

The Identity of the Image (abstract)

The Identity of the Image is a doctoral research - artistic elaboration of the problem of perceiving identity and image from the perspective of three individuals: the creator, the poser and the recipient.

The project had lasted for 4 years (2013 - 2017) and consisted of creating artistic works on identity and their analysis, which ultimately led to a visual presentation of the results of the research. Studies, the theoretical ones in which I put myself in three roles: the researcher, the creator and the recipient of the artistic work, as well as the practical ones in which the respondents take part, can be considered in the category of artistic experiment. In the visual layer of the experiment I used my own works of art created in order to interpret the reality as well as decipher the meanings and their familiarisation, which contributed to the personal character to the research.

To analyse the image I used tools adopted from social sciences (categorised interview, video recording) and then examined the materials obtained from the research in the process of qualitative analysis. It provided me with the answer to the thesis introduced at the beginning of the research.

The main assumption of the above dissertation is to substantiate the thesis introduced at the beginning of the research that the identity of the image is indicated by the creator, the posing person and the recipient at the same time independently. In this manner the three of them simultaneously create the identity of the image.

The inspiration for this thesis was a sentence written by Roland Barthes in his book *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*: "In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his art."¹ Here comes the only possible question: Who am I?

¹Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Światło obrazu. Uwagi o fotografii, wyd. Aletheia Warszawa 2008, s. 29.

The image appeared in the research correspondingly with the imaginations that led to finding the link between identity and image and I present them in the artistic part of the phd thesis *The Family*. *The Identity of the Image* constitutes the scientific description of the research materials, whereas the *The Family* project represents a graphic transfer, defining the *Identity of the Image*.

The Family is a family of portrait characters. The portrait in art is what interests me most in terms of discovering the secrets of the Other. The human face and body constitute a palette of emotions, memories and secrets. In the case of the *Identity of the Image*, the face has been devalued by means of a veil, and on such a procedure I based all the artistic activities.

The two books *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* by Roland Barthes and *Aesthetics of photography* by Francois Soulages played a crucial role in the essential aspect of the project. Both studies relate to the notion of photography and its mystery. Barthes involves intimate considerations seeking for the Being in the photography area, while Soulages penetrates the photography with the eye of the researcher. Both the approaches fit the view of photography as the designer of capturing theory in the image of reality.

In order to substantiate the thesis introduced in the *The Identity of the Image* dissertation, I carried out 6 performances in the form of artistic-research activity: *The Town of Mine* (2013 - 2014), *The Townspeople. Inside and Outside the Frame*, *Cityzens* (2013 - 2014), *Vacation: Time and Space* (2014), *The Birdheaded* (2015), *Sameness* (2016). The last activity *The Family* (2016 - 2017) is an intimate work and is a summary of the activity in the subject of depersonalisation. A total of 106 respondents participated in the study, including 77 women and 29 men.

The research was conducted as artistic experiments aimed at evoking discourse over what in the modern world of the "ruffled visualism"² is the image, how it is perceived, who is the creator, the posing person, the recipient, what is the identity.

The Identity of the Image consists of three chapters.

² Krzysztof Olechnicki, *Antropologia obrazu*, wyd. O cyna Wydawnicza, Warszawa 2003, s. 278.

Paul

The first chapter stands as the description and placement of the idea of the project. Presented here are the characteristics of the contained further in the work basic concepts acknowledged in the literature on the subject. It is the introduction of the reader into the world of the author of the research.

The second chapter describes artistic research conducted in the years 2013 - 2017 in the form of experiments within depersonalisation which the three persons (the creator, the posing person and the recipient) were subjected to. It presents 5 artistic and research activities: *he Town of Mine* (2013 - 2014), *The Townspeople. Inside and Outside the Frame*, *Cityzens* (2013 - 2014), *Vacation: Time and Space* (2014), *The Birdheaded* (2015), *Sameness* (2016).

The third chapter is a doctoral thesis which is a summary of research in the form of a work of art consisting of 18 images from the borderline of photography and digital artwork entitled *The Family* (2016 - 2017). This chapter contains a detailed description of the stages of the creation of the set of works starting from the internal, personal source of the problem located in the imagination and my memories, to the formal structure included in the technical aspect of the work. *The Family* cycle consists of works that illustrate the attitude to the identity of the image, the emotion associated with it and the role of the incarnation in the shaping of personal consciousness. The entire process of creation has been a technique worked out for the development of the PhD thesis on *The Identity of the Image*. *The Family* cycle is being presented in the form of a reproduction in the last chapter of the dissertation.

The starting point for *The Family* was disappointment, dissatisfaction of the image, the passage of time, choices and changes that follow as a result of taking action. Throughout my life I have been assimilating myself to the consequences conditioned by the choices made by myself, but it has also been a by-product of the others' approach. The foundation occurs only in the fusion with the Other. I recognise myself in the context of the other. "According to Martin Buber, it is a man himself to describe the relationship in which he interacts with other people, and the relationship itself allows

him to define himself more efficiently".³ I will not know who I am until I meet the other who tells me about it.

The Family is a representation of the *Identity of the Image* at the research and artistic interface. It derives from the research conducted and described in the doctoral thesis aimed at capturing the relationship between the creator's - the posing - the recipient and the image. The striving to resolve doubts about identity constitutes the prime cause of the creation of many images referring to identification.

The identification appears to be the core of existence. The self-definition of it allows establishing relationships and making decisions that have repercussions on not only their own memory, because the effects of the provisions come in circles. Both *The Family* and other artistic and research activities depicted portraits of people who have been "deprived of" their faces as the basic representation of communication. The task of all the groups involved in the research, the creator, the poser, the recipient was to find concepts to determine who they were, what they felt, and what they saw in the image, and whether it mattered to them.

At the beginning of the research, I assumed that all people who take part in it are the entities - the creator, the posing person and the recipient. Three entities and three selves. And with such a reference, I entered the world of research.

In the analysis of the subjectivity of the creator and the poser, I focused on the assessment of self understanding of my position. The analysis was carried out in the direct time during activities related to the photo session or, in other words, the creation of the work. The recipient formulated a subjective analysis of the image because it was a picture representing some human existence, and the analysis concerned this being. I was interested in reading the code encrypted, not the formal analysis of the work.

³ Teresa Żółkowska, *Ja, ty, inny – dialog?*, Studia edukacyjne nr 28/2013, s. 19.

Thus, three entities - the creator, the posing person and the recipient - met on the occasion of the creation and decoding of the meaning of the image in which the subject's identity was kept secret. The tools I used to cover my face were the simplest items I could reach for - cotton bag, paper bag, outer clothing, printed material.

The collected data during the 6 artistic experiments provided me with unschematic conclusions, and I discuss them in the summary of the work.

On the other hand, the entire study of the doctoral thesis entitled *The Identity of the Image* can be treated as another artistic experiment, because during reading and communing with the image there will be a unique opportunity for the recipient to take their own position regarding the identity and image.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hampson" or similar, written in a cursive style.