

# FREE ANOTHER

## Mobilizing Subjectivities through Artistic Photographic Process

SAARA MÄNTYLÄ

2018 – MASTER OF ARTS THESIS

DEGREE PROGRAMME IN PHOTOGRAPHY – DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA

AALTO UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ARTS, DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

---

**Author** Saara Mäntylä

---

**Title of thesis** Free Another: Mobilizing Subjectivities through Artistic Photographic Process

---

**Department** Department of Media

---

**Degree programme** Photography

---

**Year** 2018

**Number of pages** 124

**Language** English

---

**Abstract**

This artistic practice-based research sheds light on my photographic process with the project of *Free Another*. The series *Free Another* consists of self-portrait photographs made in other people's homes, where the inhabitants dress me in their clothes and decide on my makeup and styling. The artistic aim of this project is to explore the boundaries of visual-material identity processes as they are being interpreted and carried out by different ways of being-in-the-world.

In this research, *Free Another* provides a creative perspective that explores self-portraiture beyond the notions of representationally described fixed identity. The inquiry unfolds in an artistic framework which questions discursive understanding of identities through masquerade, performance, cross-dressing and parody. Instead of largely illustrating an alternative identity, the project of *Free Another* aims to mobilize all categories that define or differentiate a represented subject. It does this by considering subjectivity as a moving and ever-changing process.

The research analysis in this study develops through case studies, within which a detailed attention is paid to material-affective sensations that emerge in collaborative artmaking. The inquiry is broadly informed by new materialism, and specifically by the theoretical concepts of nomadic encounters and becoming-another. At large, this is a feminist project that envisions subjectivity as a qualitative multiplicity through the means of photographing.

The project of mobilizing subjectivities actualizes through the affirmative mode of becoming-another that takes place within nomadic encounters. The cases in this study bring about different material-affective entanglements which have aided the process of becoming-another in my artmaking. The analysis describes how in the project of *Free Another* such entanglements occur through slowing down, laughter, touch, dressing, and bodily relation.

The study concludes by suggesting that the self-portrait in *Free Another* becomes more-than a self-portrait. It is a portrait of subjectivities in their compositional, endlessly transforming form-taking that happens through an encounter with the artist's body. Considering bodies-subjectivities as relationally more-than provides a productive, feminist new materialist way of approaching discursively described portraiture. It works though binary divisions and representational settings. Accounting for the subtle material-affective shifts that happen in the artistic photographic process allows for new thinking about open-ended subjectivity through artmaking.

---

**Keywords** artistic process, becoming, new materialism, nomadic encounter, photography, practice-based research, self-portrait, subjectivity

---

---

**Tekijä** Saara Mäntylä

---

**Työn nimi** Free Another: Mobilizing Subjectivities through Artistic Photographic Process

---

**Laitos** Median laitos

---

**Koulutusohjelma** Valokuva

---

**Vuosi** 2018

**Sivumäärä** 124

**Kieli** Englanti

---

### Tiivistelmä

Tämä tutkimus keskittyy analysoimaan taiteellista prosessiani *Free Another* -valokuvateossarjaa tehdessä. *Free Another* koostuu omakuvista, jotka syntyvät vieraillessani toisten ihmisten yksityiskodeissa ja pyytäessäni asukkaita pukemaan minut vaatteisiinsa sekä valitsemaan minulle asuun sopivan ehostuksen ja tyylin. Teoskokonaisuuden taiteellinen päämäärä on tutkia ja kyseenalaistaa visuaalis-materiaalisten identiteettiprosessiemme toteutuksen ja tulkinnan rajapintoja.

*Free Another* -projekti, jota tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan, tarjoaa representationaalisten identiteettikategorioiden ulkopuolelle ulottuvan, luovan näkökulman omakuvaan. Se asettuu taiteelliseen viitekehykseen, jossa diskursiivista identiteettikäsitystä kyseenalaistetaan naamioitumisen, performanssin, ristiinpukeutumisen ja parodian keinoin. Sen sijaan, että *Free Another* rakentaisi vaihtoehtoista identiteetin kuvaa, projekti tähtää asettamaan liikkeeseen kaikki kategoriat, joilla esitettyä subjektia määritellään ja erotellaan. Se niin ikään ymmärtää subjektiviteetin alati liikkeessä olevana, jatkuvana muutoksen prosessina.

Tässä taiteellisessa tutkimuksessa analyysi perustuu tapaustutkimuksiin, joissa kiinnitetään erityistä huomiota materiaalis-affektiivisiin yksityiskohtiin, jotka nousevat esiin yhteistyössä rakentuvassa taiteellisessa prosessissa. Tutkimusote on uusmaterialistinen. Tämä viitekehys tarjoaa tutkimukselle keskeisimmiksi teoreettisiksi työkaluiksi nomadisen kohtaamisen sekä tulemisen liikkeen käsitteet. Tutkimus on feministinen projekti, joka hahmottaa valokuvallisin keinoin subjektiviteettiä laadullisena moninaisuutena.

Taiteellisessa prosessissa subjektiviteetti asettuu liikkeeseen nomadisessa kohtaamisessa, jonka myötä affirmatiivinen toiseksi-muuksi tulemisen prosessi todentuu. Analyysi erittelee tutkimuksen esimerkeistä esiin nousevia materiaalis-affektiivisiä tunteja, jotka ovat edistäneet taiteellisen prosessini avautumista tälle tulemisen liikkeelle. *Free Another* -teossarjan luomisprosessissa näitä tunteja syntyy hidastamisen, naurun, kosketuksen, pukemisen ja kehon suhteisuuden kautta.

Tutkimus esittää, että *Free Another* -projektissa omakuvasta tulee enemmän kuin omakuva. Omakuva on täten asetelmassaan alati muuttuvan ja uudelleen muotoutuvan subjektiviteetin kuva, joka ilmaantuu taiteilijan ruumiillisessa kohtaamisessa. Kehojen ja subjektiviteettien ymmärtäminen suhteisesti muuttuvina tarjoaa antoisan, feministisen uusmaterialistisen näkökulman lähestyä diskursiivisesti luonnehdittua muotokuvaa. Se toimii binäärijaotteluiden ja representaatioiden läpi niitä poikkileikaten. Valokuvataiteellisessa prosessissa ilmaantuvien hienovaraisten materiaalis-affektiivisten siirtymien huomioiminen mahdollistaa uudenlaisen, avoimesti liikkuvien ja muotoutuvien subjektiviteettien tarkastelun taiteellisessa työskentelyssä.

---

**Avainsanat** kohtaaminen, nomadisuus, omakuva, subjektiivisuus, taiteellinen prosessi, taiteellinen tutkimus, tuleminen, uusmaterialismi, valokuvaus

---

GRAPHIC DESIGN: SAARA MÄNTYLÄ

PRINTED IN: OY NORD PRINT AB, HELSINKI

PAPERS: MUNKEN LYNX 120 G/M<sup>2</sup>

NEW ENSOCOAT 250 G/M<sup>2</sup>

# INDEX

1. INTRODUCTION: Practice-based research from contexts to methodology	2
1.1 Research context: Setting the self in motion	5
1.2. Artistic and theoretical context: Self-portraiture and subjectivity	6
1.3 The entanglements of theory and practice in artistic research	9
1.4 Methodology and data: Advancing the artistic research inquiry	12
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: Beyond representation	16
2.1 Materialities, multiplicities and sensations in artistic research on subjectivity	19
2.2 Nomadic research attitude: Becoming-nomadic and becoming-another	23
3. ANALYSIS: Generating subjectivities in transit	30
3.1 Joyful interactions	34
3.2 Slowing down	41
3.3 Dressing another	45
3.4 Transformative touch and nomadic dollness	52
3.5 Rhythmic bodily becomings	60
4. CONCLUSION: More-than self-portraits	72
List of Cases	79
References	81
Acknowledgements	87
Appendix: <i>Free Another</i> (2016–ongoing)	90

# 1. INTRO- DUCTION

Practice-based research  
from contexts  
to methodology

**I**n this artistic research, I reflect on the photographic process of making *Free Another*—a series of self-portraits created in different home environments. I focus on how the artistic photographic process can generate subjectivity that is unfixed, open-ended and ever-changing. As I advance this inquiry through case studies, I pay detailed attention to the material-affective sensations that emerge in my collaborative artmaking. The analysis is broadly informed by new materialism, and specifically by the theoretical concepts of nomadic encounters and becoming-another. At large, this is a feminist project that envisions subjectivity as a qualitative multiplicity through the means of photographing.



Figure 1: *Harrison, New York*, 2016, from the series *Free Another*



## 1.1 Research context: Setting the self in motion

In the artistic encounters that comprise the photography project *Free Another*, I ask different people to dress me up in their clothes, and to accessorize, and style me according to their wishes while I visit their private homes. I use my body as a mediator to attend to the process of becoming-another through engagement with the dressing, the space, and a new realm of gestures and personal stories. This collaborative event is captured in photographic self-portraits where I pose wearing the other person's outfit, at a site familiar to them.

The artwork that consists of 30 photographs, explores the boundaries of visual-material identity processes as they are being interpreted and carried out by different components, such as clothing, pose and style—by ways of being-in-the-world. The artistic gesture in this project serves as a sounding board for alternative, more flexible self-presentations. It allows for the investigation of self as a free another, crossing and layering gender, sexuality, ethnicity, social class, age, and religion, among others.

The series *Free Another* is an ongoing project, currently including images from encounters that took place in the years 2016–2018 in different locations throughout Europe and North America.

## 1.2. Artistic and theoretical context: Self-portraiture and subjectivity

In *Free Another*, my creative practice provides a perspective that contests the common understanding that the human subject, their identity and self are rather fixed. In other words, this work is positioned against the idea that individuals would have certain traits and qualities which allow identity to reach its full potential within particular limits. The notion of fixed identity is enforced by the framework of ‘representation’ which describes the living world in static binary divisions such as man–woman, heterosexual–homosexual, culture–nature, self–other (Rossi, 2010). These dualist notions constitute the common Western system of meaning-making, where subjects and identity are discursively categorized as either–or (Braidotti, 2011b, p. 145). If understood within representational thinking, self-portraits bring about an array of connotations through which individuals portrayed in the images are differentiated and characterized. Such connotations fix the subject into binary categories of, for example, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, but also inspire more detailed interpretations on the individual’s identity signified by, for instance, what the person is wearing, how they pose and in what kind of a setting.

Contesting these fixed, representational notions on identity, the photographic project of *Free Another* offers a departure from the conventional understanding of a self-portrait. I turn my attention to the subtle movements and shifts *within* and *through* categorizations that are commonly understood as static binary opposites. When visiting people and preparing for the self-portraits, I time and again attune myself to other people’s identity markers and to the spaces they

inhabit as their homes. Dressing in another person's clothes in their private environment allows me to disperse within the embodiment of another as I abandon the material factors that I use to express myself, along with pre-existing notions of me–other. In this way, I traverse the boundaries of several socially and culturally understood identities by moving in-between categorizations and framing myself anew as another, again and again. Through the process of becoming-another, in this artistic project the photographic plane becomes a space to envision multiplicity of subjectivities.

Through artmaking, I hope to 'free' the body and its (re)presentation into a movement that challenges generalized notions of discursively established identities, and hence, can generate new thinking about subjectivity in flux. As a starting point for such movement, I disregard the idea of a core, essential identity, of a fixed subject position (Braidotti, 2011a, p. 3). As a result, this project extends forward the works by photographic artists such as Cindy Sherman (American, b. 1954), Claude Cahun (French, 1894–1954), Gillian Wearing (English, b. 1963), and Nikki S. Lee (Korean, b. 1970), as it builds upon their critical approach towards self as a coherent entity, and in their investigation of more flexible approaches to representational subjectivity through art photography. *Free Another* is well situated within the artistic context offered by these artists' self-portraits, as they point towards the camera's role and power in capturing and creating subjectivity (see Bright, 2010, p. 183; Raymond, 2017, pp. 130–133). Whereas Cindy Sherman uses the transgressive method of masquerade in dressing up as a fictional other to challenge culturally described female identities, Claude Cahun appears in her photographs time and time again as different, which scrutinizes binary gender roles as well as the notion of a true self that could be captured in a portrait photograph (Bright, 2010, pp. 16, 100–101; Howgate, 2017). Finding kinship to Cahun, Gillian Wearing uses the idea of a mask to make a comment on the fixity of identity as inherent and representational. In Wearing's artworks, masquerade and performance function as a strategy in transcending the subject

towards multiple (see Howgate, 2017). As Susan Bright writes, “[t]he mask offers a powerful disguise that gives photographers the chance to explore and redefine themselves, and to challenge the ways in which identities have commonly been represented —“ (Bright, 2010, p. 101). On the other hand, Nikki S. Lee explores the performative capacity of identities relating to ethnicity, sexuality, and gender in her performance-based photographic series *Projects* (1997–2001) through assimilation; she changes her bodily presentation to resemble the appearance of others (Bright, 2010, p. 11; Raymond, 2017, pp. 130–133).<sup>1</sup>

Analytically, the project *Free Another* does not aim to produce an alternative identity, but instead, to set such categorizations into affirmative process of becoming-another, and to provide photographic artifacts where this subjectivity *in transit* is made visible, shared, and can thus be embedded into future becomings. This perspective shapes my photographic approach in the context of new materialism: I consider subjectivity as fluid materiality that is unfixed, ever-changing, and transforming (see Braidotti 2011b; Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012). Within this understanding, subjectivity is neither here nor there but always shifts and moves in relation, and hence, cannot be reduced fully into a representation. The process of photographing under such relational premises allows me to create conditions for productive encounters that make it possible to envision subjectivity as a qualitative multiplicity—something which is all the time many, different, never-ending, and positive.

This research sheds light on the encounters in my artistic process within feminist new materialist framework. I focus on Rosi Braidotti’s (2011a; 2011b) concept and practice of nomadic becomings as an enabling theoretical lens for my analysis. A nomad is Braidotti’s

---

<sup>1</sup> Such approaches towards photographic self-portrait are often considered understanding identity as a performative, as something which is constructed, maintained, and as a result, subverted through the discursive repetition of signs (see for example Bright, 2010; Butler, 1990; 1993; Cotton, 2009; Raymond 2017, p. 102).

materialistic mapping of a situated, embodied and embedded social position of the subject as multiple and diverse (Braidotti, 2011b, pp. 4, 25). That is, when “axes of differentiation like class..., ethnicity, gender, age and others intersect and interact with each other in the constitution of subjectivity, the notion of nomad refers to the simultaneous occurrence of many of these at once” (Braidotti in Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 34). The artistic process under study is a feminist project towards free-moving subjectivity unfolding through nomadic becomings. Nomadic focus on becoming attends to movement that is non-hierarchical, open-ended, affirmative change (see Braidotti, 2006, p. 44). It allows for envisioning subjectivity as a process. This is especially valuable from the feminist point of view, because it contributes to liberating the subject from binary oppositions by accounting for the differences and multiplicities within. My project works through and within the historically cumulated representations of the subject that locks identity down into dualistic rigidity of self–other and mutes otherness (see Braidotti, 2011a, p. 153; 2011b, p. 68; Crenshaw, 2016). As such, it also aims for dislocating the representational idea of photographic (self-)portrait as being a mirror of any identity.

### 1.3 The entanglements of theory and practice in artistic research

This is a practice-based research, where thinking with the materials, methods and ideas of practice informs new insights (see Bolt, 2007). Reflecting on and engaging with the work of art throughout the varying encounters in the process of *Free Another* has gradually led me to the theoretical conception of nomadic becomings. When I first began the project, I photographed self-portraits in private spaces of my colleagues that I hadn't visited before. At the time, I was living in

New York (US). Without a refined conceptual framework, I felt a need to set something in motion by using my body. I wanted not to be fixed into things such as how other people would interpret my style, how I was always considered through my country of origin (Finland), and how my image in the mirror did not satisfy me. This eventually led me to express my frustration through variables of subjectivities, with a certain emphasis on cultural exchange. I would look for collaborators that were of different ethnical backgrounds to blur my own origin, and I would make photographs wherever I would travel. In the beginning, my focus was only on the clothes and location. I decided on my makeup myself, and in retrospect, the excess of it became apparent. Gradually, with one photo shoot following another, I understood that I needed to open up myself more to the situations themselves, so that I could truly let something new enter the process, and for my camera to capture it too (see Braidotti, 2011a, pp. 152–153; 2006, p. 145). “So what is going to happen?” asks one of my collaborators, two years in the process, in 2018, as I am about to begin a photo shoot in their home in Copenhagen (Denmark).<sup>2</sup> Under the premises of co-emergence within and through the process of encountering in the artmaking, neither of us really ever knows.

In this research project, the practice of art itself opens up paths for understanding the movements and vitality of visual-material processes around subjectivity. This is not a philosophical inquiry as much as this is an exploration of the artistic process at hand by using the investigative tools of nomadic encounters and the notion of becoming. This means that, as an artist-researcher-subject, I devote myself to a critical attitude towards my artistic aims and practice. In my engagement with the unfamiliar and the other through artmaking, I make a conscious choice to explore the possibilities for movement

---

<sup>2</sup> CASE 3: Collaborator C, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2 July 2018

and change within such encounter in the hopes for new openings.<sup>3</sup> New emergence is facilitated by nomadic encounters, that steer artistic process towards unknown and unexpected results through lived experiences (Smith, 2016, pp. 61–64). On a material-affective level in my study, this means allowing materialities such as various garments, interaction with another person, or weather conditions to impact the artistic process as they are felt in the artist's body. Such affective materialities can only be experienced outside what is already-known and habitual about subjectivity (see O'Sullivan, 2006, pp. 42–51). These are the lived experiences which generate becoming-another.

---

<sup>3</sup> By reflecting upon and possibly changing living habits one is able to confront the current challenges and steer processes to affirmative direction towards future thinking (Braidotti, 2017).



Figure 2: *Yulian, London, 2016*, from the series *Free Another*

The resulting photograph provides a visual record of this traversing the fluctuating position of subjectivity. The analytical approach to artmaking in this research emerges in a mutual dialogue with theory and practice, where the material-affective encounters of the process can be thought and elaborated through theoretical formations, and thereafter brought back to inform the practice. This engagement with the in-between makes it possible for developing feminist artistic research towards new futures, for creating new connections in generating sustainable thinking about subjectivity with art (see Meskimmon, 2003a; 2003b).

## 1.4 Methodology and data: Advancing the artistic research inquiry

This research proceeds through 15 case studies from the project *Free Another*. I reflect on my artistic process with the help of research material that consists of visual, written and audio notes and recordings. These help me to discuss (and remember) the affectivity that emerged within my creative encounters. While I concentrate on some photographic encounters more thoroughly as cases, along the analysis I draw connections and links to other photo shoots within the project as well. Under focus here are selected examples which productively demonstrate the material-affective potentialities of becoming in my artistic process. These felt potentialities intertwine, intermingle, and co-emerge throughout the project, however, and are not connected to only one particular encounter.

The cases are named according to the times and places where the photo shoot happened, whereas the artworks are titled by my collaborators' names and geographical locations. Such naming locates the encounters in a certain experienced spatiotemporality, making them available for analysis and further elaboration, and this is done



here for the sake of clarity. Here I aim to show, however, how such discursively designated positions and locations are themselves on the move as I foreground material-affective microrelations of the photographic encounters. An appendix of all photographic artworks in the series at the moment is provided.

My own position as an artist-researcher and a participant in the nomadic encounters, is of methodological importance. To provide productive knowledge on multiplicity of subjectivities, we must acknowledge the position we speak from: we are attached to localized histories, embodied and embedded within our experiences in the world (Haraway, 1988; see also Braidotti 2011b). However, this doesn't mean I must remain solely with my culturally ascribed position of a Western white queer cis-woman artist, which would mean remaining fixed in those categories that define and represent me discursively. Following Rosi Braidotti (2011b), the thinking subject must attain increased self-reflexivity: not only to acknowledge their location but to gain critical distance in order to form understanding of the diverse and multiple subject positions (pp. 15–17). This is a change in perspective through being conscious of the fluidity of boundaries without denying borders (Braidotti, 2011b, p. 66).

Braidotti names Cindy Sherman's photographic series *History Portraits* (1991) as a fitting example of how feminist artists can approach the nomadic intervention on representations of women by working through confining histories by visually placing emphasis on shifts, transitions and mimetic repetitions (Braidotti, 2011b, pp. 162–163). My artistic project uses a similar strategy for activating imagination in its nomadic encounters. This perspective means pulling out sensations and narratives from within the already-existing as a positive difference (Braidotti, 2011a, pp. 215–235). That is to say, instead of relying on the already-known, I continuously remember anew in my creation of narratives which allude to a new, open-ended future for subjectivities on the move. In order to do this, I must begin with my own bodily self: to remember and imagine in a nomadic way is not to forget our spatiotemporal coordinates or about linear change from one to

another, it is differing from oneself as often and as much as possible (Braidotti, 2011a, p. 32–34; 2011b, p. 15). In this artistic research, this is illustrated through the concept of becoming-another.

In the following analysis, I elaborate how various bodies, clothing, environment, touch, exchanged stories and moments, all participate in the possible becoming-another in the form of constant variation and multiplicity, and in the creation of a self-portrait that frames such becoming. For example, I analyze how laughter and slowing down are handled through their affective potentiality that participates in the artistic process, allowing artmaking to become transformative. It is worth noting that in order to resist fixed categorizations and identifications in the analysis, attention to the detail is crucial: changes and shifts in a material-affective level often happen in small twitches and are thus easily left unnoticed or unrecognized (Kontturi, 2006, p. 193). These are not details in the performatively subversive manner, which I will bring up next, but rather material-affective micromovements which are unpredictable in their vibrancy, and thus, serve as an apt entry point towards conceptualizing the artistic becoming-another which in itself is open-ended and fluid (see Kontturi, 2006, pp. 16–17; Kontturi & Hongisto, 2011, pp. 7–8). Instead of focusing on the end result, the so-called representational outcome of artmaking, a photograph, I concentrate on the photographic process and the material-affective encounters within, from the nomadically critical perspective of the embodied, embedded artist-subject.



# 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Beyond representation

Representation is an integral part of cultural production of identities, and as such, representation has been in close focus of poststructuralist feminist research for decades (Braidotti, 2011b, pp. 137–155). The feminist poststructuralist take on reconfiguring subjectivity has aimed at the hegemonic and phallogocentric construction of identities as dual opposites, such as man and woman, by trying to liberate the subject by creating alternative representations in the hope for dismissing the polarized, gendered notions altogether (see Braidotti 2011b, pp. 137–155; Butler, 1993; Vänskä, 2006). In the study of art portraiture, representational analysis and the method of close-reading provide useful insights towards setting the subject in motion within the culturally coded power structures of gender, sexuality, social class, and ethnicity (see Palin, 2004; 2007). In (feminist) self-portraiture, these representational limitations for subjectivity are time and time again contested through the performative methods of masquerade, parody, and cross-dressing, to name a few (Meskimmon, 1996; Bright, 2010).

Considering art, Katve-Kaisa Kontturi (2012) claims, however, that the representational “construction of oppositions, finding points of identification, drawing analogies and claiming resemblances” is

not enough, because it detaches meaning from art's materiality, its movements and flows (pp. 50, 191–192). My research, thus, agrees with Kontturi in that without attending to the movements and encounters of art in the process of artmaking, something essential about art's complexity and force is left segued (Kontturi, 2012, p. 17). Braidotti further suggests that for long, the feminist poststructuralist project has remained trapped within the very notion that it critiques: remaking representational identities is always tied to its starting point, its polar opposite of dualistic order (Braidotti 2011b, pp. 137–155). This is the case, for instance, with Judith Butler's (1990; 1993) celebrated theorization of gender as performative. Regardless of its powerful strategies in subverting hegemonic gender system through performative counter-acts, these repetitions can ultimately only be carried out within certain discursive limitations, which makes it impossible for this theory to conceptualize material-affective, open-ended, and unpredictable flows in art or elsewhere (see Kontturi & Hongisto, 2011, p. 7). Representation, as a system of signs, is something already known that can be named and fixed into its meaning, and as such, it also determines what can be thought (Bolt, 2004, pp. 12–13; O'Sullivan 2006, p. 1). To sum up, my artistic research project with *Free Another* departs from the exclusively representational approach to subjectivity as I aim to shed light on the affective potentiality of materiality within the photographic process. That makes this a new materialist artistic inquiry.

## 2.1 Materialities, multiplicities and sensations in artistic research on subjectivity

A new materialist thinking works through the limitations of representational analysis on subjectivity, art, and artistic practice by considering material forces alongside with semiotics, redefining these outside the dualistic mode, as a non-hierarchical process (Braidotti, 2011b, pp 146–150; Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 8). Instead of understanding art and bodies merely as representations that are coded with meaning, new materialism sees them as self-governing matter which remains in constant movement, avoiding fixed interpretations (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012; Kontturi, 2012). Matter, then, is not passive but active, self-creative, productive, and unpredictable materiality; it is vitality, excess and force (Coole & Frost, 2010, pp. 9–10). A new materialist thinking does not deny representation or human concepts but it takes into account the vibrancy of the living world, the lived experience—which in poststructuralist tradition have been given very little to none attention: things, clothes, furniture, molecules, bacteria, and so forth, are considered as active participants.

For artistic research, this inclusive viewpoint offers a valuable framework for approaching both art practice and the artworks themselves, because it opens up thinking through image-making towards understanding on how, for instance, engaging with materials and affects in the art process informs the work of art, and how the artworks themselves can mobilize and affect their viewing subjects (for example Bertelsen, 2013; Bolt, 2004; Kontturi, 2012; 2018 [forthcoming]; Najdowski & Vuorinen, 2018). Working outside dualist oppositions such as matter–meaning, or culture–nature, new materialism “allows for the study of the two dimensions in their entanglement: the experience of a piece of art is made up of matter *and* meaning“ (Dolphijn & van der Tuin 2012, pp. 85, 91, emphasis mine). This way of approaching photography contests

the notion of representationally indexical, sustained photographic image, suggesting a materially and temporally unfixed, non-finite, and fluid work of art (Najdowski & Vuorinen, 2018). It is important to note that while a new materialist artwork may take the critique of representational dualism as its point of departure, instead of negating it, it *works through* representation, moving beyond it into creating new worlds in a positive manner (O’Sullivan, 2010, p. 197). New materialism, hence, relies on creative, inclusive positivity as a constructive method in bringing-forth new concepts and images that affirm the vitality of materiality—not on oppositional negation (Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 8).

In my practice-based artistic research, a new materialist way of analyzing the photographic encounters makes it possible to approach the notion of subjectivity in transit, as a constant multiplicity. Multiplicity is a nontotalizable entity; it is neither one nor many, and never a whole, but instead multiplicity consists of constant flows that rearrange, transform and change in intensity and with other multiplicities (Grosz, 1994, p. 225; see also Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 249). For feminist research, new materialism means understanding subjectivity as a network of variables, such as class, age, ethnicity, sexual preference, and lifestyle; regarding the subject as a multiple, interconnected and open-ended, yet situated and embodied (Braidotti, 2011b, pp 146–150). This understanding is especially important for my artistic project because it means detailed rethinking of these fundamental categorizations of Western culture listed above (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008, p. 17). The investigation and questioning some of these boundaries in my work aims at reconfiguring subjectivity as non-hierarchical multiplicity within artmaking, and through this, further opening thinking towards new ways of understanding how subjectivities can be mobilized in photographic artistic process.

According to French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1994)—whose influence on the theoretical formation and



discourse of new materialism is intrinsically pivotal<sup>4</sup>—art works through sensations, while philosophy brings forth concepts. Art composes flows and vibrant materiality, that is, becomings, into blocs of sensations and affects, which can generate new becomings, open up future sensations (Grosz, 2008, p. 75; Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, pp. 163–175; O’Sullivan, 2010, pp. 198–199).<sup>5</sup> Affect refers to those becomings, which are the transformative movements within and through states of being, that artists can mediate (O’Sullivan, 2010, pp. 197–199; also Manning, 2013, pp. 26–30). Sensations cannot be created by philosophy, and concepts cannot be generated by art, “but they can engage each other through productive nomadic encounters” (Smith, 2016, p. 17).<sup>6</sup> Such encounters play a central role in my research, since the concept of nomadic encounters in artistic practice means paving the road for new ways of emergent thinking through artmaking (see Smith, 2016). In a new materialist analysis on art, affects occur for instance in material entanglements and vitality of relation, in the co-existing of the researcher and the research object (Hongisto & Kurikka, 2013, p. 12). In this research, such affects emerge and are felt in the artist’s encounter with another person, where materialities such as touch, laughter, and clothing are involved. The challenge is in conceptualizing the materialities partaking in the artistic process, when they are experienced beyond representation (such as language).

---

<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the vocabulary of this research is influenced by Deleuzo-Guattarian ways of speaking of the world and its material entanglements, as my key theoretical framework of nomadic theory comes from Rosi Braidotti, a former student of Gilles Deleuze (Braidotti, 2011b, p. 69).

<sup>5</sup> According to Jane Bennett (2010), both human bodies and nonhuman objects are composed of vibrant materiality. Remaining open to this non-hierarchical vibrancy common to all actants in a photographic encounter makes it possible for my artistic research to account for creative forces that are lively, horizontal, self-organizing, and not fully representationally comprehensible (see Bennett, 2010, pp. 5–17).

<sup>6</sup> Philosophy and art both frame glimpses from the inconceivable chaos of the universe with concepts and affects thus offering a possibility for the chaos to be thought and felt (Grosz, 2008, p. 24). For new materialism, this chaos of the universe can be conceptualized as the eternal possibilities of flows and intensities of matter waiting to be discovered or encountered.



Figure 3: *Ilina, Bulgaria, 2016, from the series Free Another*

What is crucial is the artists' capability to open up themselves to encountering the universe and its forces, in order to be able to sense, feel, process and sustain the "outside" (Braidotti, 2011a, pp. 152–153; 2006, p. 145). Whatever is sensed in the artmaking, whatever becomes in the process, is what artists then frame for others.<sup>7</sup>

The task for my artistic research project is to look for new ways of imagining and narrating changing constructions of the self through artmaking by considering the dynamics of the artistic encounter as co-emerging and co-constituting within the artistic practice (see Braidotti, 2011b, p. 150; Najdowski & Vuorinen, 2018). In an encounter of this kind, the objects of an encounter are in perpetual change, and in their process of changing relation they both become—they "[b]oth leak, flow, and transform" (Kontturi, 2012, p. 51). I open up my photographic process to a new materialist analysis through Rosi Braidotti's (2011a; 2011b) nomadic theory and the notion of becoming in artistic encounters to understand how material-affective relations are a part of my practice-based quest towards new emergence of subjectivity in transit.

## 2.2 Nomadic research attitude: Becoming-nomadic and becoming-another

Within the framework of nomadic theory, the starting point is always *within*: in using whatever opportunities already exist in our "ethno/gender landscapes" of current Western cultural identity production

---

<sup>7</sup> In the process of encountering a piece of art, the framed sensation further invites living beings into the artwork, in a similar manner of becoming where one is filled with the affective forces of the work alone (Grosz, 2008, p. 73).

(Braidotti, 2006, p. 66). Nomadic theory aims for mobilizing polarized subject positions through an affirmative actualization process. Affirmation has to do with positive, joyous difference: difference not as a *difference from* in an oppositional way, as a negation that creates otherness, but difference *in itself*, which is, taking difference in a nomadic, zigzagging way, as a constant becoming (Braidotti 2011b, p.17; 2011a, pp. 40–41, 151). The difference itself makes it possible for a thinking subject to attend to the forces outside representational dualisms subordinate to identity: “The key is embracing difference as process by mobilizing one’s stable identities to create a subject that is fluid and free of the constraining forces of sameness” (Smith, 2016, p. 59). Traversing differing within is the method for feminist theories for releasing the grip of dualism of sexual difference (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, pp. 134, 141–143; also Braidotti, 2011b). In feminist new materialisms, differences are multiplied beyond the binary setting, as the zigzagging changing material relation implies for a constant emergence of new combinations. Thus, within the polarized opposition of man and woman, as in micromovements, “a thousand tiny sexes” emerge (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 213; Kontturi & Hongisto, 2011, p. 7). In my photographs, I explore such micromovements by dressing up and posing as another in an affective-material process of becoming. The difference takes place in becoming as a constant multiplicity where bodies are considered based on what they can do (Grosz, 1994, pp. 164–165).

What resonates with my artistic research project about nomadic theory is that the nomad refuses the idea of fixity of self and instead embraces the notion of identity made of transitions, constant change and successive shifts (Braidotti, 2011b, pp. 57–59). In this way, the nomadic subject resists hegemonic and exclusionary views of subjectivity. The nomadic subject reinvents self as other by actualizing selfhood as a process of transformation and transversality, which means that there is no representational self as *now* or self as *then* (Braidotti, 2011a, pp. 29–36, 41–42). What is crucial to nomadism

is the process of *becoming*(-woman/-other/-nomadic)<sup>8</sup> which allows for these qualitative, positive transformations (Braidotti, 2011a, pp. 29–30). Becoming is not becoming as something with an end result. Becoming is about movements, forces, and affects of materiality that emerge in encounters, the multiplicity of difference *in itself* as it can be sensed, felt. Moreover, since nomadism is a transpersonal mode, beyond the notions of individuality, in Braidotti's (2011a) words: "You can never be a nomad; you can only go on trying to become nomadic" (p. 43).

In the process of my artmaking, the nomadic concept of becoming-another is essential. I use the term 'becoming' in this way because I want to stress that even though I embody some of the visual-material ways of my collaborator, the aim is not to transform myself into their lived experience by dismissing mine, or *vice versa*. In other words, the focus is not on empowering or strengthening existing identities. Instead, I am interested in those collaborative spaces where our encounter engenders something new: another vision of subjectivity, that is neither me nor the other person, but an open-ended *otherness*. Hence, the name of the series is *Free Another*. In this research, nomadic becoming-another means understanding lived bodies as manifold thresholds for change—through their vibrant qualities and material entanglements (Braidotti, 2011a, pp. 1–3;

---

<sup>8</sup> For a feminist nomadic subject, all becoming must begin with becoming-woman, because of the need to reject gendered dualisms of sexed identities (Braidotti, 2011a, pp. 29–30). "Becoming-woman means going beyond [self-evident] identity and subjectivity, fragmenting and freeing up ... [the self], "liberating" multiplicities, corporeal or otherwise, that identity subsumes under the one" (Grosz, 1994, p. 178). Because minority is the dynamic principle of nomadic theory, woman stands for minority or minoritarian, which is, all but man that is majority—the phallogocentric, dualist order that nomadism rejects (Braidotti, 2011a, pp. 29–30; also Grosz, 1994, pp. 177–178). However, as Braidotti stresses, an asymmetrical starting position between minority and majority is needed: all minorities, woman included, must become-woman in order to detach from the unitary identity as others as opposed to majority (Braidotti, 2011a, p. 30). Becoming nudges the oppositional dialectic on the move, disregarding unitarian identity: "There is no subject of the becoming except as a ... [mobilized] variable of the majority—" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 292).

Braidotti in Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, pp. 33–34). Furthermore, while my photographic oeuvre consciously addresses notions of ethnicity, age, sexuality and gender, it does this in terms of feminist new materialist nomadism. Such approach does not gather multiple positions of otherness into one subject of sameness; instead it aims for dismissing ways of formulating subjectivity through opposition and negation altogether (Braidotti, 2006, p. 133). Rather, nomadism in my artistic practice promotes a qualitative shift in perspective: “[t]he point of nomadic subjectivity is to identify ... a creative alternative space of becoming that would fall not between the mobile/immobile, the resident/the foreigner distinction, but within all these categories“ (Braidotti, 2011b, p. 7). This is done through positive affirmation, which actualizes in the becoming-another. Thus, nomadic subjectivity is in transit, and observes the world from *within*.

In academic scholarship, the nomadic eagerness to transgress boundaries invites transdisciplinarity, as well as general crossing and blending of different discourses such as in popular culture, arts, literature, or philosophy (Braidotti, 2011b, pp. 14–15, pp. 66–68). Nomadic theory therefore provides a productive framework for practice-based artistic research, such as this one, that suggests new perspectives for thinking about subjectivity beyond the habitual. It allows for the research to traverse boundaries in its search for new emergences. Steering now this study towards the analysis of my artistic process, I formulate my research attitude as nomadic. Adopting a critical nomadic consciousness of being in transit, being neither here nor there, allows me as the artist-researcher to attain “some healthy skepticism about steady identities” (Braidotti, 2011b, p. 39). This aids me in my photographic process in experiencing and envisioning subjectivity as a qualitative multiplicity. Nomadic attitude for this artistic research means opening up to cultures, languages and variation—to the affective flows and vibrant materiality of becoming-another.

In the following chapters, I weave the nomadic approach into my analysis as I flesh out the key case studies that inform this research. The cases bring about different material-affective entanglements which have aided the process of becoming-another in my artmaking. The analysis begins by establishing a new materialist artistic approach to the project of *Free Another* through encounter, empathy and embodiment. Thereafter, as the analysis unfolds, I show how my work gets productive, transversal and intensive when considered nomadically. I elaborate how becoming-another allows for my artwork to traverse the boundaries of both mine and my collaborators', and furthermore sets off our bodies into a microrelational co-emergence beyond what is already-known. Nomadic attitude is prominent when I remain sensitive to what my artist's body can do. The case analysis establishes my artistic project as a part of a collective nomadic process, and furthermore introduces a non-representational angle on feminist self-portraiture. The research concludes with a summary of the findings and a reflection on the future development of this artistic project both practically and analytically.







# 3. ANALYSIS

Generating  
subjectivities  
in transit

**T**he process of making *Free Another* usually takes place in locations that are previously unknown to me. The unfamiliarity of the upcoming situation is the unsettling force that allows me to discard unnecessary comfort with my creative work and allows me to wander towards new discovery. This is my way of embracing the creative potentiality of pure difference, that is, the difference in itself (see Smith, 2016, pp. 4–5, 280–284). As I am not familiar with my surroundings, I cannot map out what I will do. I let the experience guide the way, in my hopes that it will lay the foundation for a new artwork. This does not always work out: it is inherently uncertain where the photographic event leads. However, the process of going outside of the comfort zone of the already-known, already-thinkable, is the method that eventually can guide me as an artist into creating something that can broaden the scope of life through art.<sup>9</sup> Simon O’Sullivan (2010) describes this process of involving

---

<sup>9</sup> “[W]e continue to fail better until the potentialities and intensities of artmaking, of thinking, of living emerge and actualize something new, something that *does* work” (Smith, 2016, p. 9, emphasis original).

chance into artmaking aptly “as a specifically productive technology, a mechanism for escaping cliché and the habits of the self” (p. 202).

*Free Another* is a collaboration, that comes to life when myself and another person share a spatiotemporal location. Besides the human encounter, the collaborator’s living environment, objects, clothes, jewelry, style, atmosphere, and so forth, participate in the affective liaison which results in a photograph. In this research analysis, I narrow down the meaning of collaborator to refer only to the human-other in my project. I have made contact with my collaborators in various ways: I may ask to visit an acquaintance that I know through work or other activities, or a friend or a colleague might connect me with people that they know. Even though I do consider unfamiliarity to be beneficial for my artmaking process, knowing the person does not self-evidently mean that something unknown would not emerge within the creative process. What is imperative for my project, is that my encounter is open to multiplicities of human experience, that is, different ethnicities, ages, genders and race, and so forth. This happens through embracing a nomadic awareness in the photographic process. As an artist, I remain susceptible to every encounter, as every encounter entails unique potentialities for lived experience. This kind of openness in the process is the premise for my attempt to contest and go beyond the boundaries of fixed identities as they are categorized in representational discourse of identity politics. Otherness, henceforth, becomes an inclusive, affirmative category of another.

**ME:** “How do I look? How should I put my hair?”

**COLLABORATOR C:** “Ooooh, shall I decide it!”<sup>10</sup>

As the process of working with *Free Another* has developed, I have created myself a rule of three E’s: Encounter, Empathy, and Embodiment. This is not a rule *per se*, but more of a guideline or a

---

<sup>10</sup> CASE 3: Collaborator C, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2 July 2018

reminder which helps me to focus on productive aspects of the photo shoots and to keep the series coherent under similar, yet unfixed, setups. Initially, the three E's guided me as an artist to focus on meeting the other in a shared space-time, as an exchange, aiming to listen and understand the other person's location, and to mediate the intensities and flows of the encounter through my bodily experience—to reflect the exchange on my body. It is in this empathically charged encounter, the first E, where I ask the collaborator to decide which clothes I should wear, if I should wear accessories, and how should I style my makeup and hair. In a similar way, that stresses empathy, the second E, I encounter the living space and how it and its objects connect with the collaborator's living experiences. What also demands for artist's empathy, are the conversations that take place in these encounters: conversations that touch upon a variety of topics ranging from small talk to memories of loss or unfulfilled love. The third E, embodiment, happens in the act of photographing in a shared space-time where all these forces that I have encountered empathically come to influence my artistic choices of framing, setting up and posing. It is within this process where the three E's are at work simultaneously. I use a medium format film camera with a timer, which allows me 10 seconds to find my place in the frame after I press the release button. Sometimes, when I have been too far from the camera to do that, I have asked my assistant to press the timer for me, but I wish to keep the control of the moment that gets captured on the film solely between me, and the camera.

New materialism considers encounter, empathy, and embodiment as key concepts as well. For instance, Simon O'Sullivan (2006) writes about artistic encounter as the potential rupture from habitual thinking, which makes it possible for us to grasp positive change towards how we understand the world (pp. 1–3). Rosi Braidotti (2006), on the other hand, describes bodily empathy as one of the crucial factors when attending to multiplicities of otherness, whether human or non-human, in the nomadic project towards non-unitary subjectivity (pp. 28, 130, 221). Empathy, thus is an essential part

of the nomadic becoming (Braidotti, 2006, pp. 169–170). As a corporeal sensibility, empathy can be said to work through affective embodiment, through bodily becoming. That is to say, embodying the rhythm of sensations as they are felt, allows the artist to change in relation with the lived experience (Manning, 2009, p. 37). In the following chapters, as I proceed with my case study, I illuminate through examples how the three E's aid my artistic process also as a feminist new materialist project within this framework.

## 3.1 Joyful interactions

### CASE 1:

Collaborator A  
Varna, Bulgaria  
26 August 2016

The table is set with home-baked goods that are placed on locally traditional dishes. I am welcomed by kisses on the cheeks and a big, friendly smile. It is a warm Eastern-European summer day, balcony doors are open and the cat is hiding in the shadows deep inside the apartment. My assistant is my translator; me and my collaborator do not share the same language. I am introduced to a traditional folklore dress and the rules and situations for wearing it. My collaborator attends to folklore dance events, which is a popular pastime for the locals, and wears the dress there. In the rural areas of the country, elderly people still wear such an outfit on an everyday basis. We exchange a lot of smiles as the interaction continues. I am aware that



Figure 4: *Rumi, Bulgaria, 2016, from the series Free Another*

nodding my head here would mean 'no' which makes me very conscious of my head movements. Without a common language, such bodily expressions become important. My head forgets the rule, keeps on bobbing. I try to hide the movement in what is probably a crazy swing where my nodding chin turns to the side and up and side again. It is like my head is a propeller cooling the still warm air. The dress is an elaborate, full-covering garment. My collaborator has already decided beforehand that this is what I should wear. That is the reason why the table is set in a traditional manner too: she wants to provide me a traditional, almost idyllic, setting. She helps me put on the dress, and hands me traditional jewelry to go with it. I am supposed to put on scarf in my head but I don't know how it should be tied, so she helps me. I feel her care, and surrender myself to the

interaction. A feeling of difference takes over me, I am like a folklore doll, something you buy as a souvenir. At first, it amuses me. My collaborator goes to get a flower and puts it behind my ear to top off the styling, gestures that the look is perfect now. I choose a red lipstick to match the red in the outfit. My body feels warm and sweaty. I worry that I will ruin the dress, not being used to many layers of clothing during humid summer months. In the living room, the coffee table is perfectly arranged and I try to set my photo so that in the frame I am sitting on the couch. After a couple of frames, I feel my face being awfully tense, jaw locked in an unnatural smile. I realize that this is not working out: I am frozen in my role as an idyllic doll, without any character, without life flowing through. It is time for a break. We stand on the balcony—my collaborator, my assistant, and myself. Orchids are blooming, and cat food packages are placed next to a wooden sculpture made by my collaborator’s carpenter son. The light is warm as the air and the burning cigarette in my hand. “Can I take some photographs here too?” I ask. She shakes her head—for approval. Standing in the doorway between the orchid and cat food, my pose accommodates the dress better, and the jewelry falls right (Fig. 4). This is where she-me stands, baking, smoking, tending the plants and the pet. It is real life, that my body senses, not just a representational image. It is real heat. It is real sweat.

When the artistic practice is transformative, the artist’s body becomes a passageway for the intensities and rhythm of the being-in-the-world in moments which Barbara Bolt (2004) calls moments of “working hot” (pp. 184–185). Working hot refers to the affective stage, to the vitality of becoming, not to the physically measurable temperature—even though, the two can coincide. In such moments the world seizes to be an object to be observed, and the artist’s body becomes a vessel for the interaction of forces, and the work may take on a life



of its own (Bolt, 2004, pp. 184–185). It is when in my encounter with another person, and their view of the world, I am able to transform the energies at stake into the artistic process in a productive way: not filtering them through contemplation but by attending to felt sensations. Bolt notes that artists' work is not always hot at all: when the consciousness and reason take over, the breath goes out of the work and it becomes merely an illustration of the idea (Bolt, 2004, p. 185). In the process of *Free Another*, this often happens when the situation becomes calculated, static. For example, the collaborator can have a very strong and fixed idea of how the photographic outcome should look like, or I can plan the end result too much in advance. For me, as an artist-practitioner, this is a matter of actively paying attention to the possible traps of consciousness and representational order. It is essential for my creative process that I am able to nudge such moment of stasis back into movement by giving room for change, taking more time to discover new paths in the process of creating. Usually, this means a shuffling of elements, such as changing the framing, location or clothing. When the rational control of both me and my collaborator releases its hold on the encounter, new forms of subjectivity can be reached. However, this does not always work out—not all of the encounters in the project of *Free Another* have been productive; not all of them result in a usable photograph for the series. It is a demanding task to work with, and to get rid of, the idealized images of the self and the dearness of one's own, whether it is mine or yours. In creating artworks in collaboration with others, empathy is as an important, indispensable actant.<sup>11</sup> Encountering the other with empathy and openness builds a foundation from where it is easier to let go of the known, surrender to the flows of the process itself, and to embrace the difference that emerges on view. Encountering empathically is also reciprocated with kindness and care

---

<sup>11</sup> Rosi Braidotti (2011a) writes that empathy and compassion are also key elements in nomadic remembering and imagination towards joyful affirmation of the discontinuity of the self, which is a desire towards change and transformation (p. 229).

which furthers the becomings of otherness. In addition, what these empathic encounters bring about is a shared laughter and joy.

There is a lot of laughter and smiling involved in the artistic process that results in the photographic series *Free Another*. As I and my collaborators explore the options for outfits, we laugh.<sup>12</sup> When the belt doesn't tighten enough to hold up the pants on my waist, we laugh.<sup>13</sup> I put on his eyeglasses, we laugh.<sup>14</sup> I see myself in the mirror, what an amusing sight.<sup>15</sup> My collaborator offers me a home-made dessert, and smiling we share a bite.<sup>16</sup> I don't know what to do with my hands in a pose, and we laugh as my collaborator tries to show me what he would do.<sup>17</sup> We laugh at the objects left on the table in passing as they make a funny composition.<sup>18</sup> I turn around to show my full look to my collaborator and her friend, who has come to observe the process, and we all laugh with joy.<sup>19</sup> And when we say goodbye as I depart, the laughter leads my way.

According to Rosi Braidotti, joy is an element which generates qualitative shifts in the process of becoming, as in joyful affirmation that she often writes about (Braidotti, 2011a, pp. 151, 303). Laughter which emerges through artistic encounter, hence, alludes to embracing the positive transformation of the subject, that is, affirmation in the form of nomadic becoming. In feminist research on contemporary art, laughter has been considered emancipatory: a woman's laugh can be seen as a metaphor which helps subverting the representationally assigned position for female subject, as a collective liberation (Isaak, 2002).

---

<sup>12</sup> CASE 6: Collaborator F, Rovaniemi, Finland, 14 October 2017

<sup>13</sup> CASE 9: Helsinki, Finland, 2 October 2017

<sup>14</sup> CASE 10: Helsinki, Finland, 30 March 2017

<sup>15</sup> CASE 3: Collaborator C, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2 July 2018

<sup>16</sup> CASE 8: Collaborator H, Espoo, Finland, 17 July 2018

<sup>17</sup> CASE 4: Collaborator D, Helsinki, Finland, 12 July 2018

<sup>18</sup> CASE 3: Collaborator C, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2 July 2018

<sup>19</sup> CASE 6: Collaborator F, Rovaniemi, Finland, 14 October 2017

This perspective, however, is linked to the discursive meaning-making through humor and hysteria—which, ironically enough, makes such approach ultimately a work of negation, and not affirmation. That is, because binary structures are the starting point of humor, the liberation through emancipatory laughter is inextricably connected to those structures. Human Geographer Phil Emmerson (2017) writes that laughter can be approached through its affective qualities which is to understand laughter beyond its connection to representational systems of humor. Laughter in itself happens transpersonally; it is situated in the body, and it exceeds the bodily limits, and henceforth affects other bodies and spaces (Emmerson, 2017, p. 2085). As such, laughter has the capacity to alter spaces and bodies towards different spatiotemporal atmospheres (Emmerson, 2017, p. 2087). Consequently, laughter itself also affects, transforms subjectivities. In my artistic process, an engagement with variations of laughter between me and my collaborators reaches out to explore a mutually established atmosphere. The atmosphere of laughter allows for the investigation of subjectivities as qualitative multiplicity in the process of *Free Another*. Understood this way, laughter draws affective forces out from the potentialities of lived experiences, and it generates becoming-another in the artmaking.



Figure 5: *Marcia, New York*, 2016, from the series *Free Another*

## 3.2 Slowing down

### CASE 2:

Collaborator B  
New York City, NY, United States  
2 June 2016

On the very last day before leaving New York after five months of working and studying, I am invited to visit the home of an artist-teacher in the Upper East Side of Manhattan (Fig. 5). My collaborator directs me to her clothes. She has two closets: one for older, stored, clothes, and another for clothes that she actively wears. She tells me that I can only use the older, stored clothes. I am first baffled, doubting the authenticity of the encounter and considering the possibility of seeming campy and costumy in somewhat dated clothes: “Why not the clothes you wear actively now?” “These [older] clothes are me, these are who I consider I really am,” she says, adding mournfully: “I just can’t fit into these anymore.” Her current style is monochromatic, graphic and flowy. Something that I personally would consider very stylish and classy. I realize that the selfish expectation of wearing something which I categorize as ‘classy’ is me leaning towards something which I myself would find comfortable. That feeling of comfort would fix me into an existing subject position. The older

clothes which my collaborator relates as ‘real her’ are more colorful, and more form-fitting than those she currently wears. She shows me a dress that she wore to a friend’s wedding. It is a red wrap-around dress that she likes very much. I ask if I can have some jewelry to go with it, and she selects a couple of alternatives for bracelets from her beautifully arranged jewelry collection. As she leaves me to set up the photo, I grab her favorite summer hat. I pose in between an array of books, little glass bottles, artworks, and small doll hands—presumably collected over decades of attention to detail and personal desires. New newspapers, flowers, and a half a bottle of brandy lay on the table. Here, time arranges into layers, the unknown experiences and memories surround me, and I can only sense their grand multiplicity lurking amidst all the objects. I close my eyes to let them speak. I feel small but grounded. I breathe peacefully.

Case 2 from *Free Another* illustrates how by slowing down and remaining with the process of artmaking can generate non-fixed, nomadic encounters. When encountering nomadically, locations and identities are set in motion through my artist’s body. Simon O’Sullivan (2010) notes that art entails a certain slowing down that allows the access to things that are beyond the world as we know it: beyond the seeable, and the sayable (p. 203). It is a path for alternative narratives: “In a contemporary world that celebrates contact and communication, ever-increasing accessibility and an ideal of always-being-switched-on, this slowing down has an important, if not crucial role to play in actually living a life” (O’Sullivan, 2010, p. 203). In my artistic process, slowing down is present in the acts of undressing and dressing up. It is also present when I carefully pay attention to how the clothes settle with my body, and how the style is co-created. It is in winding the film, framing the photograph. It is through slowing down that I synchronize my breathing with the clothes, find a position and a place amongst the surrounding objects; become comfortable or remain with discomfort.

Attend to light. Slowing down means a ten-second timer. A click of the shutter. A wait in between the clicking moment and seeing the image, developed, and scanned. And then, doing it all again, in another encounter.

When I get dressed in the other person's clothes, it creates an intimate, even intensive, connection between us. From the very start of the project, I have worked under the premise that my body is an indispensable mediator in the process. In order to reach the intensities of an encounter, it is necessary for me to try to put aside whatever feelings I would have about exposing myself to the eyes of others. Slowing down in the artistic process means attending to time that is not tied to actual, definite, or durational time, or linear changing from one to another, but qualitative becoming (Kontturi, 2012, pp. 172–173). My body is a (moving-)material component of my work in itself. The intensive movement of becoming-another can be felt in the body through slowing down, which reveals the potentialities of life beyond everyday (see Kontturi, 2012, p. 173). Such bodily investment frames the artistic project with the seriousness which it deserves. This seriousness is balanced in the process with joy and laughter, which prevent the artmaking from falling into the trap of non-creative rigidity. Intimacy, however, is much more than an exposed body, and most often, being exposed is reciprocated with a similar openness in attitude. The artistic process, thus allows for a collaborative co-becoming, which I will shed light on through following examples.



Figure 6: *Britta, Copenhagen*, 2018, from the series *Free Another*



## 3.3 Dressing another

### CASE 3:

Collaborator C  
Copenhagen, Denmark  
2 July 2018

**COLLABORATOR C:** “This [dress] is nice because... it has some stretch in it, it is comfortable. I bought it in Berlin. I was there with my boyfriend and his daughter, and then, I went through this shop, and I saw this dress in the window and thought: that looks nice. It was a little short, and when I came home, I made it a little bit longer.” ...

**ME:** “Where do you wear this normally?”

**COLLABORATOR C:** “Well, it could be for a party. Last time I wore it, it was at a 50th birthday party. A big one with hundred people. It was hot and I just had this...”

**ME:** “Let me try it on.” (Fig. 6.)

We discuss personal style and relationship to clothes almost every time with my collaborators in this project. Generally, my collaborators take clothes and style very seriously. This is not surprising, as Joanne Entwistle (2011) claims, clothes’ function is to accommodate the human body to the lived cultural and social context, to signify the identity of their wearer (pp. 35–37, 47). In my artistic encounters, the clothes are mostly introduced to me according to their origin,

through situations where they have been worn, with stories on how the wearing experience affects the wearer, and on how the clothes should or shouldn't be combined to create a good style. In other words, the owner of the garment is the expert of the garment. Very often the clothes also serve as a conversation starter for other topics. From clothes, the discussion easily develops towards real-life situations, and experiences of being seen and looked at. Same thing happens with accessories such as jewelry and footwear. Garments, accessories and outfits are a path towards getting to know the other person, to become sensitive to their experience.

#### CASE 4:

Collaborator D  
Helsinki, Finland  
12 July 2018

**COLLABORATOR D:** "Oh, [the shirt] should have really been [ironed], I am sorry. I am just wearing my work clothes."

**ME:** "Do you always iron your clothes?"

**COLLABORATOR D:** "Ah yes. Yeah! I never wear them without. I hate [wrinkly clothes] so much, I feel so much like, shy, I can't walk on the street. Or, I just wear something like, these things. [Gestures towards the sweatpants and a t-shirt which he currently is wearing.] I can't go on the street. Because of that, I can't wear them [his favorite shirts] a lot, because they need [ironing], and I don't have time *at all*, so... I have a plan B, like these [sweatpants and a t-shirt]. I don't really like them, but they are easy. And I really like that." (Fig. 8.)

Many of my collaborators are invested in how I end up looking for the photograph, and combining garments into an outfit may take time and several attempts. My collaborators also enjoy showing me

how the clothes and styles look when worn by themselves. How scarfs may perfect the outfit<sup>20</sup>, or how the jacket fits like it would be custom-made<sup>21</sup>. When these styles are further transferred onto my body, the effect is not always the same.

**ME:** “That is a cool jacket! I love this thing [collar].”

**COLLABORATOR D:** “Yeah, I love it! [We laugh together.] ...

So I just want to show you. My friend borrowed it, so [it has a] bad perfume.” ...

**ME:** “Where did you find it? From here?”

**COLLABORATOR D:** “Yes, I found it here in Finland. Where did I find it... in H&M... no, not H&M, it was Zara.

At that time it was very expensive for me. My salary [back then], it was only 90 euros. And this one...

was 80 euros. But I [couldn't] leave it! Yeah.” [Smiles.]

[I try on the jacket which we have been admiring.]

**ME:** “On me it is just so big! On you it looks so good, and on me it is like, oh I borrowed someone's jacket.” [Laughter.]

In my artistic process, the act of wearing another person's clothes suggests a crossing of the boundaries between me and my collaborators. This is because the dress is usually considered private, to mark personality, that is, to mark “the boundary between self and other” (Entwistle, 2011, p. 37). It is in the wearing where the process opens up to variation, to the possibility of becoming-another. Different outfits fit me differently. While they may transform the owner's look into something else when worn on my body, they also transform me through our mutual material-affective embodiment. The clothes determine what my body can do (Kontturi & Jalonen, 2017). For example, wearing a tight belt attached with pins to my body makes

---

<sup>20</sup> For example, CASE 6: Collaborator F, Rovaniemi, Finland, 14 October 2017

<sup>21</sup> CASE 4: Collaborator D, Helsinki, Finland, 12 July 2018

my movements careful and slow, I notice how I hold my arms slightly elevated from the sides of my body so that the pins wouldn't sting me.<sup>22</sup> A longer dress requires high heels so that it will not drag on the floor.<sup>23</sup> The high heels are too big in size, and I need to squeeze my toes tightly together at every step I make to prevent the shoes from falling off.<sup>24</sup> In another instance, the pants fit me so loosely that the only way for me to pose for a photograph comfortably is to sit down.<sup>25</sup> An outfit with expensive tights and a short dress demands me to tread carefully on wooden floors, and to keep my legs together.<sup>26</sup> The clothing makes me sweat, or it lets in the cold and makes me shiver. My skin begins to glisten when I wear autumn clothes on a hot summer day.<sup>27</sup> My nose turns red and starts running when I stand still for a photograph outside in the fall weather, wearing an ill-fitting outfit that is meant for hard bodily work.<sup>28</sup> Clothes might itch, their weight and texture might make my body sore. In its various ways of influencing my body, clothing participates in the affective encounters within the artistic process. Together with other material-affective actants, clothing enables what kinds of variation and forces the body can attend to. Actants are, as Jane Bennett (2010) writes, both human and nonhuman forces, and even more so, combinations of these (p. 9). Thus, what becomes in the process of becoming-another is the entangled cloth-body, which constitutes of cloth and body, but which is also intertwined "with other social, cultural, ideological, affective and material things and technologies" (Kontturi & Jalonen, 2017).

---

<sup>22</sup> CASE 6: Collaborator F, Rovaniemi, Finland, 14 October 2017

<sup>23</sup> CASE 7: Collaborator G, Helsinki, Finland, 28 October 2017

<sup>24</sup> CASE 7: Collaborator G, Helsinki, Finland, 28 October 2017

<sup>25</sup> CASE 11: Helsinki, Finland, 8 March 2017

<sup>26</sup> CASE 12: Helsinki, Finland, 4 March 2017

<sup>27</sup> CASE 4: Collaborator D, Helsinki, Finland, 12 July 2018

<sup>28</sup> CASE 5: Collaborator E, Vojakkala, Tornio, Finland, 15 October 2017

## CASE 5:

Collaborator E

Vojakkala, Tornio, Finland

15 October 2017

A family house nearby Swedish border is under construction. Objects, furniture and working tools are scattered around. My 90-year-old collaborator disappears in the back room while I wait in the dim-lit hallway. Other family members around me are amused. Soon she brings me a bundle of clothes. Pants and a fleece jacket. And a scarf, I shouldn't forget the scarf, she always has it when she goes outside. She is suggesting me to go to the yard to turn the soil—an activity which she joyfully embarks on, among other tasks in the garden, on a regular basis. Hence, there is no question about the location for this photo shoot. This is where she spends most of her time, outside (Fig. 7). Wearing these exact clothes which I am now putting on. My collaborator is in a hurry to meet a friend, thus, the garments are gathered quickly. Boots, these are her boots, but can my feet fit in them? I am being told that I should have woollen socks so that my feet don't get cold. Here. The boots fit, tightly, but they do. Everyone smiles. I ask for my collaborator's help to put on the green, light scarf. She wraps it around my neck and ties it in a fast, but relaxed movement. "Just like this, simple, I just put it on, somehow, easily, casually," she explains, smiling. "Wait, you need gloves. What about the hat," the family knows the familiar outfit. Yes, a hat. "But how should I wear it?" I ask. My collaborator's granddaughter tilts the hat in my head. "This is the way it should be." Everyone is laughing. In a brief joyous moment, my collaborator's visual-material ways of being-in-the-world become sensible on my cloth-body. On the yard, I grab the shovel and begin turning. On the other



Figure 7: *Sirkka Ilona, Vojakkala, 2017, from the series Free Another*

side of the wide, magnificent river, Sweden observes. The northern October sun is slowly veering towards the skyline behind a blanket of velvety clouds. Not yet, but soon, it will take a peek on us when it reaches the horizon. I shovel. The fleece jacket is loose on the sides but short in length, cool autumn air creeps under. My bare wrists gulp the breeze in my wobbly movements that aim at holding up the shovel full of soil. The more I move, the more the woollen hat descends on my forehead, itching my skin. My hair, which has been casually folded under, falls with it. I try to adjust the hat, sweeping with my wrists, but instead of holding up, the hat keeps on adjusting to my movements instead, adapting to my head, and falling down. Because of the continuous back and forth movement, my anxious adjustments and the hat's stubborn materiality, my hair underneath begins to resemble a fine-threaded bird nest. Random wisps of hair are sticking out. I breathe in the cool air, face blushing from cold and from the atypical chore. My cloth-body is desperately trying to grasp how to bridge the gap of almost 60 years of age difference. I am awfully small on this already small field, yet too tall for my clothes.

The previous case illustrates further how cloth-body is entangled with not only itself but with its environment, personal histories, and emergent microrelations. This felt material-affectivity within my artistic process transgresses the linear concept of time, which also enforces the binary notion of young-old, through my lived bodily experience. My artmaking moves nomadically through the established divisions by attending to intensive time of becoming-another. This process establishes subjectivity as qualitative and nonlinear: a cloth-body determines what a body can do, and this happens outside of dualist constraints. Nomadic artistic encounter traverses representational categorizations as it opens up bodies into felt difference alone.

## 3.4 Transformative touch and nomadic dullness

### CASE 4:

Collaborator D  
Helsinki, Finland  
12 July 2018

My collaborator's hands brush my hair with extreme gentleness (Fig. 8). He takes the hair back, measuring it carefully. In silence. His touch is so gentle, that I can barely feel it on my skin. Perhaps just that makes it so sensible, I need to surrender to its sensation to realize it. A tender, almost unnoticeable movement brushes through my hair. We slow down in this mutual agreement of touching. From my hair, the sensation takes over my whole body, I feel calm, open, endless. I ask him why he has left Iraq, and he begins to tell me his story: helping friends to escape Isis, relatives, being warned by others, being threatened... His touch is so overwhelming that I can barely hear what he says, let alone process the information in order to ask more. Very soon, he also stops in the middle of his story, asking for a hair tie. He steps back and comes to the front, measuring me carefully with his look as I sit on his chair. "To be honest, I like it more open like that, it is so nice. And if it would be my hair, I would leave it like that. Yeah, leave it, I am sorry, yes. ... I was thinking that I would like to have the hair here, more up, and in the middle have some hair here, not all."





Figure 8: *Mustafa*, Helsinki, 2018, from the series *Free Another*

He shows what he means with his own hair, which is not long enough to actually hold such a hairdo. I tell him it is his call, and he confirms that he has decided that we leave my hair open. At the same time, however, he goes back behind me and continues gently touching and arranging my dry, split-ended hair, causing my skin to shiver. For several minutes, he continues arranging and contemplates in silence, holding, releasing, brushing. “Sorry if it is hurting,” he says. I ensure him that he definitely isn’t hurting. He brushes again. I am not sure what he does exactly, and realize at the same time that this is why hairdressing salons have mirrors. Here, though, I enjoy the surrendering sensation of not-knowing because I cannot see. Eventually, he comes to the front again, and looks. “No, leave it,” he says coming closer and arranging the hair tresses by my face, “Yeah, do it like that.”

Touch reveals what is thinkable and non-thinkable through the limits of the body, though the limits of what is not controllable about senses (Manning, 2006, p. 86). As I surrender to a touch, I cannot regulate how my body reacts to it: I get chills, I relax, I change. Forces that are outside my control, that is, sensations, function as generators for bodily becomings. Sensations are bodily encounters (Manning, 2006, p. 22). A touch is a process, where material sensations are created when a body is touching another. This is a process of transforming bodies in-between bodies, emerging within the touch. As Erin Manning (2006) writes: “When I reach to touch you, I touch not the you who is fixed in space as pre-orchestrated matter/form. I touch the you that you will become in response to my reaching toward” (p. 87). When my collaborator reaches towards me in touch, it is a reaching towards the potentialities of our becoming within that touch itself. It is very profoundly the sensation of moving otherness of our bodies towards an another, which is not fixed but flowing, open-ended, as the process of making *Free Another* suggests. This sensation is what allows to mobilize the subject in a nomadic encounter.

Prioritizing touch is a way to avoid “falling into the trap of fixing bodies as simple objects of thought” (Manning, 2006, p. 86). As a transformative generative movement, touch is present more or less in many of my encounters with my collaborators. It is a touch between stranger-others, who do not normally reach towards each other in a bodily encounter, but are now motivated by a mutual agreement towards potentiality of positivity in the name of artmaking. Touch can be initiated by me in asking for help to attach a piece of jewelry<sup>29</sup>, or to tie a scarf around my neck accordingly<sup>30</sup>. It is also actively offered by my collaborators in various instances. Touch is holding my face still while applying makeup.<sup>31</sup> Touch is folding a piece of clothing with

---

<sup>29</sup> CASE 6: Collaborator F, Rovaniemi, Finland, 14 October 2017

<sup>30</sup> For example, CASE 5: Collaborator E, Vojakkala, Tornio, Finland, 15 October 2017

<sup>31</sup> CASE 13: Helsinki, Finland, 5 March 2017; CASE 7: Collaborator G, Helsinki, Finland, 28 October 2017

pins to fit me.<sup>32</sup> Touch is putting on my shoes and arranging the shoe laces.<sup>33</sup> Touch is folding a turban<sup>34</sup>, tilting the hat<sup>35</sup>, rolling up my sleeves<sup>36</sup>, and straightening the wrinkles of my shirt<sup>37</sup>. Touch is even putting on my fishnet tights.<sup>38</sup> The I, here, whose accessories I am referring to, is the another, the forming, non-unitary subjectivity in the artistic process, which my body therefore touches in mediation. The touch qualitatively alters the spatiotemporal relation between bodies, and through the force-field of touch, it transforms the matter of bodies and their form (Manning, 2006, p. 86). Following Manning, the force-field of touch is both concrete and virtual (Manning, 2006, p. 86). I feel the touch which is intentional and purposeful, but at the same time a rush of unexpected affects reach out to my body. Touch leads to experiencing bodily the multifaceted potentiality of sensation which coincides and emerges with the encounter, that is, also, smells, sounds, light, memories, and so forth (see Manning, 2006, p. 44).

**ME:** “It is fine, you can touch [my hair] as much as you want.”

**COLLABORATOR C:** “Like a doll!”<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> CASE 6: Collaborator F, Rovaniemi, Finland, 14 October 2017

<sup>33</sup> CASE 4: Collaborator D, Helsinki, Finland, 12 July 2018

<sup>34</sup> CASE 11: Helsinki, Finland, 8 March 2017

<sup>35</sup> CASE 5: Collaborator E, Vojakkala, Tornio, Finland, 15 October 2017; CASE 6: Collaborator F, Rovaniemi, Finland, 14 October 2017

<sup>36</sup> CASE 4: Collaborator D, Helsinki, Finland, 12 July 2018

<sup>37</sup> CASE 4: Collaborator D, Helsinki, Finland, 12 July 2018

<sup>38</sup> CASE 7: Collaborator G, Helsinki, Finland, 28 October 2017

<sup>39</sup> CASE 3: Collaborator C, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2 July 2018

Touching with intent in the process of making *Free Another* opens my body into nomadic becoming. It also alters the relationships between me and my collaborator, offering our collaboration an another dynamic to navigate. We start as artist and her host-guest, and then shift to a mannequin-doll and the doll's dresser-stylist. In this shift, we engage with the nomadically inherent unfixity of such positions as we transform in relation through the act of decision-making within the process. This provides us both agency as creative bodies in transit. The emergence of dollness-in-me was not anticipated. After all, every photoshoot is unknown to me before it happens.



Figure 9: *Maria, Rovaniemi*, 2017, from the series *Free Another*

## CASE 6:

Collaborator F  
Rovaniemi, Finland  
14 October 2017

In an encounter in Finnish Lapland, my collaborator is extremely excited to show me her clothes (Fig. 9). She comes up with an array of different opportunities for an outfit, all of which she lays on the bed. We laugh and have fun as we get to know the stories of the clothes and plan which one to choose for the photograph. One is pink, one is animal-patterned, one with a flurry neckline. In the end, I am dressed in a 50's style red polka-dot dress with a frilly underskirt. She likes my Marilyn-styled hair, as she calls it, which we pair with a strong eyeliner. She tightens the belt with pins to make it fit, and pulls a bracelet long up into my arm. As I pose in a frame with a beautiful pair of pink high heels set on a table as decoration, I can't help but to feel like a very fancy doll. The array of outfits, my look which is decided for me by the collaborator, her assistance in dressing me, the touch, the interior—all these contribute to my sensation. And indeed, my collaborator has pointed out, that this is an outfit to go out dancing, to celebrate, to *be* fancy. My movements in the outfit are careful, as I wish to hold the style in place, and because of the need to be careful of the pins attached to it. The sensation produced resembles of almost being in an alternative universe where the touching, garment, and movement, coupled with caring, and laughter, has led me to wander.

One might easily think that such dollness objectifies the feminine subject and freezes it in a phallogocentric representational order as the subordinate, even inanimate, other. Very literally, the dress halts my movement, holds my body in a certain way. How can we

possibly free thought through such fixity? I might consider Cindy Sherman's photographic works where she repeatedly portrays herself in female roles which replay the positions of phallogocentric otherness. However, the very repetition of these positions as roles which she embodies in the process, reveals the constructedness of the representational order, and as such, even contests the idea of human facial recognition (Minissale, 2013, pp. 67–69). The fact that Sherman remains as the only constant within the array of differing characterizations points towards multiplicities otherwise left unnoticed. Her work suggests female bodies without fixed identity (Minissale, 2013, p. 210). Thus, her artist subjectivity is not trapped within dollness of a feminine role but instead she uses it as a method to expand our understanding of the world through art. Similarly, in my artistic process, dollness is a strategical force—not a fixed position of otherness. In *Free Another*, it opens up established identities and gendered hierarchies into movement. Instead of carrying out a transformation, however, in this study dollness offers me as the artist-researcher a nomadic way of attending to productive relationality between me and my collaborator. It is a shift in our dynamics, which enables co-traversing subject positions in the artmaking, as a positive act towards qualitative otherness. In such co-constitutive collaboration, we are both able to attend to the movements of our boundaries, in a relational becoming-another. While dollness makes me as an artist sensitive towards materialities that participate in the process, it also brings my collaborator to observe and wonder the shifts in subjectivity which happen through their actions, decisions, and objects. I would argue, that this subtle change is also very useful in encountering the other with empathy, in order to be affected by the multiplicity in themselves. That is, accounting for the embodied variables of difference within one. As our experiences blend and transform, our bodies are able to do things together, and to sense these intensities of change. What emerges within the interaction is a co-becoming, an embodied encounter with felt, real-life forces. Braidotti (2011a) describes artist's work of this kind as “a complex

multiplicity, a factor of empowerment of potentia, ... multiplier of virtual possibilities, through the rigorous application of the rules of composition of assemblages” (p. 156). As I have suggested before, the work—including my work in *Free Another*—for envisioning new futures often takes place *through* the dominant representations of subjects, but more importantly it breaks off from these dichotomies from *within* (Braidotti, 2011b, p. 68). In the artistic process of *Free Another*, dollness, quite contrary to the stereotypical understanding, thus, emphasises proximity and interconnectedness of perspectives, which is a part of active imagination towards multiple subjectivities. Furthermore, whereas nomadic dollness can be considered a method of bodies-identities in movement, it is the artist’s style of framing sensations that emerge through the process which ultimately leads to the artwork, to the photographic portrait (see O’Sullivan, 2010, pp. 198–199).

## 3.5 Rhythmic bodily becomings

### CASE 7:

Collaborator G  
Helsinki, Finland  
28 October 2017

The warehouse building is quiet on a densely gray, rainy weekend afternoon as I enter through the loading platform door. This is not my collaborator's home, this is a studio space where all his makeup, wigs, outfits and jewelry is stored in a perfect order—where the magic of drag happens. I am invited to take a seat in a small room where my collaborator begins to apply makeup on me (Fig. 10). Regardless of the occasional small talk during the process, the atmosphere is deeply focused, the air is calm and muted. We spend a long time together in a touching, calmly paced, relation. His hands drawing his drag-look on me, his eyes measuring, evaluating the progress, and planning the next move. My breathing syncing to the rhythm of the collaboration. Layer after another, brush stroke after brush stroke, my face begins to change. He tells me how challenging it is to transform me into his drag character as my facial features are so different, even though he is creating a look which he has mastered into habitual excellence on himself. My collaborator, however, is very invested in this process and makes sure he performs every





Figure 10: Making of the series *Free Another*. Photo shoot with collaborator G, Helsinki, 28 October 2017. (Documentation: Nikolett Kustos)

step on the way: he applies my mascara, he glues in my fake eyelashes, he pulls up my fishnet tights on my fake butt, he fastens my padded bra, and he places the high heels on my feet and ties the buckles. I take these movements on my body like a mannequin. It is almost like going through a strange birth, this becoming-another through the process of drag. The result of the time-consuming construction of another is mind-boggling: while wearing the full outfit is a bodily sensation that I am able to respond to through my movements, when I look at myself in the studio mirror, I don't recognize the body that I am sensing-with. In this emergence of becoming, I begin to embody anotherness—a strange, unknown corporeality. My smile lands differently



Figure 11: *Nikola, Helsinki*, 2017, from the series *Free Another*

on my face, the silhouette of my body is different. Yet, the sensation of such becoming through and within my body is what I am left with when I begin photographing, without mirrors. The gray drizzle surrounds the process through large industrial windows, a veil of transforming sky-water-air-entanglement. It is absolutely not the case that I would become familiar with how my movements and gestures get a visualized expression in this new body during the artmaking process. Precisely this persistent unfit is what moves our bodies towards becoming-another: on my body, his drag is transforming, and that co-created shift further transforms my body. The photograph, thus, frames an another set of gesturing, which is neither mine nor my collaborator's, but an affective-material corporeality of anotherness in-between—a bodily becoming (Fig. 11).

Drag-body is an exaggerated cloth-body, which requires new, sensitive attention to what it means to inhabit a body that is not yet mine. Because my research nomadically aims for envisioning subjectivity beyond existing categorizations as essentially fluid and open-ended multiplicity, this research does not consider drag as a gender performance that re-iterates conventional gender roles by highlighting them through cross-dressing as in Judith Butler's (1993) concept of performativity. While performatively drag does make visible the constructedness of social-cultural hierarchies on a larger, visible scale of performance by exaggerating an opposite gender role, it does so by appropriating the existing gendered subject positions (Butler, 1993, p. 125). The aim of my artistic process of *Free Another* is not to become my collaborator in drag or otherwise cross-dressed but to open our bodies into affirmative movement that makes us change in relation. Rather than being based on a discursive and historical power play between possible, already known subject positions, my project of *Free Another* beckons something which Rosi Braidotti refers to as “cultural cross-dressing” (2006, p. 52). For Braidotti, this means, attending

to and navigating through nomadic shifts in-between cultures of identification. Moreover, cross-dressing this way is exactly about embedded and embodied subjectivity that opens towards variation of the other—towards becoming-another in multiplicity of crossing-through, again and again. Drag, in my analysis, presents itself as transformative through movements that happen on a microlevel, almost unnoticeably. I explore the nomadic encounters in my artmaking as a process that allows for subjectivity to emerge and change in bodily relation, in micromovements, beyond what is already-known.

It is in this bodily becoming-another, indicated in the aforementioned case as drag-body, where the already-thinkable movement and the corporeally known set of poses, are affected in the artistic encounter. This leaves subjectivity open to variation, to a new future. It is pure flow of difference through becoming, a nomadic otherness. As this otherness is felt in the artistic process, it reveals itself as a force which is more than another: a body is a relation, a co-constellation of events that take place in a moment, which leads to what body can do (see Manning, 2013, pp. 17–30). Such moment is not a fixed place or a result of any kind, but a threshold activated by affects. In Deleuze and Guattari's words: “— the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between ... multiplicities” (1987, p. 249). In my artistic process, becoming-another thus expresses how “[t]he body is infinitely variable, not subject but verb” (Manning, 2013, p. 29).

This transformation in my photographs is embedded on my bodily self through layers, whether as layers of makeup, and layers of clothes, or layers of stories, weather conditions, or laughter. These are material factors in the artistic process which affect and move me as the creating subject. They are mediated through my bodily sensations, that is, through the process of becoming. These material factors, themselves are on the move. Clothes move, fold, get wrinkly, and so forth, in their co-constitution with my body and its movements, but also with environmental changes such as wind or rain. Weather itself is always a moving affair. Similarly, makeup wears off and gets smudgy through its encounter with surrounding forces. And how many stories

is there—always changing in relation to where they are told, to whom and by whom. Such layers don't have hierarchy or limitations, as they move in relation, in those zigzagging ways in which they can be sensed in the artmaking.<sup>40</sup>

#### CASE 8:

Collaborator H  
Espoo, Finland  
17 July 2018

My Indian-born collaborator and I laugh together, as she tells me about the diverse symbolism of the jewelry while she is attaches them around my wrists and ankles. Largely, these symbols are related to purity, virginity, and fertility—being married, unmarried, or widowed. Around this topic of conversation, we agree that my look is festive—as my collaborator exclaims when I put on a dress made of her mother's sari: "Oooh, it looks so pretty on you, like a wedding dress!" Later, she adds: "If you would go [out] like this in Mumbai, it [would] all look very high-fashion, actually, and not traditional at all because the dress itself is not traditional. So... This is very modern. This is very traditional. That is very traditional. [Points towards different accessories that I am wearing.] I think your earrings and the anklets are more traditional than anything else that you are wearing." We move on to planning my makeup. She first wishes that I would decide on that myself but soon enough, she participates in the decision-making, and we are able to attend to a co-creation through collaboration which is reflected on my body. We are moving in the process

---

<sup>40</sup> See more on layers in artistic process of painting: Kontturi, 2012; 2018 [forthcoming].

together, as she guides my actions and my hands follow the instructed rhythm. She looks carefully what I am doing, and I do my best not to do ‘what my body normally does’, which would be to move in a planned, practiced way. In this case, the task with makeup helps me, since I am not very accustomed to applying makeup or creating looks with it. Eventually, my collaborator and myself, are pacing the co-emergence of a new formation, the becoming-another as it is movement in such relationality.

**COLLABORATOR H:** “Put some lipstick because ... it will add more color.”

**ME:** “Do you want me to put eye shadow? Or eyeliner? Or stronger eyebrows?”

**COLLABORATOR H:** “Maybe, little stronger of everything. That would make things more bright.”

[Laughter.]

**ME:** “Here is some eye shadow...What would compliment this...?”

**COLLABORATOR H:** “Dark ones.”

**ME:** “Yeah, let’s start with that.”

[I am doing my makeup and my collaborator is watching.]

**COLLABORATOR H:** “It should be darker.”

[I continue applying makeup.]

**COLLABORATOR H:** “Yeah it is getting better.”

**ME:** “Do you want me to add black?”

**COLLABORATOR H:** “No... Can you open [your eyes]?”

Yeah, good, so nice. This is good. Maybe we shouldn’t over-do it also.”

[I blend the eye shadow.]

**COLLABORATOR H:** “Yeah that’s good enough, I think.” ...

**ME:** “And I can put a little bit more mascara also.”

**COLLABORATOR H:** “Yes.”

**ME:** “And the eyebrows.”

**COLLABORATOR H:** “And the lips, yes.”

**ME:** “Yes.”

This artistic research project has brought me to work together with people with varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds. *Free Another* has been the reason why we have come to collaborate in such close proximity with many whom I otherwise might not have had a chance to share such intimate moments together (see Kontturi, 2017). As I mentioned before in this research, dressing up in the other people's clothes in their private space during my artistic process provides me and my collaborators an intensive, intimate, and open atmosphere for co-creating. This practice brings us stranger-others into a bodily relation as we explore the possibilities of becoming-another through our collaboration. The project of *Free Another* not only enables such liaison, but these encounters are what make *Free Another* possible. While I have had the opportunity to envision subjectivities beyond one through these bodily co-becomings and challenge the boundaries



Figure 12: *Neha, Espoo*, 2018, from the series *Free Another*

of the social-cultural positions of mine and my collaborators in my artistic process, *Free Another* does not remove or undo individual positions or differences. Following Braidotti (2011a), as an artist-researcher-subject, I cannot “dispose nomadically of a subject position that ... [I] have never controlled to begin with” (p. 42). Rather, this artistic research project suggests more sensitive ways of relating to each other. Partaking in a nomadic artistic intervention on socially and culturally differentiated subjectivities means collectively imagining new ways of understanding being-in-the-world in a relational, affirmative manner (see Braidotti, 2017). In our collaborative relation, we are able to experience what our bodies can do together, how we can move together in becoming. My artistic process allows for our bodies to open up to sensing how attending to such relation can make our differences constitutive and essential (Kontturi, 2017). That is, relationality of bodies is always a becoming of not one, but qualitative non-hierarchical multiplicity that emerges in that precise relation.

A certain layered rhythm of co-emergence thereafter encloses my artistic process. It is movement within. Rhythm, in this way, is created in touching relation, but also through seeing-making-collaboration. It is a pacing in-between subjectivities. Rhythm emerges in the voice of my collaborator joining the process, but also in the sound of the tiny bells in my anklets as I move from behind the camera to take a pose, following the bodily poses that my collaborator suggests. It is a beat of music on the stereo, switched on by my collaborator while I pose.<sup>41</sup> It can be a rhythm of movement-yet-to-come, as I hold or are in contact with an instrument that calls for pacing and attending to movements—either a musical instrument, a worker’s tool, or something else.<sup>42</sup> Even when I am seemingly standing still in a pose, my body takes

---

<sup>41</sup> CASE 11: Helsinki, Finland, 8 March 2017; CASE 14: Vienna, Austria, 2 May 2017

<sup>42</sup> CASE 14: Vienna, Austria, 2 May 2017; CASE 13: Helsinki, Finland, 5 March 2017; CASE 5: Collaborator E, Vojakkala, Tornio, Finland, 15 October 2017; CASE 1: Collaborator A: Varna, Bulgaria, 26 August 2016; CASE 15: Vojakkala (Collaborator I), Tornio, Finland, 15 October 2017



up a rhythm. A posing body moves in micromovements, which are needed for holding the posture (Manning, 2009, pp. 43–44). Without these micromovements, there wouldn't be a pose. Posing, hence, is a rhythmically moving process in itself. As Erin Manning (2009) claims, when a body is considered as pure plastic rhythm, such body in movement is a becoming-body—"a body that resists predefinition in terms of subjectivity or identity" (p. 6). My artistic process gathers layers of rhythmic sensations through the bodily becoming-another into a photographic plane, together with other material-affective components that emerge in the nomadic encounter. Here, rhythm is the bodily slowing down which allows emergence through artmaking, within a particular spatiotemporal moment of becoming (see Grosz, 2008, p. 47). Furthermore, rhythm is the heat of the artistic process, when flows and intensities can be felt and mediated in the artist's body (see Kontturi, 2018 [forthcoming]), when the process itself moves as "free otherness".





# 4. CON- CLUSION

More-than self-portraits

This research analysis showed how subjectivity is set on the move in my artistic photographic process of *Free Another* by accounting for the vitality of materiality, affects and rhythms. This movement actualizes in artmaking through the affirmative mode of becoming-another that takes place within affective nomadic encounters. In these encounters, flows, intensities, vibrations, shifts, and forces of the living world are sensed in the artistic process allowing the emergence of qualitative subjectivities in transit.

The becoming-another is a collaborative, co-creative co-becoming, under a mutual agreement to explore the positivity of change. My collaborators' participation in the process lay the material foundations for such emergence. This is not to say that the artwork is made by my collaborators, or that the work makes itself within the collaboration, and neither is the work only a result of me as an artist choosing a method of photographing and rigidly following the rules of that methodology. Rather, when as an artist-photographer I attune to the material-affective flows and intensities of the artmaking and create conditions for movement within, all actants in the artistic process collaborate and the work can become transformative. In my project of *Free Another*, actants have meant cloth-bodies, accessories, atmospheres,

objects of home environments, weather conditions, shared gestures, and so forth. Through attending to these, the artistic process can reach out to sensations that cannot be pre-determined before taking a photograph or before partaking the photo shoot event.

In making portraits, I would argue, it is important in this way to leave the process open-ended in order to let the differences within subjectivities flow through. In the beginning of my analysis, I introduced my so-called guidelines for the artistic process of *Free Another*: encounter, empathy and embodiment. As this research demonstrates, those have served me as an artist in keeping the process nomadically amenable for collaborative affects, not in terms of methodological limitations. Under these premises, by letting the empathic encounter be generative through embodiment, the artwork can enjoy something which is unique, yet purposefully executed. In my artistic process, this has meant aiming at envisioning and visualizing subjectivity as multiple.

In this nomadically established photographic process, subjectivities are set in motion when the artmaking slows down and allows for the atmospheric affectivity of laughter to become sensible. Subjectivities flow in transit through touching relation in nomadic artistic encounters as I attune to the surrounding force-fields of stories and materiality. Subjectivities blend, blur, shift and transform in nonhierarchical layers, where the materialities of dressing, applying makeup, and wearing garments participate in my process. Subjectivities remain in-between, as I frame my photograph within the collaborative, co-created encounter that generates rhythmic bodily becoming. Subjectivities open up to variation when my collaborator considers: “Now you will look like a princess.”<sup>43</sup> We have shifted our dynamic nomadically and explore together the potentiality of co-constituted transversality of dollness. What follows, is that throughout this research project I have set the spatiotemporal coordinates of my nomadic

---

<sup>43</sup> CASE 8: Collaborator H, Espoo, Finland, 17 July 2018

encounters into an affirmative process of becoming-another. Therefore, the positions and locations which I have named in my research cases, and which I apply to the titles of the artworks, are themselves in transit through the material-affective relations within my artistic process.

Becoming-another in my artistic process means endless variation of otherness as qualitative multiplicity. What this sets forth is that there is no one being, no self or a subject to rely on. The resulting artwork is a visualization of this spatiotemporal event of co-becoming of otherness, mediated through my artist-bodily sensations. Due to multiple material entanglements in the artistic process, in *Free Another*, subjectivity falls not into this or that category, but it is an enmeshment of all the categories in their vibrant co-emergence. The photographic series of *Free Another*, thus unfolds through a process where categories such as woman, man, heterosexual, homosexual, native, foreigner, old, young, self, and other, intermingle, co-exist, transverse and occasionally even disperse. *Free Another* does not erase these or any (macro)categories, but allows for the new emergence of indispensable sensations which occur within and through our differences in micromovements. It challenges the already-known in its collaborative event-gesturing. The process of creating is a relational co-becoming with stranger-others, which allow the artistic encounter to open into unexpected, yet productive flows of affective materiality. From a feminist new materialist point of view, the artwork provides a creative perspective for envisioning subjectivities in transit, beyond exclusionary dualisms. Not by forgetting our locations but by moving-with others towards jointly created, new sensations of qualitative otherness. By accounting for the difference itself, my artmaking demonstrates the potentiality of subtle material-affective shifts that happen through artistic encounters and how these becomings produce nomadic, open-ended visions of subject as multiple and ever-changing. That is to say, *Free Another* generates nomadic subjectivity, which works through binary divisions and representational settings. This makes new thinking of subjectivity through artmaking possible—yet forever remaining as an inexhaustible process.

What this suggests, subsequently, is that the self-portrait in the project of *Free Another* becomes more-than a self-portrait. Following Erin Manning (2013), it visualizes a body which is always more-than the form it inhabits: a body changes, becomes in relation and is the “how of its emergence, not ... its form” (p. 17). It is not just a portrait of a human being, but a portrait of otherness endlessly affected and mobilized by flows and vitality of materiality. It is a portrait of what emerges in bodily becoming, that is, a portrait of a process which is “always in co-constellation with the environmentality of which it is part” (Manning, 2013, pp. 17–19). The self-portrait is not anymore about self of any kind, it is about *a* subject which is perpetually different, transforming and multiple. As Barbara Bolt (2004) claims, such portrait is not just a representation, but a portrait that *becomes* (p. 163). It is a portrait of subjectivities in their compositional, endlessly transforming form-taking that happens through an encounter with my body. It is a portrait of “free another” in its process of becoming-another. A portrait of open-ended micro-becomings of *a* subjectivity, as in, Deleuze and Guattari’s a thousand tiny subjectivities. This transversal multiplicity has the capacity to broaden the scope of what is already-known as it becomes-another through the vital materiality of the photographic artwork itself.

The process of *Free Another* is ongoing at the time of this writing, which means that the photographic series is still partly in editing stage, and partly waiting to be made. Only a few of the images have found their final output size as artworks at this point. Those works have been exhibited.<sup>44</sup> I aim to publish the series eventually as an artist’s book with close to 50 photographs which will show the photographic project of mobilizing subjectivities in single covers. In this way, these more-than self-portraits can be viewed in their collective, nomadic relation. Consequently, this makes the exploration of an artist’s book appear as a fitting objective for a future research project: to provide

---

<sup>44</sup> Free Another, Photography Exhibition, 18 January 2018 – 1 March 2018, Sushibar+Wine City, Helsinki, Finland



more knowledge on the nomadic potentialities of an art book when its format is able to contain such qualitative multiplicity thematically.

This research shows, however, how the process of *Free Another* is valuable in itself. What is elaborated through the analysis is how by attending to flows and intensities in the artistic process can make the work transformative and bring artmaking towards new emergences of thinking. Furthermore, my artistic process is a contribution to a feminist new materialist project of understanding bodies through their ever-changing potentiality as it opens the subject into nomadic becoming. Within such framework, my project envisions self-portrait photographs as more-than self-portraits, beyond the notion of self-(re)presentation. This research shows how considering subjectivities as relationally more-than provides a productive, new materialist way of approaching discursively described portraiture. It further establishes how attending to lived, felt experiences is a valuable premise for any feminist, new materialist, artistic, photographic, or political project—and moreover, for a project that is an enmeshed convergence of all of these. Such project, just like mine with *Free Another*, can ultimately never be said to be finished truly, as nomadic thinking through art or otherwise demands constant remapping and questioning of the already-known. For the project of *Free Another*, this means there will always be more portraits to be made, more artistic encounters to attend, and more otherness to be affected by. This is the way artistic practice-based research can provide new insights for a new future of being-in-the-world—by continually attending to the forces, flows and intensities of artmaking as an open-ended multiplicity.



# LIST OF CASES

- CASE 1:** Collaborator A: Varna, Bulgaria, 26 August 2016
- CASE 2:** Collaborator B: New York City, NY, United States, 2 June 2016
- CASE 3:** Collaborator C, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2 July 2018
- CASE 4:** Collaborator D, Helsinki, Finland, 12 July 2018
- CASE 5:** Collaborator E, Vojakkala, Tornio, Finland, 15 October 2017
- CASE 6:** Collaborator F, Rovaniemi, Finland, 14 October 2017
- CASE 7:** Collaborator G, Helsinki, Finland, 28 October 2017
- CASE 8:** Collaborator H, Espoo, Finland, 17 July 2018
- CASE 9:** Helsinki, Finland, 2 October 2017
- CASE 10:** Helsinki, Finland, 30 March 2017
- CASE 11:** Helsinki, Finland, 8 March 2017
- CASE 12:** Helsinki, Finland, 4 March 2017
- CASE 13:** Helsinki, Finland, 5 March 2017
- CASE 14:** Vienna, Austria, 2 May 2017
- CASE 15:** Vojakkala (Collaborator I), Tornio, Finland, 15 October 2017



# REFERENCES

- Alaimo, S., & Hekman S. (2008). Introduction: Emerging models of materiality in feminist theory. In S. Alaimo & S. Hekman (Eds.), *Material feminisms* (pp. 1–19). Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: A political ecology of things*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Bertelsen, L. (2013). Francesca Woodman: Becoming-woman, becoming-imperceptible, becoming-a-subject-in-wonder. *Performance Paradigm: A journal of performance and contemporary culture*, 9(Assembling wonder). Retrieved from <http://www.performanceparadigm.net/index.php/journal/article/view/132/131>
- Bolt, B. (2004). *Art beyond representation: The performative power of image*. London & New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Bolt, B. (2007). The Magic is in Handling. In E. Barrett & B. Bolt (Eds.), *Practice as research: Approaches to creative arts enquiry* (pp. 27–34). London & New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of 'sex'*. New York & London: Routledge.

- Braidotti, R. (2006). *Transpositions: On nomadic ethics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Braidotti, R. (2011a). *Nomadic theory: The portable Rosi Braidotti*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Braidotti, R. (2011b). *Nomadic subjects: Embodiment and sexual difference in contemporary feminist theory* (2nd ed.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Braidotti, R. (2017, March 2). *Aspirations of a posthumanist* [Video file]. Tanner Lectures on Human Values. Yale University, Whitney Humanities Center. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNIYOKfRQks&t=2791s>
- Bright, S. (2010). *Auto focus: The self-portrait in contemporary photography*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Coole, D., & Frost S. (Eds.). (2010). *New materialisms: Ontology, agency, and politics*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Cotton, C. (2009). *The photograph as contemporary art* (2nd ed.). London: Thames & Hudson.
- Crenshaw, K. (2016, October). *The urgency of intersectionality* [Video file]. TEDWomen 2016. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle\\_crenshaw\\_the\\_urgency\\_of\\_intersectionality?utm\\_campaign=tedsread&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=tedcomshare](https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare)
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari F. (1994). *What is philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press.

- Dolphijn, R., & van der Tuin, I. (2012). *New materialism: Interviews & cartographies*. University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press.
- Emmerson, P. (2017). Thinking laughter beyond humour: Atmospheric refrains and ethical indeterminacies in spaces of care. *Environment and Planning A*, 49(9), 2082–2098.
- Entwistle, J. (2001). The dressed body. In J. Entwistle & E. Wilson (Eds.), *Body dressing: Dress, body, culture* (pp. 33–58). Oxford & New York: Berg.
- Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile bodies: Toward a corporeal feminism*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Grosz, E. (2008). *Chaos, territory, art: Deleuze and the framing of the earth*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), Autumn, 575–599.
- Hongisto I., & Kurikka, K. (Eds.). (2013). *Toisin sanoin: Taiteentutkimusta representaation jälkeän* [In other words: Artistic research after representation]. Turku: Eetos.
- Howgate, S. (2017). In A. Roff (Ed.), *Gillian Wearing and Claude Cahun* (pp. 8–173). St Martin's Place, London: National Portrait Gallery Publications.
- Isaak, J. A. (2002). *Feminism and contemporary art: the revolutionary power of women's laughter*. London & New York: Routledge. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>

- Kontturi, K.-K. (2006). *Feminismien ristiaallokossa: Keskusteluja taiteen ja teorian kytkennöistä* [In the Cross-Swell of Feminisms: Conversations on the Connections of Art and Theory]. Turku: Eetos.
- Kontturi, K.-K. (2012). *Following the flows of process. A new materialist account of contemporary art.* (Doctoral dissertation). Annales Universitatis Turkuensis, B349. Turku, Finland: University of Turku.
- Kontturi, K.-K. (2017). Crafting relational activism: Political potentials of communal making in contemporary Australia. In C. Mattos Avolese & R. Conduru (Eds.), *New worlds: Frontiers, inclusion, utopias* (pp. 271–282). São Paulo: Comitê Brasileiro de História da Arte (CBHA), Comité International de l'Histoire de l'Art and Vasto.
- Kontturi, K.-K. (2018) [forthcoming]. *Ways of following: Art, materiality, collaboration.* London: Open Humanities Press.
- Kontturi, K.-K., & Hongisto, I. (2011). Sappho wants to save you: Identiteettipolitiikasta taiteen mikroliikkeisiin [Sappho wants to save you: From identity politics to micromovements]. *Naistutkimus*, 24(4), 6–18.
- Kontturi, K.-K. & Jalonen, V. (2017, November). Cloth-bodies: Writing-enabling-moving. Paper presented at Art of Research 2017 conference, Espoo. Retrieved from [http://artofresearch2017.aalto.fi/papers/17\\_Kontturi\\_Jalonen.pdf](http://artofresearch2017.aalto.fi/papers/17_Kontturi_Jalonen.pdf)
- Manning, E. (2006). *Politics of touch: Sense, movement, sovereignty.* Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>



- Manning, E. (2009). *Relationescapes: Movement, art, philosophy*. Cambridge & London: The MIT Press.
- Manning, E. (2013). *Always more than one: Individuation's dance*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Meskimmon, M. (1996). *The art of reflection: Women artists' self-portraiture in the twentieth century*. New York & Chichester: Columbia University Press.
- Meskimmon, M. (2003a). Corporeal theory with/in practice: Christine Borland's Winter Garden. *Art History*, 26(3), June, 442–455.
- Meskimmon, M. (2003b). *Women making art: History, subjectivity, aesthetics*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Minissale, G. (2013). *The psychology of contemporary art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Najdowski, R., & Vuorinen, J. (2018). Surface tension: Material intra-actions within photography. *Ruukku*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.22501/ruu.371917>
- O'Sullivan, S. (2006). *Art encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought beyond representation*. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- O'Sullivan, S. (2010). From aesthetics to abstract machine: Deleuze, Guattari and contemporary art practice. In S. O'Sullivan & S. Zepke (Eds.), *Deleuze and contemporary art* (pp. 189–207). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

- Palin, T. (2004). *Oireileva miljöömuotokuva: Yksityiskohdat sukupuoli- ja säätyhierarkian haastajina* [The Symptomatics of the *Milieu Portrait*: Detail in the service of the challenging of gender and class hierarchies]. Helsinki: Taide.
- Palin, T. (2007). *Modernin muotokuvan merkit: Kuvia 1800- ja 1900-luvuilta Taidekoti Kirpilässä* [Signs of the modern portrait: 19th and 20th century images in the Kirpilä Art Collection]. Helsinki: Taidekoti Kirpilän julkaisuja 4.
- Raymond, C. (2017). *Women photographers and feminist aesthetics*. New York: Routledge.
- Rossi, L.-M. (2010). Esityksiä, edustamista ja eroja: Representaation on politiikkaa [Performances, presentation and differences: Representation is politics]. In T. Knuutila & A. P. Lehtinen (Eds.), *Representaatio: Tiedon kivijalasta tieteiden työkaluksi* [Representation: From a foundation of knowledge to a tool] (pp. 261–275). Helsinki: Gaudeamus Helsinki University Press.
- Smith, T. (2016). *Nomadic encounters with art and art education*. (Doctoral dissertation). Ohio State University. Retrieved from [http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc\\_num=osu1480418270792104](http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1480418270792104)
- Vänskä, A. (2006). *Vikuroivia vilkaisuja. Ruumis, sukupuoli, seksuaalisuus ja visuaalisen kulttuurin tutkimus* [Queer glances. Body, gender, sexuality and visual culture research]. Taidehistoriallisia tutkimuksia, 35. Jyväskylä: Gummerus.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The photography project *Free Another* or this research would not have been possible without the gratuitous generosity of my collaborators. My heartfelt thank you to all of you for such unique, inspiring and delightful encounters.

I would like to express my special appreciation and gratitude to my advisor Katve-Kaisa Kontturi for being an invaluable mentor during my research process. Your meticulous editorship, caring and open-mindedness has turned this research project into a rewarding learning experience. I am forever thankful and humbled by your indispensable and mindfully challenging contribution.

Thank you to my supervisor Heli Rekula for your kind encouragement and flexibility. Thank you also to all AA2 colleagues in Aalto University for contesting my artistic aims in an affirmative way.

Thank you Joseph Maida for your creative intelligence, inspiration and critique, which set me off to a productive start with *Free Another*.

Thank you Marcia Lippman for letting me into your Secrets and strengthening my artistic foundation. Thank you Secrets, for the shared safe space of creative mindfulness. Thank you Caroline Rothstein for your poetic epiphanies, and for being an inspiration.

A particular thank you to Allyssa Yohana for offering me the first opportunity to explore the idea of dressing up into other people's clothes in their homes, in the name of nomadic artmaking.

Thank you Timothy Smith for the invigorating conversations and generous sharing of reading materials which helped me dig in deeper into new materialism.

My sincere gratitude to Lily Díaz for your compassion towards allowing me to focus on finishing this research.

Thank you Arenys de Mar society, Noora Mäntylä and Ville Kuusela for providing me a table to write, an environment to think, good company to converse with, and a place for rest during these nomadic times.

A special thank you to Nikolett Kustos for your generous assistance, creative like-mindedness, and continuous and manifold support during my artistic process.

I am endlessly grateful to my parents and sisters for lovingly and unquestionably supporting me during all my years of academic and artistic learning and projects. None of this could have happened without you.

I survived through this sometimes seriously arduous writing and creative process because of the relentless, untiring, loving and professional support that I got from Alex Atanasova. Thank you Alex for our invincible, tender, and intelligent togetherness.



# APPENDIX

*Free Another*  
(2016–ongoing)



*Marcia, New York, 2016, from the series Free Another, Archival Pigment Print, Framed, 50x40cm, Edition of 8+2AP*



*Iliana, Bulgaria, 2016, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print, Framed, 80x65cm, Edition of 5+2AP*





*Niko, Helsinki, 2017, from the series Free Another, Archival Pigment Print*



*Damiana, Helsinki, 2017, from the series Free Another, Archival Pigment Print*



*Ana, Helsinki, 2017, from the series Free Another, Archival Pigment Print*



*Harrison, New York, 2016, from the series Free Another, Archival Pigment Print*



*Yulian, London, 2016, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print, Framed, 70x56,5cm, Edition of 5+2AP*



*Sirkka Ilona, Vojakkala, 2017, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print*



*Nikola, Helsinki, 2017, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print, 100x81cm, Edition of 5+2AP*



*Neha, Espoo, 2018, from the series Free Another, Archival Pigment Print*





*Britta, Copenhagen, 2018, from the series Free Another, Archival Pigment Print*



*Mustafa, Helsinki, 2018, from the series Free Another, Archival Pigment Print*



*Deborah, Chappagua, 2016, from the series Free Another, Archival Pigment Print*



*Rumi, Bulgaria, 2016, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print*



*Sara, Budapest, 2016, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print*



*Miila, Vojakkala, 2017, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print*



*Yrjö, Helsinki, 2017, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print*



*Teemu, Helsinki, 2017, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print*





*Päivi, Helsinki, 2017, from the series Free Another, Archival Pigment Print*



*Adama, Vienna, 2017, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print*



*Maria, Rovaniemi, 2017, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print*



*Marcia, New York, II*, 2016, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print



*Niko, Helsinki, II*, 2017, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print



*Mia, Boston, 2016, from the series Free Another, Archival Pigment Print*



*Patrick, New York, II*, 2016, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print



*Ronja, Copenhagen, 2016, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print*





*Patrick, New York, 2016, from the series Free Another, Archival Pigment Print*



*Deborah's Mother, Chappagua, 2016, from the series Free Another, Archival Pigment Print*



*Maria, Helsinki, 2017, from the series *Free Another*, Archival Pigment Print*



*Allyssa, Brooklyn, 2016, from the series Free Another, Archival Pigment Print*



