.

The closing seminar and feedback questionnaire brought out the need for job consultation among artists and those who work in the field of arts: *I would also like to have personal job consultation through discussions. It would be great to have a chance for 3–5 meetings with a mentor in my own field.* There was also discussion about the need for a group that would support artists and about who would be responsible for developing the mentoring activity. Artists' need for discussion and sharing was also brought up in many connections. Many of those who responded to the feedback questionnaire planned to continue the self-portrait process. The process can also be put to use in the development of supervisory work and self-management.

In *The Unhappy Artist? Self-portrait methods as promoters of artists' well-being at work* closing seminar Pia Houni presented a summary of the feedback and some critically important questions:

- Think back to the greatest moment of your career. Why was it important?
- What were your values and priorities at the time?
- How could you step out of the confines of everyday life and work?
- What could a broadening of daily life and work entail?

Autobiographical writing and self-portrait work are excellent tools for observing one's own daily life and opportunities for change. At the end of the workshop period the participants were asked about any significant changes they had experienced in their minds' self-portraits during the workshops:

I've opened up the big picture so that it's visible to me, its enigmas and contrasts included. I look at all sides of myself – the ones I need and the ones that life has given me. My self-portrait is more creative and gutsy than I've been willing to admit.

It has perhaps become broader, and I may be slightly closer to understanding my identity as an artist.



Marja Susi: Self-Portrait (2013)

*Yet it hooks you.
Division divides the head,
soul and toes.*

*The colours talk while I weep:
NO, NO...
and
THERE, THERE...
That too.
And then art.*

⁴ Aaltonen, Vesa. 2013. *When words are not enough. In: I as Me. Making of 2000 & 11 Self-Portraits.* Editorial team: Taina Erävaara, Anttoni Lehto, Ilona Tanskanen and Otto-Ville Väättäin. Turku: Course Material from Turku University of Applied Sciences 81. p 120.

Composite Curs

by Pauline O'Connell

The elaboration of place-bound identities has become more rather than less important in a world of diminishing spatial barriers to exchange, movement and communication.¹

English Geographer and Social Theorist David Harvey

In response to David Harvey's statement, I believe that we are not only influenced by what is around us in our locale, whether we are located inland, upland, in coastal, rural, or urban areas, our immediate environment indeed rubs off and leaves an impression on us, but these environmental factors are measured geographically. Many points of reflection and vantage points are necessary if we are to gain a more plural, multi-stemmed position. Therefore, when we question who we are, we must first question what kind of foundation this identity is built upon?

Sometimes identity can be built on shaky foundations, often demarcated through governance. If the locale, for instance, was once colonized or indeed itself a colonizer, the residual can present a one-dimensional definition built on oppositional characteristics of being 'Other'. I am conscious that I am writing at a time in history when there are major conflicts in the Middle East, between Israel and Palestine in Gaza, in eastern Ukraine, and in Syria to mention but a few, resulting in many hundreds of lives lost. Identity composition is where real people are implicated, and indeed immersed in this ongoing narration of human evolution.

In truth, I see it that we can only ever be the composite curs of our archival² pasts, reflecting a shared composite identity worldwide. Contemporaneously historic migration narratives are being re-played every day and the diasporic scattering of identity seeds are simultaneously questioning and reflecting the root of this same question.

¹ David Harvey, *From Space to Place and Back Again; Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity* - text for UGLA GSAUP Colloquium, May 13, 1991, as cited by Hayden in, *The Power of Place* p. 43

² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* – "archive" designates the collection of all material traces left behind by a particular historical period and culture. (<http://www.michel-foucault.com/concepts/index.html>)

But why, one might ask is it important now? Our multi-centered global position has provoked this enquiry conflating place, identity, belonging and community linking local and global³ As a reaction to globalisation and the possible fear of the implied homogeneity of mankind suggested in the quote at the beginning by Harvey, the question of who we really are is being reawakened with a new significance in contemporary cognisance.

So then when we think of a European identity, what does it look like? This is a subjective question and will be answered by you and me differently. *As immobile infants we measure everything in our world through our senses. As we develop dexterity, arm's length becomes our measure. Then, as we learn to crawl our exploratory distance expands. We measure our world from our body particular wherever that is in space. So, as we develop a cultural cognizance beyond that of the individual this then extends our self-reflective measure.*⁴

The *Contemporary Self-Portraits* (CSP) project provided an opportunity for the inclusion of a multi-faceted Europe, acknowledging the layering of multi-ethnic cultures that have historically been ingredients in its development. The *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project has stimulated a questioning of what a personal and collective identity looks like.

Projects were directed and coordinated locally by each CSP partner organisation working with their selected collaborators. These projects, however, functioned outside of the conventions of an original place-bound identity and outside of the normal conventions of time too. Creating a third space, the varying projects looked at the contemporary now and issues relating to it. The past – identity politics revelled in part through a poly-verse use of languages mostly evident in Eastern Europe. Whilst simultaneously it looked at the future – the aspiration of those involved and how each participant would like to be viewed. The CSP project created an archive that leaves a legacy traversing many time zones.

There is a consciousness on behalf of the participant that someone will view me or my choice of representation: in a place, in time. They will look at my choices, my clothes, my expression, make assumptions about my mood and wonder what it was like to be me, what was I trying to communicate, and why is it or why will it be important in the future?

³ David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, 2000, Edinburgh University Press, p. 43

⁴ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place, The Perspective of Experience*, 2008, Minnesota; University of Minnesota Press, Sixth Edition.

The *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project created a heterogeneous community through the project – that engaged both inside (physically in place) and outside (conceptually questioning what a composite European self-portrait can look like) of the original placed identity in a European context.

At a time when the global economy has imploded and that shared residue (acknowledging the uneven geographies of that economy) is what lies at the heart of our human re-invention, for the citizen, art student, adult learner, professional artist, worker, educator, child to posit this question about what a contemporary self-portrait is, is to trouble the notion of a placed identity.

Therefore, to engage conceptually with what a contemporary self-portrait is, is to provoke this question of what local – identity means, an enquiry of self in place, creating a relational identity, thus creating something new and unknown. Discoveries made via the method of autobiographical writing and diary swapping led to new self-discoveries as outlined in the direct feedback in the CSP evaluation document. New value systems were attributed to this methodology via the sharing of that experience.

In conclusion, there can be no conclusion as this questioning of the self-identity through the use of self-portraiture has longevity. Through art history we can see that it has created a legacy. Self-portraiture as an artistic method of self-enquiry and self-discovery will continue to be used into perpetuity.

The *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project respected and managed to maintain the autonomy of each partner country. This autonomy is crucial in the success of a disparate, multi-constituent art project, developed over time. It created both individual and group agency whereby local and European exchanges were undertaken. Thusly, it offered an opportunity to imaginatively interpret a personal and collective self-portrait in time and place. It created a blueprint that holds the potential to take oneself by surprise, to discover something other than a reflection of your own intension and to explore at the edge of your control.



Writers

Liana Benke works as a Project Manager at ISSP, and coordinated the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* workshops and exhibition in Riga, Latvia. She is involved in a variety of photography and education projects, and teaches visual anthropology at the University of Latvia.

Taina Erävaara (MA, University of Turku) is the head of Fine Arts and a lecturer in visual culture at Turku University of Applied Sciences. She is also leading the contemporary art research and development group at TUAS. Taina has curated several exhibitions, been in the editorial team of several publications on visual culture, and worked actively in the field of contemporary photography. Erävaara was the Project Manager of the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project.

Lisa Lundström is a Curator and the Head of Education at Bildmuseet, Umeå University. She graduated from Umeå University in 1991 and has a Bachelor of Art in Museology, Ethology and History of Art. She worked as a Gallery educator and Curator at Bildmuseet between 1995 and 2006. During the period of 2006–2012, she worked for the Swedish Exhibition Agency in Visby as a Tour Manager and Producer for a touring art exhibition. She returned to Umeå in 2012 and is currently working for the new Bildmuseet at Arts Campus, Umeå University.

Keiu Maasik is a Graduate of the Estonian Academy of Arts, Bachelor Degree studies programme at the Department of Photography. Maasik was a participant in the *Introduction to Self-Portrait in Contemporary Art. Part 2* workshop led by Wilma Hurskainen.

Dr. **Ailbhe Murphy** is a visual artist and member of the Dublin-based interdisciplinary art and research team *Vagabond Reviews*. Her role as Coordinator for the Dublin CSP project was to liaise with the project participants, youth workers, artists and NCAD students. She worked closely with the CSP coordinating team from the *Rialto Youth Project*, Fatima Groups United and NCAD to devise the CSP workshops, organise the final exhibition in NCAD and compile the Dublin CSP publication.

Pauline O' Connell is a socially engaged Irish artist. Her multifaceted practice as a professional artist, independent curator, educator and writer is shaped by her firm belief in the ability of art to contribute to social and (implicit) political transformation. With

projects such as *Landscape and Memory* (2014), *Heave-Ho* (2012) and her ongoing enquiry regarding rural public space through *The Community Field* (since 2012), O' Connell has established a number of public platforms for evoking issues in relation to rural identity whereby the 'peripheral voice' is mediated by the distinctive experiences and memories of individuals. This 'peripheral voice' acts as a metaphor for the physical, metaphysical, political, social and moral energy of a person and a place. O' Connell was invited by NCAD to be the independent evaluator for the *Contemporary Self-Portraits* project.
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Susanna Pyörre (MA, University of Turku, 2000) has been working as a Project Planner for several years. Currently she works in the Faculty of Arts Academy at Turku University of Applied Sciences. Pyörre has worked on several projects as an administrative coordinator or project manager. In addition, she has prepared several project applications, been in the editorial team of several project publications and other end-products.

Iiona Tanskanen (MA, University of Turku, 1991) teaches Finnish language and communication as a Lecturer at the Arts Academy in Turku University of Applied Sciences. Her speciality is autobiographical writing. She worked as an autobiographical writing expert in *Contemporary Self-Portraits*. Tanskanen's particular interest is in artistic work that combines visual and verbal expression.

Laura Toots is an Associate Professor and Project Manager in the Department of Photography at Estonian Academy of Arts. She graduated from the same department herself in 2011 (MFA). During 2009–2010, she completed her exchange studies at the Bergen National Academy of the Arts in Norway and at the Aalto University, School of Art and Design in Finland. Together with Marge Monko she has been the Project Manager of CSP in Estonian Academy of Arts.

Iveta Vaivode is a Latvian artist and curator. She is a Program Coordinator at the ISSP school where she also teaches. Born in Riga in 1979, Iveta Vaivode graduated from Bournemouth Art Institute (UK) in 2008 and currently continues her studies in Master of Photography at Aalto University of Art and Design in Helsinki. Her last work *Somewhere on a disappearing path* has been selected amongst the recipients of the C/O Berlin Talents award 2013, Burn Magazine grant and CSD Documentary Essay Prize in Photography. Since 2008 she is a member of the non-profit organization ISSP (International Summer School of Photography) and her work has been exhibited worldwide.

Presenting the Contemporary Self-Portraits Project Partners

Bildmuseet

Bildmuseet is a centre for contemporary art and visual culture founded in 1981. The museum is part of Umeå University and exhibits contemporary international art, photography, architecture and design, along with art historic retrospectives. The exhibitions are complemented by guided tours, lectures, seminars, films and performances. Workshops and educational activities inspire creativity. Since 2012 Bildmuseet has been housed in an acclaimed building by the shores of the Ume River, right next to Umeå Academy of Fine Arts, Umeå Institute of Design and Umeå School of Architecture.

<http://www.bildmuseet.umu.se/en/>

Estonian Academy of Arts

Established in 1914, the Estonian Academy of Arts is the only public university in Estonia providing higher education in fine arts, design, architecture, media, visual studies, art culture and conservation. The EAA is striving to become a leading international centre of innovation in the field of visual culture. Currently there are more than 1,200 students enrolled in the Academy, with many participating in exchange programmes at international partner universities. In addition to active study and research activities, the Estonian Academy of Arts also offers lifelong learning opportunities through the Open Academy.

www.artun.ee

ISSP Association

ISSP is a non-commercial education and networking platform for photographers in Latvia and internationally that works to offer high-quality alternative education for young photographers and to encourage the cross-border exchange of ideas in the art of photography. Since its establishment in 2006, ISSP has yearly run the International Summer School of Photography, curated a number of exhibitions, initiated international and local photo-education projects, produced a series of publications and catalogues, established a contemporary photography education programme in Latvia, and gathered a thriving community of young photographers in Latvia and abroad.

www.issp.lv

National College of Art and Design

The National College of Art and Design is one of Ireland's leading third level art colleges. Situated in the historic Liberties of Dublin, the college has over 1,000 full time students and over 500 part time students studying across four faculties: Design, Education, Fine Art and Visual Culture. As part of its unique Expanded Academy initiative, NCAD is developing a working partnership with the *Rialto Youth Project* and Fatima Groups United which sets out to explore and connect arts pedagogy and practice in community contexts.

www.ncad.ie

Turku University of Applied Sciences

Turku University of Applied Sciences is a multi-branch educational community of some 9,000 students and 750 experts. The Arts Academy at TUAS provides a wide range of Bachelor of Arts programmes in the field of arts and media: Fine Arts, Journalism, Media Arts, Music and Performing Arts. The Arts Academy is a prominent regional operator in the field of culture, which makes research, development and innovation (RDI) activities in collaboration with businesses and communities an important duty of the institution.

www.tuas.fi/en/about-us/faculties-and-campus/arts-academy/



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Bolderājas grupa: Sandra and Vladimirs Jakušonoks

Ābeļzieds senior centre

Čiekurs youth centre

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Sweden

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Region of Västerbotten Academy of Fine Arts

Umeå Municipality Regional Visual Arts Co-ordinator

Umeå School of Education, Art Teacher Training Programme Faculty of

Art and Pedagogics

Umeå University



Culture