



Appropriation and Post-production in Contemporary Art

About the concept of artistic originality

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ABSTRACT

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In contemporary art, it is easy to work with someone else's material legally or illegally thanks to the wide digital networks, but the creative process remains an individual quest. The starting point for this thesis was to study how appropriation is applied in contemporary art and how art history has affected the ways in which artists take inspiration and material from others. By examining different theories, opinions and example cases, the concept and current state of art appropriation was researched. Ideas about artistic authenticity were studied and the current copyright laws were shortly presented in the thesis. Postproduction art was analyzed in theory and defined in different practical cases where new creative work was made from existing artistic material.

Based on the research, clearer definitions were made, and new emerging creative areas were mapped more in-depth. Working with other people's material creates new possibilities for individual expression and experimentation as well as social commentary, but it will nevertheless remain in a moral and legislative sense a grey area when it comes to ownership. The thesis includes also a report about *Placeholders*, a video installation with mural artwork and mixed media paintings, that was made for the Fine Art study path's degree show *Atomic Jungle*. The exhibition was planned for Galleria Himmelblau but was implemented virtually on the website (www.atomicjungle2020.com) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The artwork was based on thoughts about authenticity, collage identity and outside influence affecting our individuality.

Key words: art appropriation, postproduction, remix art, authenticity, originality

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1 INTRODUCTION

In a networked world, people get constant influence from different people and their ways of thinking, which makes it harder to define originality and authenticity. This shows in the creative field as well: all art has been affected consciously or subconsciously by something else. Many artists, including me, often develop their art by searching for new styles, techniques and subjects by viewing other artists' work, absorbing influence and adopting the practices they like. How important is the artist's role and authenticity? How much originality is left in an artwork if it is built upon past creations? Appropriation art deals with these questions: it is about artists making their artwork out of someone else's work.

Art history is full of appropriations, but their regulation has only been developing more recently. Copyright laws dictate certain rules we must comply, but sometimes artists work around them. The ethicality of these rules can also be questioned: when creators recycle ideas and material, they might occasionally steal credit from other artists by taking advantage of their work, but in some cases, it is hard to define when someone crosses a line and what kind of use of other people's creations is appropriate. When is a concept or artwork owned and how is further use regulated? Based on these questions, I wanted to research how the current copyright laws affect art and how originality is seen and defined in art.

Postproduction in art includes practices like collage, appropriation, remix art, readymades and digital edits. It is the act of taking something which already exists and recontextualising, reassembling, transforming or combining it with something else and thus creating a new art piece. I research postproduction in art based on Nicolas Bourriaud's book *Postproduction. Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World* (2005). Postproduction artists work more like DJs by selecting, combining and editing cultural material. They can deconstruct culture and represent it in a new perspective.

I also present how contemporary artists work with appropriation and postproduction by presenting working methods and selected artworks by Richard Prince, Sherrie Levine and Douglas Gordon.

With digital media, postproduction possibilities are endless: internet is full of accessible material, and with modern editing programs anyone can start combining, remixing and modifying art, videos, music or text. Many media artists use these possibilities, and I, too, am personally very interested in using postproduction techniques, but a bit paradoxically not with my thesis artwork called *Placeholders*. Unlike many of the example artworks mentioned in this thesis, my own work is not appropriating or copying anything. The artwork deals with visualization of the thesis topics while the written part explores the theories and practices of appropriation; *Placeholders* is related to my thesis topic by its imagery and representation, not by its source material. I wanted to explore my own skills in video and painting, so I did not want to use any ready material for the artwork.

Idea for the artwork came from executing video installations in the past, and from the desire to combine video projection with paintings and apply my personal artistic style on a larger scale. *Placeholders* was created as part of the virtual degree show *Atomic Jungle*. The artwork designed for the physical gallery space combines mural painting, video mapping and 12 mixed media paintings installed on a seven-meter long wall in a dark space, although in the spring of 2020 the work was implemented digitally because of the pandemic situation. The painting series portrays a glowing face fragmented into different parts, and digitally created moving patterns are projected onto the surrounding wall paintings presenting reaching hands. The basis for this work was to show how an individual is the sum of their parts and more, and how what we borrow from others can eventually become a crucial part of ourselves.

2 ART APPROPRIATING

2.1 Defining appropriation

Anyone who has ever studied modern art history is probably familiar with Marcel Duchamp and his readymade art, the most well-known artwork being *Fountain* (1917), a urinal that was presented as a high-end art piece. Although Duchamp is the artist known as the creator of appropriation art, a recent book by John Higgs presents that he was influenced by Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, who was the original creator of *Fountain* (Higgs 2015). Regardless, readymades are familiar everyday objects which are put on display and turned into art: in this case we are talking about appropriation art.

Appropriation art takes a (usually) recognizable object, text or image and recontextualizes it. In the new context, the associations that the reader/viewer has with the appropriated object are subverted, and he or she is forced to reexamine his/her relationship to it. Therefore appropriated art is often political, satirical and/or ironic. (Amerika 2011.)

Appropriation art in other words is the practise of using pre-existing objects or images with little to no editing to make art. With appropriated artworks, the emphasis is usually on the new meaning and context of the work instead of the content or author. Art critic Douglas Crimp writes in 1982 that appropriation can be divided into appropriating styles or material: for example, Robert Mapplethorpe has appropriated his style in photography from the style of pre-war studio photographs, but Sherrie Levine appropriated photographs directly from Edward Weston by rephotographing them (Evans 2007, 190–191).

Appropriation art has been criticized as being lazy and unoriginal, based on copying and exploiting others, but often the thoughts behind appropriation art are very original. To quote an article in *Inquiries Journal* (Appropriation in Contemporary Art 2011): “On a basic level, we tend to equate originality with aesthetic newness. Why should a new concept – the concept of appropriation and the utilising of existing imagery – be deemed unoriginal?”

2.2 Ideas about creative originality vs. external influence

When we get inspiration, it is often after seeing something that we really like, which makes us want to try to do a similar thing. Seeing an artist painting in a specific style may give us new ideas about applying that style to our art. It is an everyday thing for artists to search for inspiration by looking at artworks online, visiting art museums, going to new places, meeting new people and doing collaborations with others. Even historically important artworks have been influenced by other people and art. Artists like to collect ideas from the external world.

Writer Jonathon Lethem states in his essay *The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism* (2007) that an artist's gifts are awakened by observing and adopting other art. He describes inspiration: "Inspiration could be called inhaling the memory of an act never experienced. Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void but out of chaos." (McLeod & Kuenzli 2011, 302). We cannot ignore the signs of our environment. Even according to neurological study, our consciousness, memory and imagination are built this way. "If we cut and paste ourselves, might we not forgive it of our artworks?" asks Lethem. (McLeod & Kuenzli 2011, 305, 317.)

Throughout the course of history, originality has been seen and appreciated in different ways. In Romantic thinking originality and authorship were highly regarded: the artist was considered a genius and artworks were born out of the artist's inner inspiration. The term avant-garde in art (starting from the 1850s) meant innovative and experimental art that has brand new subjects or form, usually challenging the old norms. The concept of avant-garde valued the originality and radicality of an artist's ideas and vision. (Tate 2020.)

Essayist Roland Barthes published his text *Death of the Author* in 1967, which challenged the role of the author, thus also that of the artist, when he wrote that text is multidimensional and never totally original: "the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture" (Barthes 1967, 4). This new approach affected how artworks were seen, as not born from just the genius of the artist but from a wider background including the cultural context. The author was considered more like the collector of ideas than the creator of ideas.

After technological advancements like photography and mass production, originality had to be re-evaluated when art became more easily replicated and commonplace. Philosopher and critic Walter Benjamin defined the originality of an artwork in his famous text *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936): “Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.” The reproduced work is detached from tradition and the original context, and thus loses its ‘aura’. For Benjamin, the essence of an artwork changes when it is mass copied and distributed widely: more people can see the artwork, but they also concentrate less on it. (Benjamin 1936.)

Simon Reynolds, the author of *Retromania* (2011), states that the contemporary culture is characterized by fast movements inside knowledge networks, when in the past, it was outwards going movements into the unknown. In pop music history, the 60s and 90s of fast development forward were followed by plateau time periods when movement went in circles (the 70s and 00s): “During these directionless phases, it’s easy to convince yourself that originality is overrated, that artists have always recycled, that there’s ‘nothing new under the sun’. It can become a real struggle to recall that pop hasn’t always repeated itself and that in the not-so-distant past it has produced, repeatedly, something new under the sun.” (Reynolds 2011, 428.) Similar to popular music, also in art, relying too much on the past and other creations can diminish creativity, so sometimes it’s better to work on something entirely new and not imitate anything else.

Authenticity gets more difficult to define when new art seems to be built on the past, but is there also some inner originality that an artist can present to the world? Is an artwork channelling the original essence of an artist? Not all think this way: “— I know something that a lot of artists know but few will admit to, and that is: Nothing is completely original. All creative work builds on what came before. Every new idea is just a remix or mash-up of one or two previous ideas.” claims artist and writer Austin Kleon in his TED talk *Steal Like an Artist* (2012) on TEDx Talks Youtube channel. In my own opinion, an artist can be both original and build on past influences, naturally evolving their unique voice by trying different things from other artists and collecting data, becoming more authentic on the way.

3 POSTPRODUCTION IN CONTEMPORARY ART

In the context of film and tv, postproduction means all the editing that is done after the shooting, including for example cutting, colour correction and special effects. Postproduction art, a term created by curator Nicolas Bourriaud, means art that is created from already produced cultural material (Bourriaud 2005). The source material can be for example deconstructed and reassembled, filtered, reshaped or put into new context. Postproduction art is basically also appropriation: "Appropriation is indeed the first stage of postproduction: the issue is no longer to fabricate an object, but to choose one among those that exist and to use or modify these according to a specific intention." (Bourriaud 2005, 25.) In a way, this is art recycling.

In practise, postproduction art can mean for example collages and edits from other people's works like video montages. The source material is not just adopted as it is but instead the artistic process lies in the act of modifying it into something further, into something new that can be acclaimed as the artist's own. The source material plays an important role, but the main focus is on the newly created work.

Creative originality becomes a different kind of act, when the artist instead of making raw material is selecting objects in circulation on the cultural market and inserting them into new contexts. This kind of artistic practise does not start from creating brand new art on a blank canvas but from 'remixing' already available forms and data. According to Bourriaud, postproduction artists, like DJs or web surfers, are inventing new paths through culture. This navigation through cultural history becomes the subject of artistic practise itself. (Bourriaud 2005, 13, 17–18.)

In this new form of culture, which one might call a culture of use or a culture of activity, the artwork functions as the temporary terminal of a network of interconnected elements, like a narrative that extends and reinterprets preceding narratives. Each exhibition encloses within it the script of another; each work may be inserted into different programs and used for multiple scenarios. The artwork is no longer an end point but a simple moment in an infinite chain of contributions. (Bourriaud 2005, 19–20.)

When artists start to combine their own creative work with that of others, the line between production and consumption gets blurred, writes Bourriaud. Consumption becomes a form of production, making choosing and fabricating equivalent. Like with Duchamp's urinal, the creative process lies in the act of choosing, not in manual skill: inserting an object into a new scenario and giving it a new idea is thus production. (Bourriaud 2005, 13, 23, 25.)

In the 1980s, computers became more available and in music, sampling became a way of creating something new from old songs. Suddenly, the remixer was perhaps even more important than the original composer. (Bourriaud 2005, 35.) A DJ navigates through the history of music and chooses the samples they want, modifies and combines them, almost like Duchamp when he has an exhibition of readymades which are "more or less modified products whose sequence produces a specific duration" (Bourriaud 2005, 38). An artist works in a rotating network of forms where the artwork becomes a link between other works (Bourriaud 2005, 40).

With postproduction art, artists can decode the surrounding environment and create alternative scenarios with new forms and narratives. It brings possibly hidden constructions to our consciousness and offers new paths through culture. Postproduction artists use the world and social constructs as their material and show us that structures can be moulded and manipulated, used like clothes, tested and experienced: "– – art can be a form of using the world, an endless negotiation between points of view." (Bourriaud 2005, 46, 72, 94.)

There is a mass production of images in the modern world, which makes it natural for artists to start mixing and matching these products (Bourriaud 2005, 45). This kind of art can also be called remix art: "remix is much more than a category of music; it identifies what could be called the zeitgeist of the early twenty-first century" (Gunkel 2016, 18). Reynolds states: "Not only has there never before been a society so obsessed with the cultural artifacts of its immediate past, but there has never before been a society that is able to access the immediate past so easily and so copiously." (Reynolds 2011, xxi). Postproduction is an important practise in art today and will be in the ever more digital future as well. I believe more and more artists will likely work in this way.

3.1 Brief history of the development of artistic re-use

Even though postproduction practises are more widespread today, they have been developing throughout art history. Nicola Coller, Matteo Mastandrea and Thomas Greenall from the Royal College of Arts in London examine how culture is and always has been influenced by postproduction: “Art history is now widely accepted as one of reinterpretations, appropriations, cross references, dialogic presuppositions and citations – from cubist collages and situationist *détournement*, to modernist cut-up techniques and postmodernist culture jamming.” (Coller, Greenall & Mastandrea 2018). Artists have always been appropriating, but I will focus on the more recent modern art history of material appropriation.

With the invention of photography, artists had to question the meaning of figurative art, because one could just take a photograph if the capturing of an image was desired. This brought forth art movements that focused on form like Cubism and Expressionism. The Cubists started to add other existing material like sheet music and newspaper clips into their work. New art techniques were researched, and collage became a more popular art form during the first half of 20th century (Cran 2014, 8).

Picasso and Braque were the main artists to validate collage as a serious art form, demonstrating how combining images and words would change predefined meanings and represent the elements in a new light. Collages had been made throughout history, but during the 20th century, they became more conceptual and did not just focus on aesthetics: “Collage in its twentieth-century manifestation was about meaningful encounters and juxtapositions, about displacing, disrupting, and deconstructing, whilst simultaneously representing the possibility of dialogue and synthesis between heterogeneous elements.” (Cran 2014, 14–15.)

The Dadaists also made collages and photomontages (collages of photographs) to comment on the chaos of the First World War. They used techniques called *assemblage* (combining found objects together) and *cavandre exquis*, exquisite corpse (collecting images and/or text by different artists into one work). Later Surrealists continued with similar kinds of techniques like collage and found objects. In the 1950s, *détournement* was a technique used to turn culture against itself by

appropriating something from the dominant culture and changing meanings in it. For the anti-art movement Situationists it was a political act. (McLeod & Kuenzli 2011, 3.)

Appropriation art became more popular during the pop art movement in the 1960s. Artists like Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, observing commercialism and mass production culture, would use popular culture images in their artworks (Amerika 2011). At the end of the modernist era, instead of focusing on infinite progress and inventions, the new idea was to utilize remakes and relationships between objects (Bourriaud 2005, 43). Appropriation was linked to Postmodernism that started to challenge notions of originality, categories and old truths in the 60s: artists would adopt other styles from the past or different cultures into their work and use ready materials. These concepts have shaped the general attitude towards appropriation and collage art in the present day.

3.2 Copyright customs in art

In the US, the copyright law was originally made to benefit both the artist and society by giving the author rights to their creation to earn from it, which would encourage them to produce more cultural products and profit from them, but after a limited time span those creations would belong to the public domain (McLeod 2005, 108). Also, the fair use law was made in the US so that the artist would not have total control over their work. The fair use principle lets people use copyrighted material if they use it to criticise or comment on other work like when making a parody or satire or if they use it for cases like education or news reporting. (McLeod & Kuenzli 2011, 15–16.) This exact law is not valid in Finland.

According to the Finnish copyright law, an artist or author has automatically the rights to their original work for the duration of their lifespan and additional 70 years, which means the work cannot be used without the artist's permission for copying or sharing for a public with the exception of private use and quoting. Additionally, the name of the artist must be mentioned, and the work respected. The copyright covers the expression and appearance of the work, not the ideas, information, theories or principles present in it. (Kopioisto N.d.)

Creative Commons (CC) licenses, established in the US in 2001, were made so that creators could define how their works could be used by others. Creative Commons licences seek balance between the artist's rights over their works and possibilities for others to use their work in different ways: copying, distributing, remixing, adapting or built upon according to which one of the Creative Commons licenses is used. In every case, the original creator should be credited, unless the work is licensed CC 0, which means the work goes to the public domain and can be used in any way. CC licenses are valid everywhere in the world. (Creative Commons N.d.)

Copyrights are important in giving artists control over their own work and protect the works from plagiarism. These laws help artists earn money from their work for example by selling licenses and rights to someone else. Sometimes it can be more important for the artist that their work is distributed as wide as possible and seen by many and also used for further copying and editing. In these cases, the artist can license their work under Creative Commons.

In some cases, it can be argued that copyrighted works should be allowed to be used more freely to encourage further general creativity and development and prevent commercial monopolies over certain ideas or concepts. "Ownership has never had anything to do with creativity" addresses Negativland, a sound collage band that has been sued for their sampled music (McLeod & Kuenzli 2011, 117). They hope the copyright laws would fairly compensate artists for their work but not prohibit creativity that utilizes new technology to make art or music in collage form, especially nowadays, when the Internet encourages people to copy, edit, cut and paste, appropriate and redistribute. (McLeod & Kuenzli 2011, 130–131.)

It can be natural to feel possessive over something we have created, but at the same time we have probably used other people's ideas and materials over the course of our creative development. It is impossible to work out of a vacuum even if an artist makes everything from scratch and does not get any help, because we have been at least affected unconsciously. All cultural processes are interconnected and spread out to new areas, so this natural flow cannot be totally controlled by copyright laws.

4 EXAMPLE ARTISTS

4.1 Richard Prince

Richard Prince (1949–present) is an artist that has rephotographed for example advertisements of luxury products and more recently, other people’s Instagram posts. He is famous for appropriating the Marlboro Man by taking photographs of the cowboy images in Marlboro’s cigarette advertisements, cropping the original images and rescaling them, thus creating the *Untitled (Cowboy)* series, initiated in 1980s. He questions whether what we see is real and how commercialization and advertisements depict our society.

In his exhibition *New Portraits* (2014), he exhibited strangers’ Instagram pictures without permission and only edited them by adding a few comments. The artworks comment on the Internet culture and sites like Tumblr and Twitter where people freely collect, repost and share ideas, images or basically anything. The Internet is the world of digital appropriation where sources are sometimes credited and sometimes not. Most of the appropriated Instagram photos were from young creatives, most of them women and in rather sexual poses. Some of the people whose Instagram photos were used were happy that they gained exposure and felt honoured for being in an artwork, but some felt violated that their images were used without their approval.

Brian Wallis, an independent curator, states in TIME’s documentary about Prince: “Looking back, people will recognize Richard Prince as a really pivotal inventor of a new paradigm and new way of looking at culture as a subject for artistic representation, and the shift from the artist as somebody who makes something to somebody who recognizes and points it out.” (TIME 2016.) Prince is considered a controversial artist and he has been sued several times because of his appropriations, but he continues his practise of rephotographing and his works are considered very valuable in the art market.

4.2 Sherrie Levine

The appropriation artist Sherrie Levine (1947–present) is best known for her photography series taken after famous artists' works including among others Walker Evans (*After Walker Evans*, 1981). She was part of the famous *Pictures* exhibition in New York in 1977 that presented appropriated art and defined a new generation of artists. She has also photographed and copied expressionist paintings, digitally edited modernist artworks into simple colour grids and reproduced sculptures after for example Marcel Duchamp (Picture 1). By making copies and edits, she questioned concepts of originality in art and emphasized a feminist viewpoint by appropriating especially male artists that had a dominant place in art history.



PICTURE 1: Sherrie Levine, *Fountain (Buddha)*, 1996

In her statement (1982), she claims: “We know that a picture is but a space in which a variety of images, none of them original, blend and clash. A picture is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.” and “Succeeding the painter, the plagiarist no longer bears within him passions, humours, feelings, impressions, but rather this immense encyclopaedia from which he draws. — A painting’s meaning lies not in its origin, but in its destination.” (Evans 2007, 81.) So, she makes many references in her artworks, but most important for her are the new contexts and what they represent for the viewer, in this way creating new interpretations for older works.

4.3 Douglas Gordon

Douglas Gordon (1966–present) is a contemporary artist who appropriated the well-known film *Psycho* (1960) by Alfred Hitchcock into his own work *24 Hour Psycho* (1993) that literally is the film stretched into 24 hours, making it extremely slow. He also removed the sound, so the viewer is left with intense anticipation looking at the movie with the pace of 2 frames per second. The video installation was hanged from the ceiling in a dark space so that the viewer was able to see it from both sides of the projection.

24 Psycho emphasizes the voyeurism in the original film and adds a physical viewing experience because the viewer can walk around the screen and see it from both sides compared to the original film being screened in a cinema. The installation is more approachable and reminds of movies played with home video recorders. “I think that ways of looking are determined more by the circumstances in which a film is seen than the commercial or ‘alternative’ intent of the director.” Gordon says in an interview in 2003, quoted by Katrina M. Brown in her book *Douglas Gordon* from 2004 (Evans 2007, 164–165). By changing the context and form of the original film, Gordon also took away the original meanings, which lets the viewer see the images in a new light and interpret them in a new way.

Black Burns (2017) is a shattered statue replica recreated after Robert Burns’ statue made in 1824 by John Flaxman, standing in the Great Hall of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh. The original statue was white but *Black Burns* is made in black marble and broken down to pieces, presenting the famous Scottish poet opened and in pieces. The original statue presents a great and proud man while the replica represents the dark side of the poet who had connections with slave owners even though he was viewed as a fighter against injustice. “Gordon’s work often takes as its subject something familiar and explores the ways in which memories and expectations surrounding it can be thrown off balance by subtle interventions in the way it is presented and displayed.” (Gagosian 2017.)

5 ARTISTIC PROCESS OF *PLACEHOLDERS*

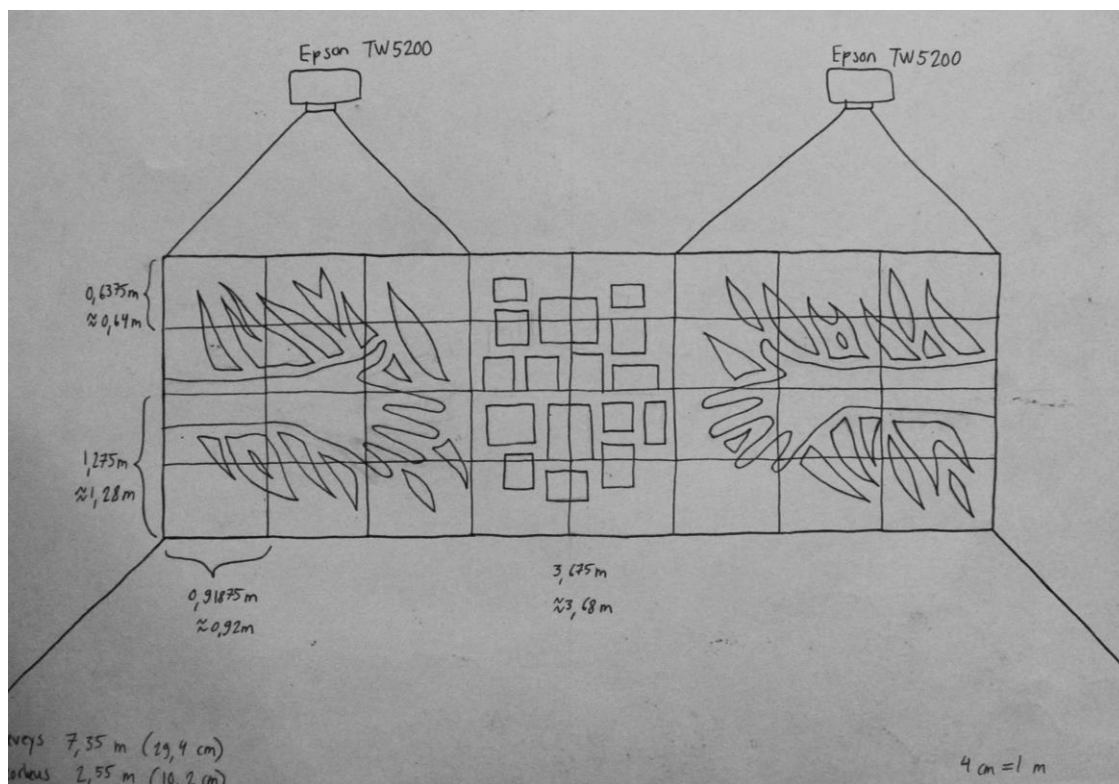
For my artwork, *Placeholders*, I planned to make use of a big wall and paint directly onto it and combine painting with video works by video mapping complex shapes in the mural. In the middle of the installation, there would also be a series of 12 paintings. The wall I got at Galleria Himmelblau was 2,55 meters high and 7,35 meters wide and it was in a dark space. It would have been painted black, and the murals would have been painted with only white, and then video would have been mapped and projected onto the white parts, thus colouring the image.

But, due to the coronavirus situation, the physical exhibition was delayed until the next autumn and the installations were implemented digitally. I made the painting series by hand, but the mural was made digitally in Adobe Photoshop, and later I combined everything into a 3D installation in Blender to present the final installation. I did not use appropriation or postproduction techniques in my final degree artwork; instead I wanted to study themes of originality and influence in the visual language and representation of my work.

5.1 Visualization and painting of my thought processes

For the wall, I decided to paint two big hands, reaching from outside the 'canvas' to the middle (Picture 2). The hands would represent other people giving you influence that would carve out your identity and help with self-discovery more, in a way giving you pieces of identity. At the same time, they would also take influence from you and use you as a piece in their own self-construction. The small abstract fragments next to the hands would emphasize this dynamic process of giving and taking, making it even more visual.

I was not sure what I would put in the middle of the wall, but after testing out the projectors in the gallery, I decided I would use paintings in the middle, because the projectors could not cover the whole middle part smoothly because of a pillar that was too close. Due to the space being dark, I thought I could try out UV-paints that glow in the dark, because if I used regular paints for the paintings, I would also need a spotlight, and extra lights would have ruined the projections. But, using UV-paints and a blacklight would not disturb the projection quality.



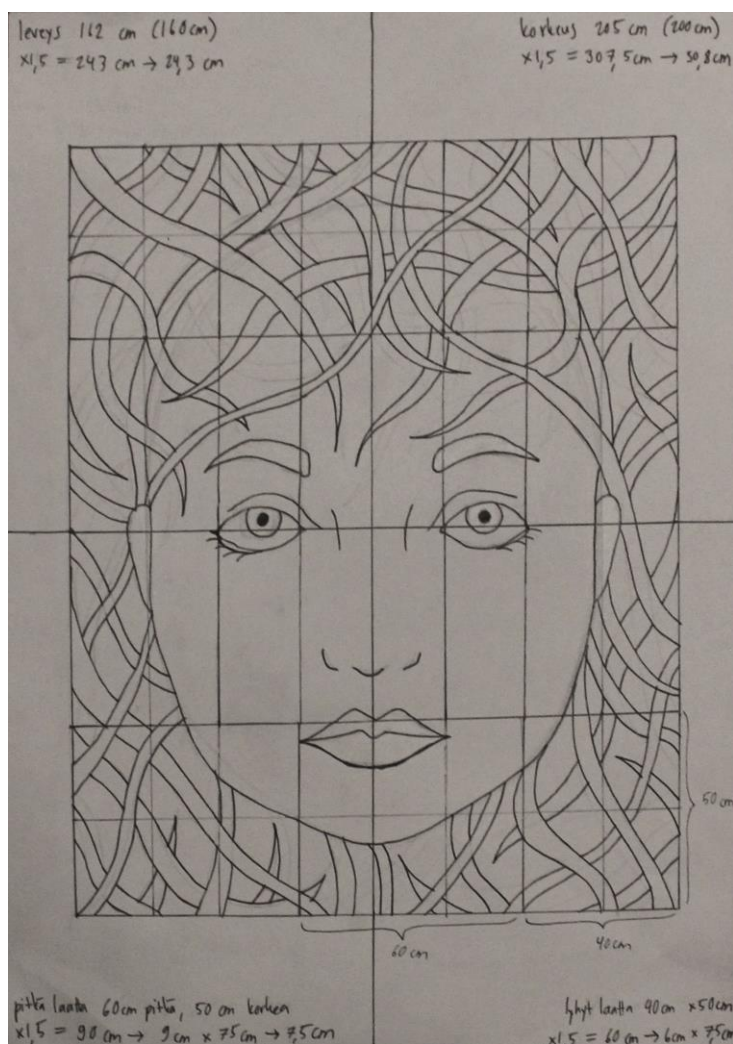
PICTURE 2. Inka Jerkku, sketch for the whole installation wall, 2020

When I decided to have paintings in the middle, I first thought I would paint a human and some intersecting lines, and the paintings would not be arranged in some specific order (Picture 2). But, when I got the MDF boards done, I arranged them into a big rectangle and decided I would have them like that instead (Picture 3). I drew a sketch that I would use as my basis for the face I would paint onto the boards (Picture 4), so I could get the scale and proportions right. I copied the measurements from the sketch to the MDF boards after I had painted them all different colours with acrylic paint.

I wanted to draw a rather general and anonymous human face although it ended up being a feminine face. In some way the face represents also me and my journey into authenticity, but my intention was not to make the artwork about myself; instead, I wanted the viewer to be able to relate to the human face in the middle, or at least see it as someone else but still as someone relatable or understandable. I added the curly streams behind the face to give a sense of movement to the otherwise still painting series and to symbolize all the different thoughts, experiences and styles that influence and inspire us from outside of ourselves



PICTURE 3. Inka Jerkku, painted MDF boards arranged, production picture, 2020



PICTURE 4. Inka Jerkku, sketch for the UV-paint face, 2020

With the different colours and the fragmented background composition I wanted to emphasize the collage-like identity and process of gathering influence from various places. Although, in darkness the acrylic colours of the background are barely visible, and the whole background looks mostly black (Picture 5), in the dim light from the video projections the background colours might be visible. I used a lot of different colours for the face part as well, but not as many as for the background, because I had a limited amount of UV-paints and I ordered only 4 different colours (plus white for eyes): pink (red), orange, yellow (neon green) and green. I made more shades by mixing them together, and I painted first a layer of white acrylic paint onto the boards under the UV-paints to make the colours more visible. The UV-paints had to be ordered from outside of Tampere, so I did not choose so many different ones, and I had to stay in the budget, too. But I'm happy now that I had a more limited colour palette for the face, because now it looks clearer and not overly scattered.



PICTURE 5. Inka Jerkku, *Placeholders*, detail: complete painting series in black-light, 12 pieces, 2020

5.2 Video mapping demo version

I executed a demo version for the video mapping during a school course (Emerging Trends in Visual Design for Live Events) in the autumn of 2019. Video/projection mapping means the act of defining the outlines of a video projection into a certain shape according to the background, for example like a triangle or circle. I had done projection mapping in the past with Resolume Arena but for my degree work the mapping would be much more complex and the shapes would have curves that cannot be properly mapped with Resolume, so I studied the possibilities of various softwares (Table 1). After I got to test MadMapper in school I decided it was my best option to use for the final artwork because this software did what I wanted (after some trial and error) and was the least hassle for me.

TABLE 1. Software pros and cons regarding video mapping complex shapes

Software	Pros	Cons
Resolume Arena 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have used it a lot before, so I know how it works - Can be used to map complex shapes that have straight edges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curved shapes cannot be mapped by it - Videos often lag when they are played simultaneously
TouchDesigner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very versatile and almost anything can be done with it - Can be combined with other programs - The non-commercial version is free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have used it only a couple of times and do not know much about it - The software is very complex and takes time to learn
MadMapper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I had not used before, but I learned how to use this software during the school course - Simple to use and the mapping of complex shapes was possible with the help of Adobe Photoshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Costs money - When videos are imported to the program, they cannot be edited any further (besides few colour changes) so there is less room for experimentation

The whole process of doing projection mapping on a mural or painted image is clarified in Figure 1. I had to use Adobe Photoshop in addition to create different layers for the videos and Syphon Recorder for recording, so the overall workflow got a bit more complicated but still doable.

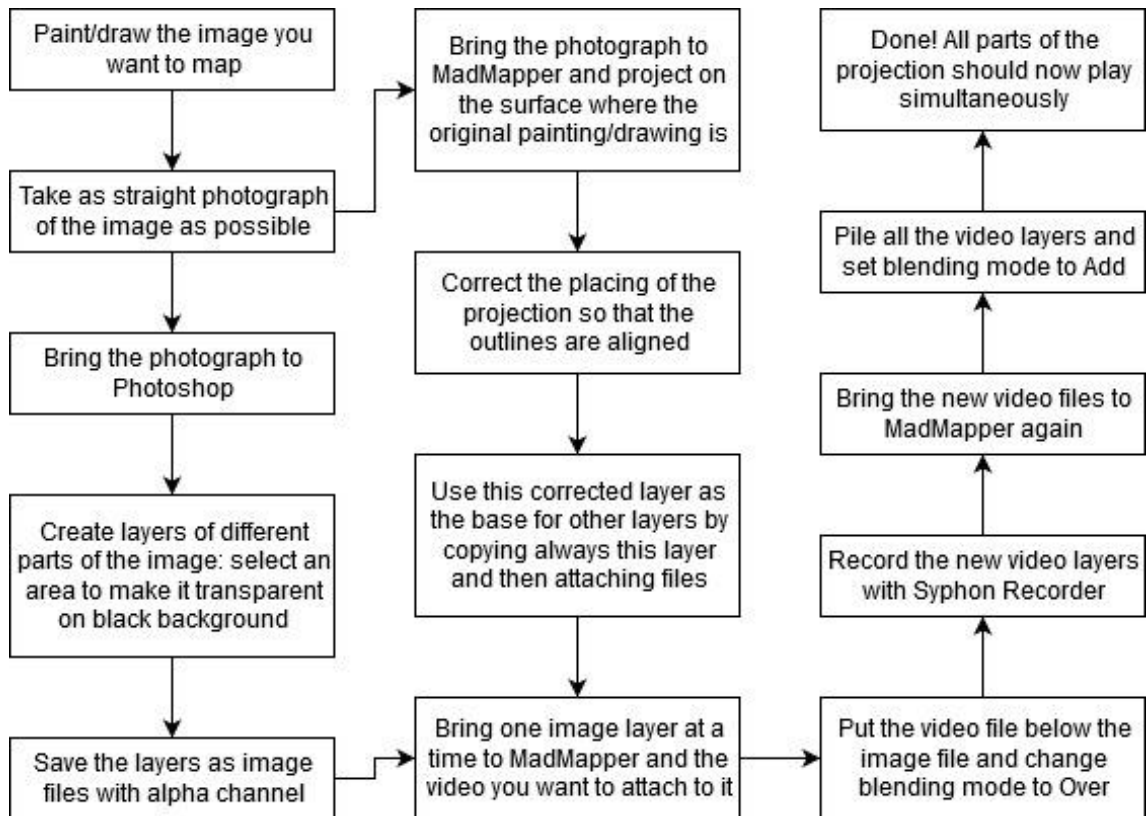


FIGURE 1. Workflow of the video mapping process with MadMapper

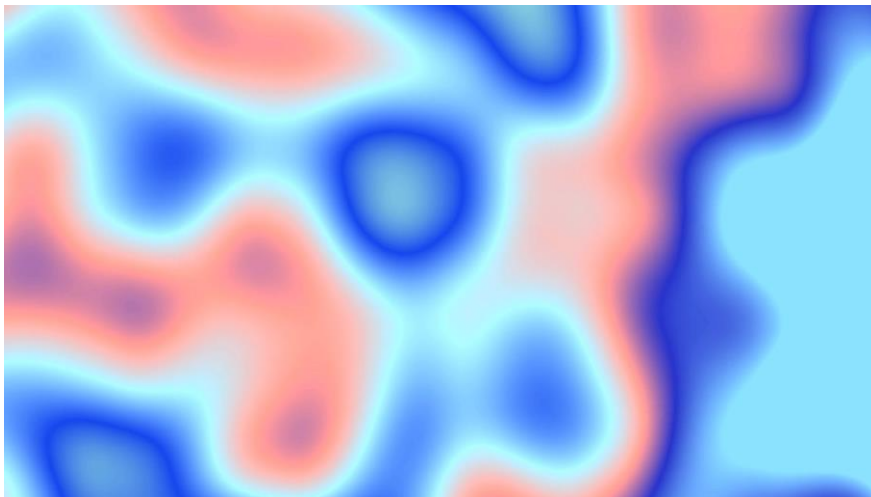
The end result of my demo version in school succeeded really well and looked like I hoped (Picture 6). The background material is foam board and I drew the outlines of my drawing with black marker. I used the videos already available in MadMapper so I was able to change the animations and edit the colors so it was fun to try on different combinations. Doing this course and making the demo version really helped me to figure out how I would execute my video installation in the final exhibition.



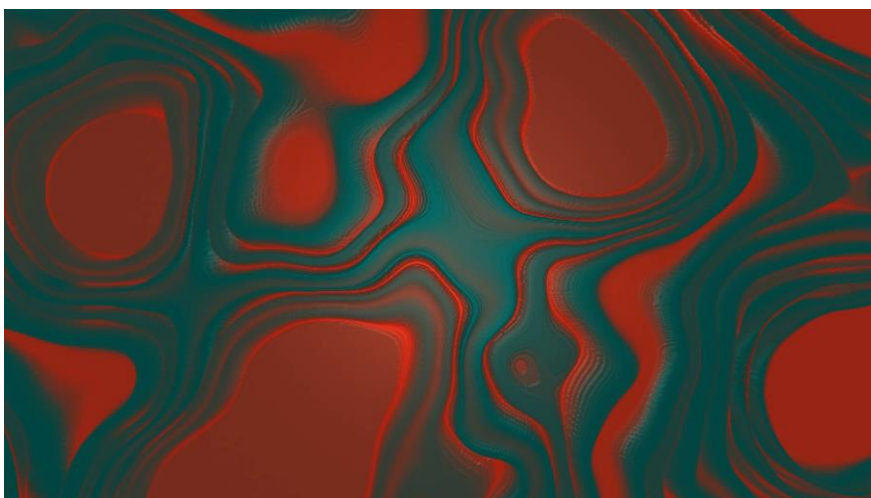
PICTURE 6. Inka Jerkku, background drawing with no video and with video projection, mapping done with MadMapper and Photoshop, production picture, 2019

5.3 Creating videos

For video creation, I wanted to use TouchDesigner, because that is a program I wanted to learn better and I knew it was great for making abstract videos. I had used it before but not for this purpose, so I started by searching tutorials for the kind of videos I wanted. I wanted videos that include morphing shapes or moving patterns, and I found a tutorial for how to use noise patterns to make this kind of animation (Voigt 2018). The first videos I made were purely moving 2D noise patterns in different colours (Picture 7), but after I found a tutorial about noise displacement (Alexander-Adams 2019), which made the pattern look more complex and 3D (Picture 8), I wanted to develop my videos more into looking like that.

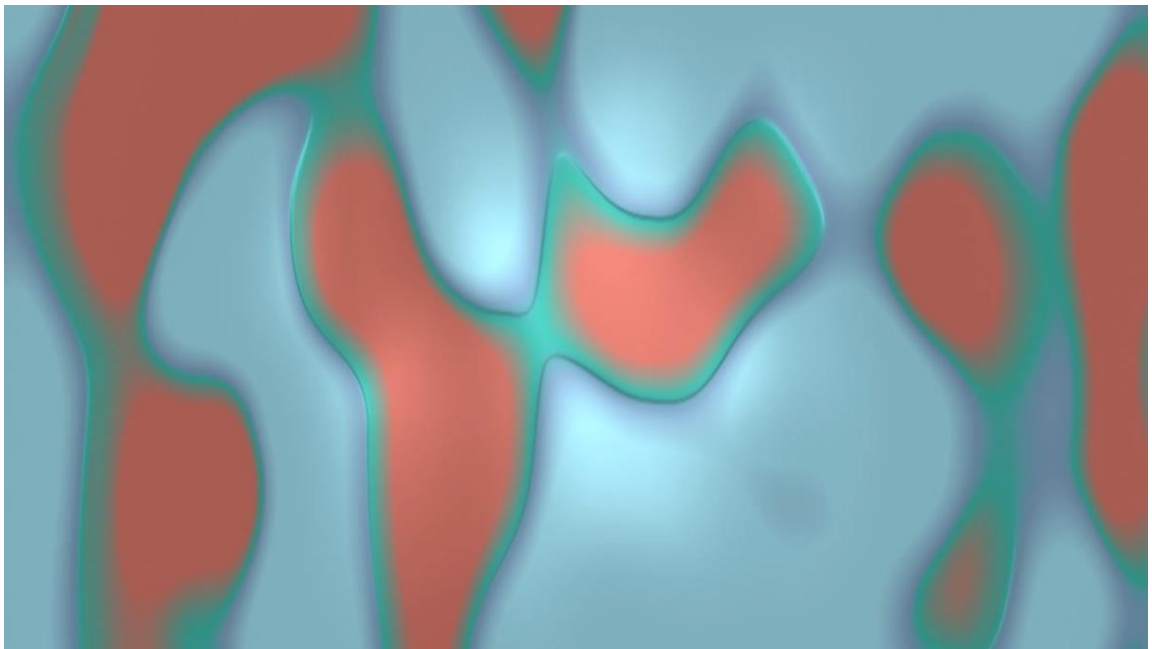


PICTURE 7. Inka Jerkku, screenshot of the first version of video pattern, production picture, 2020



PICTURE 8. Inka Jerkku, screenshot of the second version, noise displacement tutorial, production picture, 2020

For the final videos I combined the style from the first versions and the technique from the second videos, creating a simple but three-dimensional video of moving and merging patterns (Picture 10). I made two 30-seconds-long videos of this pattern, one version where the movement is horizontal and another version where it is vertical. Afterwards, I edited the videos into 60-seconds-long loops by duplicating and reversing the same clip. The videos suddenly changing direction and going backwards also emphasizes the process of giving and taking. These are the clips I used for the final installation (after editing the colours and brightness).



PICTURE 9. Inka Jerkku, *Placeholders*, screenshot of a final video loop, 2020

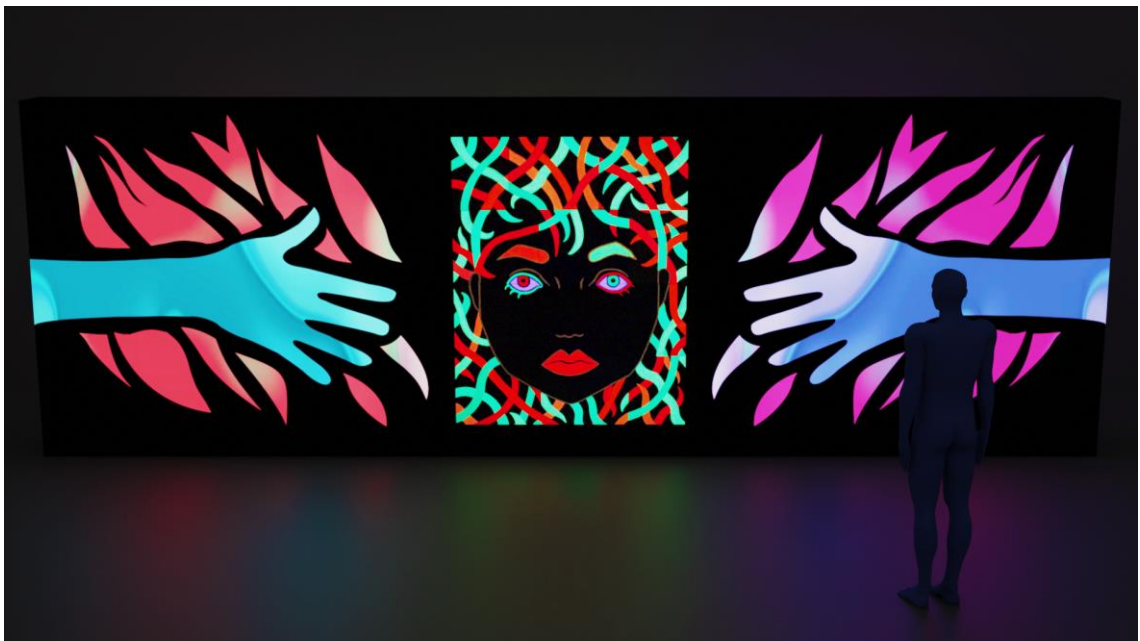
5.4 Online implementation

Because of the coronavirus situation in the spring of 2020, our final exhibition was postponed until the following autumn and the artworks were published on the degree show website instead. So, my installation had to be made entirely digitally. This was a nice challenge for me, because I got to demonstrate how the final artwork would look like before executing it in a physical gallery space. I used the video mapping technique I had learned earlier, but not with MadMapper. Instead, I used Photoshop and Premiere to create the video layers and combine them with the painting series to create the wall in video form (Picture 10). I used the sketch I drew of the wall earlier to create the video layers based on that (Picture 2).



PICTURE 10. Inka Jerkku, *Placeholders*, screenshot of the virtual wall, 2020

After I had the video file of the entire wall, I made the wall installation in a 3D space with Blender. With the right measures, I modelled the wall in a dark space and attached the video file onto the wall. I rendered individual images and a 10-second-long video demonstrating how the space would look like. For understanding the scale, I also added a human figure in front of the installation (Picture 11).



PICTURE 11. Inka Jerkku, *Placeholders*, 3D installation with human scale, 2020

I was happy with the result, because it clearly shows how the actual wall installation would look like in the gallery. Of course, the real-life version will look slightly different and the lighting can vary depending on how bright the projectors are and how luminous the paintings will look like next to the projection. But for me it will be very interesting to see how the final installation will look like compared to this digital version.

The symmetry of the installation and the face in the middle make the viewer focus their glance to the centre, possibly specifically to the eyes, and the slowly moving and morphing abstract video patterns create a hypnotic feeling. The visual expression is simplified and clear instead of trying to go for realism, because I think this kind of two-dimensional style works better in an installation like this that is based on the contrast between light and darkness, making the visual impact stronger. I hope the viewer can read the visual language and symbolism in my work and understand what intentions I had, but also possibly project their own thoughts and find new meanings in it.

5.5 Virtual Reality Gallery

In addition to the virtual installation, the artwork was presented in a 3D Virtual Reality Gallery made to be experienced with a VR headset. The VR Gallery was created in Unity by a team of students. For my own room in the gallery, I wanted to model the 3D fragmented head myself with Blender, a 3D program I had used before. I used my painting series as a reference for sculpting the 3D head and cutting it into pieces that the player can move around. I wanted to present the idea of collage identity by letting the player piece together or mess up the floating head. The room was based on my installation, where two hands from the walls reach for the head in the middle (Picture 12). Ambient noise music was also added to the room, creating a slightly disturbing atmosphere.



PICTURE 12. Atomic Jungle VR Gallery, screenshot of Inka's room, 2020

6 DISCUSSION

Creativity can be manifested in more different ways than just making something yourself from scratch: it can be combining, re-assembling, re-contextualizing or editing material in some other way. Appropriation and postproduction are these kinds of practises. I do not think they are better or worse than other artistic techniques, just different ways of expression. They provide ways to show the surrounding society and its elements broken down to fragments and reconstructed, demonstrating how everything is mouldable and can be seen in an alternative way with new possibilities.

In appropriation art, the artist's skill is to create new meaning for an already existing work and present it in a new way by taking or copying an object another person made. Often, the work becomes more conceptual emphasizing the thoughts behind the work, when it is not entirely made by the artist. Nevertheless, the artwork is new, because the appropriation artist does not just present the already existing work; they create a new work with a perspective that has not been seen before based on the content another artist created earlier. Also, post-production and remix artists, who combine and edit premade works by others like when making collages, use their creativity for the process of selection and marking their own path through a culture. They use their ability to connect the right pieces to create a new whole that speaks their point of view. The new result can be very original.

Today, thanks to globalisation and networking technology, possibilities of reusing cultural content are endless which in turn blurs the line between creative authenticity and shared ideas. Digital softwares make it easier than ever to be creative with the cut-and-paste technique: you can basically edit, combine and rearrange anything you find online legally or illegally. Of course, material that is protected by copyright should not be officially used. But, in a networked world, it is easy to forget where the original material you used came from. The copyright laws create guidelines for how an artwork can be used, but sometimes creativity might require actions that go beyond these laws. The ethicality of using someone else's material might have to be questioned separately in each case.

In my artwork *Placeholders*, I focused more on influence and the creative process itself than art appropriation or postproduction which are the themes of my written part. All these topics are however based on the interaction between an artist and other artists / the surrounding environment. The whole subject matter is wide so I tried to find subcategories that I could concentrate on, both in my artwork and thesis. Therefore, I made the division into art appropriation and postproduction in my written part and defined them separately. These themes overlap regardless, so the definitions I made are notes in my personal research and not the only truth about these topics.

Through the final artwork process I absorbed a lot of new technical information and clarified to myself what kind of installations I can and want to create. The artwork was slightly inspired by the aesthetics of psychedelic dance music culture (UV-paints, abstract video projections) and my experience as a VJ (visual jockey) in different concerts and events. Although, I would not say that I appropriated the style because my personal style has always been very colourful, vivid and hypnotic. This also demonstrates how it is often unclear whether a style is inherent or adopted. When I have made video installations or played live videos to music in events before, these visuals have always been part of the background or in the supporting role. This time, the visual work becomes the focus when it is presented in an exhibition space as its own entity without music or a happening. It will be rewarding to see my work in a bigger scale after first executing the virtual version.

I think with my artwork I succeeded in portraying the process of observing the world and getting influence while simultaneously searching for own authenticity and style. I personally think that taking inspiration from elsewhere and copying or imitating others can help an artist to recognize individual preferences and strengths, and that way strengthen own originality. It's natural that artists gravitate towards styles that feel close to them. Observing traits in others can make you see those traits in yourself as well. That is what the name of my artwork, *Placeholders* comes from, referring to how inspiration and influence from others work as placeholders for our own authentic creations that are born after first exploring and imitating other styles. So, copying others does not always make you fake or less authentic; it can also be a tool for further development of your individual expression.

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2. Inka Jerkku, sketch for the whole installation wall, 2020.
3. Inka Jerkku, painted MDF boards arranged, production picture, 2020.
4. Inka Jerkku, sketch for the UV-paint face, 2020.
5. Inka Jerkku, *Placeholders*, detail: complete painting series, blacklight, 2020.
6. Inka Jerkku, background drawing with no video and with video projection, mapping done with MadMapper and Photoshop, production picture, 2019
7. Inka Jerkku, screenshot of the first version of video pattern, production picture, 2020.
8. Inka Jerkku, screenshot of the second version, noise displacement tutorial, production picture, 2020.
9. Inka Jerkku, *Placeholders*, screenshot of a final video loop, 2020.
10. Inka Jerkku, *Placeholders*, screenshot of the virtual wall, 2020.
11. Inka Jerkku, *Placeholders*, 3D installation with human scale, 2020.
12. Atomic Jungle VR Gallery, screenshot of Inka's room, 2020.