

OURSELVES

A GROUP COLLABORATION

What part of your *self* are you curious to explore and are you willing to share?

C O N T E N T S

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INTRODUCTION

What happens when you bring a group of mostly strangers together and let them explore and exchange their *selves*?

self

1. *a person or thing referred to with respect to complete individuality: one's own self*
2. *a person's nature, character, etc.*
3. *philosophy: a) the ego; that which knows, remembers, desires, suffers, etc., as contrasted with that known, remembered, etc., b) the uniting principle, as a soul, underlying all subjective experience*

This project was about joining the selves of 19 creatives over the course of two months.

Starting off, every participant received the same questions to get an overview of where the individuals stood and what intentions they had.

In a collaborative manner, the goal was to create one or several self-portraits with a medium free to choose from. In a Facebook group or privately, participants were invited to share thoughts, advice and progress with each other.

The project concluded with a last round of questions to understand what resulted from collaborating on the same theme. The answers were not shared with each other until the very end of the project.

J A M E S

J A M E S

@jamesgrantmclaren

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

James McLaren, 25, South African living in London, UK.

What's your professional background?

I studied Genetics and Biomedical Engineering, now I work as a nanny for three boys, plus I'm a barista on the weekend.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

I've never collaborated on anything artistic.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

A huge one, I'm sure. Rather than a single narrative, you'll have currents of thoughts pushing things in all kinds of ways.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

I am what thinks, self is experience, what

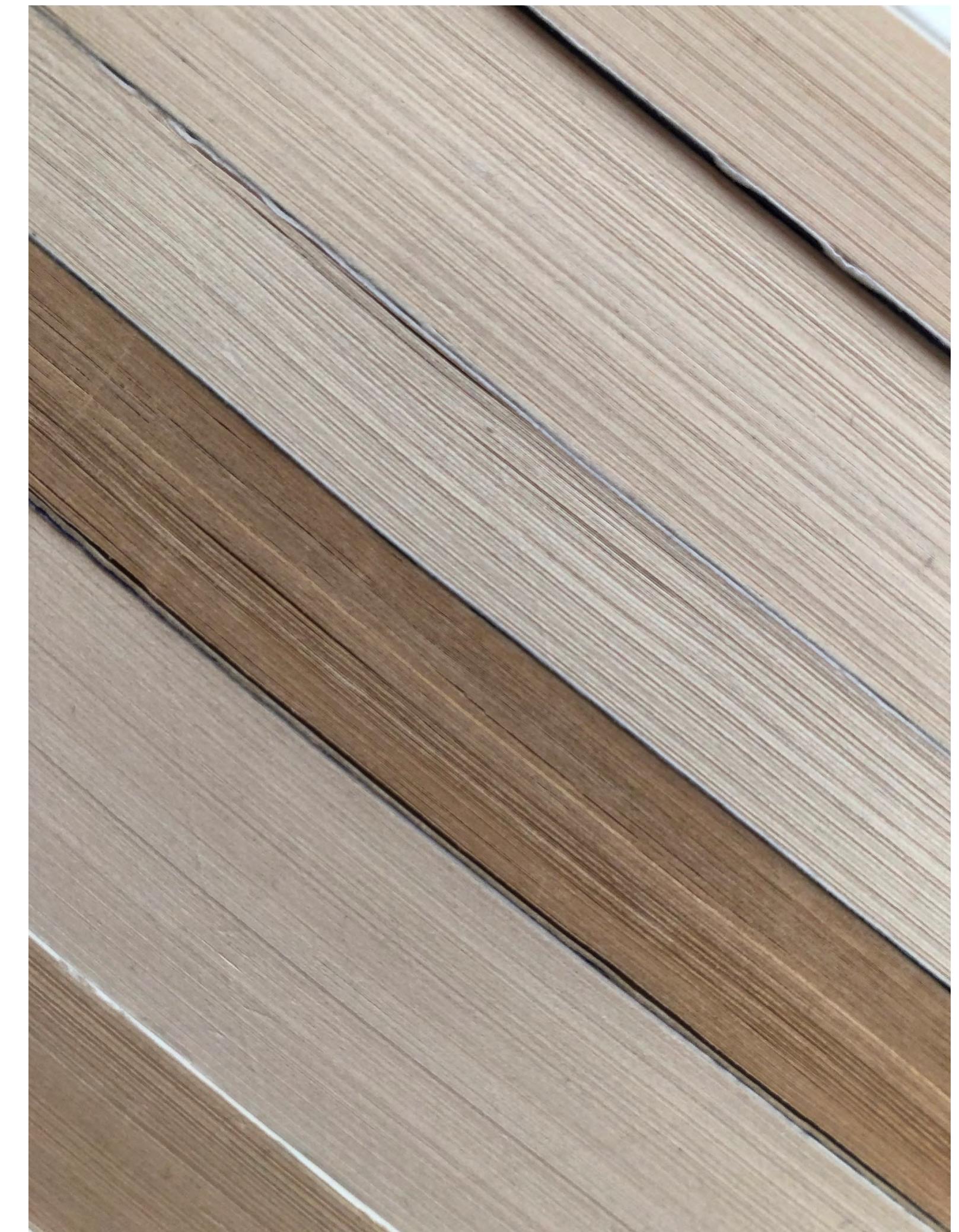
feels.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

To portray myself feels confusing, as I don't really know what I am, only what I was.

What medium are you going to use?

Some words, some pictures, I'm more shy with my words than pictures.



©James McLaren, *Our Selves*.

J A M E S

@jamesgrantmclaren

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

I hope my work contributes a little beauty. I don't think I'm technically skilled but I tried to show a little of the things that make me myself. If shown on their own, my images would be meaningless, you have to know they're trying to show something human.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

I didn't really let myself be influenced by looking at what everybody else was doing because I'm shy and always worry that if I let myself be influenced, I'll lose a little bit of me.

Did you make use of contacting others while

working on your self-portrait?

I spoke to a couple of people, but once again, shyness! So I played the stalking game.

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

My hands mean a lot to me. I worry that I don't look after them well enough, especially since they do so much for me. I feel I should be more grateful to them. Books, and my clothes keep me safe in my head and protect my body not only from cold but from gaze. I'm not sure how to show me, but I showed some of what surrounds me.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

Definitely, but I wouldn't know how to explain it. I saw people and wondered about them, and thought about things I wouldn't have thought about without the prompting of the project.

L I V

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

My name is Liv. I am 28 years old and am originally from a small rural place in Ohio.

What's your professional background?

I am a professional art and portrait model. I travel throughout the US and Europe, but my main focus now is modeling for artists in traditional mediums – mainly painting and drawing.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

I have not had the chance to be a part of a group collaboration, where I trusted the quality of the content being pieced together, until now. Seeing how it will all come together is what I'm looking forward to. I also love self-portraits, and part of that is how their creation is normally a solitary activity. Putting that creation in the context of a group project is interesting.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

Yes – there's more pressure to perform. It feels like a middle ground between self-portrait work and modeling for me. If I'm working alone, I don't have a deadline to create something - I don't have any outside observers at all unless I really want them. There are no expectations outside of my own. Working as a part of a collective instills some need to participate, to create content. Having deadlines or more pressure can be a good thing though – it can produce different results in the work, and those differences are worth examining.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

When I use the word *self*, I find myself referring to my inner thoughts and feelings over anything physical. I don't tend to refer to my physical body as my *self* and feel it functions as an extension. Although, that's a whole philosophical debate I don't want to

get into for fear of boring anyone reading. Essentially, I use the word to refer to the collection of thoughts and feelings that form my identity. I would think the same in using the word to refer to someone else - I'm not referring to a body but to the thoughts and feelings.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

I'm accustomed to it as I do self-portrait work often. I can become uncomfortable or unsatisfied at times – especially if I'm not expressing what I really want to or what I had in mind for a piece. Sometimes I feel that I can become closed off, even when photographing myself, but those emotions are worth exploring photographically. Practicing self portraiture has taught me certain things about myself over the years. Exploring feelings and my mental state has become therapeutic over time.

What medium are you going to use?

I will be taking photographs.



©Liv Sage, *Light Traces*.



©Liv Sage, *Light Traces*.



©Liv Sage, *Our Selves*.



©Liv Sage, *Our Selves*.

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

I think it's interesting to see how all of the self-portraits came out, and how we all have such different ideas of ourselves. Some images are very raw, some are *pieces* of a person with macro shots of specific body parts, some include other elements like flowers, some are a part of a series. I think what also goes along with self-portraiture and contributes to the portrait, is the context or place in which it was taken or the elements it is combined with later – either as a diptych or as a part of multiple exposures.

I think my images add to this variety. We all were given the same prompt and the results are so varied. I think that variance is really wonderful to look through.

The images would all be perceived differ-

ently if shown apart from the project. To a certain extent, though images can stand on their own, I think in a project they are viewed in the context of the project. You view the entire collection as a series and, while observing the differences that are very apparent, you're trying to find common ideas and threads between images when they're shown in a collection. That influences your view of each image individually as a result.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

To some extent, yes. I think it's always good to observe the work of others and to see and think about the differences. Thinking about why those differences exist, especially emotional differences, is interesting to me. I really like the more gritty, raw portraits as that's something I think I can struggle with in my work at times. Expressing in front of

the camera to simply capture a moment and feeling is a different mindset than the intention to simply create an image. Sometimes I think I fall into the latter way of creating, so it's helpful to observe the ways others create and what they write about how they do so.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

I did not. I tend to be a bit solitary. I look at the work being created by others, and I tried to keep up with that part of the project.

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

My self-portrait work has been a bit more sensual in recent months, and I think the ones I chose for this project show that feeling.

I don't have much to describe about the photographs, but it's more of a beginning to explore parts of myself I generally don't show

at all. I'm also becoming more used to my new home and where the light falls at certain times of the day. I've been working so much that finding the light has one of my greatest difficulties. I feel like I found new things to love about my new home in these photos.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

I've learned that I need to answer emails faster and meet deadlines in a more satisfactory manner!

But, on a more serious note, I think it was wonderful as an exercise in producing work, keeping up with other members of a group, and contributing something to a creative project.

A R T U R O

A R T U R O

project31416.com | @arturo_sanma

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

My name is Arturo, I'm 32 years old (almost 33) and I'm from Granada (Spain).

What's your professional background?

I studied Tourism and Marketing. As a photographer, I've done many collabs with other artists and I usually shoot film.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

Collaborating with other artists is the way I understand art itself. We are a social animal and in our world (art/photography) there are not so many chances to share, show and learn from others without the ego from everyone. Sometimes we close ourselves off and we miss the opportunity to find people like us and grow up.

Do you think there is a difference between

working within a collective or alone?

To me, the big difference is that I have to expose my work to someone right there, and that scares me. Everyone has to fight his/her own demons.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

A safe-box which, usually, I don't want to open.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

Scared as hell. Very uncomfortable.

What medium are you going to use?

Photography.



©Arturo Sanma, *Our Selves*.

A R T U R O

project31416.com | @arturo_sanma

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

I think without the project nobody would know that self-portraiture isn't something I'm comfortable with.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

Of course, I'm able to learn what is going on behind the pieces.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

No, I like to keep to myself and taking pictures of myself would be very vulnerable to share. I don't know if it is something bad or not, but the way I worked on my own I'm not ready to share.

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

I usually say something about my creation, but honestly, I'm not quite sure what I should say about this one. Personally, I don't understand myself very well, therefore I have no idea what to say.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

Self-portraiture is more difficult than I thought and, in my opinion, it takes a lot of courage to always create something only with yourself.

J A Q U E L I N E

J A Q U E L I N E

jaquelinekastenholz.de | @jaquelinekastenholz

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

Jaqueline Kastenholz, 30 years old, living in Koblenz, Germany.

What's your professional background?

I have a university degree (Master of Education) in Arts and German Studies for schools and I also studied Playing Arts. I canceled my way on becoming a school teacher at the last step. Since then I am working as a university lecturer for Aesthetic Education for future school teachers and also as a researcher for Cultural Education. In my case, being an artist is more like a self-fulfillment and add-on than a main profession. Art and creativity, however, are my setting in my daily business and in my free time.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

Because I am searching for collective pro-

cesses as I am interested in new dynamics, inspiration, real connection and another form of interaction in our society.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

Yes. I love both of it. But I think it is important to communicate and change your point of view from time to time, to make progress. I am also interested, which effect my works have on recipients and to learn from others.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

The word *self* means to me, making experiences with my whole body, mind and memories from my past experiences. It is also a combination of roles in daily life and the way they seem to fit or not. *Myself* is different from *yourself* or *themselves*, but I feel, there are many things in common between all of us, so that we always tend to see ourselves in each other. For me *self* is progress

J A Q U E L I N E

jaquelinekastenholz.de | @jaquelinekastenholz

that lasts a lifetime. It develops from *trying to play another self* to *getting to know myself and accepting and loving*.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

It is like a mirroring process and very psychological to me. I think about how I want to be looked at, how I look at myself and how I feel. I often love to break my self-demandings of being pretty in this interplay with myself. It is like a challenge to get to a self, that is very private and more sorrowful. It feels often like a more realistic version. But in fact it is just one fragment of myself, that not so many people know. A part that is more hidden in everyday life. I like to bring this part to life and in the spotlight. To celebrate its own beauty.

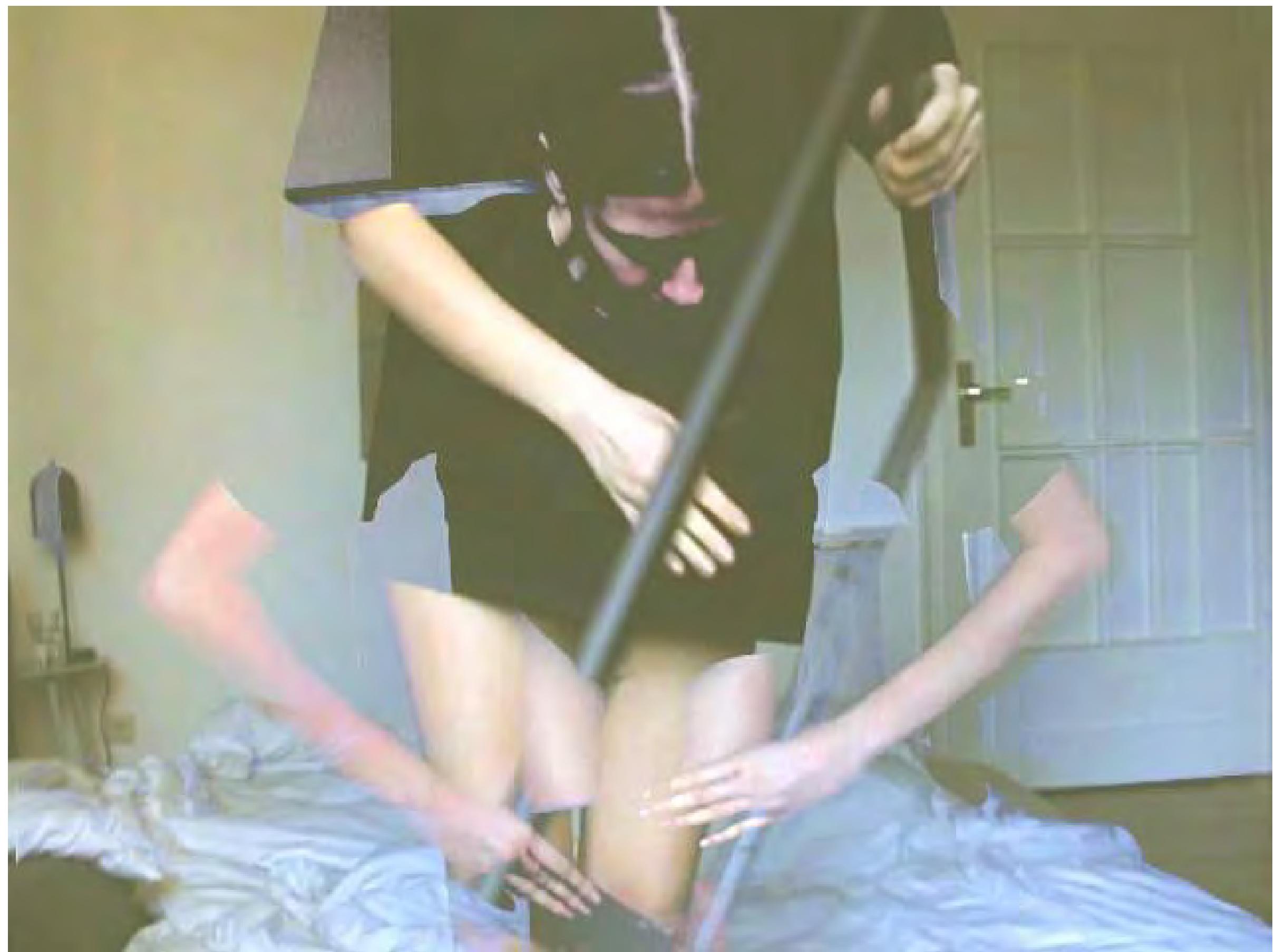
What medium are you going to use?

To be honest: I don't know yet. Probably painting. But I also like to make drawings,

photos and video works.



©Jaqueline Kastenholz, Stills from *Fitting the Frame*. (Link to video: <https://vimeo.com/322763309>)



©Jaqueline Kastenholz, Stills from *Fitting the Frame*. (Link to video: <https://vimeo.com/322763309>)

In our everyday lives, we often encounter determining factors that require structural, emotional and mental adaptation from us. This process can sometimes equate to dance, but also degenerate into a mental and not least physical struggle. In this work, personal development and individuality within narrow, standardized boundaries are negotiated.

J A Q U E L I N E

jaquelinekastenholz.de | @jaquelinekastenholz

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

It is interesting that we all worked with new media in the end, so my work contributes to the group very well, even if it is the only video. I love the fact that you can see a common ground between so many different works. I think apart from this project my work would be perceived more impersonal – as an image of society. But as part of *Our Selves*, you can see that it is in fact also a self-portrait, which allows a personal view on my inner conflicts and dialogues. I would guess that the context of the other works shifts the perspective.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

Definitely, yes! I was especially very inspired by some works of Poleta, which combined dance and performance with photography. As I am very much into performing arts and the thought of embodiment I already thought about self as thinking, feeling and experiencing the world with the whole body, but never thought about the possibility to show and express myself in that way. I was also inspired by the answer of Xavier, that *self means search*. So, I experimented with no pressure or definite aim, I just searched for something interesting and let the process itself create new ideas and let all parts dance together in the end – referring to Poleta's definition of self.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

Yes. I contacted Poleta in the beginning, because I was interested in working together on the dance-idea. But we always passed each

J A Q U E L I N E

jaquelinekastenholz.de | @jaquelinekastenholz

other or did not find time to send emails. So I created a facebook-group to reach out for reflexions on my work and getting in touch with each other more easily. That was very helpful as I'd got new perspectives on my ideas and work, especially from Helene and Raghda and from seeing and talking about their work in progress. Raghda also did a morning-selves challenge with us, which I joined in and she shared her perspective on my video material with me by editing it in her way. This collaboration is named *Chasing Frames* and can be watched on my Vimeo-page as well.

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

I have worked intuitively without being aware of any meaning at first, so I did not understand how much the performance *Fitting the Frame* makes my self and my inner crisis visible until I watched the first trial.

In my job, I often struggle with determining non-creative factors and structures that are opposite to my natural self, which is passionate, free-minded, sensitive, creative and loves communicative exchange. The inner fight between rebellion and confirmation is always a part of me and searches for a way of relief.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

I've learned, that I need communication and cooperation to get the most out of myself. It seems that I am highly motivated and productive with a collective in the background, which is, on the other hand, sometimes hard for me when working alone. I also learned to trust my intuition and the process.

R A G H D A

R A G H D A

@ra8daa

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

Raghda Khairy, 23, Egypt/ Alexandria.

What's your professional background?

I'm a senior studying Filmmaking and Animation.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

Actually, I'm interested in self-portraits, how it can express the entire soul and reflecting tiny details about us. It's interesting to see a self-portrait of someone even if he/she isn't an artist. I enjoy analyzing people's personalities using the portraits they took of themselves.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

I'm interested to observe the philosophy of everybody, who is taking part in this group.

Working collectively can make a project more creative and interesting. I read a quote of Leonardo Da Vinci. He said: *The mirror, above all, the mirror is our teacher.* I'm so interested to know about the other participants and the way they'll express themselves. I think we'll have the chance to share our perspectives and to collect our output to come out looking more global as the name of the project *Our Selves* suggests.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

I'm not sure what the word *self* means to me. It's a journey discovering ourselves. I think the word *self* means what's behind my eyes, my mind and my heart. It's what we think we really are.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

Portraying myself is the one thing that made me learn more about myself: The colors I put in my frame, the elements and light I use,

R A G H D A

@ra8daa

the parts of my body I shoot and every small details I put in my portrait without noticing that it says something about me. I only realize that later.

What medium are you going to use?

Still not sure if it'll be a photograph or a painting or something else.



Sticking: to stay with something or someone thinking it's your identity and probably it's not.

R A G H D A

@ra8daa

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

The differences between images make it look more real, the places they choose to take their self-portrait, the image sizes and the tones. All that says something about themselves. Mine, too. It would feel different if my portrait was shown separately. With the others, it refers directly to the word *self* of each participant.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

Of course, we are what we do.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

Yes, it made me feel freer and close to the

ones I reached out to.

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

I do love the cinema. It made me fall in love with wider compositions. Years ago, I noticed that I'm always taking close-up photos. I then trained to capture wider perspectives, but when it came to self-portraiture, I returned taking close-up shots. That says something.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

It's always simplicity: Seeing someone for who they really are, seeing people presenting themselves through self-portraits. Those works draw them and me closer together.

L U I Z

L U I Z

@vigiliisquenoces

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

Luiz Otávio, 41, from Recife (city), Pernambuco (state), Brazil.

What's your professional background?

I'm a screenwriter and film director. Besides, I've been teaching in film school for three years now. I am interested in photography as a form of registration and expression, but not on a professional level. I consider myself an amateur.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

It's an opportunity to meet people with the same interests and develop new works that may reach more people.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

Dialogue. I believe that in a collective the

exchange of perceptions and experiences occurs in a more spontaneous way.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

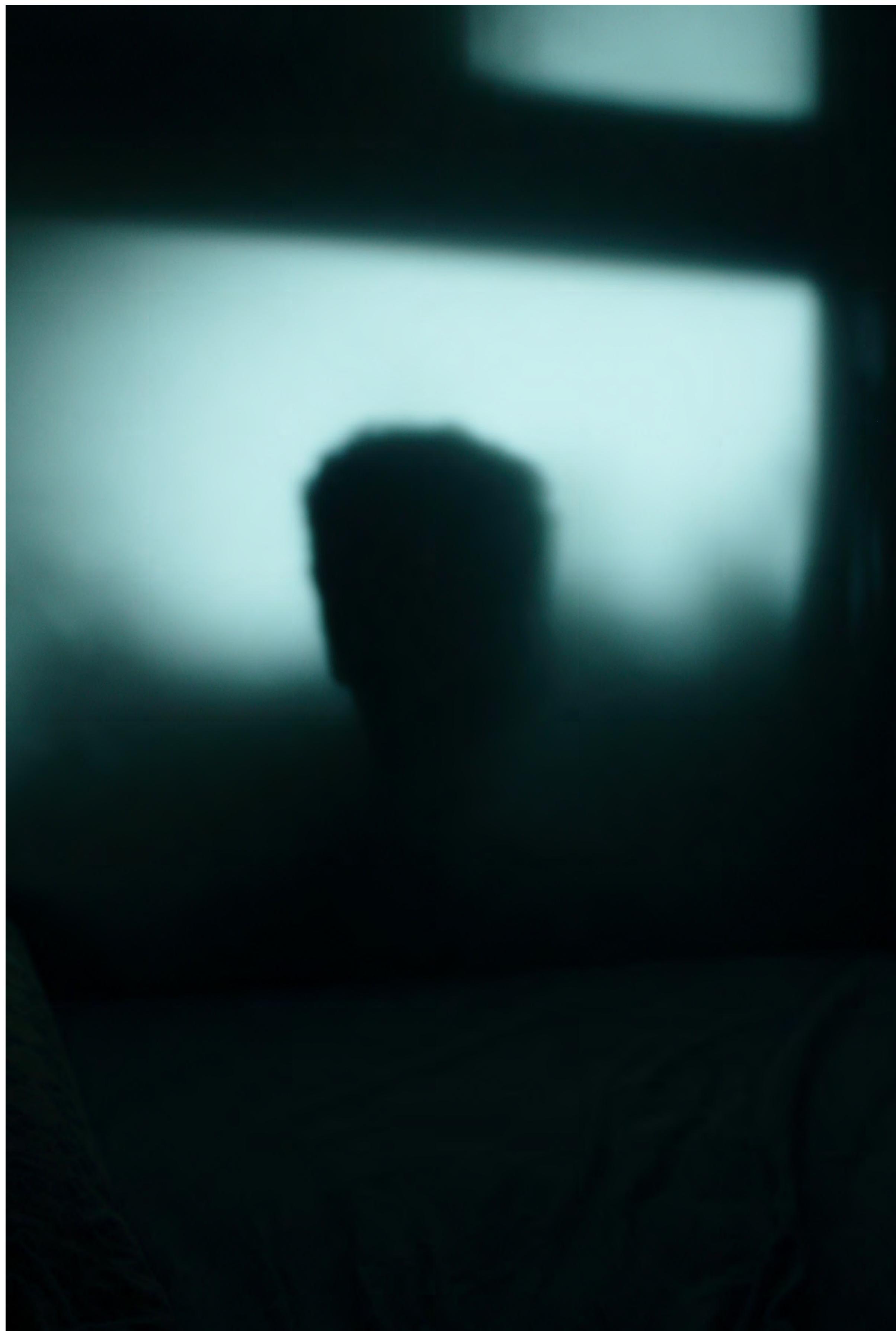
That's hard. In Portuguese, we do not have a specific word for *self*. It can be translated as *si próprio*. Practically, through self-portraiture, I was able to know myself better, to understand a part of myself that I might not have known or fully accomplished otherwise.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

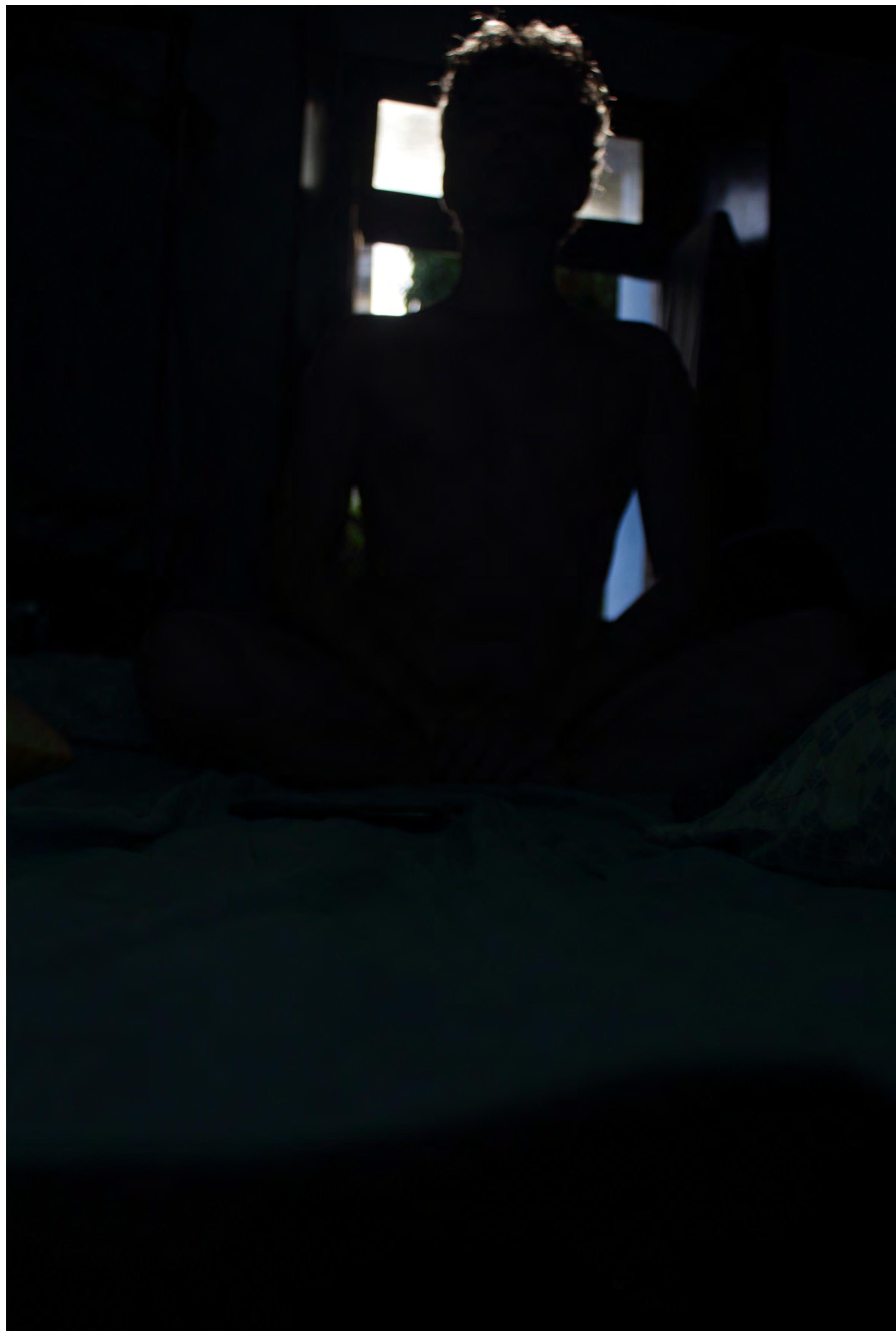
As I said before, I feel as if I am in search of self-knowledge. At the same time I believe that I can also share something with other people, not about myself, but something larger.

What medium are you going to use?

Photography mainly. Maybe text and audio-visual.



©Luiz Otávio, *Our Selves I.*



©Luiz Otávio, *Our Selves II.*

L U I Z

@vigiliisquenoces

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

I really hope it does contribute, as it's important for me not to portrait myself, but also see myself as part of a bigger work.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

It certainly did. Although I wanted to get more in touch with other collaborators, it just did not happen.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

I tried at first but received no reply.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

Working in collaboration is hard. I would like to try some more.

R I S U

R I S U

@64shadesofhoernchen

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

My name is Susanne, also known as Risu and I am in my late 30ies.

What's your professional background?

I am a researcher at a German university and currently living in Japan.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

I have seen works of other group collaborations before and always thought that it was extremely interesting what happened to the single pieces when put into a shared concept. Also, seeing what different people come up with and how they interpret the same idea or topic, is very inspiring.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

Well since the people in the group don't

know each other personally, I don't think it will make that much of a difference during the process of creation. But I think working consciously on the same topic will eventually give the final pieces a different meaning for the people who created them as much as for the viewer.

Though who knows, maybe I will be able to tell it made a difference for my working process once the project is finished.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

This must be the most difficult question. The meaning of *self* has been explored and discussed so often before by artists and philosophers, it is difficult not to use any of those explanations.

For me *self* is not something fixed but eternally changing, adapting, depending on the circumstances and the people surrounding oneself. Deep down though is a solid core, something that is the basis for all interac-

R I S U

@64shadesofhoernchen

tions, something that, I think, also shows in my self-portraits. Not always clearly visible, but definitely present.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

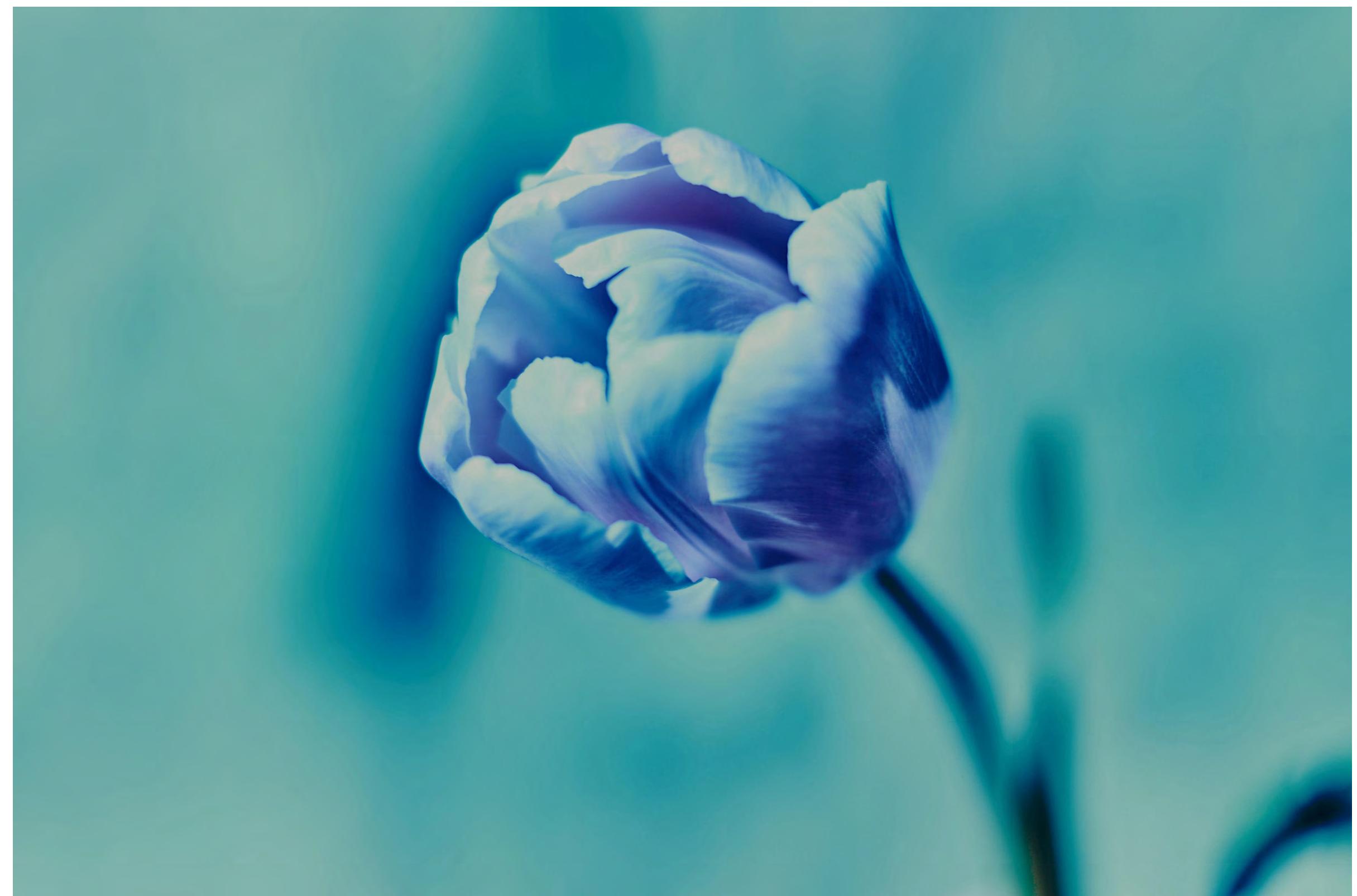
I am very excited. I actually started my way into photography with self-portraits (due to the lack of models) and have used it ever since to explore techniques but also myself, playing with different parts of my personality.

What medium are you going to use?

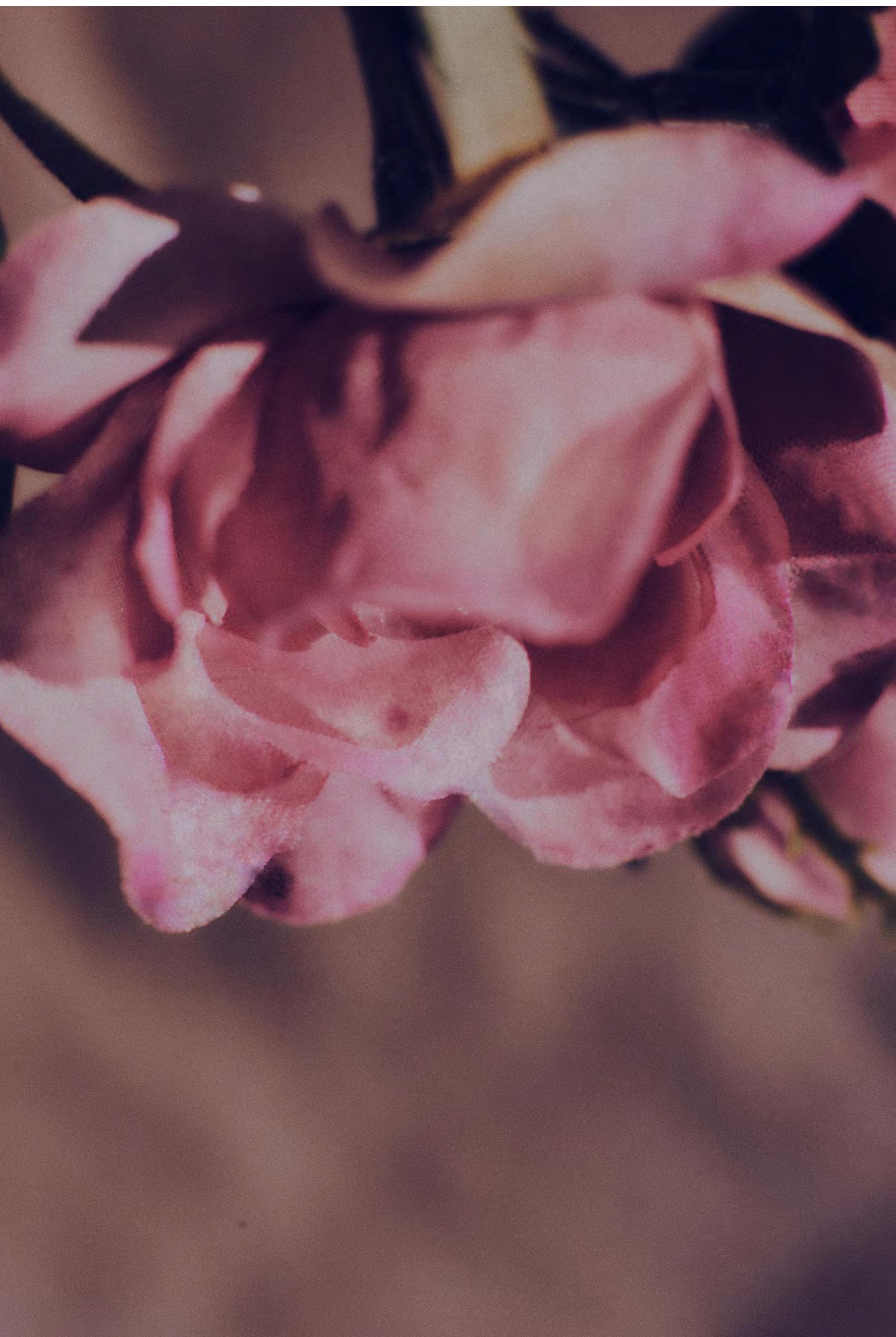
I am going to take self-portraits with my camera.



©Risu, *Frühling I.*



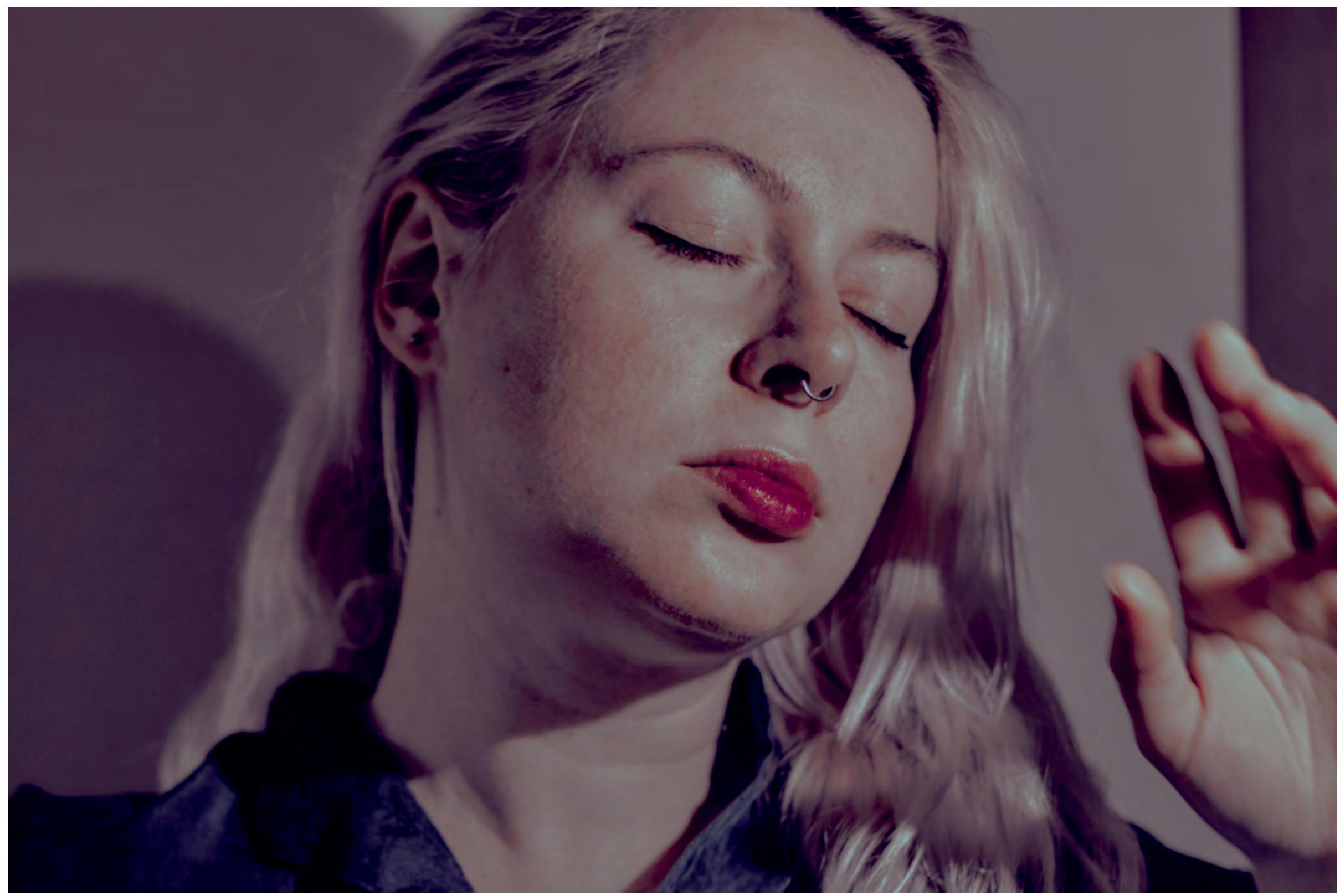
©Risu, *Frühling II.*



©Risu, *Sommer I.*



©Risu, *Sommer II.*



©Risu, *Herbst I.*



©Risu, *Herbst II.*



©Risu, *Winter I.*



©Risu, *Winter II.*

R I S U

@64shadesofhoernchen

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

I am still not very sure how my pictures contribute to the overall project. Right now looking at them, I feel that most of the other pictures work organically as a whole, aesthetically and also in a way, they convey emotions and a state of being. Mine seem to have followed a different path, paying more attention on colors and an overarching concept rather than just letting it flow.

I am convinced that all of the pictures would be read differently if not shown in a group. The collection offers automatically points of comparison and maybe also broadens the range of possible interpretations to the viewer.

Do you feel that reading your collabora-

tors' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

I have to say, that I did not draw that much influence from the answers of the people collaborating. Instead, I looked at their portfolio on Instagram and their homepages. Some of their work I already knew. I found the visual stimulation and the way some of their previous work spoke to me more stimulating and made me rethink my own perception of what a self-portrait can be.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

Not as much as I could and might have wanted to initially. As mentioned above, I knew quite a few artists from their previous work and did not feel, I was good enough to collaborate with them directly. Furthermore, I was a bit lost with the idea of collaboration without actually knowing any of the people involved personally. The mutu-

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@64shadesofhoernchen

al understanding, on a personal but also on an aesthetic level, was missing, something I realized would have been necessary for me for a deeper exchange and a subsequent collaboration.

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

Inspired by the Japanese custom of the appreciation of the seasons and alluding to them in poetry by seasonal words (e.g. *kigo*), I decided to create a visual version of this concept with objects taken from nature, side by side with the self-portraits. Using different color schemes, I hoped to juxtapose different atmospheres, hopefully evoking in the viewer a reminiscence to their own memories related to the seasons.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

I have definitely rediscovered self-portraiture

as a way of experimenting and playing with ideas and exploring myself further. Viewing the works of the other collaborators, I am also eager to dive deeper into a more emotional and raw self-representation, if not for the public then at least for myself.

B I A N C A - M A R I A

BIANCA - MARIA

siekorrigierte.at | @biancamangata

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

My name is Bianca-Maria Braunshofer, I am 32 years old and I am from Austria (living in Vienna).

What's your professional background?

I am currently working in a bookshop and as a publishing manager, I have my own company too for editing, correcting and text-ing (german language): *sie korrigiert's* is my company.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

Actually, I stumbled upon it by accident and thought: *I've never done something like this before*. Also, its bit out of my comfort zone and I think I am ready for exploring myself outside my tiny little box of things I've known and learned already. Group collaborations can change the way you look at people, art

or at yourself. I wanted to see what a group of complete strangers (which I believe, most of us are) can actually build in a creative way.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

Definitely, there's always a difference when it comes to working alone vs. in a collective. Even if this collective is virtual and you don't even know yet what the others may think or write or create. I think it already affects one in the moment you know *this will be a group collaboration*. It means, other people, other stories, other backgrounds, other professions will cross your path, your work, your art, your thoughts. If this doesn't affect one's work, I don't know what does.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

I see *self* as something that I feel is me. It's Bianca-Maria, who has lived on this plan-

BIANCA - MARIA

siekorrigierte.at | @biancamangata

et earth for 32 years now, who doesn't actively remember herself being born or the first two years of her life, yet she knows, those moments already formed a part of her *self*. Self is me with all the experiences and knowledge from them, all the emotions and thoughts, too. Self is me as a body, that can transform, change, give shelter to a precious mind and emotions. Self is me as an individual with all the influences of others, too. Self to me is rarely something that can be seen without connection to other living beings. Self is, at least I think, always HERE. NOW. Things that make you yourSELF will hardly ever change 100 %. Circumstances and the ways you look at them, though, may.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

I like portraying myself. The moment I am portraying myself, I feel secure. I feel loved by myself, I see myself. I know I am okay the way I am. I like to look at myself closely,

even if I feel bad or sad or something. This changes when I start to think about others. I develop narcissistic moves/traits. I want people to look at me, but only if I find the portrait good enough. I want them to look at me as close as I do. I want them to see myself (of course it can only be the picture of *myself* that I've painted over the last couple of years), I want them to admire me and what I am doing. I am not interested in criticism at that special point (it's not always like this; it can last a few minutes or some hours, after that time I am open for criticism again). I am fascinated by how I change into somebody else when portraying myself and thinking about the reactions. I don't want to judge this behavior/thinking/feeling about myself, I just want to state it. It's a small part of myself I sometimes meet when portraying myself.

When I was in school, I was totally into Cindy Sherman and tried also to picture myself

BIANCA - MARIA

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in different roles. It fitted into my exploring-adolescence-mood. Maybe I've never grown out of it.

What medium are you going to use?

Analog photography. I want to mix it with words.

At the beginning of this project, I had in mind to take a self-portrait like I'm used to. I read all my collaborators' first round of answers carefully, looked at their IG feeds and talked to a few of them. I set everything up in a way I was comfortable with.

The idea was to show two faces of myself: One with a lot of make-up and my idea of beauty. Another without make-up, naked and bare-faced. Before taking photos on my analog camera, I used the phone to get an idea if what I was doing would look good. (I know how to handle a camera, but am no pro. I simply push the shutter-release.)

During the project, I went on a surf-vacation. It happened then that I hurt myself. One moment not thinking and the next getting hit by my surfboard. Underwater. I panicked a little, got myself out and ended up with nothing more than a small bruise.

I woke up the next morning feeling shocked. Looking into the mirror, the bruise had gotten bigger and affected the vision of my right eye. Had I hit myself harder than I thought?

I thought of the project, about the self. I didn't feel comfortable with what I had initially planned anymore. I wanted to make something that is not *Instagram*. I didn't want to construct beauty. What I did want was to show what I look like when not being my best, a bit sad, the insecurity of not feeling beautiful. With this, I wanted to show myself, that there is nothing that can take away myself, but myself.

So, I decided to create two pictures of my reality: One of myself (what I look like and how others might perceive me) and the other of my inner reality (of how I feel).

I have a bruise on my face, wear clothes that look somewhat untidy and my flat is a bit messy. It makes me feel naked and like I am able to see myself: *Hello, here I am. I got stories to tell and sometimes my camera teaches me something.* Colors are not always bright and shiny, just like I am not at times as well. Sometimes vision is blurry. Sometimes I have bruises and my hair is in disarray. Sometimes everything seems like a huge mess.

Beyond this appearance, I accept the present as it is.



©Bianca-Maria Braunshofer, *Our Selves I.*



©Bianca-Maria Braunshofer, *Our Selves II.*

B I A N C A - M A R I A

siekorrigierte.at | @biancamangata

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

I am not sure about this, but think apart from this project there would be a different perception and take on the pictures as they are not polished at all and look like somewhat raw.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

Yes, I feel it does, even now. I think they have a constant influence on me.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

I was contacted by another artist.

Have you learned something new during

the project process?

It's nothing new, but I get very excited every time a deadline comes closer. It makes me question if others acknowledge my work.

D O M I N I Q U E

DOMINIQUE

@dominique_instantphotography

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

Dominique, 43 years old, born and raised in Paris, France. Living a dream in Morzine, a little village (built by the French, British, Germans, etc.) in the French Alps for four years now.

What's your professional background?

I'm a self-taught photographer and musician. I was a personal caregiver for ten years, now I'm 100% back into photography and music for the last two years.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

Not a group, yours. Because I trust you and I'm not afraid anymore to work with people. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. I'm curious.

Do you think there is a difference between

working within a collective or alone?

Yes, a collective means sharing while you're at work. Being alone means sharing after work is done.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

The best way to be lost in space is by focusing on the *self*. The good old *me*, *myself* and *I*. I don't want this. I'm fascinated and scared at the same time by people, who only take self-portraits and/or talking about their life. *Self* is my private part, the internet won't steal it.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

Weird, bad, sad, happy, excited, anxious, sexy, ugly, etc. Depends on when/where/why.

What medium are you going to use?

Photography and music.

I'm bored with *sophisticated* pictures. This one is blurry and random.

It is me.



©Dominique, *Our Selves*.

DOMINIQUE

@dominique_instantphotography

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

I'm not sure, but the picture would not exist without the project.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

No, I'm too old (didn't say wise) to be influenced.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

I didn't have time.

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

This is me. Real and far from any tricks.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

Yes, time. We have to expand it.

KIKI

KIKI

vimeo.com/kikifebriyanti | @kikikiksky

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

My name is Kiki Febriyanti. I'm 32 years old and from Indonesia.

What's your professional background?

I'm a filmmaker.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

I'm interested in challenging myself to do something together with other people from different backgrounds. I think it will be fun to see and learn from each other, as well as to create something together although perhaps every one of us lives in a different country.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

Yes, it is different. When I'm working alone, I only deal with myself, my own ideas, timeline, problem, etc. In collective work, each

participant should be able to communicate well, share ideas, discuss boundaries or obstacles, and try to find solutions together. Also, it's important to respect and tolerate each other.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

Self to me means reflection and expression.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

I'm an independent person. I'm a thinker (or a dreamer), I like to have fun but I'm also a serious person. I call myself a happy stranger.

What medium are you going to use?

Video, photography, language, drawing.

These photos are the reflection and interpretation of myself/ourselves during a process. Often I have to and want to do many things simultaneously. But sometimes it doesn't work as planned. Sometimes there are unexpected obstacles. Occasionally, this makes me feel bad or sad.

These photos are also metaphors for things, which are unfortunately taboo for women in my country and some other places. Taboos such as being independent, showing self-expression, or even asking questions and speaking. At this point, women can only struggle to survive and talk with themselves.



©Kiki Febriyanti, *Our Selves I*.



©Kiki Febriyanti, *Our Selves II*.

KIKI

vimeo.com/kikifebriyanti| @kikikiksky

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

I believe my work would be different if it was shown apart from this project. In this collaboration, we had the chance to not only look at each other's work but also to discuss it.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

Reading the answers and seeing the work of other collaborators, I think it had an effect on myself, while I was thinking about my own work. So yes, they have influenced me in some moments.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

Yes.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

The *Our Selves* theme has been very challenging and interesting, especially in the form of photos. Usually, I take photos of other people using the documentary method and when I take self-portraits I usually only focus on myself completely. But during this collaboration, I experienced a couple of things that made me think a lot. So this is the first time I learned something new, I made self-portraits, not only to express what I feel about myself but also to express the collective experiences and thoughts of other people that I've only kept in my head before. To me, it's a beautiful process of learning.

ELIANA

ELIANA

@eliana_v

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

My name is Eliana. I'm 30 years old. I'm from Colombia and currently residing in New York.

What's your professional background?

I'm a graphic designer and photographer.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

I find it very interesting to collaborate with other creators, who can support and help each other. I also love to connect with other like-minded people.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

Yes, I think working within a collective can be very inspirational. You can learn a lot about the way others work and learn how to work with others.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

For me, it is a very spiritual word. Means the true nature, the meaning of your existence. That uniqueness that one should be. Everything that is you and that radiates from you.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

I feel it can be very challenging because I'm so critical with myself, but at the same time I feel excited to explore a different aspect or maybe the real aspect of myself and my creativity. Lately, I've been feeling so disconnected and overwhelmed, I'm hoping this could be a way of healing.

What medium are you going to use?

My main medium will be photography, but I've recently been feeling the need to paint, so I'm hoping to try that as well.



Reflecting light ...

... in the darkness of my deepest melodies.



©Eliana Vélez, *Our Selves II*.

ELIANA

@eliana_v

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

Each one of us expresses a different feel and perspective about the project. I think my images contribute differently and uniquely, just as I feel everyone else will. In conclusion, we're still being connected as a group to the same concept and feeling; being our unique selves. I do think that my images could be perceived differently being part of the project; with more openness and understanding.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

Yes, it inspired me and pushed me to do it.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

Unfortunately no. I wish I had, but the project ended up touching me in a very personal way.

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

This is a very emotional and personal piece. I used to create a lot of self-portraits many years ago, and I stopped. This felt like a coming back to myself and an expression of everything I'm going through right now.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

I've learned, and I'm still learning to let go.

R A M I N

R A M I N

@ramin_roshandel

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

I'm Ramin, 31 years old and originally from Iran.

What's your professional background?

I am based in Iowa City for my studies in Composition but I'm also a portrait photographer.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

I want to be part of this project because I believe in teamwork. Also, to get to know more people, who have similar concerns.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

I do believe that working alone is different than working with other people. There are many instances for teamwork which show us how artists are taken more seriously by

society when they started working together or as a group of artists.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

Self means the side/part of someone when they think about themselves as an essence/identity.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

I think portraying myself is a way, which helps me look at myself through different perspectives/angles.

What medium are you going to use?

I'm going to use photography as my medium.



©Ramin Roshandel, *Our Selves*.

*I was born into this world.
I leave it at my death.
Into a thousand towns
My legs have carried me,
And countless homes –
What are all these?*

Haiku by Gigan Zenrai

R A M I N

@ramin_roshandel

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

I believe it would. I believe whether we look at ourselves within or without this project, it's a long journey for all of us to get to know ourselves better. If I looked at my portrait as if it was shown apart from this project, I would have perceived it more as a personal shot rather than a self-portrait which is related to a series of other self-portraits. However, now within this context and besides other portraits, I feel like that all of us are saying something that is united in essence, but it's not the same in reality through our photos. The question, however, is: *What is that something?*

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has in-

fluenced your own?

Seeing their works definitely gave me some ideas. I cannot claim that I have specifically been influenced by a certain collaborator, but the spirit of this project has affected me for sure.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

I did not ... (I wish I had though.)

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

I have always been struggling with myself, thinking about the reason of our life/our existence. This is very much related to Omar Khayyam's poems and also a series of death haiku that I like a lot. Coming out off a tough month, made me think more and more about myself. This shot is kind of an answer to all of the moments I passed.

R A M I N

@ramin_roshandel

**Have you learned something new during
the project process?**

It's not easy to answer this question. We have always been learning by everything we do. During this project, I got to know myself better ...

A I M I L I A

A I M I L I A

aimiliat.de | @aimiliatheofilopoulos

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

Hey, my name is Aimilia (25) and I am from Bielefeld, Germany.

What's your professional background?

I am starting to study Photography in October 2019. Right now I am shooting weddings (for money) and shoes. But I love to shoot portraits. In the main time, I am working as a marketing assistant.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

Because I think photographers should interact more with each other, but also to get myself out of my comfort zone. And I love self-portraits.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

Yes! You interact and talk more about your

own work, but also about what inspires you and what makes you the person, who you are today.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

Mostly depression and the way out of it. But also finding myself again; in photos and words.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

I used to portray myself a lot. It's more of a love-hate thing.

What medium are you going to use?

I would love to shoot some self-portraits on 35mm film, but we will see.



©Aimilia Theofilopoulos, *Our Selves*.



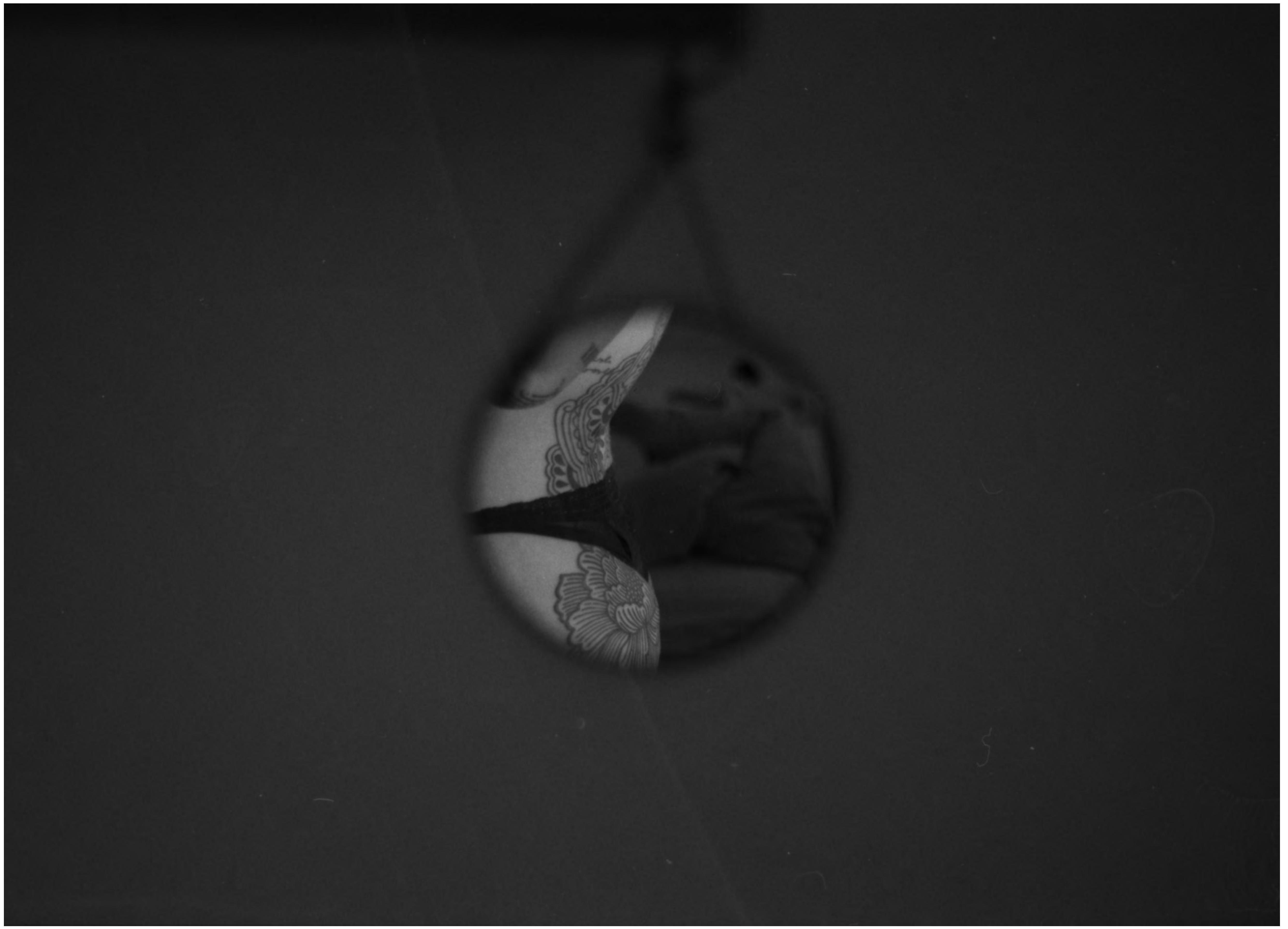
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A I M I L I A

aimiliat.de | @aimiliatheofilopoulos

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

I noticed that some of the others followed me back. However, I didn't really interact with anybody but Helene.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

Some artists really inspired me to always push further and to never give up on myself.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

Not really, maybe because of the lack of time I had or because of my mental health.

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

How far can you go before you lose yourself? How hard can you push yourself before you will break your own bones? How much can you give before your heart aches?

Have you learned something new during the project process?

No.

P O L E T A

P O L E T A

sublimeconnecting.com | @fragile.dance

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

Heya, my name is Poleta, 24 years old, from Bulgaria.

What's your professional background?

I am currently a graduating photography student, who is in love with the beauty in the small details; as well as creating art, dance, writing through connecting with people.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

I have been craving recently to be surrounded by like-minded people, who like Kerouac says are *desirous of everything and burn, burn, burn*. Thus this project will hopefully give me a chance to meet more creative universes and give life to something beautiful.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

Yes and no at the same time. Working alone, you have the freedom to go whichever way you want, but then again you are your own worst enemy and best friend. There is no space for bouncing off ideas. There is beauty in working alone, as once you get into the flow of it, it is an amazing, therapeutic experience, but who knows, maybe when it is shared with like-minded people in a safe space, it is even more magical.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

It means constellations of feelings, impressions, dreams, fears, cravings all dancing together, accumulating a sense of a soul, looking to grow and expand through meeting other beautiful souls.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

This question is a bit ambiguous to me, as portraying can have quite a few different connotations. How do I feel about portray-

P O L E T A

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ing myself as in the sense of how would I express myself, or how do I feel about the action of portraying myself and showing myself. Anywho, I love expressing myself, I wear my heart on my sleeve and also if I had to choose a way of portraying myself it would be through dance, photography and writing.

What medium are you going to use?

Photography. Creative writing. Dance.



©Poleta, *Letting go.*



©Poleta, *I want to be soft with you.*

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Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

I believe very strongly that everything in this world happens for a reason and that every little happening is synchronized and connected to something else. My images represent a moment of liberation of when I allowed myself to start creating again, of me being soft to myself. I was not thinking of how it will tie with other people's work, I just knew it somehow would, as we are all breathing universes, we are all connected and we are all expressing ourselves, and naturally I think all of the works flow very well together.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

When entering this collaboration, my mind was one of an eager artist, ready to meet other creative universes and get inspired and create. What happened, though, was quite the opposite. I got too overwhelmed by life and my creativity seemed to disappear even more. I was shying away from the group, from artists who tried to contact and collaborate with me, simply because I was way too overwhelmed with life and with the perfectionist in me wanting to still create something, even though I did not even have the energy to stay awake. At the end, I allowed myself to be soft with myself and look at other people's work not as a comparison or as a must to create, but as a simple visual inspiration and this triggered me in a soft way and let me finally create and remind myself of the beauty of performing for the camera and focusing inwards.

Did you make use of contacting others while

working on your self-portrait?

No, as life threw quite a few hurdles at me during this time, I shun myself away from taking photographs as a whole. As I am quite a perfectionist (or I somehow want my life to live up to my ideas) I wasn't able to allow myself to create any work and was way too hard on myself and thought that I would not be able to contribute with anything. I thought I'd be a much more active participant, but, in the end, this removal taught me the valuable lesson of being an observer and of allowing the visuals of someone's soul to affect me.

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

This piece is a visual evidence and a reminder to be softer with myself and to allow myself to create; it was and still is an on-going process of a forgotten relationship with the camera. It is a reminder of that stillness and

understanding that occurs when you perform for the lens, for yourself.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

Yes, that nothing is as one expects it to be; that work can be created even in the worst creative rut, that softness is the way through.

S A M

S A M

samanthaevans.net | @sam.antha.evans

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

My name is Sophie, but I'm usually known as Sam. I'm 23 years old and currently living in Brunswick/Germany.

What's your professional background?

My main focus is on (analog) photography; I'm studying Fine Arts and Cultural Education.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

I myself am more of a secluded person by my own choice most of the time, but I feel that in the world of creativity one has to break out of one's own mind space and take a step back from what one does or thinks one is. This works best when hand in hand with other people, helping one to reflect and understand. The project seems to be a well-balanced structure between self-per-

ception and collective work. It's exciting.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

Being alone, one might be more liberal in thoughts and deeds, but, at the same time, limited by his or her own borders and experiences. There's a reason we let ourselves be inspired over and over again to open windows for new directions. Definitely, there are differences that can act as a curse or blessing at the same time.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

Self is not a word I like to surround myself with. Although I'm very much in favor of self-love and -care, to MYSELF I still am ungracious and distrustful after all. It displays many negative vibes, which is what I want to work on.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

S A M

samanthaevans.net | @sam.antha.evans

From time to time, I am trying to portrait myself, but fail. Working with oneself as material, as a rhetoric figure, as a fixed point – you got to get involved with yourself in a way that is neither mine nor pleasant. I wish it wasn't this way and there's hope I am capable of it, but still, it worries me.

What medium are you going to use?

Primarily I will work with the camera; film is my favorite medium and I hope the random and raw process of working with analog pictures will help me get more courage.



©Samantha Evans, *Go by*.

S A M

samanthaevans.net | @sam.antha.evans

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

By knowing this is a project, my entitlement was higher than usual and I have prepared and discarded many things, which sent me spiraling downwards to the point I had to work spontaneously to meet the deadline. It resulted in something very unplanned by the pressure of wanting to plan something extraordinary. Who knows how much this would have influenced me without the knowledge of this project – but I'm very certain without it, I wouldn't have had the courage for a self-portrait in the near future at all.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

It probably hasn't changed my initial work very much, still, it encouraged me to see that I'm not alone in my ways of thinking and that people here are pulling a strange and uncommon rope together. Also, it's very exciting to see everyone tending to depict themselves nude or at least lightly dressed. I'm wondering what's the reason for that?

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

Sadly, no.

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

It was freezing and windy climbing up this slope, wearing my tracking boots only partly and a coat to guard myself from the extreme wind and cold for just a moment longer – it was huge fun! Luckily, I had some help, so that I didn't have to reposition every time. The moment, while the picture was being

S A M

samanthaevans.net | @sam.antha.evans

taken, was very intense. Yet it was a very beautiful moment, surrounded by forest, weather and the wishful thinking that there's actually something visible on the roll of film in the end.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

Maybe not learned but reminded that one's rarely alone with their thoughts and sorrows. Many people face similar fears and that's okay. Every step is guiding in a new direction. It is just important to have the energy and courage to get out one's cocoon. Even if it's just for a moment.

F R Y D E N S R A I C H

F R Y D E N S R A I C H

@frydensraich

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

Frydensraich, 27, Germany.

What's your professional background?

Art/ nude model since 2012 as well as a poet and writer.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

To experience what I explain down below.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

Yes, there definitely is a difference in working within a collective. It's another experience, somehow I can work more closely with myself through others because they give me other views, perspectives and interpretations of my work, so, therefore, my horizon is wider.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

I honestly don't know. It's really vague to me, sometimes I am confused, sometimes I am concerned. Most of the time I just breathe.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

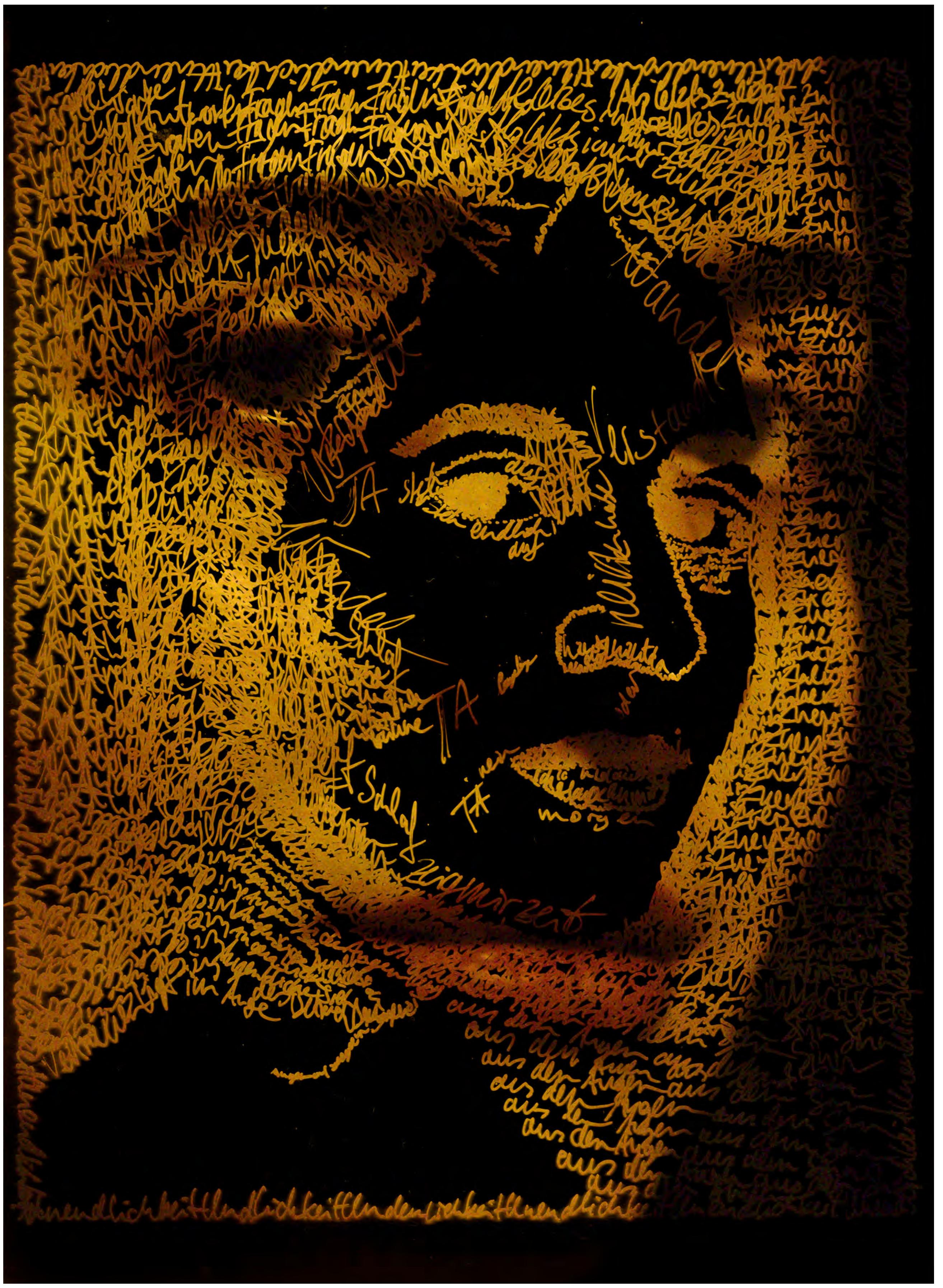
I am scared sacred.

What medium are you going to use?

Words, paper, layers and collage techniques.



©Frydensraich, *Shifted white*.



©Frydensraich, Shifted black.

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

I believe every single artistic work in this project could stand on its own, but it may create another context to put them all together.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

Reading the other collaborators' answers, in the beginning, gave me courage. I had doubts, but so had others as well. I didn't feel so alone with my concerns.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

No. Though, I observed the progress of the others in the Facebook group. Again, it

helped me to know that others were questioning themselves as well, but were searching for solutions.

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

- 1) I went out in the evening, placed myself under a streetlight and a person very close to me helped me taking a picture. At this point, I already had a clear idea in my mind.
- 2) Chose one picture and edited it. (Black-white, higher contrast.)
- 3) Printed the image.
- 4) Chose three different colours to mark/ highlight shadow and light areas in the face.
- 5) Put a transparent foil over the digitally and analogue edited image.
- 6) Filled the shadowy areas with words I strongly reflect with.
- 7) Scanned the foil.
- 8) Experimented with the image of the foil and different edits of the original picture in

an image editing software until satisfaction was achieved.

9) Named the work.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

More like re-learned or reminded. I prefer to work alone or just with a close circle of people. I am not used to share ideas/ concepts with strangers while still in progress. Especially with the subject of self-portraits, I couldn't find a way for myself to get in contact with others since it's such a personal theme.

Nonetheless, I am very happy to have been a part of this project and am very excited to see all my collaborators' final results.

X A V I E R

X A V I E R

@xavierriver

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

My name is Xavier Rivera. I'm 30 years old. I live in Valencia, on the East coast of Spain, but I was born in Lima, Peru.

What's your professional background?

I appeared in two zines with a collective of Valencian photographers. This year we will make another one. I also was published in a magazine about *Pilota Valenciana* a sport here in Valencia. I studied Photography for four years and am now majoring to be an expert in Contemporary Photography.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

I want to be part of everything related to photography, because I think I can learn from others and maybe inspire them, sharing information, worries, and new perspectives. I also think this method is bizarre and

interesting.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

Definitely. I enjoy my work more when sharing it with other photographers than with clients (e.g.). It's become a funnier and more enriching experience. If we create a worldwide group, our influences will make us focus on ourselves so differently. In a positive way.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

The word *self* means *search*. Searching for my own identity, my essence, what makes me unique. It means *inner*: Inner peace, inner chaos. Contradiction, naturalness.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

Sometimes I feel afraid: How much am I showing? Is this the real Xavier? Who is Xavier? To me, there isn't a final answer, I'm just

X A V I E R

@xavierriver

in the middle of my path to discover myself.
I feel curious.

What medium are you going to use?

I'm pretty sure I will use my smartphone and
maybe scanned photos of family album.



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©Xavier Rivera, *Our Selves*.

X A V I E R

@xavierriver

Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

The empathy or fear I can generate to who-soever dares to look at me carefully are the people I'm talking to. I think these photos are questions that were, are and will be always in my life. How much am I showing? Is my work communicating more than what I want? I think some of these questions connect me with the rest, they fill me with energy as some of them are so powerful.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

I haven't read them all, but some of them are so inspiring because of their difference to me. Sharing different perspectives paradoxically connects us and it broadens our

minds.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

I couldn't contact anybody as I was very busy, but, no doubt, I will after this project.

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

My images are experiments on the duality of personality, a shimmer of hope in the middle of a crisis. My eyes reflect tragedy, a broken and closed heart.

The portrait of my half shaved beard is the position between *who Xavier* is to my family (somebody clean, somehow *pure*, with a purpose as a sales representative) versus is *who am I to myself* (a person I see in the mirror, somebody lost, somehow *dirty*, tainted by vices, perversion, bad choices, silence tragedy). Both parts are the same person, but none is in dialogue with the other. They are

X A V I E R

@xavierriver

in different dimensions.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

Sometimes, learning from yourself is scary. I'm afraid of myself as I'm encouraged to change the twisted parts of my inner pain, like therapy where you have to discover somebody strange inside of you.

C H A R L Y

CHARLY

espritconfus.com | @espritconfus

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

Charlotte Grimm, called Charly, 25 years, living in Leipzig.

What's your professional background?

I'm a self-taught photographer. I used to paint and draw as long as I can remember, and when my attempt at studying Fine Arts completely destroyed my passion for painting, I resorted to another medium – photography. I'm currently studying Art Education and am looking to do my Masters in Art Therapy.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

Reintroducing the medium of self-portraiture into my work with a greater sensitivity to it, as in having a network of artists to be inspired by and to inspire around me, is very appealing to me. I am very excited to read about everyone and to let it fuel my creativ-

ity anew.

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

Absolutely. I am keen to let the thoughts of others influence my own interpretation of the theme.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

I think it's hard to really grasp the whole meaning of *self*. It's what's beneath the surface, beneath the human form, the soul, the mind, the heart. It's our emotions, our dreams, the very essence that makes you *you*. The self also shapes our appearance, of course, makes us style our human cocoon the way we wish to be seen, it's what distinguishes us from others.

Overall, I believe self is the union of all the elements – like body, thoughts, emotions, sensations, memories, heritage etc. – that work together to form the individuality and

CHARLY

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identity of a person.

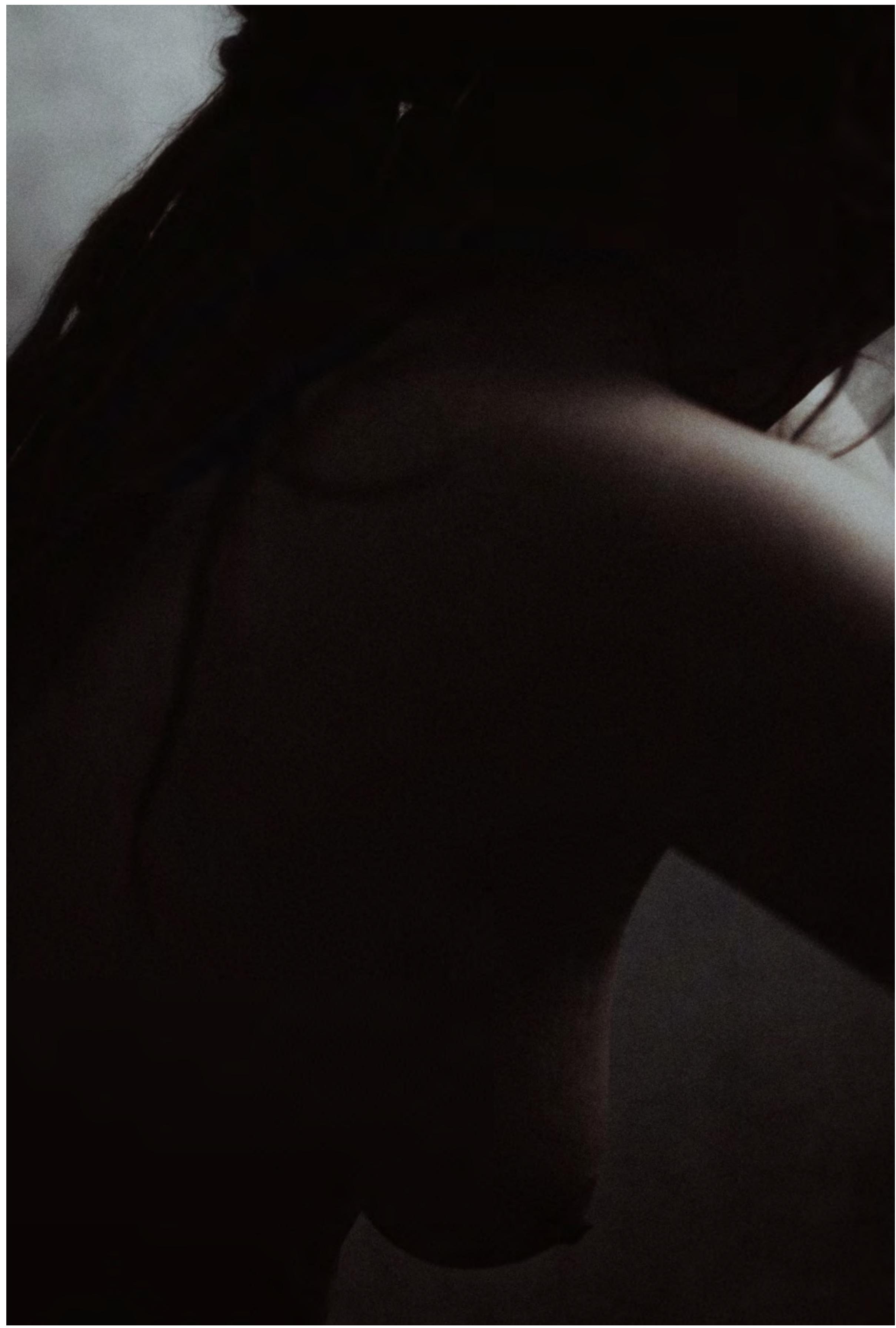
How do you feel about portraying yourself?

Starting off, the majority of my photos were self-portraits, as were many paintings from before. The artistic exploration of my emotions, my expression, and my form has always been a constant companion to my work. In the beginning, it was mostly as a tryout for new techniques where I wasn't sure about anything yet and didn't want to pull a model into the uncertainty. Now, portraying myself is still a very meditative way of grounding myself, feeling myself, especially when shooting outside in extreme environments. It is a handle to cope with strong emotions, and it has proven to be very therapeutic to me.

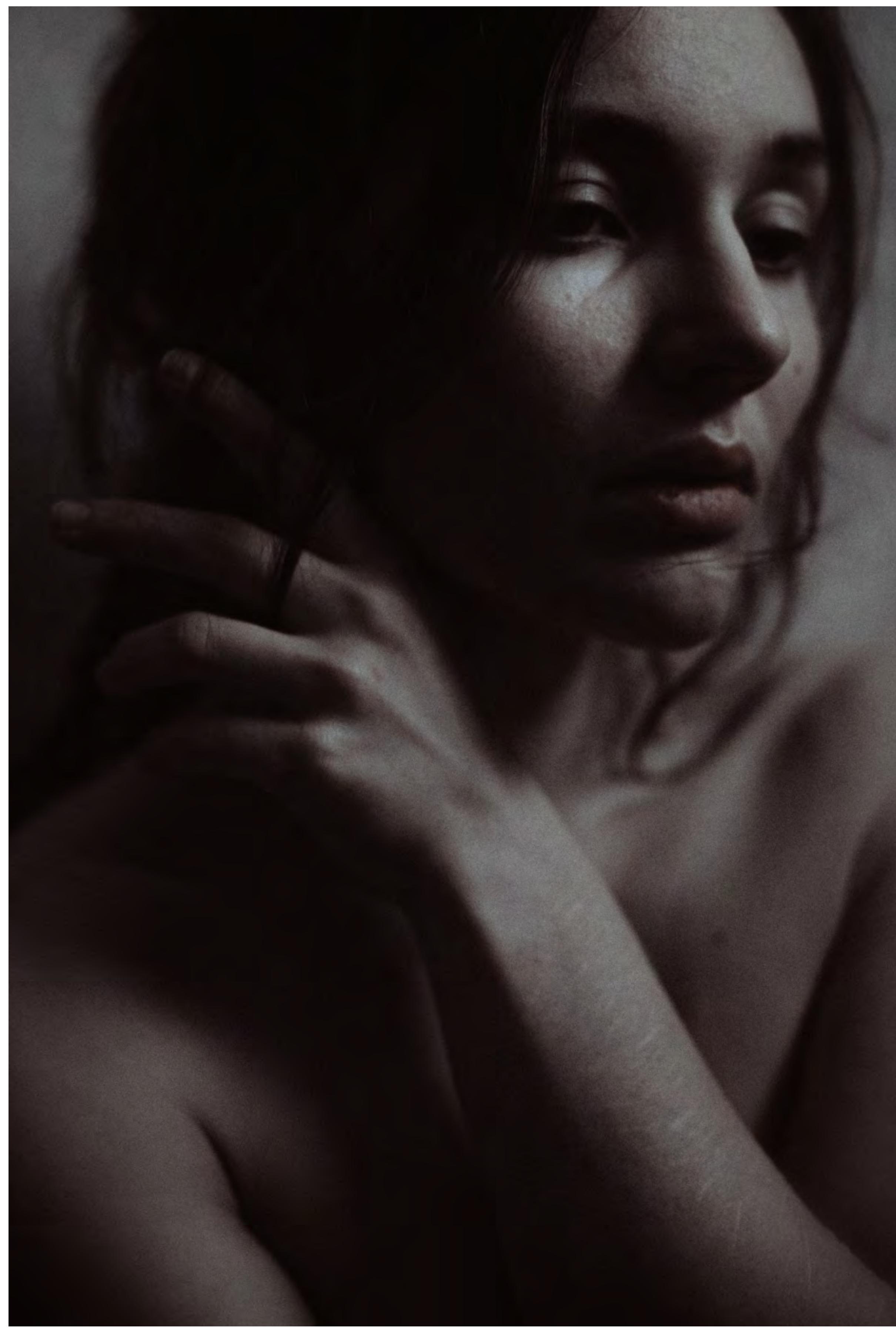
What medium are you going to use?

I will most likely be working with photography, maybe adding some traditional art ele-

ments to it.



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CHARLY

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Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

I think my series is pretty compatible with the rest of the work. I have used self-portraiture thematically a lot in the past, therefore it would possibly not be perceived as totally different. BUT the focus on the intention of the series would probably get lost. In any case, I'm happy to have been part of this project!

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

Partly, yes. It especially resonated with me that many of the collaborators discussed insecurity about themselves, thus inspiring me to create my series.

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

Sadly, I did not. I checked all the feeds though.

If you haven't already, would you like to say something about your piece?

My series focuses on self-acceptance. I do not feel super secure with these images. They show my flaws. They are photographs which, a few years ago, I would have NEVER shown to anybody. I have a belly in those pictures, I'm not holding my breath, and I'm not trying to pose in a super flawless way. There are scars and imperfections all-over. The one I'm particularly hesitant to share is the one where I'm actively trying to create as many skinfolds as possible, because – hell, yes – that's what my body does. I'm trying to explore the relationship with myself through these images. While I love bodies of every shape in every other person, I my-

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self have a pretty long history of body hate. I wouldn't wear shorts until two years ago. I was too ashamed for my thighs. I would actually have folders on my PC and label them *reasons I should diet* and fill them with photographs where I could only focus on what was wrong with my body. I'm slowly letting that shit go, and doing these self-portraits with the intention of being okay with my body – my self – was a step in the right direction.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

I actually have. Given the stressful times, technical problems and my inability to do the shoot when I wanted, I realized that there's no need for a special room or time of day or anything to create. It's a good thing to never forget this!

H E L E N E

HELENE

helenevienna.com | @helenevienna

Basic questions: What's your name, how old are you and where are you from?

I'm Helene Vienna, 30 and from Germany.

What's your professional background?

This is something I've struggled a long time with. Originally, I studied Graphic Design, as well as Art History, took tons of online and offline courses in pretty much anything creative and am now a Graphic Designer/Illustrator by day, which offers an okay income, and a Fine Art photographer by night, which barely covers my photographic journey. To be honest, I'm still a bit struggling with what to call myself professionally, but art is where my heart is.

Why do you want to be part of a group collaboration?

Being part of a collective opens up a dialogue between multiple people. Dialogue means movement, means learning, means

growth. It's always been my mantra to never stand still. So why not do that collectively?

Do you think there is a difference between working within a collective or alone?

Most certainly. Although I am very independent and like to work as a lone wolf, working together implies that you can also help each other when you feel stuck or lost.

What does the word *self* mean to you?

This is quite complex, but to answer it in the most simple way: self is all that I am and am not.

How do you feel about portraying yourself?

Self-portraits are how I started with photography. However, it's been a while since I last did it consciously. Under the premise of doing it collectively, it will be a new take on the subject itself.

HELENE

helenevienna.com | @helenevienna

What medium are you going to use?

I love letting the child inside of me come out to play. Creating is the biggest playground for me to explore.

There is an artist, called Tai Cruz, whom I came across years ago. She manipulates photos in a way they come close to paintings. Because of my split creative personality, the drive to experiment with that style arose. However, unlike Tai, I want to manipulate my photo(s) by hand and not on the computer. So for this occasion, I will use mixed media.

During the project, I thought about what's the best *light* to represent myself in. Should I show (thought) processes, issues, things I adore, situations I often find myself in? How can I make myself *visible* through an image?

From an initial desire to combine photography with painting, I moved back to photography itself. Every image becomes visible through light. Without the sun, life itself would not exist. I would not exist.

It reminded me that every sunrise is an opportunity to grow.

Light makes me feel alive.



©Helene Vienna, *Sunrise*.

HELENE

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Now that everyone has finished their work, how does your image contribute to the group? Do you feel that it would be perceived differently if it was shown apart from this project?

As I was the creator of this project, I made a conscious choice to collaborate rather than to explore self-portraiture on my own. Questioning not only myself but all selves, in general, is in my nature. When existential questions kept resurfacing, I was wondering how many others are facing the same process. Honestly, it was surprising that so many people were interested in exploring themselves with a bunch of strangers. That thought alone – of a union – is answer enough.

Do you feel that reading your collaborators' answers and seeing their work has influenced your own?

I had a pretty set outline for what this proj-

ect should and shouldn't be. What I hadn't quite figured out was a place where everyone could exchange their thoughts and processes. Luckily, Jacqueline suggested opening a Facebook group, which helped to share ideas.

Receiving and managing all collaborators' answers was highly influencing. Before I received any of the answers, I wanted to have my own finished first. But going through all the ideas, my initial thoughts changed. Through everyone's input, I had the chance to re-think.

The same goes for the portraits. I think like everybody else, I was very curious about what others were coming up with. Fearing that would influence me too much, I was surprised as through exchanging ideas in the group, I came up with my very own self-portrait. In the end, what it really boils down to is to explore yourself.

H E L E N E

helenevienna.com | @helenevienna

Did you make use of contacting others while working on your self-portrait?

Aside from putting everything together and preparing emails, I was in contact with several individuals privately as well as through the Facebook group.

Have you learned something new during the project process?

Change is necessary. It's my mantra to let things flow and grow, but often I like to control a situation.

I really wanted to combine painting with photography, evolving from *my style* of photographing. I sketched down ideas, thinking I'd have to create a huge set of images to represent myself. Nothing really convinced me.

What I had hoped for the project was to actually collaborate, so communicating with others was very helpful. Their ideas poked my own. It made me focus more on the

theme itself rather than to fuss about which medium to use. And there it happened: My self was flowing and growing.

GRATITUDE

I want to thank every collaborator for bringing this project alive. It was such a wonderful experience to connect beyond borders and learn more about each one of you, as well as about myself.

A few times, I read that some felt as if their work and perspective didn't matter as much as someone's with more experience. It reminded me of how I feel every single time I'm trying out something new and am faced with another person's knowledge and skills. Let me tell you, it is normal. It is okay!

It really doesn't matter how much experience someone has or doesn't have, the main reason for coming together (or having the idea of collaboration) is to share. We are all in the same boat. Someone on a path further away once stood in the same spot some us are standing in right now. We learn and we grow.

So let's thank everyone and, most of all, yourself for being here, opening up (even if it was just a little), being vulnerable and standing strong, exploring (even when it's scary) and last but not least, for listening, giving advice and reaching out.

- Your Helene

CONTRIBUTORS

| Name | Instagram | Location(s) |
|--------------|---|------------------|
| James | @jamesgrantmclaren | South Africa, UK |
| Liv | @asmallwoman | USA |
| Arturo | @arturo_sanma | Spain |
| Jaqueline | @jaquelinekastenholz | Germany |
| Raghda | @ra8daa | Egypt |
| Luiz | @vigiliisquenoctes | Brazil |
| Susanne | @64shadesofhoernchen | Germany, Japan |
| Bianca-Maria | @biancamangata | Austria |
| Dominique | @dominique_instantphotography | France |
| Kiki | @kikikiksky | Indonesia |
| Eliana | @eliana_v | Colombia, USA |
| Ramin | @ramin_roshandel | Iran, USA |
| Aimilia | @aimilia.theofilopoulos | Germany |
| Poleta | @fragile.dance | Bulgaria |
| Sam | @sam.antha.evans | Germany |
| Frydensraich | @frydensraich | Germany |
| Xavier | @xavierriver | Spain, Peru |
| Charlotte | @espritconfus | Germany |
| Helene | @helenevienna | Germany |

C O N C E P T , D E S I G N & P U B L I C A T I O N

Helene Vienna - Fotografie + Illustration

Mail: hello@helenevienna.com

Web: www.helenevienna.com

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