

# Exploration of Cultural Identity through Self-portrait

Moving ON as a Case Study

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## ABSTRACT

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In the written part of my thesis I explore the concepts of identity and culture, in order to understand how contemporary artists define cultural identity and represent it in their self-portraits. I also present my personal video self-portrait which touches the topics of transcultural and multicultural identity in a world of hybridity.

I present my journey of self-exploration and reflect it in my film 'Moving ON'. I explain the process behind the production of my video self-portrait, the technical aspects and the artists: Zhang Huan, Tracy Emin and Tehching Hsieh that had an influence on it in the context of contemporary art. I also use documentary "Notebook on Cities and Clothes" (1989) by Wim Wenders as well as Tarkovsky's semi-autobiographical film "Mirror" (1975) as inspirations for my thesis film.

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Key words: culture, identity, self, art, self-portrait

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

An exploration of identity has always been a crucial part of philosophy and art. In the written part of my thesis I intend to look into the role that culture is playing in formation of our identity and how it is reflected in the genre of contemporary self-portraiture.

What is cultural identity? It is not easy to answer this question due to the constant changes occurring in culture and its perception. The role that globalisation has played in our modern culture is significant. Multiculturalism has been embraced and promoted as a successful trend of our world. In a world of fusions and hybridity our cultures and identities have become blurry.

I explore how artists from different countries comment on the world they live in and how they reflect their cultural identity in art. My main focus is on contemporary self-portraits - works that are not necessary figurative in a traditional sense but performances, installations and films. I make analysis of the works of Zhang Huan, Tracey Emin and Tehching Hsieh in order to see the different perspectives these artists have on ideas of culture and identity.

In my own film I explore my personal life in multicultural environment, how I create a feeling of home and security while being constantly on a move. This video self-portrait is inspired by Tarkovsky's semi-autobiographical film "Mirror" (1975) as well as Wim Wenders's documentary "Notebook on Cities and Clothes" (1989).

I walk down the memory lane of my life and create a personal piece that resonates with myself on a deep level. I build a sense of home not necessary with places and cities, but with people surrounding me. People from different cultures and backgrounds, people that make me feel happy, safe and loved.

### **3. CULTURE**

The term of Culture carries incredible amount of meaning in it and can be defined in numerous ways. For the clarity of my project, I'm going to use definition of the word Culture from the angle that suits my purpose in this Thesis.

According to Cambridge Dictionary culture is "the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time". In this definition the part of "particular time" is pivotal. We tend to forget that culture is not stagnant, there are constant changes happening to it. Migrations that happen nowadays more and more have resulted in multiculturalism and transculturalism. In the past, transcultural experiences were only accessible to elite; nowadays, it is something experienced globally.(Hansen, Nordin & Llena 2013, IX). Due to the Globalisation, influence of Internet culture and migrations cultural diffusion has been at its peak, so the cultural borders have become more and more blurred. Hybridity overrules in everything - it is the main trend of the 21st Century world.

#### **3.1. Key Characteristics of Culture**

Culture consists of "practices - the things that are done here and values - the way things should be done" (Triandis, Gelfand, Van Lange, Kruglanski & Higgins 2012). As Spencer-Oatey implies in her analysis of Culture and its elements, "we can describe 'how' a group constructs its environment and 'what' behaviour patterns are discernible among the members, but we often cannot understand the underlying logic – 'why' a group behaves the way it does." To understand a certain culture it is important to grasp the "why" behind a group's behaviour. The essence of an answer to this question lies in the set of values that is programmed in each cultural tribe. This set of values tend to get blended with a mindset of a person to the point that these values become assumptions which are usually taken for granted and discarded from awareness. (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 3.)

It is important to note, that culture defines our behaviour and the way this behaviour is interpreted (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 4). For that reason, in order to be understood correctly, behaviour nuances have to be thoroughly studied and carefully implemented. I specifically use the word ‘nuances’ to imply that there is an incredible amount of points that should be taken into account. For example, in a study published by American Psychological Association in the year 2011, it was found that the perception of facial expressions differs from culture to culture (Jack, Caldara & Schyns 2011). In my opinion implementation of cultural behaviour studies should be taken into considerations not only by business organisations but also by artists that are creating their work for a global audience.

Culture is not inherited from your parents. It is a learned concept that comes from the environment person grows up in. It can be seen in a figure 1 which aspects of “human mental programming” are inherited and which are learned (Hofstede 1994, 6).

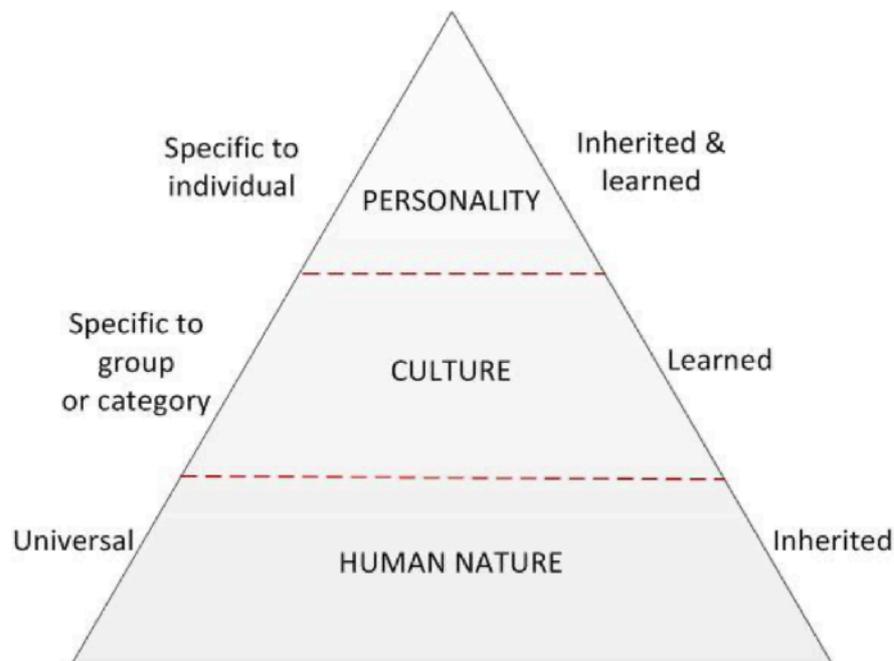


FIGURE 1. Three Levels of uniqueness in human mental programming in Hofstede's infographic.

Hofstede implies that during history people have been constantly overestimating the role of heritage and race, which resulted in the ideas of cultural superiority (Hofstede 1994, 5-6).

Culture is not distributed evenly among the whole group. As I have mentioned, people learn culture from their environment that has lots of layers and elements. This brings us to a conclusion that individual can possess more than one culture. The assumption that individual identifies only with one culture comes from the confusion of concepts such as National Identity or Ethnicity. (Hofstede 1994, 5-6.)

### **3.2. Culture, Ethnicity and Race**

Ethnicity is a term that is often confused with culture. However ethnicity refers to “a wide variety of groups who might share a language, historical origins, religion, identification with a common nation-state, or cultural system” (Lustig & Koester 1999, 33–36). For example, people who live in USA, but whose ancestors came from Italy, still maintain their Italian ethnicity even though they are not a part of European Culture. Another example are Jewish people that belong to the same ethnicity but can share different cultures. (Lustig & Koester 1999, 33–36.)

Race is a biological concept that addresses physical characteristics in appearances a person might have. It is a much wider term than culture or a nation. Sometimes race and culture go hand in hand together. An example of that is African American people in USA that have formed a particular set of cultural traits. A Nigerian person and African American person are a part of a same race, but they are from very different cultures. (Lustig & Koester 1999, 33–36.)

### **3.3. Multiculturalism and Transculturalism**

According to the Cambridge Dictionary multiculturalism is “the belief that different cultures within a society should all be given importance”. Many scholars ar-

gue that multiculturalism have proven to be problematic, due to the boundaries it creates. The coexistence of several cultures in the same area, doesn't guarantee their interaction and acceptance of each other. This is the reason why Cultural Diasporas are created and people never truly integrate and acknowledge the culture of a place they have moved into. (Cuccioletta 2002.)

Oppose of multiculturalism, the concept of transculturalism "emphasises the need for groups to identify common ground among cultures, and the need for the individual to acknowledge the foreign within oneself in order to be able to comprehend others." (Hansen, Nordin & Llana 2013, X). This idea is based on the concept of multiple identities within each person, and the ability of a person to break down the boundaries of cultural heritage that form person's identity (Cuccioletta 2002). I explain the concept of multiple Identities in Chapter 4.

### **3.4. Entertainment and Culture**

In this chapter I will refer to Culture as a universal concept in order to clearly see the role that technology has played in its transformation.

According to Andrew Postman (2017), the average screen time for an adult in USA is 74 hours per week. Technology not only has become a part of our culture, it has shaped it thoroughly. Memes, tweets, Facebook posts, Instagram influencers, YouTube videos, Netflix - we consume an incredible amount of entertainment and information every day. One of our biggest fears is losing a phone. Being away from the gadgets and not having an instant ability to check anything that comes to our mind 'hurts' us.

Entertainment is the way we consume information nowadays. Finding information that matters has become a challenge: "the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance," predicted Aldous Huxley in his 1932 dystopian novel "Brave New World". He describes a society as "trivial culture, preoccupied with some equivalent of the feelies, the orgy porgy, and the centrifugal bumblepuppy". (Postman 1985.) It is incredibly sad to admit that this IS our current reality.

## 4. PERCEPTION OF SELF

In the previous chapter I have named key characteristics of Culture, how it is often confused with other terms, and I have reflected on the modern culture nowadays. However, we still cannot talk about cultural identity, because we need to define Self and Identity in order to fully understand how artists represent their cultural identity in self-portraits.

### 4.1. Personality, Identity and Self

In figure 1 “Three Levels of uniqueness in human mental programming”, which I have talked about in previous chapter, on top of the infographic Hofstede(1994,6) has placed a term ‘Personality’. It is an individual concept that is both inherited and learned. Personality is a set of behaviours that reflect our identity.

Identity used to be thought of as a combination of personality traits established in a childhood and more or less fixed for the rest of a life. The main trait of identity was its sameness and singularity. “Inconsistency of personality” was considered to be an illness up until the end of a twentieth century when a number of scholars (Gergen 1994, Melucci 1997, Rosenberg 1997) have started to look at identity from a different angle. (Sökefeld 1999.)

Nowadays, the concept of identity is defined by its plurality, not singularity. As Sökefeld (1999) implies, “There can be identity only if there is more than one identity, and in this sense difference constitutes and precedes identity.” An ability to handle multiple identities is an essential part of a Self. Identities are building blocks that form the image of a Self. We tend to handle and adjust our identities in social situation when there is a need to relate to other people. However, some social situations can lead to a conflict of personal identities. Under social pressure, this conflict results in identity shift inside the Self. (Sökefeld 1999, 417.)

## 4.2. Culture, Identity and Self

Culture does not equal Identity. According to Hofstede (2001), identity is a reflection of the question *Where do I belong*; your identity shows how you differ from other people. It is possible to have different feelings towards the subject and still share same set of values. “A shared identity needs a shared Other” (Hofstede 2001,10): German person in Germany will feel very different from all other Europeans such as Italians and French. However, all of them will feel European in Asia. (Hofstede 2001,10.)

As I have discussed previously, in a modern world culture and identity are not stable concepts. Culture is effected by rapid changes happening in a world, while Identities are modified within us during our whole life. In order to measure and evaluate concepts of identity and culture, there is a need for a certain constant. The only relatively stable constant that is left is Self; I will talk about why it is important for a Self to be stable in the next subchapter. Sökefeld (1999) proposes a concept of a Universal Self, just like we think of culture in an everyday life - without separating it in blocks. This conceptualisation of the Self can be achieved in “self-monitoring of self” from everything else and “self-monitoring of self’s relationship with others”. (Sökefeld 1999.)

## 4.3. Self-verification

In a nutshell, Self-verification theory is a desire of people to be seen by the society in the same way as they see themselves. This gives them stability due to the predictability of group’s perception of a certain individual. Inability to self-verify yourself deprives individuals of having meaningful connections with other people. (Swann Jr, Van Lange, Kruglanski & Higgins 2012).

Predictability overall has always been favoured by the community and was an important element of survival. “Mutual Predictability” was a key element of a successful work division in a group, thus forcing people to develop stable self-views. Psychology confirms that stability of Self plays an important role in healthy mentality. (Swann Jr. et al. 2012.)

People tend to create the opportunities for self-verification. They tend to create environments for self-verifications and they tend to constantly remind people of their views by subconsciously giving them “identity cues”. This includes dressing up in a certain way, picking a name for an email/Instagram account or putting up a certain mood. (Swann Jr. et al. 2012.)

As Swan Jr. (2012) implies, “People tend to interpret information in ways that reinforce their self-views”. People with positive high-esteem remember more positive things and have a preference for more positive evaluations and people with low self-esteem remember mostly negative things and prefer negative evaluations. I will talk about self esteem in the next subchapter. (Swann Jr. et al. 2012.)

#### **4.4. Belongingness**

The need to belong is part of our human nature. According to Baumeister’s (2012) theory of Belonging “people have a fundamental, strong, and pervasive motivation to form and maintain at least a certain minimum number of social relationships”. There is a certain level of primacy behind this term. People are willing to risk their lives in order to be accepted by a certain group and prove their self-esteem. (Baumeister, Van Lange, Kruglanski & Higgins 2012.)

Self Esteem is a personal mechanism that keeps Belongingness on track. It is set in us by nature, to make sure that we are a part of a society in order to survive and reproduce. There are four elements that are valued by a primal society and thus are measured by our self esteem: likability, competence, attractiveness and moral stability. Based on this, Baumeister comes to a very interesting conclusion that the relationship that is happening between people and with an outside world is of great importance, because our brain adapts to these changes and what goes inside of us and how we feel is a reflection of an outer. (Baumeister et al. 2012.)

Baumeister argues with theories of Freud that in his opinion are outdated and overused by people out of the psychology field. Freud's ideas about human psyche are based on "conflicts between individual and society"; Baumeister bases his ideas on "cooperation between individual and society" and calls humans "cultural animals". He says that culture is "a humankind's biological strategy" and an evolved way of socialisation. The need to belong entails the need to make culture. (Baumeister et al. 2012.)

## 5. CULTURAL IDENTITY IN SELF PORTRAITS

Self-Portraits in contemporary arts have evolved from a mere documentation of self-appearance. Nowadays, artists are more interested in exploring their identities by “challenging relevant notions of what it should be” or by “emphasising the open-ended nature of the exploration itself” (Minessale 2013). I look at the artists that I find relevant to the representation of our current world and culture as well as my practice. The artists that I have chosen explore the Concepts of Cultural identities from new angles and perspectives.

### 5.1. Cultural Heritage

Zhang Huan was born in 1965 in Anyang, China and currently resides both in Shanghai and New York. He is considered to be one of the most significant artists in Chinese contemporary art scene. Zhang Huan is known for his big scale works and for using his body mercilessly to comment on topics of identity and cultural issues. (Ocula 2015.)

The artwork I discuss is called 'Family Tree' (picture 1). To create photos for his serial Self-Portrait, Zhang Huan asked 3 calligraphers to write on his face everything he says about his family history, spirit and his own fate. The calligraphers were told to keep writing despite the overlapping of characters and meanings: “More culture is slowly smothering us and turning our faces black.” (Zhang Huan 2000.)

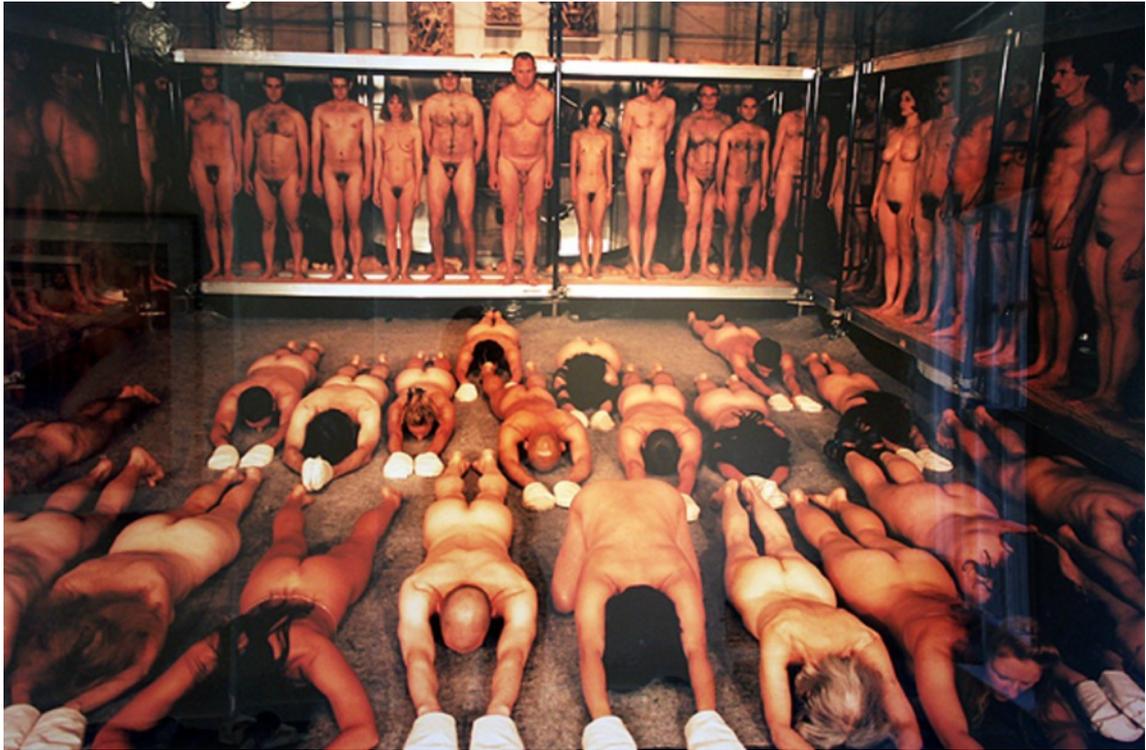
The disappearance of Identity under the layers of Cultural Heritage is an aspect that Huang address in a visually astonishing way. Huan Specifically uses Chinese characters, he is understood only by people that might share the same language with him; in the eyes of a western world these words don't make any sense but the gesture is violent. Cultural history might be a part of us but it doesn't define us. (Hofstede 1994, 6.)



Picture 1. Family Tree (Zhang Huan 2000)

## 5.2. Belonging.

Another two works created by Zhang Huan that also speak of Culture but from a slightly different perspective are performances 'My America' (picture 2) and 'My New York' (picture 3). In these works we can see the struggle of an artist to fit in a new culture since his move from China to US.



PICTURE 2. My America. Hard to Acclimatize (Zhang Huan 1999)

The story behind My America is very interesting. One day Zhang Huan was walking around the streets of New York and was offered some bread. Artist didn't understand this at first but later he was told that this is how Americans treat homeless people. This caused a feeling of embarrassment and humiliation

and inspired Zhang Huan to create the performance about the way Americans treat immigrants. (Heartney 2007.)

Zhang Huan asked 56 Americans to strip down their clothes and perform 12 rituals from Tibetan Buddhism and tai chi with Zhang Huan. The 13th act separated the artists from the crowd. The crowd judgmentally stood around Huan and threw pieces of bread at vulnerable artist who felt alienated from the crowd: "The reference to eastern spiritual practices that preceded this hostile action pointed to the gap between the cultures of East and West." (Heartney 2007). With this performance Huan shows how at a first sight Americans embrace multiculturalism, but due to their "spiritual poverty" they are unable to fully accept the culture of others.

Huan is often naked in his performances and asks others to do the same. He says that clothes are our "cultural shells" and only by removing them people can feel their real Self, "the body is the proof of identity" (Huan 1998).



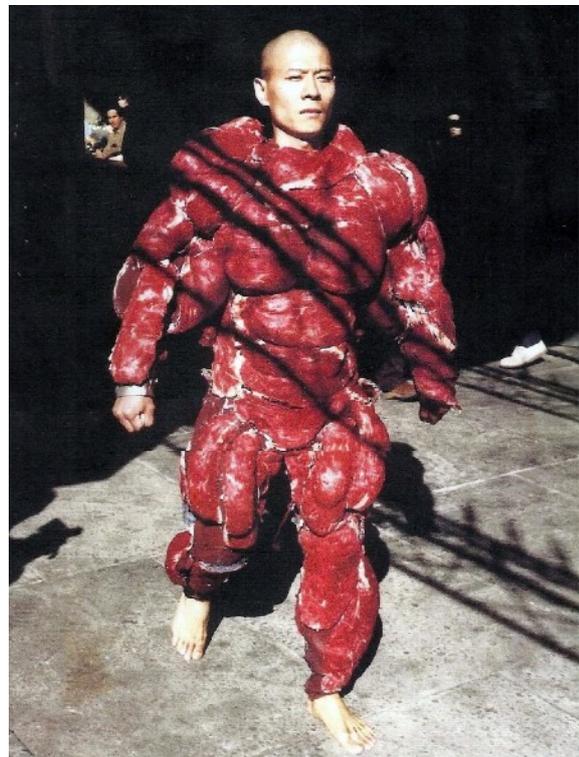
PICTURE 3. My New York (Zhang Huan 2002)

When it comes to Huan's work 'My New York' (picture 3), we can see the changes that happened to artist during his years in his adopted city. In the city,

where everybody stand up for themselves, it is not uncommon to lose humanity and unleash an animalistic side in yourself. Zhang Huan thought that he needed to put on a protective meat suit in order to fit in. In this costume Huan walked out of a gallery to the streets of New York, parading around the block and giving people doves to release. The release of doves is sign of recognition and liberation - gesture taken from Buddhism. (Heartney 2007.)

This performance was incredibly powerful. The “cultural shell” Huan had to put on himself was a reflection of a ruthless culture he was trying to survive in and be accepted by it.

Eight years later, the performance “My New York” has inspired American singer Lady Gaga to put on a meat dress made of raw beef for 2010 MTV awards (picture 4). The dress reflected the same idea: cruelty of culture we live in and a need to be an animal yourself to fit in and achieve something in this unforgiving world.



PICTURE 4. Meat Dress 2010 (Dazed 2015); My New York (Zhang Huan 2002)

### 5.3. Confessional Art or the essence of Self

Tracey Emin 1963 is one of the brightest examples of confessional art. Her artwork is a genuine representation of herself; everything she does is very personal and to some extent uncomfortably personal. She calls herself “the essence” of her work: she is her own inspiration and her best artwork. (The South Bank Show 2001.)

Reinvention of art forms is one of Tracey Emin’s principles. Creating something in a form that was made 100 years ago or more doesn’t strive her as being artistic. Some people produce incredible pictures, but it doesn’t make them artists. There is no thought process behind those perfect images they make. You do not need to be incredibly technical in order to produce art. (The South Bank Show 2001.)

Tracey Emin is a sincere reflection of our culture. The veil of fakeness and thrills that people tend to cover themselves up are bravely taken off. Even though that some people find her work shocking, Emin says that she doesn’t strive to be controversial - “I do what I do”. (The South Bank Show 2001.)

As Amelia Jones implies, due to technological boom and digitalisation, “we don’t know how to exist anymore without imagining ourselves as a picture” (Jones 2016). However, Tracey Emin has certainly managed to perfect “self-portraiture” without implementing a physical image of herself. There is an incredible amount of works that I could use as an example, but I’d like to talk about Emin’s work that she produced in 1998 during the hardest time of her life.

My Bed (picture 5) is a representation of a time when Tracey Emin has spent several days depressed in her bed drinking, smoking, eating junk food and not willing to move or live. After several days laying in this bed, she has finally found strength in herself to stand up. She crawled to kitchen to drink some water, returned back to the bedroom and looked down at her bed: there were bottles of spirits, stained knickers with menstrual blood, condoms, multiple cartons of cig-

arettes and lots of trash. That's it, she thought - this is a ready piece. That's how her most famous artwork was born. (Meis n.d.)



PICTURE 5. My Bed (Tracey Emin 1998)

The amount of backlash Tracey Emin received for presenting her bed in 1998 at Tate was massive. There was almost no sympathy coming from press: "Everyone can put their bed in a gallery and call it art!" - "Well, they didn't. Nobody has ever done that before" was response given by Emin during the Sky interview. (The South Bank Show 2001.)

Overall, Emin loves creating artwork that makes people talk. That's what drives her. I certainly agree with this statement: the discussion of artwork, backlashes and support - they are all a part of an art. The better an artwork - the more talk there is about it.

Meis analyses 'My Bed' in her essay 'The Empty Bed: Tracey Emin and the Persistent Self' (n.d.). She says that the bed is not the most important element of this work; the absence of Emin is. The fact that she has risen from this bed, from this "testimony to the despair of a spiritual bottom" is what makes this important. (Meis n.d.)

Nowadays, there is nothing left of that woman that was laying in the bed sinking in depression. This bed is like a ghost of a woman she once was. In that bed Emin left a part of her identity, a layer of herself she didn't want to wear anymore. My Bed is a reflection of a time that is never coming back.

#### **5.4. Denial of Culture**

Tehching Hsieh is well-known for his one year art performances that show the essence of human nature. Being acutely committed to every project he does, he is willing to go to extremes of discomfort for a length of a whole year. From 1981 until 1982, Hsieh stayed for one year out on the streets of New York without seeking shelter. From July 1983 until July 1984 he was tied by a rope to another artist Linda Montano. However, the piece that I want to concentrate on has started his career in US - the cage isolation piece. (Schlenzka 2016.)

To understand Tehching Hsieh's performances, we need to look at his background. He was born in 1950 in Taiwan. He dropped out of school, started painting and experimenting with performances. In 1974 he came to USA and has been an illegal immigrant for 14 years until he was granted amnesty. During his first years in New York, Tehching was afraid to be arrested and didn't even go to metro or explore the Art Scene. He has worked in restaurant but eventually, in the year 1978 he wrote to influential art critiques around the country and notified them about his upcoming one year art performance - Cage Piece (picture 6). (Delaney 2017.)

**ONE YEAR PERFORMANCE**  
by **SAM HSIEH**



Open to public on dates circled from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

<b>1978 to 1979</b>	
<b>SEPT</b>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 <b>30</b>
<b>OCT</b>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 <b>21</b> 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
<b>NOV</b>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 <b>11</b> 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
<b>DEC</b>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 <b>23</b> 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
<b>JAN</b>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 <b>13</b> 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
<b>FEB</b>	1 2 <b>3</b> 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 <b>24</b> 25 26 27 28
<b>MAR</b>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 <b>17</b> 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
<b>APR</b>	1 2 3 4 5 6 <b>7</b> 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 <b>28</b> 29 30
<b>MAY</b>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 <b>19</b> 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
<b>JUNE</b>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 <b>9</b> 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 <b>30</b>
<b>JULY</b>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 <b>21</b> 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
<b>AUG</b>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 <b>11</b> 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
<b>SEPT</b>	<b>1</b> 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 <b>15</b> 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 <b>29</b> 30

**111 HUDSON ST. 2FL N.Y.C. 10013**

PICTURE 6. One Year Performance 1978-1979. (Tehching Hsieh 1979)

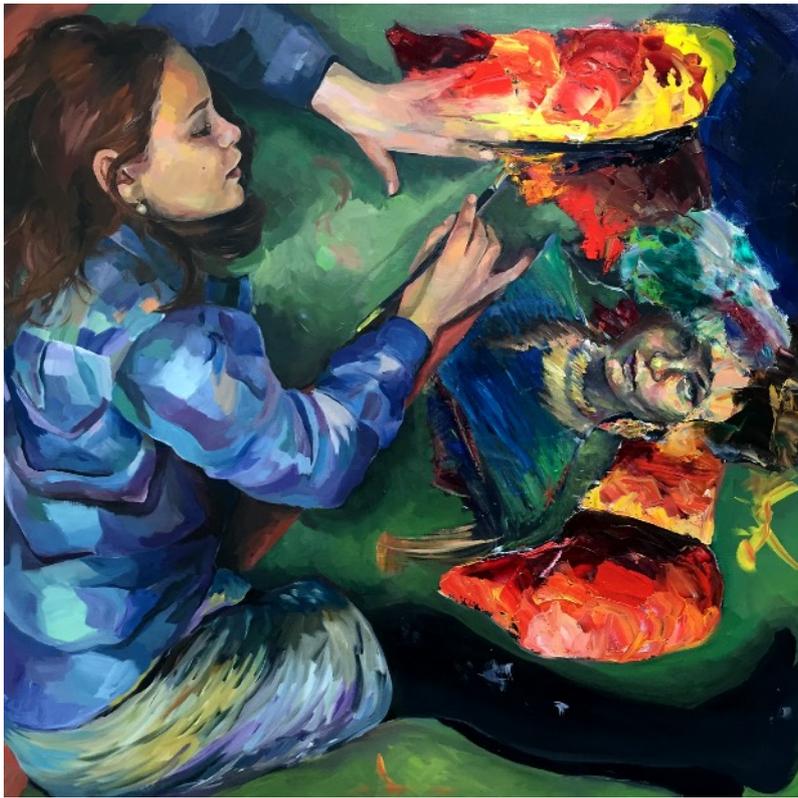
The idea of Hsieh's performance was to isolate himself of everything that relates to culture: interactions with people, reading, writing, entertainment, etc. He was daily brought food and clothes and his waste was cleaned from the cage. Hsieh also had a number of open public days when anybody could view his performance for a couple of hours. (Schlenzka 2016.)

Denial of Culture is the denial of belonging. Tehching Hsieh was exploring a concept of belonging and isolation and how hard it is to deny human nature and the need to socialise. He has proven that it is possible to refrain from cultural interactions for one year, but with a certain level of mental pain. This perform-

ance is considered to be one of most extreme ones in an art history (Delaney 2017). But was he really denying his need to belong? I would say that he was doing the opposite: if we analyse this performance and apply Baumeister's theory of Belonging (see chapter 4.4), we can see that by doing this piece in the circumstances Hsieh was, artist had a dominating urge for a need to belong among the art community. This need of acceptance was more important than a concern for his mental health.

## 6. PRODUCTION OF THE MOVING ON DOCUMENTARY

I have previously made self-portraits of myself but they never felt anything more than just a depiction of my appearance on canvas. I got tired of creating purely representational art (picture 7).



PICTURE 7. Self Portrait (Diana Kamaletdinova 2016)

While doing a research for this thesis, I've noticed that I cannot stop reading about Tracey Emin. I fell in love with her work and process behind it. I've realised there is a strong need for some freshness in my art practise. This self-reflection made me rethink my whole attitude towards art and open my mind to ideas that I have been too scared to execute, due to my striving for aesthetically pleasing images.

Unlike Zhang Huan's works that talk about his struggle to embrace foreign culture, I wanted to talk about a certain comfort that life in multicultural society

brings me. I think it all came to a realisation of personal values and a meaning that I place in the concepts of Belonging and Home.

### 6.1. Moving ON Documentary

Home for me is not necessary represented by places and cities. I have been changing “homes” almost every year ever since I moved away from Russia at the age of 17. My home is people that I can connect with. It is an emotional recharge and mental relaxation that happens with people I call family and friends (picture 8). Throughout their life quite many people change cities or countries, they create homes while being surrounded by people from different cultures.



PICTURE 8. Moving ON (Diana Kamaletdinova 2019)

My thoughts on culture, identity and home strongly resonate with Wim Wenders's 1989 documentary "A Notebook on Cities and Clothes" (1989). He talks about constant changes that are happening in our lives; that everything changes - the cities we live in, our homes, our habits and our clothes. Wim Wenders also talks about the instability of identities due to those rapid changes. (Wenders 1989.) I have discussed the topic of unstable identity in the chapter 4.2. 'Culture, Identity and Self'. There, I have mentioned a concept of Universal Self introduced by Sökefeld (1999). In my documentary 'Moving ON', this Universal stable Self is precisely what I use as a base for my film. I am the only constant in this film; I am the observer and 'the lens' through which the audience experiences a documentary.

The dominant image of Wim Wenders's documentary is a highway ride (picture 8). The never-ending movement and travelling makes us think of changes and time. I personally strongly relate to this image, thus I have taken its elements and placed it in my own documentary 'Moving ON'. There, to depict this constant moving I use an image of a train (picture 9).



PICTURE 9. Notebook on Cities and Clothes (Wim Wenders 1989)



PICTURE 10. Moving ON (Diana Kamaletdinova 2019)

The train ride I 'take' in my film is a nostalgic journey through my memories that reflect important moments of my life. The scenes I show in a documentary, are impressions of my inner world, the tone of a film has a balance of chaos (picture 11) and serenity (picture 12).

The similarity of emotions I feel with people from different cultures, makes me think of the way we tend to unintentionally build cultural barriers and stereotypes at times when they can be easily transpassed.



PICTURE 11. Moving ON (Diana Kamaletdinova 2019)



PICTURE 12. Moving ON (Diana Kamaletdinova 2019)

To separate the serene moments from the more emotionally charged ones, I use black and white and coloured pictures. This decision is inspired by dream-like scenes from Tarkovsky's 1975 film 'Mirror' (picture 12).



PICTURE 13. Mirror (Tarkovsky 1975)

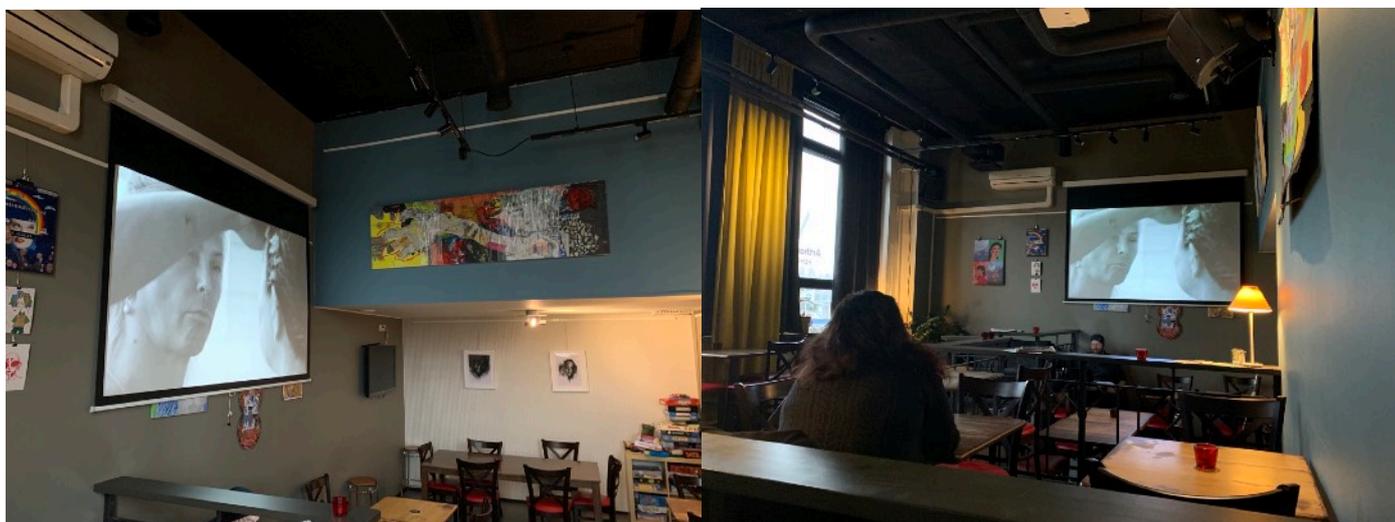
Tarkovsky's *Mirror* has made a very big impact on my own documentary 'Moving ON'. Tarkovsky's approach to editing and picking scenes in this film is very similar to a way our memories work. Associations and emotions are the driven force of his work. After all, 'Mirror' is a semi-autobiographical film. This way of working seemed very appropriate for my own film. I didn't want a linear style storytelling in my work. I wanted to show impressions and emotions. I wanted to show a raw 'live painting' of my inner world.

## 6.2. Screening of a film

I have showed my documentary 'Moving ON' at Arthouse Cafe Kehräsaari in Tampere on 17th of November 2019 (picture 14&15). I will also exhibit my work at Gallery Himmelblau in the Atomic Jungle Degree show 2.4.-24.4.2020.



PICTURE 14. Screening of 'Moving ON' at Arthouse Cafe Kehräsaari (Diana Kamaletdinova 2019)



PICTURE 15. Screening of 'Moving ON' at Arthouse Cafe Kehräsaari (Diana Kamaletdinova 2019)

## 7. DISCUSSION

Once a year I tend to check Mark Manson's website for a proper pep talk. This time, I stumbled upon a very interesting point that actually made a lot of sense in a reference to my thesis. In that article, Manson was telling about Tim Ferris' short video, where he was explaining the idea behind "identity diversification". In the world of entrepreneurship it is always smart to have several business, in case one of them goes down. Same can be applied to a person's identity: it is smart to diversify aspects of your life, so in case your social life fails you, you still have something to keep you happy and fulfilled. I suppose, for that same reason I have smartly diversified my cultures...

The theory part of this thesis and research behind it has clarified for me the meanings behind culture and identity. In the past, I have been constantly confused with these terms which made self-analysis of my work a big problem. The way that contemporary artists have worked with these concepts has inspired me for a creation of my own cultural identity self-portrait in a form of a personal documentary.

The realization that identity of a person is a non-stagnant concept which changes under the pressure of environment has helped me to understand that my cultural identity has and will be changing throughout my life due to my encounters with new cultures, places and people. The aspect of my cultural identity diversification under the pressure of multicultural environment has laid a foundation for my personal documentary 'Moving ON'.

The beauty of a work that I have created is in its relative infinity. 'Moving ON' is a personal reflective diary. With time my 'train ride' is going to get longer and longer, filled with more events, emotions and memories. I have created a project that I can come back over the years and it will open more and more, just like a confessional work of Tracey Emin, Zhang Huan's 'Family tree' and Tehching Hsieh's one year performances. Moving ON will become not only a reflection of myself but also a reflection of cultural changes and a reflection of my personal Cultural Identity.

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