

Marjut Silvennoinen

I AM THE DOOR- JOURNEYS THROUGH TIME, SPACE AND  
BEYOND

Degree Programme in Fine Art  
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In this thesis, sculptor Marjut Silvennoinen explores the different influences which have formed her outlook on life and art. She intertwines reminiscences of her childhood experiences with her reflections of current art trends in order to comment upon the collective consciousness of our society.

She questions the value of Contemporary Art, art education and their future, and contemplates the role art plays in bringing about a universal spiritual transformation. To do so she has explored Socially Engaged Art, the role of women, and an emerging body of Internet support groups catering mainly to the women seeking to regain their spiritual and creative power.

She examines her own role as an artist, and the current role that art has within society, questioning both its merit, and its reception. She asks us to reflect on whether Contemporary Art has the power to touch the viewer – to convey to him or her a deeper understanding – or whether the art community is content to contend with baser emotions of shock and disgust?

# MINÄ OLEN OVI- MATKOJA AJASSA, PAIKASSA JA RAJATTOMUUDESSA

Silvennoinen, Marjut

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Tässä opinnäytetyössä kuvanveistäjä Marjut Silvennoinen tutkii niitä vaikutteita, jotka ovat muodostaneet hänen käsityksiään elämästä ja taiteesta. Teksti muodostuu lapsuuden muistojen, taiteen ja tietoisuuden vuoropuhelusta.

Hän kyseinalastaa nykytaiteen arvoa, arvomaailmaa ja taidekoulutusta, sekä miettii kädentaitojen tärkeyttä korkeatasoisen taiteen luomisessa. Jättääkö nykytaide katsojan kylmäksi, ja rajoittuvatko ilmaisukeinot katoavien kädentaitojen myötä? Silvennoinen pohtii taiteen osuutta yhteisön tietoisuuden mittarina ja yhteiskuntamme muovaajana. Hän tutkii yhteisöllistä taidetta, taiteen tulevaisuutta ja taiteilijoiden osuutta tuleviin yhteiskunnallisiin muutoksiin, ja miettii miten yleisö vastaanottaa ja arvottaa taidetta. Pystyykö nykytaide vaikuttamaan syvällisesti katsojaansa ja avar-tamaan hänen tietoisuutta itsestään, vai onko nykytaide tyytyväinen sensaationhakui-suuteensa käyttämällä keinoja, jotka herättävät katsojassa inhoa ja kauhua?

Silvennoinen pohtii myös omaa rooliaan taiteilijana, naisena ja yhteiskunnallisena vaikuttajana.

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## PREFACE

I left again, my small feet stomping the ground. How I hated them! Aren't they unfair? Now I am so angry that I will never, ever, ever go back again. I go to the forest, to that deep, dark womb of spruces and moss. I move fast up the hill to the place where I was betrayed. Yes, she betrayed me too. There on the path lay the ugly pinecones that open up to look like monsters. They had hurt my bare feet and ever since I had been frightened of them, but my friend, a rare friend, had taken my hand and forced me to touch them. I jump over them. I am not scared of them any more but I have stopped trusting her.

My little body is full of fire. Outrageous, they are all outrageous! Now I will never, ever, ever, ever go back again! I run past a small shack that is rarely lived in. Is anyone there? I want to run past unnoticed. I don't want anyone to see me. Under the thicket and hanging branches of the trees until I have disappeared from sight. I slow down. The moss is soft green. The sunlight dapples on it and invites me to the soft embrace of its play of light and shadow. I am safe.

I know this place very well. I recognise every stone and root of a tree on the pathway through the forest. Today I go far. I am going to cross the meadow of cows in the woods. I don't like cows. They have massive bodies and when I run they lift up their tails and start running too. They come too close to me when I pick wild strawberries. Once a cow tried to eat my shoe. In fact cows are worse than pinecones.

Now I climb through the barbwire fence to the safe side when I hear cowbells nearby. I am too small to climb over the fence. Sometimes my clothes get stuck in the wire and it is difficult to free myself in a hurry. Truthfully speaking I get stuck quite often. Barbwire is also bad.

I return at dusk. I am full of peace and happiness. I have forgotten the reason for my anger.

It is an early summer morning. Everyone else is either asleep or still in bed. I slip out of the house and take the path to the wild strawberry meadow. The sun is already bright and warm but still my feet get wet with dew. I run with excitement, through

the woods, through the gate to the meadow. This is my most-beloved place. I climb to a flat rock that is surrounded with wild strawberry plants. Carefully I turn each strawberry over to see if it is ripe. I only pick the red ones. I squat on the rock and the sun warms my back. The peace of the meadow takes over. Everything around me sparkles and sings songs of ecstasy.

But I am growing up. The bright summers and dark winters follow one other. A cold winter is inevitable after a warm summer. This dark winter night I am going to ski around our field once, twice, three times. I am afraid of wolves but I am going to overcome my fear. My eyes are getting used to the dark and instead of just following the track blindly I start to see the forms and shapes of the trees and their shadows around me. I ski fast as the fear nips at my heels. Let go of your fear! I teach myself courage. Darkness is my friend.

The wanderlust when once it hits you is insatiable. I must go again, travel further afield. Not because I want to see something specific. I just need to go. The childhood terrain has grown too familiar, the new urban living in a small town too repetitive. I am on fire but in a different way than before. I am not afraid of what lies ahead of me. I am in that foolish age of feeling invincible.

Before, many things that had fascinated and bewitched me, had also been scary. Everything had been new, unknown, exciting and nearby. It had been enough to climb a tower, stand on a cliff and look into a cave. Now the unknown terrain is a foreign land, an exotic culture, a hot climate. Remote corners of Mother Earth are calling to be explored. I grew up surrounded by forests and I want to get off the beaten track.

This time I go more consciously without questioning my courage. In my heart I feel that everything will be good, always. So I venture into the world, the visible one. I sleep in a yurt in Inner Mongolia, cycle the grasslands with a compass as my only companion, walk the desert in the Gulf of Kutch, visit religious Hindu festivals and dance a few hot lambadas.

I meet friends, enemies, tricksters, saviors and one or two ogres. There are endless things to explore and I believe that I would explore these new foreign lands forever. But as in all stories in mine also there is a twist of fate that comes to play. A spell is cast and I become a captive of the Grand Ogre whom one may call the mundane life.

A duty bound, monotonous, day-to-day routine in which I don't know my Monday from my Saturday.

I move into a city and I start to forget the wild soul of a young woman that once roamed free. Years go by unnoticed, happenings unregistered but there is yet one more place to venture to, a place I get to know out of boredom. It is a Great Big Adventure, a Journey within. Unknowingly I dive in head first and start a new long chapter in my life. My new journey turns out to be the most demanding one, a journey without detailed maps or ready answers, and the one from which I may never, ever, ever return.

Then Art and Yoga step into my life.

## 1 GOING DEEPER

It is compelling to explain the journey within. There seem to be no beginning or end to it. I don't know if this particular journey started from the moment of birth, beyond, or years later when I felt the rising of consciousness, awareness of the world around me as a teenager. Perhaps the journey was pure and innocent when there was no awareness of the world outside myself as a child. But the journey took place, space and form. Whether it was pre-planned or just happened according to the law of cause and action I cannot tell. It is clear that there has been a Higher Guidance leading me through all experiences and supporting me through trials and tribulations. When as an adult I entered the inner journey one thing certainly lead to another, one revelation to the next and my outer life followed. I cannot tell if it has been according to a script or not.

People think that meditation is about bliss and spacing out, feeling the void and having no thoughts. Going within with meditation is much more than that. It is a journey that demands discipline and readiness to look at oneself honestly, to be prepared to make conscious changes. Spacing out and looking for bliss is but a cosmic coma that doesn't necessarily lead to awareness. Inside oneself lies a journey through darkness

and light. Transformation is often painful. Inner readiness is needed to open the door and to step in.

In the Hindu mythological epic Vishnu Puran which consists of cosmogonical, theological, astronomical and physical knowledge, there is a story about the churning of a milky ocean. The Supreme Godhead Vishnu gives advice to the Gods that in order to defeat the Demons and to keep the balance of good and evil in the Universe, they must acquire the nectar of immortality by churning the milky ocean. To accomplish the task they must join forces with the Demons. This is a parable of how one must churn the mind in order to bring out merits and demerits. When the milky ocean is churned the poison comes out first. The same way by churning the mind the poison must come out before the nectar can be attained. Meditation makes one come face to face with demerits.

Journeying within has made me question myself, my actions, my motives as an artist and art itself. The world we live in has reached a materialistic peak and art has followed.

Art is an expression of the collective consciousness of people and it is this consciousness that has experienced rapid changes throughout the history of Contemporary Art. Art has become something to be consumed, hurriedly looked at and accepted as art because it has been placed into a public gallery or a prestigious museum. From the ready made art to "happenings", almost everything has become a form of art. Moreover the "shocks factor" has been appointed the new currency within art. Artists like Damian Hirst, Tracy Emin, Sarah Lucas and many others, have gained fame and attention by shocking their audience. They have given us half a cow in formaldehyde, a tampon-strewn bed, human excrement and drunken bouts in a toilet.

The reality of this "shock art" becoming widely popular and accepted throughout the entire Western Art world, without a serious questioning its value, is a significant point in determining the general level of awareness in our society. I believe that now as a society we are standing on the threshold of a new beginning, the dawn of a new consciousness, art will progress with the developing and transforming human consciousness. Art helps us to build our collective consciousness and the future of our civilisation depends on it. Where I stand in this is somewhat a mystery even to my-



self. The beauty of life is that nothing stays the same. We are in a continuous flux of movement and change. The Ocean has churned a lot of poison and I am hoping for the nectar to emerge.

## 2 JULIAN SPALDING

Julian Spalding, a well-known curator, art critic and founder of two Glasgow Museums, has been rightly dubbed the maverick of the art world. Spalding has surprised artists and art critics by questioning the value of twenty-first century art and arguing that some of it isn't art at all. He has openly expressed his view that art of our time is in a terrible state. I find his recent writings refreshing and promising for finally there is someone, who despite his impeccable credentials in the art world, has the courage to speak out.

Spalding is the author of *The Eclipse of Art: Tackling the Crisis of Art Today*, a book that is based on forty years of looking at and thinking of what he terms "modern art." The book starts with the blunt title of his Introduction: "Why You Are Right Not To Like Modern Art." Then he follows with an explanation:

"This book has been written for those people who, though they enjoy art in general, have become confused and disenchanted by the art of our times. It has been written for those who feel sure they can respond to art and want to remain open-minded, but can see very little merit in what is being promoted as art today."

Julian Spalding boldly stands in stark contrast to the prevailing view that anything can be art if experts say it is. What makes one an expert is as questionable as what makes one an artist in the present day. Perhaps Spalding comes very close to being right about art in his insight into the nature of it:

"We reserve the word "art" for those rare creations that stir our emotions and stimulate our thoughts profoundly... If a work of art is not centred on human-

ity, what is its form? ...The key thing that all artists have to learn...is how to make images that express their feelings and ideas... What matters is what a work of art is about...The meaning of a work of art is locked into the process or its creation... Looking at...art makes one feel more fully aware of one's thoughts..., more exposed to one's emotions..., more integrated, more composed—more in a word, conscious.”

Most interestingly Spalding writes about the deterioration of art education since World War II. In his view the leading culprit was artist and colour theorist Josef Albers, who moved to America from Germany. Albers, like his work, was very purist and theoretical and his art format consisted of superimposed squares and rectangles of different colours. According to Spalding;

“Albers’s work was the epitome of post-war abstraction, and the teaching of art suffered as the language of art was decimated. There was no point in learning to draw a figure if you would never have to paint one. So generations of artists emerged who had never learnt to draw... Before long artists did not dare to put pencil on paper for fear of exposing themselves and their incompetence. But then many argued that drawing, so long regarded as the foundation of all visual creativity, was anti-art because it was too personal.”

Spalding is not the only one who has lamented the decline of learning the skill of visual arts. Decades earlier the painter-teacher R. H. Ives Gammell in his book *The Twilight of Painting* (published in 1946) offered this evaluation:

“ The ultimate importance of Modern Painting in the history of art will be seen to lie in the fact that it discredited and virtually destroyed the great technical traditions of European painting, laboriously built up through the centuries by a long succession of men of genius. The loss of these traditions has deprived our potential painters of their rightful heritage, a heritage without which it will be impossible for them to give full scope to such talent they may possess.”

After openly criticising Damian Hirst's art and calling him a talentless conman Spalding was banned from seeing Hirst's Tate exhibition in September 2012.

### 3 EDUCATION vs. INTUITION

My own experience of art education has been a disappointing one. There are a growing number of young students admitted to art schools who are looking to develop their craft skills. Many schools cannot accommodate to this rising demand. The skills are either scarce or the teachers willingness to share them with their students leaves a lot to be desired. The current system favours the theoretical rather than practical approach to art. The conceptual art tradition is to think, not to make, and this attitude has firmly established its place in art education. To really develop a craft skill is a gradual process and it takes time and effort to train the hand and eye to work together.

After struggling with the conceptual approach to art education I have personally come to a conclusion that an apprenticeship system is needed in order to become a competent artist.

The real reward of learning transpires from struggling to develop a skill and then mastering it.

When I was 5-years-old I taught myself to read from my elder sister's A B C-book. The beginning was very hard, and I used to work myself into tears of frustration and anger for not understanding the very first sentence in the book. I can still feel that emotion rising within me as a child helplessly looking at pictures and trying to make sense of the letters and their meaning in constructing a word. "Read to me, read to me" was my constant cry to the adults around me but they did not have time. Then an amazing thing happened, I broke the code and read the sentence: Oma maa mansikka, muu maa mustikka which translates to English as "My homeland is a strawberry, a foreign land is a blueberry."

There was no going back now and I devoured all printed matter to read although at home this was in very limited supply. I longed for something to practise my new skill on. My mother had a Bible and that was the very first book I read. I took an immense

dislike to St. Paul from that reading and many times as an adult I have been wondering what it was that struck my child's mind with such an aversion. Obviously Jesus was my favourite.

I have never forgotten the first sentence I learned to read even though I have spent the major part of my life in a blueberry rather than a strawberry. My experience has been that if one puts enough time and effort into something he or she has a burning desire for, success is inevitable. There is a way to shorten the process and that is learning from someone who already knows. All professional educators and teachers should aim to shorten their student's learning curve. Without trained craft skills, artists cannot bring forth the strength of their expression.

The key element of my own art comes from intuition. My art is created in the process of making and without this process no work of mine could exist. A perfect marriage between skill and intuition is the ideal combination I am seeking to achieve.

It would be wonderful to gain back the child's open approach to art and life:

I loved a dog. Every now and then from nowhere he came to our house. I didn't know whose dog he was. He just appeared. My sister was afraid of the dog. The dog was big, black and shaggy. He was my delight. No-one else liked the dog and the dog liked no-one else but me. We rolled on the ground and I rode on his back. I loved him so much that I ran indoors to get him my most treasured belongings; a dummy and a blanket. I told him that he could keep them but my mum took them back to the house. Then the dog disappeared and didn't come back any more.

I loved a tree. It was a big, old spruce with a massive trunk and low hanging branches that formed a shelter underneath it. Around it lingered a mild scent of resin and needles. The bark of the tree was dark, hard and prickly, its roots were thick and bulging out of the ground. My sisters and brothers went to school. I went to sit underneath the tree. I ate sandwiches wrapped in paper that made lot of noise and drank milk from a bottle. It was my school. I learnt a lot about peace from the tree. One day my dad cut the tree down. He said it was old and dangerous. For the first time in my life I was in mourning.

I loved the old vicar. He had baptised me and wore a robe when he visited us. His face radiated joy and his entire being emanated warmth. I wrote his name all over my mum's hymn book. He retired, moved away and stopped visiting us.

I loved and feared a cow. Her name was Friend. She was friendly but she would still lift her tail and run. She became old and was sent to the slaughterhouse. When the truck came to pick her up I stood by the house, my little body tight with horror, my heart stopped by intense pain and sorrow. I want to stop this horrible event! I want save Friend!! Why doesn't anybody stop this? The cow didn't want to go and her big, brown, friendly eyes were full of sadness and fear. For me she was a divine being. I was frozen motionless watching as they took her away. It was then I thought that love didn't exist.

I want to make a huge mosaic picture of Lord Krishna hugging a white cow to appease this most heart wrenching memory of my childhood. Not long ago I learned that for the Hindus a cow embodies the Holy Trinity of Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva. I believe that all these archetypes and mythologies live in every one of us and it depends on our openness how we access them. Intuition and archetypes bring us into connection with Higher Intelligence, with wisdom and knowledge beyond our sense perception.

My personal understanding of art never deviates far from my understanding of soul language. Soul communicates with symbols and myths which are better understood through intuition than the logical mind. When an artist honestly and simply gets visually close to expressing his or her inner experience, the more powerful and original the work will be. For me art is a language of the soul and reflects the consciousness of its author.

“It is very important for the artist to gauge his position aright, to realise that he has a duty to his art as well as to himself, that he is not king of his own castle, but rather servant of a noble cause. He must search deeply in his own soul, and develop and tend it, so that his art has something to clothe, and does not remain a glove without a hand.”

- Wassily Kandinsky

## 4 ART LANGUAGE

Another sobering phenomena entering the media is the discourse about the language of art. "Art language" refers to all language used to describe, critique and asses art. It is becoming increasingly common for the media to make references to the notion that art language is not only pretentious but also unaccountably vague: It seems to say a lot whilst meaning very little.

The last century has seen the fast contextualization and intellectualisation of art, and art language has followed. The shift from non-linguistic forms of art, such as painting and sculpture, towards art that is primarily theoretical would suggest that art language would have evolved in clarity to facilitate better understanding of an artist's work. But evidence proves the opposite. Art language has become so convoluted that recently a handful of web-based programs have emerged that seek to satirize art language and make it a subject of jokes. The website [www.pixmaven](http://www.pixmaven.com) has a section called "The Instant Art Critique Generator" which produces ready-made phrases neatly coined "Critical Response(s) to the Art Product" (or CRAP). By entering a five digit number code of one's choosing the program promises to deliver the user a phrase of "CRAP" to amaze and confound friends and colleagues. For example, the code 33248 produces this entirely meaningless rhetoric:

" It should be added that the optical suggestions of negative space  
brings within the realm of discourse the substructure of critical thinking. "

Undeniably, to add humour, the site exaggerates by giving overly meaningless phrases with no artistic context. However real life is not too far from this. In many instances artists and art critics use incomprehensible phrases to establish their authority on a subject and to leave others embarrassed by their comments and observations. Elitism has become a part of this discourse; it has created competitiveness and has become a motive for people to attempt increasingly ambitious and intellectual declarations when speaking about art. As a community we have forgotten the true art of communicating lies in the use of words and phrases that are in context with the subject matter, and easily understood regardless of how deep a meaning they convey.

## 5 ASCENDING AND DESCENDING

I wanted to play with the boy next door. There was no real next door. The boy next door was half a mile away. That was the distance to our closest neighbour. I wanted to play with the boy but my mum didn't like the family. I played with him any way. Secretly.

I took my skis and skied toward the forest. As soon as I couldn't be seen from our windows, I turned around and skied to my friend's house. We had some adventures!! We decided to ski to a top of a big hill where there was a wooden surveillance tower. It was a long climb. First from his house through a small road to the top of a smaller hill, over flat ground and then a very steep climb over a field belonging to a grumpy man who lived at the top. It took a long time. Crisscross, crisscross our skis made patterns in the snow and we were out of breath, panting. We wanted to invisibly ski past the house of the feared man. There were immaculately piled long lines of firewood in the back garden of his house. They were long lines like neat wooden walls that could be seen from afar. Every piece had been placed carefully to fit tightly into the pile. Once the boys from our village blew up these immaculate walls of wood with old war ammunition. Children didn't like him, he didn't like children, and he had none of his own.

We got past his house unnoticed, crossed a road and skied on. There was still one more climb ahead. The toughest one through a forest, where we had to go around trees and rocks with skis. We were determined. It was a bright sunny day at the end of March. The snow was hardened by the overnight frost and it made the climb even more testing. The forest was dense and blocked the sun as we climbed on. My friend was tall for his age and gave a first impression of being clumsy, but he was far from it. I was as skinny as a rake and small for my age. Climbing up hill was easier for me than for him. I didn't understand why my mum didn't like my friend. He was the nicest boy I knew, always fair, kind and helpful. We would talk incessantly to each other and he was always positive and encouraging towards me. He had written in my book of rhymes his best advice to me: "Don't be like a stone, grow like a tree".

We reached the top. The forest had been cleared away around the surveillance tower, which was now standing majestically in front of us at close distance. The bright

sunlight was dazzling our eyes and the snow under us was getting softer from the warmth of the sun. A little way more to go to and we would be the winners.

We had climbed the tower before and planned to do so again. The spokes of the ladder were too far from each other but we had made it to the top and back down again. We took our skis off and walked to the bottom of the tower. The spokes were covered in ice but not just in any kind of ice. It was that very slippery see-through ice that had melted and refrozen again.

We started climbing. It was a treacherous climb. My friend went ahead of me, nimble with his long legs. I faithfully followed. The ladder got narrower toward the top and the spokes were a bit closer to each other except for the last one. I was fully aware of the ice under my feet and I chose every step carefully. I reached the last spoke before the platform. My friend was already up on the platform looking at the open view. I was stuck. I could not easily pull myself to the top, so my friend pulled me up. It happened easily and quickly, suddenly I was standing next to him on the platform looking at the snow-covered landscape in front of us. We stood there side by side in silence. Perhaps we both knew the danger ahead of us in climbing down. The wind was bitterly biting our cheeks and we soon got fed up with standing there, doing nothing and saying nothing. It was time to go down. A fear gripped me. I couldn't reach the first spoke. I lay flat on the platform lowering my legs down in search of the first spoke. My legs were dangling in the air. I felt the fear alive in my body as if every fiber, every cell in my toes was alert and tingling. My friend sensed my fear and stepped in. "You can do it Marjut, you can do it". He kept repeating encouragingly his words ringing in my head. "You can do it, you can do it, you can do it".

I didn't know if I should go up or down. If I went up, it would be worse. I lowered myself further down and felt the solid but slippery wood beneath the tip of my toes. A little bit further down and I would be there. My friend was standing up in front of me, excitedly urging me to keep going. I looked down to see the drop beneath me. I decided not to look again. I looked up. We smiled at each other as my feet landed on the icy spoke and I started a very slow and conscious descent. It felt like a long way down now, much longer than up. My friend climbed down above me and we both landed safely at the bottom of the tower. We didn't say anything about the climb, didn't mention the ice or the danger. We were both relieved. I knew I had a true friend in him. This was one more secret to hide in my heart.



## 6 ART AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Art can be used as a vehicle for higher consciousness. Towards the end of the 1980's Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the guru of the Beatles and the father of Transcendental Meditation, decided to pass the knowledge of an ancient principle of the art of soul awakening, based on Hindu Vedas, to the Swedish artist-painter Curt Källman. With the advice of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Curt Källman adjusted the knowledge of the Vedas to the needs of Western Civilization and a method of painting known as "Vedic Art" was born. According to Curt Källman:

“ The art of the Veda is based on 17 principles which are the key words presented in proper order, and which open the subsequent doors inside every one who has heard them and chosen to use them”.

These principles are not written down or taught as a theory, instead they are experienced in painting. Like a navigation map they help every one to find their inner space. Vedic Art is knowledge of the laws of nature and the universe and the way to reach higher consciousness through creative activity, which requires no talent or workshop basics.

In comparison to the work of a trained artist, most of the Vedic Art wouldn't pass as art in a professional sense. Vedic Art does not emphasize training artists hand-eye co-ordination by painting from observation. It is an intuitive process that aims for right-side brain activity, leaving the logical mind behind and diving deep into the inner knowing that we all possess. It does not teach one how to paint: It helps a painter to remember how to paint. It is structured to bring the artist to an inner understanding of his or her connection to the cosmos.

The Vedas state that art and life stay in such an intimate relation to one another that sometimes they are difficult to separate.

## 7 SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART

Amongst the professional, trained artists, there is a contemporary development toward bringing art and life together. Recent large exhibitions in the UK and US have been featuring artist like Susan Lacy and William Kentridge who have been active creators of Socially Engaged Art, an art movement that brings art closer to society and works with non-artists alike.

In 2012, the 7th Berlin Biennale aimed to situate art within the field of contemporary politics. The curator of the 7th Berlin Biennale, Artur Mijewski, investigated social norms, morality and the power of art in relation to politics. He invited artists to submit their material and political statements for the exhibition. The Biennale did not communicate a particular idea through a physical arrangement of artwork in a space. It brought into question how art allows citizens to influence reality and foster critical attitudes in society. It wasn't an easy task as historically political art has often been associated with the shame of promoting a dodgy political or religious agenda. Now that art has been emancipated from serving religion, the state or politics, it is looking for new ways to impact our society and humanity. During the exhibition it became evident how uncomfortable art's confrontation with political reality and its debate with itself can be.

Personally I feel that the conceptual contemporary art depicts our world in narrow individual viewpoints which are strongly influenced by the current art trends manipulated by powers behind mass media. Instead of expressing ones inner self it often produces pieces to shock or to make an artist's name known, and serves the celebrity cult more than great art work. This kind of "art" instead of offering spiritual awareness to the society and linking the artist's inner experience to that of the viewer's, represents its subject matter in such way that instead of uplifting or connecting the viewer to his inner reality, it serves as a source of confusion, depression and anxiety: It increases the negativity in society.

## 8 WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF ART?

Artists need to reawaken their understanding of the responsibility art plays in society. Artists are connecting to one another over the Internet and creating forums to connect

and support each another. This along with the movement toward Socially Engaged Art, could certainly become a decisive factor for the way we interpret and make art in the future. Artists will have a role to play in bringing about a universal spiritual transformation.

My big question is: Will art return to an appreciation of skill based disciplines or will it stay in denial about the current crisis of lacking skill? The intelligence of the logical of mind is limited. If we continue the current trend of intellectulizing art and its disciplines, will we end up with art forms that are restricted and narrow in their expression? Or will the opposite happen? It is inevitable that there will be a transformation in art in the future.

Isn't immortal art that which has caught a glimpse of something beyond our sense perceptions ? In the land of imagination and intuition without the restrictions of logical mind? There where the mystery of art and life are alive and interlace with one another? A concept explored by John Keates in his poem "Ode to a Nightingale", a poem that must to be experienced rather than understood:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
 No hungry generations thread you down;  
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
 In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,  
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
 The same that oft-times hath  
 Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
 Of perilous seas, in feary lands forlorn.

Forlorn! The very word is like a bell  
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self!  
 Adieu! The fancy cannot cheat so well  
 As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.  
 Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades  
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep  
 In the next valley-glades:  
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
 Fled is that music:-- Do I wake or sleep?

## 9 A WOMAN FIRST OR AN ARTIST FIRST

I dislike the term Feminine Art. Unless all art made by men is called masculine and all art made by women is called feminine, this kind of labelling doesn't serve art made by women. Art is rarely called masculine. If female artists would have held an equal position throughout the history of art, this labelling has its rightful place.

Women artists tend to be protagonists of their own life. Only in recent history they have gained acceptance and freedom of expression. The fundamental life energy of a woman is Shakti-a creative feminine principle. This drives women to have strong urge for self-expression and creativity.

In mythology women exercise instinctive powers and wisdom. They go through cycles of self-sacrifice, death, rebirth, creativity and hope without forgetting the continual presence of death. They represent archetypes from a temptress and a lover to a wife and a mother. A mature woman realises that she has a freedom to manifest the most appropriate archetype to deal with any given situation. As a mother I am a Kali-Ma, a fearless warrior ready to devour anything that threatens my children.

Shakti is the power used to overcome evil. When Hindu Gods cannot defeat a powerful negative energy they worship Durga, the destructive principle of Mother Goddess. This amazing power is in all women to protect their offspring and create new life. This level of creativity is far from being meek.

A woman's life unfolds in cycles and she changes throughout her life. The time has come for women to seek their power, shape their lives and give them a meaning. Through unleashed creativity women have power to heal their society and families. I was born to experience this transformation. To separate my creative essence to be

first a woman or first an artist is irrelevant. The creative feminine energy in me is unyielding. My creations are gender free.

The power of Shakti increases its clarity through yoga and meditation practice. It brings all aspects of feminine energy alive, the good, the bad, the fierce and the mild. It protects my integrity and dignity and makes me whole. Art fits into this perfectly. It gives me a vehicle not only for self-expression but also for integrating all aspects of myself. It shields me from conflicting pressures from society. By tapping into my creative essence my art and I feel alive.