

Building an artistic identity in collaboration with a mediator

A case study on three Finnish visual artists
at the first stages of their career

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ABSTRACT

Thesis

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<p>Degree programme</p> <p>Arts Management</p>	
<p>Abstract</p> <p>Vast amounts of the previous research on artists has had a focus on the managerial activities and artist's personal development post-graduation. This thesis is a qualitative case study of Finnish visual artists and their artistic identity. More precisely, it focuses on the collaboration between emerging artists and a mediator on an art exhibition. The research looks into the current practicalities of the interaction occurring in the exhibition process, and defining the elements that add value to artist's work in three different types of galleries in Helsinki, Finland.</p> <p>The primary data of this research are six semi-structured interviews conducted between March and May 2016. The theoretical framework of the work applies to the studies of creative labor, art world and art sociology. The main results of the study suggest that interaction skills and communication methods evolve within personal experiences rather than through direct tutoring in the process of co-operation. However, mediators do have a vital role in helping young artists in the transitional phase. The outcomes of this work also proves that an encouraging environment includes shared learning experiences and appears, at its best, as appreciation and mutual trust. These elements form a functioning foundation for different participants in the art world to successfully work together.</p> <p>The Finnish art world has plenty of room for more interdisciplinary learning environments and collaborative models. The subject of a relationship between an artist and a mediator should be explored further.</p>	
<p>Keywords</p> <p>Art world, artishood, artistic identity, communication skills, curator, emerging artists, Finnish art, gallerist, interaction skills mediator, networks, personal development, visual art</p>	
<p>Additional information</p>	

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

This thesis originates from my personal connection to visual art, artists and the whole fascinating field around it. At the core of the research are three Finnish visual artists that are in the early stages of their careers. This means that they are having their first or second private exhibition and are in the process of building the artistic procedures, connections and ways to work in the art world and society as professional artists.

The key idea of this research is to explore how these artists see themselves as part of the art world and from which different sections the visual art field in Finland consists of. The core idea of this research is to recognize the skills artists can gain through the process of having an exhibition and working together with a mediator in 1) a commercial gallery, 2) an artist-run gallery and 3) a gallery as part of a museum and how these skills and networks can be used later on in their career to encourage and support it.

The chosen cases present exhibitions in three distinctive environments with different participants within the field of visual art. All of these settings will be viewed both from the perspective of a mediator, such as a gallerist or a curator and from the viewpoint of an artist. The cases present a varied field as all of the galleries have specific characteristics and working methods. Through these three cases I aim to provide knowledge on how artists become established after graduating, having one of their first private exhibitions and what plays the main role in their artistic identification process. In addition to networks and skill recognition this thesis examines how one becomes a part of the art world and society as an operative and surviving professional artists.

The Finnish Foundation for Cultural Policy Research (CUPORE) has looked in to the structures, abilities and skills that are required for artists to practice their profession in the future. According to the analysis from Herranen (2013, p. 133), the requirements valued by 190 Finnish artists that are related to success are:

- Artistic vision and artistic identity
- Practices and policies in the art world
- Understanding contemporary art
- Knowledge of art techniques and methods
- Professional ethical principles and value basis in the art field.

Some of the skills presented above are learned during studies at Art Universities. Others are achieved through experience and in some parts guidance, examples and role models are needed to scale the abilities. Two of the first are central skills that are in the core of my research and cannot be learned purely through studies, but have to be experienced and tried out. It seems that many practices in becoming a professional artist are tied to certain traditions of teaching and the studying culture in Finland. Often the identification process is left in the responsibility of the artist, but the practice should be taught more before entering into the world of professionals. The role of a mediator and generally working with other people during studies gives the artist a glimpse of the real world and possibilities to position him/herself in some frame of reference.

As my personal interests are in the Finnish art scene, in this research I want to identify how visual artists in Finland begin their careers. The thesis looks deeper into building a professional status and clarifying means of the networks. In order to find solutions, I wish to address what kinds of tools and scenarios occur in the process of having an exhibition and how these would help the artist with their future work and managing in the art world as a practitioner. Both, the artists and the mediators are included in this relationship and the current rules, standards and functions in an exhibition process are viewed from two perspectives.

There are diverse milestones and indicators defining when artists are reaching the status of ‘a professional artist’. The significant criteria can be observed through several factors. One is the first exhibition where an artist takes part with a real work that reflects their self-development and progress. Another way is to look into one’s elaboration of independent vision and expression. It is also noted that traditional full-time employment is not to be taken for granted as an artist but it reflects the ‘adulthood career’ and therefore feels professional for young Finnish artists. (Karttunen, 2009, p. 59)

In Finland there are several options for visual artists to display their art works. Each artist has their own approach and aims, but most of them want to create discussion, raise questions and represent their ideas. And most importantly: to become part of the art world and society as individuals through their work. The versatile gallery field in Finland offers a functional platform for this.

“In Finland galleries have several roles. They can act as a gatekeeper, be part of the production or work as a mediator, or do all of these at the same time. Their strong position in the market reflects an exclusive role as they also effect the demand of visual and fine art by deciding the main part of public supply – which artist are introduced and when it is their time to be in the spotlight.” (Mänttari-Butler, 2010, p. 19)

Current structures and behavior in managing an exhibition in Finland are fixed to the traditions that has been learned over the years. Finnish artists often tend to have a state of mind where they want to keep their appearance to the minimum, concentrate on hard work and then exhibit the work with a ‘low-key’ approach. Regarding interaction skills in a collaboration between the artist and the mediator, there is a notable lack in the process of knowing how an exhibition is constructed in an artist’s mind, how they feel during it, what kind of communication arises, what is important for them and how they will develop their artistic identity during the whole operation. This research covers not only what happens at the moment when the exhibition is held and right after but also the vital tools that will offer

these artists future goals to reach something meaningful and space for artistic development. For emerging artists, it is important to search the source of artistic identity soon after graduation.

1.2 Defining the key terms

Visual art is a term that I have chosen to use in this thesis. I did not want to narrow it down only to fine arts or arts in general. In the introduction of an art policy program by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland it is defined that “visual art consists of fine arts, sculpture, graphics, photography, media, comic art, art handicrafts, performance art, site-specific (e.g. environmental and communal art) and many other phenomena evolving within the field of contemporary art” (The Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009).

Currently, a vast amount of contemporary art created in Finland by young artists seems to be a mixture of several artistic procedures and the use of various kinds of materials. I define visual art as a form combining traditional methods of creating art with both a contemporary viewpoint and mixed media, such as sound, image or an installation.

With the term ‘young artists’ I am addressing people who have graduated from university within the last five years and are in the beginning of their professional careers. The emerging visual artist has, for example just had their first (or second) solo exhibition or has had a break-through and sealed a deal with a commercial gallery.

With the term ‘mediator’ I am signifying a person who is a kind of a gatekeeper within the art world; someone who has the power to decide what art is presented and brought to the audience. In Becker’s words: “we can think of an art world as established network of cooperative links among participants” (Becker, 1982, p. 35). In this work, the term mediator is interchangeable with the term curator and I am using both expressions.

1.3 Problem formulation

The research process started when some artists I know, mostly my friends, had asked me to help them to write grant applications and other elements related to producing or organizing artistic events. I felt as though helping them as a one-off would not assist the artists enough to embrace these skills and be able to use them later in their career. I sensed I could do more for them, see how certain capabilities can be included in an artist's world. In order to proceed, I need to know what lays behind it all – what is the original source of artists' path to reach a state of mind where they feel comfortable doing what they do as well as how they can be aware of everything that is around them; work together and benefit from different groups of people in their networks.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has defined that “creativity and visual thinking develop in an early stage ... and at the same time the process of doing is more important than the finished product” (The Ministry of Education and Culture (2009, p. 9). Underlying the research, I have a hypothesis that young artists find it difficult during the beginning of their careers. It is possible that attitudes and expectations shape the ground where they begin and the role of the product rises from the expectations from others and there is not enough room for the basics; creativity and visual thinking, that should be shaping the whole identity of an artist.

It is also possible that these young artists have not recognized their available networks and how to use them. Also, sometimes the effects of different parts of the art world and society and why all of these are needed in the system are unclear to people who are part of the art world. The fine line between commercial and non-commercial parts of the art world is hard to recognize. During my time getting to know the Finnish art scene I noticed that a very limited group of artists had considered these issues or addressed them in their daily lives. There is rather many research in the visual arts and the young artists' position in the field as well as their income basis, however, it seems that artistic identity has not been researched as

extensively. Also, what has been neglected is the means and effects of mediators and their communication with the artist in the exhibition process. I aim to bring it up into the light.

1.4 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to identify the path Finnish visual artists choose to take when becoming an artist; what is the fine line between a new beginner in the visual art field and a professional? The focus of this research is not only examining the next stage after graduation or the first solo show, but how the artistic identity is built when an artist works together with different groups of people. Particularly how through these intercourses one is able to recognize the role that each of them takes, and more importantly, what the communication brings them. In this thesis I especially want to focus on the relationship between the artist and a mediator and leave other parts of society and education in the background.

The main research question is:

- How do Finnish visual artists form their professional identity and what is the role of a mediator in this process?

The following questions are used as a supporting research question:

- What kind of interaction is there between the two parties?
- How is trust built between different parties?
- How are networks formed and used during and after co-operating?

My personal aim and one of the reasons to conduct this study is that I have been asked for help regarding production aspects in the field of visual arts, such as applying for grants, producing art events and getting sponsorships. I have had several discussions during the past three years with artists who have opened up

their working methods and thoughts to me, expressing their worries about their profession in relation to the future, especially regarding being able to work in their own field, the visual arts.

Career development is not a commonly discussed topic among visual artists in Finland. The operational environment creates its own restrictions. Often the moment for 'skills recognition' is buried under other practical tasks and emerging artists do not have a moment to view their artistic path in depth. I am looking to find out the viewpoints from both artists and mediators and work out what the learning both sides will gain from a project, or an exhibition, when conducted together. Many artists may have unrecognized talents that need to be encouraged and further developed to better articulating their work to different audiences, presenting it to mediators, acknowledging their networks and valuable skills for the future. Through identifying their skills, emerging artists obtain ways to widen their views, recognizing the present set-up and choose the tools to work with in order to develop themselves for future challenges as professional artists.

1.5 Research approach

The research is a qualitative case study. Based on my personal interests, I have chosen to present a varied view to the field with three different cases. The subject is examined through the experiences of both art galleries and the artists. All of the chosen cases and galleries are located in Helsinki but there are similar participants around Finland. This means that the results can be compared to other operators in the Finnish visual art scene. In some cases, I first chose the gallery, in others I definitely wanted to talk to a certain artist. In general, I have found a perfect trio resembling the current state of Finnish visual art scene and the young artists within.

The chosen cases are

- **Artist-run gallery:** Sorbus gallery & Artist Kristina Sedlerova
- **Museum:** Helsinki Art Museum's gallery & Artist: Karoliina Hellberg

- **Commercial gallery:** Helsinki Contemporary & Artist: Emma Ainala.

The artists and each of the galleries mentioned were effortless to find as I was familiar with the field through my interests and contacts. I had been following the students in the Fine Art Academy in Helsinki and checking up on the gallery scene here. All of the chosen visual artists are young Finnish women born between 1987-1989 but their gender was not decided in advance. I wanted to choose artists who I also found fascinating based on their previous work and with whom I could create rich conversations with. This was principally more important than who the mediators were because the visual artist's personal experience was critical for this research. It was also very essential that the chosen gallery representatives were interested in my study subject, keen to co-operate and would agree to talk willingly about these specific exhibitions and artists.

Generally speaking, I find it necessary to describe the basic practices in the co-operation methods between the artist and mediator and all the steps that are part of the process of identifying their professional competence. I am enthusiastic to discover if there is an operational model that brings artists and mediators closer to each other, working as a human to a human, being in the same level even when they have varied backgrounds and represent different participants of the art world. In this thesis I am trying to find out if there are mutual working habits among young artists in relation to planning exhibitions and mounting, or does it differ depending on the mediator's skills and the artist's own readiness and information of the field and its practices.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of six chapters. After this section the introduction begins, in which I will outline the theoretical framework. It covers the core of this thesis, presenting the art world and its participants from artists to mediators. This is followed by the third chapter which portrays my research method. It draws a picture of qualitative research and the case study. I am concentrating on data

collection methods, especially describing more about the interview types and questions while in the fourth chapter I concentrate on presenting my analysis and results from the research. I am comparing the cases to each other through the interview themes.

In fifth chapter I present the conclusion linking my own findings to the previous research. After this observation comes the discussion and suggestions for future research into the subject.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I will have a closer look into the theoretical views of my study. I am explaining both about professional identity and the field of visual art to bring up the sociological understanding of these core themes and functions behind them. In addition to this, my theoretical framework portrays the artists' understanding of the field, concentrating on the tools that form within the artistic work and communication with mediators in the exhibition process.

2.1 Who is an artist?

The path towards becoming an artist consists of several different phases and it does not follow any congruent script. It is inevitable that having the first solo exhibition is one of the biggest turning points. It will stir up the feeling of artisthood and one's place in the art world. Traditionally the artists' trust of the whole art world and its functions, peers and mediators is gained through multiple dimensions, mostly experiencing the working life, as a professional artist.

Piispa and Salasuo talk about the calling in artistic abilities that regularly follows one through childhood and shapes it to be a 'life task', often recognized already when a child is less than 10 years old. They confirm that "to support the calling, it requires inherited, learned and accumulated social and cultural capital." (Piispa and Salasuo, 2014, p. 82-83) This is a necessary step in young artist's development and decision-making process. Most likely it will lead the artist to professionalism and the thought of recognizing a life task at a young age will stay in the background, guiding and reminding of the calling, an early-age choice made to become an artist.

Salazar's (2016, p. 146) research suggests that "...[artists'] identity is more fully formed during the four years of college study as compared with the years immediately prior." Art students often recognize the calling themselves and

considers it as a choice. That has been axiom to them from the childhood. "Many of the students appear to regard their artistic talent, to a degree, as a 'gift of grace'. The idea of a strong inner drive is supported by Røyseng, Mangset and Borgen (2007, p. 5).

Being willing to step out of comfort zones can open up opportunities for an artist that are not seen before. It certainly teaches an early career artist many things and creates questions such as: What is my future goal? Who can I trust? Am I accepted as part of a community where I want to belong? Is there something that I have to give up in order to become professional? Are there expectations for my work?

The same idea appears in Karttunen's (2009) study. The meaning of inner experience is extremely strong and all the interpretations are done through the artists' own professional development. To see yourself as professional, the ability to practice art full-time is one of the key criteria; "in Finland this is rarely the case for young artists as they first need strong networks and most of all the self-confidence." (Karttunen, 2009, p. 59) Though it is not explained further how this actually happens.

In general, artists in the beginning of their professional career are somewhat a mystery to many, especially to the audience. If there has not been any press coverage and the first solo exhibition is still coming, it is almost impossible that they would have become a phenomena or a subject of discussion elsewhere than among other artists, fellow students and the like. Alexander has stated "we know very little about artists who are just starting out, and about aspiring artists who never make it" (Alexander 2003, p. 138). This forms the challenge that covers the whole field of visual arts, in Finland and all around the world. In spite of finding the talents and working with them, mediators might sometimes have a very important role in the process to know, sense and 'lift up' the potential there is among young talents.

Supporting the definitions presented above, Jeffri and Greenblatt (1989, p. 10) present three themes of artistic skills and the professional recognition. These can be used as a validation and support the structure of this thesis.

1. Marketplace

- a. The person makes his/her living as an artist.
- b. The person receives some income from his/her work as an artist.
- c. The person intends to make his/her living as an artist.

2. Education & Affiliation

- a. The person belongs to an artists' union.
- b. The person has been formally educated in the fine arts.

3. Self & Peer

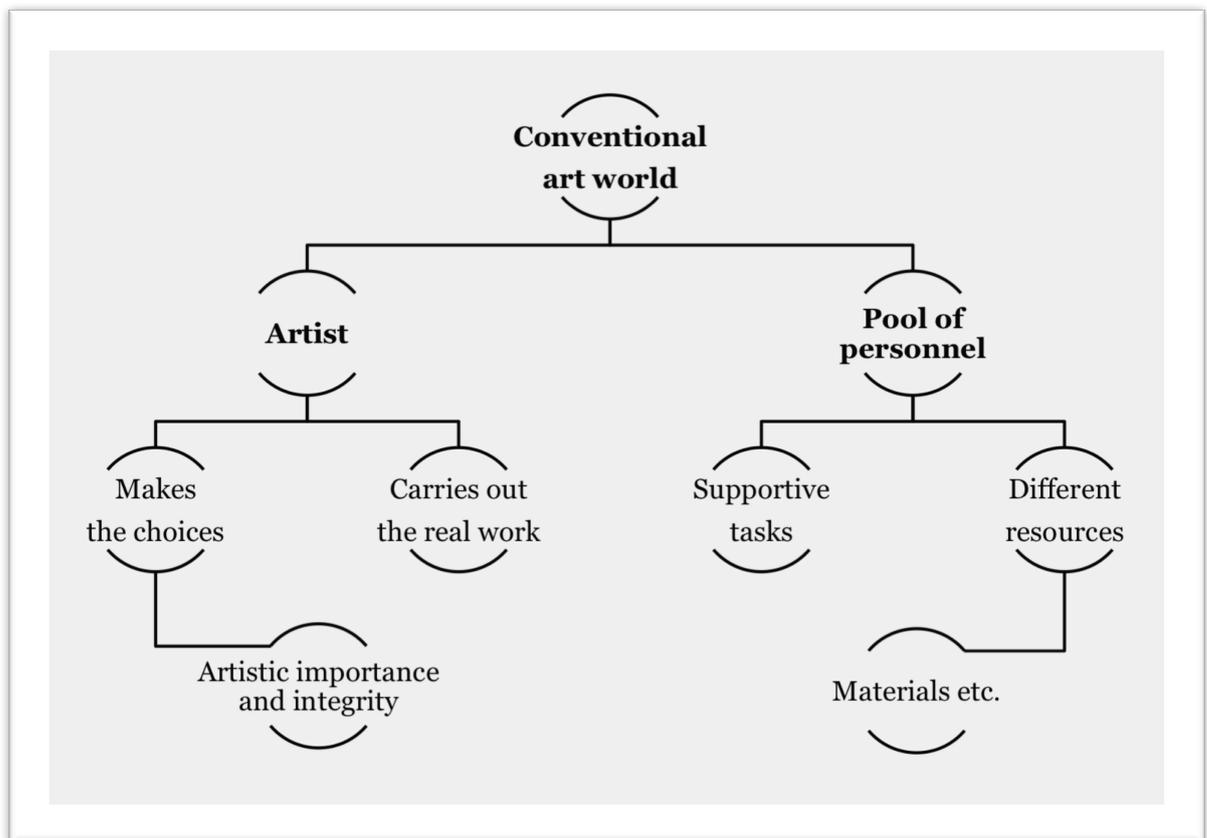
- a. The person is recognized by his/her peers as an artist.
- b. The person considers him/herself to be an artist.
- c. The person spends a substantial amount of time creating art.
- d. The person has a special talent.
- e. The person has an inner drive to make art.

Jeffri and Greenblatt thus make a distinction between the artist's personal skills and features, effect of education and recognition of the artisthood. When viewed like this, the list seems without a doubt clear: this is what artists are made of. When studying emerging artists, it seems that point 1c is a valid assumption but points 1a and 1b do not fit the image of fresh graduates. The same is true with point 2a – young artists are first test members in the unions. Most diverse variation is seen with the 3rd point. Marketplace can affect to the moment when point 3a and 3b occurs. Often points 3c, 3d and 3e are formed already at a young age and works as a starting point in the path of becoming an artist, these last three are the core themes of artisthood.

As Becker (1982) has specified: “The artist works in the center of a network of co-operating people.” The conventional art world separates both artists and the people who work with them. This is illustrated in the following figure.

“Everyone else’s job is to assist the artist. The support personnel delivers the people, materials and all other resources that an artist can concentrate on creating artistic importance with their work. It is not a setup king (artist) vs. subordinates (personnel) because the art world members teach themselves. (Becker, 1982, p. 77-78)

Figure 1: Conventional art world



Source: Becker, 1982, p. 77-78

Karttunen (2009) analyzed how at times, the artist is seen as an equal partner with a mediator but sometimes is given the role as a statistic that has a task: to create material for the thematic program of a star curator, who in Karttunen’s text is the

main artist (Karttunen, 2009, p. 21). This disagrees with Becker’s core idea where both units are separated but support to each other (Becker, 1982, p. 20) In the case of a young artist, all the experiences (being part of the art world) from earlier times will certainly effect how the visual artists’ identity is built. If someone unwillingly becomes a pawn in a game, undeniably the point of view and attitude towards the art world and all of it segments are different than with an artist who had the possibility to operate freely without restriction or strict guidance.

Artists certainly struggle with their position related to the economy and the future as a professional. Defining the status when still studying causes ambivalence and they seek influence for the attitude from the peer network rather than professional artists; “for some (especially visual artists), this crossing of boundaries was only superficial: They considered "commercialization" to be part of an intentional artistic strategy (as in "concept art")” (Røyseng et al. 2007, p. 7).

Jackson et al. (2003, p. 8) provide a scale that measures different dimensions in the artistic work. Through this it is possible to understand the structure of visual art field. This is explained in more detail in the following table.

Table 1. Taxonomy of artists’ support structure

Dimension	Definition	Examples
Validation	The ascription of value to what artists do.	Peer recognition; audience or direct public recognition; awards; media coverage; etc.
Demand and markets	Society’s appetite for artists and what they do, and the markets that translate this appetite into financial compensation.	Access to commercial, nonprofit, public and informal sectors; access to market intermediaries, such as agents, associations, service organizations, unions and guilds, and educational institutions; etc.

Material supports	Access to the financial and physical resources artists need for their work: employment, insurance and similar benefits, awards, space, equipment, and materials.	Formal employment; sales; commissions; awards and grants; residencies; cooperatives; discounts or subsidies for artist housing and live/work space; supplies; etc.
Training and professional development	Conventional and lifelong learning opportunities.	Universities and arts schools; local arts agencies; arts service organizations; community-based organizations; peer-to-peer and mentoring relationships; web-based exchanges; travel; etc.
Communities and networks	Inward connections to other artists and people in the cultural sector; outward connections to people not primarily in the cultural sector.	National and networks; regional networks; local and community-based organizations; institutional affiliations; funder-driven communities; community outreach peer to peer; access to gatekeepers; etc.
Information	Data sources about artists and for artists	Access to artists' opportunities and knowledge via online and other sources; research on artists' economic status; social contributions; support structure; etc.

Source: Jackson et al., 2003, p. 8

Art can be seen as a social activity meaning that the artist is not isolated from society even though the artistic work is often done alone. Based on Becker's theory, people with similar ways of thinking create the art world and certifies its existence through common activities. They share valuable information that helps them to act as group to support each other and embrace the effectiveness of their network (Becker, 1982).

“To speak of the organization of the art world—its division into audiences of various kinds, and producers and support personnel of various kinds—is another way of talking about who knows what and uses it to act together.” (Becker, 1982, p. 67)

Alexander (2003) has presented a model that divides artists in two groups based on their talent; superstar artists and the ones who have only modest (or very little) success. She summarizes it like this: “talent alone can not account for the division of artists into two neat groups of extremely valued artists (who become superstars) and modestly valued ones (who do not.)” (Alexander, 2003, p. 136). Behind this is Rosen’s (1981) statement as presented in Alexander (2003). Definition of superstars that have ‘box office value’ without determining it more precisely but only saying it is “the artists who have it have an advantage in the artistic labor market.” Also tracing the idea that the buyer’s opinion count and that they only settle for someone whose talent is well recognized (Alexander, 2003). I find this disconcerting as in the field of visual arts especially in Finland, just a small fraction of artists reach ‘the superstar level’. That is considered as a place, where you need to achieve enormous amount of sales, coverage, invitations to fairs, all kind of events, being active with media etc.

I see that the word ‘value’ plays a more important role in Alexander’s (2003) definition. It can be connected to several levels and not only directly linked to sales. I would not see that this division and ‘winner takes it all’ mentality fits in the Finnish art world. Artists themselves are probably not bringing the super star theme up that much. Behind this is Kegan’s (1983) statement as presented in Salazar (2016): “the fact that these artists express a sense of happiness and success in the first months of postgraduate life is significant because the transition into adult life, research suggests, can be a difficult one” (Salazar, 2016, p. 11). In the identification process it can be destructive to have the pressure that one should build a successful career. In the field of visual arts this works more in the opposite way; the value and success is criticized and seen as negative movement.

This method of defining talents can also harm visual artists’ identification process. Hard pushing from the school or a mediator’s side can create lack of dignity. This has the greatest impact before graduation or having the first exhibition which is seen as an intermediate space, which demonstrates to the artist the ‘real action’ in the art world. These include becoming familiar with what kind of form artist’s processes and development takes and where it leads them.

“The difficulty of creative work leads in turn to the characteristic duration of the task. It is long, hard work. Sometimes the last steps of the creative process look easy; confusing this phase with the process as a whole can lead to exaggerated ideas of its spontaneity and ease.”
(Wallace and Gruber, 1992, p. 15)

Based on a research made by Klammer and Petrova both creative personality and creative environment are not static elements. The visual art world with its multiple levels and qualities is under a constant change in status. Also, emerging artists have to acknowledge this and not consider it as a threat but an opportunity (Klammer and Petrova, 2007, p. 253).

2.1.1 Forming the artistic identity

In this research, the core is catching that moment when an artist sees him/herself as an active part of art field and society. The point in which they practice their profession and see themselves as part of the art world on a few different levels, such as having recognized the nature of working with a mediator (e.g. gallery) and what connection means. Also understanding the process of building and having their first private exhibition after graduation where the tasks are often different from the exhibitions done at a school gallery or in a group exhibition. The path from a new beginner to a professional artist can happen quickly if the person has recognized their networks and are ready to use them.

One of the first definitions on the artistic identification process and basics comes from Danto: “for want of a word I shall designate this the is of artistic identification.” He is pondering it through the formation of an actual art work, elements and structure of the piece, justifying that people [the artists] are part of the construction: “persons, like artworks, must then be taken as irreducible to parts of themselves, and are in that sense primitive” (Danto, 1964, p. 576-577). He views artistic identification through examples of making an art pieces and its interpretation – meanings of lines.

“Notice here how one artistic identification engenders another artistic identification, and how, consistently with a given identification, we are required to give others and precluded from still others: indeed, a given identification determines how many elements the work is to contain. (Danto, 1964, p. 577-578)

The Ministry of Education and Culture (2009) offers a slightly differing definition; the process of doing is more important than that of the finished product. It is easy to agree with this view especially when talking about visual art, even Danto's (1964) specification started from the elements of a finished art work. A lot has happened in over seventy years and what can be stated is that developing an identity is an ongoing process for artists, they learn by doing. It is more of a vocation than a conscious decision. Piispa and Salasuo noticed how the young artist's generation sees it as a lifestyle – making art is in the core of their lives and conviction plays an important role; art is seen as a highly valued tool in the artistic identity building (Piispa and Salasuo, 2013, p. 81). Hall and McGrew support this, the acknowledged effects that alter the identification; breaking it down through paradoxical identities. He has concluded that “identity becomes a ‘moveable feast’ formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surrounds us” (Hall and McGrew, 1992, p. 277). When looking at the bigger picture, Eteläpelto and Vähäsantanen outline: “widely speaking, the professional identity can be seen as the ratio of an individual in the society, what is the dominant division of labor and how to act in the surrounding world” (Eteläpelto and Vähäsantanen, 2006, p. 45). This explains how one sees their status and place in the conventional art world.

According to Klamer and Petrova (2007) cognitive, personal and environmental elements are the ones stating the “ritual” of becoming an artist. These components are part of creativity the processes through which the artist realizes their creative achievements and feel ready to reach professionalism. Sharing their ideas, inspirations and experience with others; i.e. working in an environment where artists feel they belong, will clarify their place in the art world. Having the common ground as a starting point is a way of becoming aware of their artistic creativity. (Klamer and Petrova 2007, p. 249-251)

Artistic competence can be seen as a successful seam of understanding the art world's interests, trends and values through which the vital identity is built. After the creation process, one has the ability to work by the rules defined by the field and is capable of stepping into the art world as an artist. This is the key point in the artists' career development process (Lepistö, 1991, p. 29). Røyseng et al. presents a supportive thought.

“Although many young artists find that the procedures and attitudes in some of the working arenas contrast with their charismatic expectations, it is not an unambiguous experience. In spite of everything, most of them do not stop believing in the magical aspects of “life as an artist”. It is rather a question of adjusting their expectations. (Røyseng et al., 2007, p.9)

It can be presumed that visual artists will definitely remember the first moment and their debut in the art world as well as the feeling of being a professional. In the novice phase when identity is just forming, the socialization in the working community is highlighted. The reason being, at that stage the individual has not yet gained authority in the working community or the cultural capital which often evolves with time and is controlled by other members of the society (Eteläpelto and Vähäsantanen, 2006, p. 44). An observation by Røyseng et al. (2007, p. 9) says: "life as a professional artist has both its mundane and magical aspects. It is not realistic to expect the magic to be present continuously." When this is learned at an early stage, it hopefully brings artists to the ground if needed.

According to Rensujeff (2010) people working especially in the creative fields (photography, literature, visual arts), need a kick start in their artistic career. The birth of first work or holding the debut exhibition was considered as a clear starting point for them. When talking about performing arts (dance, theatre, music) this occurs differently; a specific start for the professional career is not identified as such a strong event or single action but rather the start for the career was tied to the moment when the concrete artistic work begun. (Rensujeff, 2010, p. 41)

2.1.2 Exhibition process for an artist

Both art world's different participants (personnel) and art's different sides – aesthetic and commercial, face each other in an exhibition. It is commonly known that regarding artists' merits and visibility, gallery exhibitions are very important, also with the grant application process and other ways of developing their career. (Lepistö, 1991, p. 30-31) Ministry of Education and Culture consider: "if comparing within the international level, the Finnish art market is underdeveloped" (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009, p. 13). This subject is related to several factors and can affect the visual artists' attitude towards the art world. Lind covers the topic of confronting the existing model related to mediating art (Lind, 2013, p. 85-91). The powerful dominant style can seem frightening to young artists. Still Abbing strongly suggests that "artist-researchers", which I consider to be young artists, do not care about the audience or buyers. He also states that artists treat their studios as laboratories and they are behaving very self-referential which is the ruling attitude within contemporary art. (Abbing, 2002) By this definition the underdeveloped art market in Finland and strong curatorial style should not be an issue in the identification process.

The turning point is inevitably somewhere. The definition suggested by Ansio and Houni (2013) supports Abbing's opinion from the previous chapter. They formulate that remembering the individual work path and self-reflectiveness are related to the turning point: "the process of simply selecting the turning points in their own consciousness determines of places of identity for the individual." (Ansio and Houni, 2013, p. 76) Through these points in several theories, having a private exhibition has a solid position of being the essential turning point defining young artist's position.

2.1.2.1 Mounting an exhibition

Displaying your own art for young artists can be thrilling. They spend many days and nights thinking about the elements and how to present their work in the best context. The exhibition concept and preliminary idea can change during the days.

Limitations of space, colour and light in the exhibition space set restrictions and it may not be simple to fully change these components. This is also a notable topic when choosing the place where the visual artist wants to have their exhibition. Gazi (2014) has presented the basic means that shape an exhibition process. Behind this core idea – “use of space, color and light that creates a context for the display” is Swain’s (2007) text and as Gazi later declares, all the individual elements such as objects or themes, words or pictures are required as the combination all of these plays a bigger role in terms of meaning – it ties the elements together creating the full context, a whole exhibition. (Gazi, 2014, p. 4)

A visual artist can not always have a say in all of the different means and roles in the procedure. They have set a purpose [how to exhibit chosen works] that should meet their own wishes. These take form as requirements when viewing from the mediator’s side. In the best case the gallery’s structure supports the wishes, and the process is smooth. Artists might be able to decide the dates for their exhibition and the style in which it is advertised. It is possible that they also get to influence who is invited and have a say in how the press release is written. In a group exhibition curated by somebody else it is not possible to influence which other artists are invited, or in the case of a commercial gallery it could be the mediator who sets the prices for work and not artist themselves. All in all, the most critical issue is that the artist is able to see the gallery as their “own” and feels that exact space is the right place displaying his/her art, either for a small or a large audience.

Malik (2008) has talked about the price of the art work and if it reflects the value or not. In his text the price is powerful and has an over-determining characteristic. The danger in price-setting at the first private gallery exhibitions is present. Malik states how it can be “a rhetorical act deployed by gallerists, dealers and collectors to draw attention to this or that artist’s putative importance.” (Malik, 2008, p. 286)

”In this system, the price of an artwork is set by the gallery based on its intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics – for example, the originality and reputation of the artist, the technique or medium used, the size of

the piece and possibly how long it took to create.” (Moureau and Sagot-Duvaouroux, 2012, p. 48)

In the art economy, the galleries' position is central. Their role in the process can not be ignored. Whoever the customer is, the gallerist's work as mediator between artist and buyer is strong. It will have a direct influence on the artist, especially when the case concerns a commercial gallery. Clearly this creates a specific setup that could possibly have an effect on the artist's personal experience of exhibiting work.

2.1.2.2 Art critique

The public's evaluation of artists' work and their criticism are in Lepistö's (1991) words the third crucial institution in becoming an artist. It is necessary that the exhibition will gain public recognition. Also media and press are tied to the critique. These together create the way the general public, people who are more or less familiar with art, will view an artist and their work. (Lepistö, 1991, p. 31-32) In addition, Alexander proposes a concept that status is built on talent. She adds: "reputation, on the other hand, refers to what others think about an artist's work and how widely the artist (or artwork) are known" (Alexander, 2003, p. 145). Recognition and reputation plays a clear role in the way art critique is formed. Also, it is not only the artistic work that matters, but the mediator's style and effort together with an artist that first creates visibility.

Commercial galleries measure success through the critique more than other participants in the field of visual art. Caves (2000) specifies that it is about suitability - the artist will learn by examining several galleries and their style of exhibiting where he/she would find proper affinity towards their own art work. Caves continue that "artists recognize a vertical differentiation of galleries based on the quality as well as the style of the art that they offer." (Caves, 2000, p. 28)

As reported by the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yleisradio) in 2011 Finnish newspapers have cut the amount of art critique published. In an article by Mällinen it is written that the space is given to other subjects as the competition

increases and advertising revenue decreases. An interesting observation is that in his opinion, “At the same time that press turned its back on the visual arts, Finns consume it more than before”. Mällinen also suggests that six years ago the domestic art market was booming as Finns were buying lots of art for themselves, perhaps more than ever. (Yleisradio, 13. May, 2011)

According to Malik (2008), art critique is indisputably a central feature of art’s marketization. He expresses that ”critique is immediate and content-specific, articulating the interests of this or that art practice, articulating such-and-such concerns and giving them wider pertinence.” (Malik, 2008, p. 285-289) This is the most known form of art critique but beside the content-specific side is the artist, a human who is not an object and is as much part of the critique as the actual work. There should be a gentle way of forming the critique, combining both the artist as a person and the artist’s work.

“The artist's work requires publicity, at least exhibiting work publicly ... the total package ‘artist-works’ is part of modern art worlds context of importance. Creating a name and a status, artist as a public a person and a personality – an artistic image created of him/her – is an essential part of the artist's trademarks in the art market.” (Lepistö, 1991, p. 89)

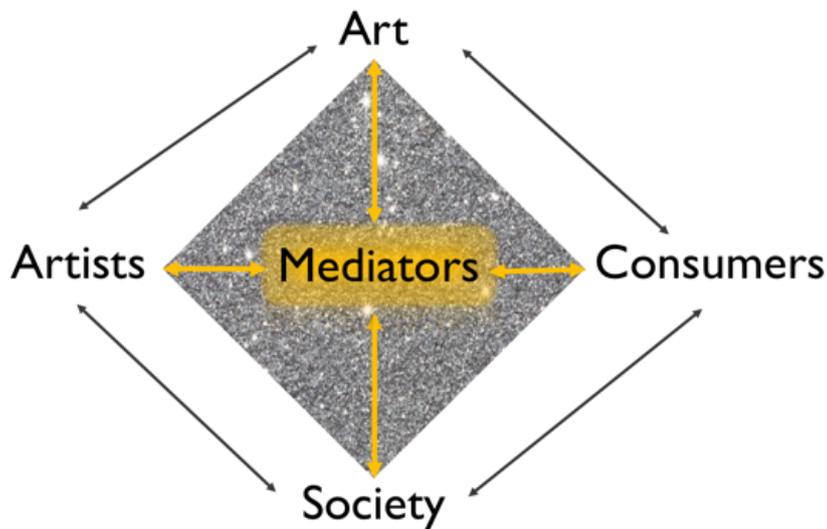
Visual artists are always public figures as Lepistö stated. However, it is right to question this; does the artist always know that they have to deal with the critique towards both their work and their own artistic image? To accept the role as ‘a trademark’ is not something that is part of forming the artistic identity. This can be a challenge especially for young creators as there are very few situations when both the creator and their work is evaluated publicly. It only applies to types of work that are related to the artistic profession; such as musicians, painters and performers of some kind. Abbing corresponds: ”people are always distinguishing products that are considered art from those that are not... People classify products as being more or less art” (Abbing, 2002, p. 15).

2.2 Mediators in the art world

The art world is a lively unit that is formed by its members. Everyone is responsible for its functionality. One of the most used theoretical references for looking deeper in to the subject is “Art worlds” by Becker. In his words “art worlds typically have intimate and extensive relations with the worlds from which they try to distinguish themselves” (Becker, 1982, p. 36). However, this community is still joined together with “other environments”, either looking for ideas or borrowing property and resources to change, be more powerful, to fully serve its members. In short “art worlds equals an established network of co-operative links”. He also adds that there are no limitations in terms of who can be part of it. (Becker, 1982, p. 34)

Alexander declares: “art is communication. Art has to get from the people who create it to the people who consume it” (Alexander, 2013). She introduces the modified version of a cultural diamond, first presented by Griswold in 1994. In her model the diamond has four elements; 1. creators (artists), 2. objects (art), 3. receivers (consumers), 4. social world (society). For over twenty years, the original diamond by Griswold has been used and modified in several ways. Alexander’s model is more or less the same, but it has one extra part - distributors (mediators), in the middle of the diamond, which binds all the parts together. This is a critical and much needed element in today’s art world. (Alexander, 2013, p. 60-62) This is illustrated in the following figure.

Figure 2. Modified cultural diamond



Source: Alexander, 2013

Lepistö has written that the art world is often viewed as a field, a community. The artistic production is in a direct connection to the mediator level (Lepistö, 1991, p. 28). Becker supports this idea, as says the ones who control the pool (in the art world) “must contend with their own constraints and exigencies which affect what artists have to work with” (Becker, 1982, p. 70). In Frame Contemporary Art Finland’s lecture series curator Hand (26. January, 2015) emphasized the importance of knowing your artists and what motivates them. In her opinion this is the aim in managerial mediator work.

A mediator follows the artist very closely. Starting from setting up an exhibition and being part of different stages to interacting with the artist in various ways. In this research, the visual arts value chain and its core are viewed through a definition in Karo (2007). This core is modified and presented by Sjöberg (2010, p. 33). In order to handle the vision and strategy of artistship, it is necessary to consider focusing on some assignments that will help the Finnish visual art world take the challenge and meet the demand. The art world is a co-operative web of activity (Becker, 1982, p. 67). Mediators have the main keys to influence other members of the pool of resources and keep it all together.

Table 2. The visual art's value chain

Production	Contains stages of setting up an exhibition and the pre-work regarding the idea how to exhibit the works in a best possible way. Also tasks regarding the production: creating a concept, budget management and aftersales
Mediation/Distribution	Different forms of dealing art. In the distribution phase, artwork is transferred from the artists' studio to the 'end user' and possibly onward via secondary market mechanism.
Public relations	Marketing and communications such as press releases, invitations and keeping up the list of journalists/writers.
Encouraging environment	Willingness to co-operate and to find common ground to reach the equal target. Developing the rights of "culture workers" (not only artists) rights in institutions and the real appreciation as an important resource in an organization is part of a supportive environment. Also providing good working conditions, good leadership, as both liability and trust to employees.

Source: Sjöberg, 2010, p. 33

One of the key responsibilities of mediators is taking care of the relationships between creators (artists) and distributors (in this case themselves). Their significant task as a gatekeeper is vital to artists, whether they work with commercial or non-profit galleries. A mediator will strengthen the visual artist's

networks, making it wider and more professional. In addition, they support artists by offering a platform where they can feel natural, at ease and confident to work with their art. The mediator is not necessarily a gallerist; they can also act as a kind of an agent or an advocate.

It is recognized that some artists are more talented than others, but how is it possible to define it in the field of visual arts? It is not so easy and the level of talent is different depending on who is viewing it. Moureau and Sagot-Duvauroux have said: “experts, on the other hand, earn their legitimacy through their ability to identify the next trend, to recognize before all other those artists who are destined to make history” (Moureau and Sagot-Duvauroux, 2012, p. 45). From a mediator’s perspective this definition could be linked to measuring sales or visibility in the media, to visual artists themselves it is often other kind of achievements; learning to use new materials, gaining opportunities such as residencies, or obtaining a grant. The feeling of achieving something that pushes forward in their career.

2.2.1 Different mediator types

Mediation means active engagement, as shaped in the previous chapter. Mediators in the field of visual art can have heterogeneous backgrounds. Some have been educated as artists, whereas some are still practicing artists themselves, others are trained in management and have strong skills in economy and communication, it is possible that they are masterminds in the whole field, possibly even leaders in art organizations. There are several profiles now and even more to come.

”As a term, ”mediation” seems to be open enough to allow for a wider variety of modes of approaching exchanges among art, institutions, and the outside world. In short, mediation appears to provide room for less didacticism, less schooling and persuasion, and more active engagement that does not have to be self-expressive or compensatory.”
(Lind., 2013, p. 88)

The way Lind (2013) opens the term in “Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating” seems to reflect well with the current understanding of curating. A mediator and a visual artist must have a common ground they stand for, mediating should not appear in an annoying or persuading way but on favorable conditions. It is essential that the platform for working together is open and respectful.

Meessen and Unteregger (2015) have created a concept and edited a workbook – an art mediation resource. It is published by the Manifesta Foundation in The Netherlands. In one of the chapters they present a quiz demonstrating the different mediator types. In the quiz there are 14 questions and five answer options to each question. A person will get their mediator type after answering all of questions, each asking for examples about their favorite activities and tasks (all related to mediating art). In the workbook the writers examine the way mediators build their profession asking questions such: “my preferred field of study is... a) aesthetics, b) pedagogy, c) sociology, d) ethics, e) cultural anthropology.” Based on the answers Meessen and Unteregger have formed five mediator types; Intrinsic, Formative, Participatory, Critical and Transformative. (Meessen and Unteregger, 2015)

In relation to the daily activities and role of a curator Morgan (2013) say there are infinite opportunities.

“The answer is dependent entirely on the curator: an academically capable researcher who spends the majority of their time in libraries versus a transient, independent curator visiting the studios of a global array of artists? Or an institutionally based, bureaucratically driven curator fulfilling the demands of trustees versus the director of a small nonprofit scrambling for financial support but relatively free to experiment?” (Morgan, 2013, p. 29)

Content-based competence is not highlighted enough in the Finnish producer training says Karo (2007). In his opinion curators need more than a traditional background as an art historian or wide technological know-how: “practical skills and the necessary art theory and philosophical knowledge of the visual arts, as well

as administrative skills and knowledge must be learned primarily from elsewhere.”
(Karo, 2007, p. 55)

2.2.2 The mediator within society

As issued earlier, Becker’s conventional art world contains the pool of personnel who mostly work for the artist. The artist comes first – without their satisfaction an exhibition won’t happen. “The ones who control the pool must contend with their own constraints and exigencies which affect what artists have to work with” (Becker, 1982, p. 70).

It is not a rare case for the artist and the curator to be on the same level (Karttunen, 2009, p. 20). She found in Feinik’s (2011) work that artists do require lots of time and possibilities to concentrate on, in order for them to produce good work: “the lack of working time will directly effect to the quality of work. That, in turn, influences the artists' access to grants or getting their work sold” (Karttunen, 2009, p. 16). Visual artists might have challenges in trusting an outsider with their work, even so, managerial help will give them a chance to concentrate more on their work without disturbing factors.

“The sales and marketing assistance that managerial co-operation offers reach a significant role from coping at work and income perspective for the artist. The effects of management can also be seen in the artist’s self-esteem. Managerial assistance will enable the artist to fully concentrate on their artistic work without compromise, which in turn enables the recognition of the artist's identity.” (Feinik, 2011, p. 106)

This observation covers the basics of the artist’s value chain presented by Sjöberg. It gives meaning to the need of mediators in the art world. The basic functions of artistship and strategical objectives needs the help of a mediator on several levels. Not only in sales or recognition, capacities for work or new possibilities, but also in confidence and supporting the journey to professionalism.

Surely mediators represent the basic functions of the art gallery where they work at. Resch (2016, p. 54) has divided it to three categories: economic, artistic and socio/ethical. All of the case galleries have certain goals they follow, other in more detail, others less strictly. The traditions of the art world sometimes prevent including new business models and more interdisciplinary methods to the galleries style of work. Resch is saying that “galleries are part of an industry that runs on trust and personal interaction—with artists, customers and colleagues.” He also formulates that through the exhibition, the galleries build their effective artistic value that is shown to different focus group. In here the mediators have a key role. (Resch, 2016, p. 54-55)

Pedrosa’s opinion is that “as a professional activity, curating defies categorization.” They call it ‘an intricate process’ which means it is inescapably personal (Pedrosa, 2013, p. 123-124). Curatorial practice is like building a map of your skills and connections. Art curators must have a close connection to their subject; their academic background might be in art history or fine art practices, but the most important skills are to understand art aesthetics and the field. Pedrosa concludes that the core of curating consists of “learning, researching, discovering, but also unlearning.”

“The question of authorship and the curator has been contested ground in the last few decades, the presumption being that the curatorial role has seeped into the realm of the artist and threatens at times to eclipse the latter’s position and independence. (Morgan, 2013, p. 27)

When talking about the role of a curator in an arts organization, Cray, Inglis and Freeman (2007) formulates it as: “the leader’s role here would focus on encouraging diverse experiments, fostering those that were promising and persuading the organization as a whole to accept change as a constant.” (Cray et al., 2007, p. 308) The visual artists themselves are not generally perceived as leaders. This of course is a question of their own ability and desire to take that role and cherish the position.

The suggestion by Morgan (2013) forms its significance if the curatorial role is viewed through the idea of leadership. Cray et al. (2007) presents four leadership styles, arguing about their varieties in the art field and unique features compared to other industries. They talk about charismatic, transactional, transformational and participatory types of a leader. These styles are opened up through their basic characteristics, strengths, weaknesses and applicability. In the context of this thesis, curators are also leaders as they are in charge of encouraging the artist and promoting the exhibitions and their gallery. Curating creative people demands sensitivity. Transactional leadership is basically about the relationship of a leader and a follower. Whether or not this can be linked directly to the liaison of a mediator and an artist is not certified. Still as Cray et al. claims: "overuse of transactional leadership can lead to complaints of managerialism and interference with artistic freedom." (Cray et al., 2007, p. 299-301)

As Karttunen (2009) observed earlier, both the artist and the curator are seen as equal parts of the art world. Still, in some cases, a mediator in society maintains the role of a star curator, 'the leading artist'. This tied in with charismatic leadership, in which the manager's profile engages with a powerful gallery owner; the main curator, often working in a commercial gallery with an established position in the field and a recognizable curatorial style. On the other hand, young artists at the beginning of their career are in a need of a leader, someone who supports their vision and shapes their security. A 'charismatic' mediator works as "a running start" for the artist: "such leaders have a powerful effect on their followers, inspiring trust, devotion, and a desire to emulate their values, goals, and behavior." (Cray et al., 2007, p. 299) As said, it is possible that this can be a good match, mostly depending if the artist is creating work that pleases the star curator.

Cray et al. state that "proponents of transformational leadership argue that such leaders can convince followers to perform beyond expected levels as a consequence of their influence." (Cray et al., 2007) This type of leadership is less recognized in the art field and there is a chance that just a few curators necessarily think about the impact of their work on the artist's own work progress and performance. The future might bring more of a 'transformational' style to the work between a mediator and an artist.

The least noticeable leadership style with arts is the 'participatory one'. It is inevitable that during the exhibition process the artist is involved in making decisions, engaging in group discussions (for example with a mediator and the gallery's marketing staff) and one on one meetings with the curator or gallery staff responsible for displaying the work. Still before all the interaction begins, the gallery usually has a plan they are implementing and the artist is given options in some scale. These parts, surely depending on each case, are decided in advance so the actual artist's level of participation is low.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

In this thesis I explore how Finnish visual artists at the early stage of their career see themselves as part of the art world. My research is a qualitative case study in which I investigate what is the position of emerging artists, and explore what strengths and skills they gain when co-operating with a mediator whose task is to promote and support the artist's work.

3.1 Methodological approach of the study

The concept of a case study is constructed by the amount of chosen cases and collected information. This is how Gomm, Hammersley and Foster (2000) phrases the core. They also discuss whether it is a method or a paradigm. The basics of a case study arise from the style a research is carried out; data collection methods and tools for the analysis; "frequently, but not always, it implies the collection of unstructured data that are collected, and perhaps also for how these are analyzed" (Gomm et al., 2000, p. 3-4). All the collected data, the number of cases and their depth and details of the study classifies it as a method.

Before the 1980's case studies were linked to participant observation but after Yin's seminal text in 1984 it has been separated as its own style. "The legitimacy of the case study has been achieved at the expense of narrowing the diverse options available to researchers. According to Piekkari and Welch the alternative model's popularity is increasing and pluralism is not any longer a threat to case study's validity. (Piekkari and Welch, 2011, p. 3-5)

The role of theory is often emphasized within case study researchers. It has been considered the part that justifies the topic and brings up the unique configurations. However, in my case the interviews played the main role when matching theory and data. Case studies are seen as more than just a method. also state that

'pattern-matching' the theory with data concludes coherent case propositions in a well done study (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, p. 29). I followed the Finnish visual art scene for a longer period to build a basis before delving deeper into theory. Thus the interview data was collected in a short timeframe. I focused on the three cases managed through six semi-structured interviews.

Based on Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) it is important to combine both reading and writing at the early stage. They warn about waiting for too long with the actual analysis and state that "qualitative writing is a form of inquiry". Their opinion is to write about the empirical materials whilst also reading theory: "as you write, you will also explore and refine your perspective, thoughts and ideas" (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, p. 286-287). They are supportive of taking a break and leaving the thesis to rest for a while. I had a need of observing the topic over a longer time period and forming the overall picture before beginning with the writing process. Although Eriksson and Kovalainen state that editing and rewriting are essential parts of the process, I needed strong interview data before completing the theory. Especially this specification by Eisenhardt and Graebner's was helpful:

"More significantly, it is critical to invest in developing well-crafted tables, appendixes, and visual aids to demonstrate the theory's underlying empirical support and the anticipated richness of the case data, and to tie those tables clearly to the text. " (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, p. 29)

The research question will lead the way, it is a basis for the work and its meaning can not be argued. The question helps to verbalize the choice of methods and theoretical frame. In my working methods the main theme of the thesis was decided at an early stage but it took some time to formulate it entirely. Literature and further reasoning leads the process further and provides more tools for reorganizing the topic. Before starting, the question has to be viewed carefully, is it researchable empirically? Not forgetting that the main question also works as a determining factor when choosing the right method. (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, p. 27-29)

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) support the idea that qualitative research is as necessary as quantitative; "when the choice of methodology is based on appropriateness in relation to the research aims." Personally I feel that in the field of art, qualitative research was the style this issue needed to be viewed at. The knowledge of basic philosophical concepts related to the art world helped me to find the right direction in my research. This is inevitably needed to gain understanding. (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, p. 5, 10-11)

Case study research has been judged about its strategy and lack of rigor. I wanted to overcome this, but in the beginning it was challenging to provide a satisfactory amount of theory also aimed in the right direction as the framework felt too fractured. Based on the methodological literature I have read, the background and history of case study stands out from the current way of conducting a case research. One view Yin (2009) brings up is the scientific generalization and lack of it. Especially that this methodical generalization had to be built from pieces, a wholeness that did not exist. Yin also reports a question as to whether if the amount of experiments are enough to provide a sufficient number of concepts and theory. He states that "good case studies are still difficult to do." Yin added that "the case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence—documents, artifacts, interviews and observations—beyond what might be available in a conventional historical study." (Yin, 2009, p. 11, 14-16)

Generally speaking, I find it necessary to describe the basic practices in the co-operation methods and all the steps that are part of the identification process. I was enthusiastic to discover if there is an operational model that brings art mediators and operators from varied backgrounds and organizations to work the same way. With that in mind, I rearranged my question to meet the empirical requirements.

3.2 Data collection

In this thesis I examine whether there are mutual working habits among young artists on the exhibition planning and mounting, or does it vary depending on the mediator's skills and the artist's own readiness and information of the field and its practices. For this, my choice was to use the semi-structured interviews as I found it most suitable for my thesis.

The key point was to tackle the issue of working habits and communication. In order to achieve this, I kept strictly to the topic by interviewing only the artists and mediators. I excluded other participants in the art world as that data could be found from previous documentation in different Finnish and international sources. It was the right choice and as Strauss and Corbin have stated: "professional experience ... can enable the researcher to move into an area more quickly because he or she does not have to spend time gaining familiarity with surroundings or events" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 47).

I scaled my theory and research through Alexander's (2003) cultural diamond presented earlier. It is a model that gives a view the art world and its actors and their interaction channels. This will show the artist's value to the society and their position. A special skill that artists bind together with a professional, e.g. mediator, is explained well in the model. I am not trying to measure the keys to success but the terms presented above fit the main theme of becoming a professional artist there it will be a list worth remembering when analyzing my research data. "Interviews are a highly efficient way to gather rich, empirical data, especially when the phenomenon of interest is highly episodic and infrequent" (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, p. 28).

3.2.1 Case organizations and artists

I chose to examine a wide variety of different individuals who are part of the Finnish visual art field. The case galleries and artists were chosen in pairs. This

was inevitable as the research is about communication in an exact project, the mediator had to know the specific artist and vice versa. To get different perspectives I chose three levels;

- 1) An artist-run gallery Sorbus that has five members who pursue their own practices alongside managing the gallery
- 2) HAM, a gallery that is part of the Helsinki Art Museum and therefore owned by City of Helsinki
- 3) A commercial gallery Helsinki Contemporary that represents both up and coming and more established artists both in Finland and internationally. All of these three levels create a setting that allows comparison; finding both similarities and differences between the parties involved.

In the case of Sorbus gallery, I first chose the gallery and then talked with the group to find out which of their previous exhibitions and artists would be a good match. In the case of the HAM gallery, I decided that I wanted to interview a specific artist and this was also the same case with the Helsinki Contemporary. Within the practice I realized how this factor was surprisingly important to me – I felt the connection with the artist was more important than who the mediator was. All in all, the thesis focuses more on the artist's and their identity, not forgetting the mediators part and also their personal and professional areas of development.

The first sketch of my ideas and suggestions of interviewee's was formed at a very early stage. I struggled with the idea of "a young artist", the definition is related to several factors such as age, level of professionalism, date of graduation etc. The basic thought in the beginning was to interview relatively young artists (under 40 years) who have been working for less than 10 years professionally and maybe also had international experience.

Later on with the process I got fascinated by artists who are just in the phase of breaking through and building their identity, experiencing the art world and

defining their own track. It felt clear that this is the core point where I need to talk to them, not five years after graduating and working as an artist. The breaking point is much richer interaction-wise. After this realization I made a redefinition to my first sketch for interviewee's, followed my aspirations and made a final decision on the people I wanted to interview and the cases.

Also in the first steps the trio I imagined was an artist-run gallery, a commercial gallery and a Finnish culture institute abroad. As I decided not to include an international institution/gallery, the core trio changed. I first had another option for the commercial gallery to use in my research but I could not find a suitable artist exhibiting there. Therefore, as artist Emma Ainala was about to have her show at Helsinki Contemporary, I chose to interview her.

The artistic style was one key point when selecting the artists. The cases chosen are young Finnish talents who work with different methods and materials. Kristina Sedlerova is a sculptor who creates installations and uses mixed media in her work. Emma Ainala paints and creates installations. Karoliina Hellberg paints, does set-design and other visual compositions.

3.2.2 Description of the cases

All of the three cases, the artist & mediator pairs, are presented in this chapter. The cases are presented in the order I conducted the interviews: Sorbus gallery and artist Kristina Sedlerova, Helsinki Art Museum (HAM gallery) and artist Karoliina Hellberg, Helsinki Contemporary and artist Emma Ainala. All of the texts are taken from official sources; websites and Facebook events. In this way the cases are presented with an authentic voice - how the gallery and artist want to present themselves. The reason behind my choice for the cases is presented later.

“Sorbus is a non-profit art space located on Vaasankatu in Helsinki, Finland. Sorbus opened in January 2013 and has since hosted exhibitions, performances, concerts and happenings from different art

fields. Sorbus tries to remain impulsive and adaptable to a variety of exhibition formats. Sorbus is run and curated by a core artist working group: Otto Byström, Henna Hyvärinen, Jonna Karanka, Sakari Tervo and Tuomo Tuovinen.” (Sorbus, 2016)

Within the past four years the gallery has presented several interesting artists in Kallio area and gained recognition outside Finland. In 2015 Kristina Sedlerova exhibited at the gallery.

“Kristina Sedlerova (b.1987) is currently studying in the MFA program of the Academy of Fine Arts Helsinki in the Sculpture department. This spring she is graduating from Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture with an MFA in stage design. Kristina enjoys working both with small- and large scale projects, moving from spacial design to making small-scale kinetic sculptures.” (Sorbus, 2016)

‘SUPERNATURALWOMAN as Kristina Sedlerova: SOLOMENTO o EVERYTHING’ was held at Sorbus 1. – 12. April 2015.

”HAM was opened at the Tennis Palace on 25th September 2015. The Helsinki Art Museum, HAM, looks after an art collection that belongs to the people of Helsinki, which includes over 9,000 works of art. Almost half of these works are on display in parks, streets, offices, health centres, schools and libraries, to brighten up everyone’s day. HAM draws attention to modern art and contemporary art in its exhibitions. HAM Gallery is a HAM exhibition space focusing on showcasing topical and new contemporary art.” (Helsinki Art Museum, 2016)

They also state that The HAM gallery concentrates on showing new Finnish art and up-and-coming artists.

“Karoliina Hellberg (b. 1987 in Porvoo) is an artist who lives in Helsinki. She has a Master’s degree from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts and works primarily with paintings and drawings, though she also presents work as installations. She writes about painting and visual portrayal. Hellberg’s dissertation at the Academy of Fine Arts dealt with the aesthetic ghosts that can manifest themselves in people, sounds, images or places. Such apparitions may be a secret felt between oneself and another, a recollection that determines the present, or a meaning sensed in an object.” (HAM gallery website, read in January 2016)

VILLE by Karoliina Hellberg was held at HAM gallery 16. January – 28. February 2016.

“Helsinki Contemporary focuses on long-term collaborations with emerging and more established artists who take a physical, in-depth approach to their work. Our artistic profile is not restricted to any particular media, but prioritizes visual art of current interest that conducts a dialogue with both the surrounding society and the space in which it is presented. In our collaborations with artists, we accentuate curatorial commitment and the content of the art.

Since 2012, Helsinki Contemporary has carried on the successful work begun by Gallery Kalhama & Piippo Contemporary in 2007.” (Helsinki, Contemporary, 2016)

In addition, the gallery states they offer ‘personalized professional expertise’ and supports their artists’ career long-term.

“Emma Ainala (b. 1989, Helsinki) lives and works in Savonlinna. She graduated from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in 2013. Ainala’s solo exhibitions have been seen for example at Galleria Huuto on Jätkäsaari in 2014, at Hasan & Partners in 2013. Ainala has also taken

part in numerous group exhibitions, the latest being Time that Remains at Helsinki Contemporary and Kunsthalle Helsinki's Young Artists 2013 exhibition.” (Helsinki Contemporary's website, read in April 2016)

Emma Ainala's 'SENSUAL WORLD' was held at Helsinki Contemporary from 8.–30. April 2016.

3.2.3 Interviews

In the introduction Yin (2009) presents an appropriate way of conducting the research questions. To get the most out of the topic and interviewees he proposes of using certain types of questions: “a basic categorization scheme for the types of questions is the familiar series: “who”, “what”, “where”, “how” and “why” questions.” He warns about using “what” questions too much as in his words: “in contrast, “how” and “why” questions are more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of case studies, histories, and experiments as the preferred research methods.” (Yin, 2009, p. 9)

Strauss and Corbin (2008) have also shaped questioning types that are convenient when working on a qualitative study. These four types give the researcher help in analyzing the data. They also have an assumption that the question types change during the research phase, starting with open ended, more free types of questions and ending with more developed and focused ones. The four types are sensitizing, theoretical, practical and guiding questions. (Strauss and Corbin, 2008, p. 69) When planning my interview template, I paid attention to Yin's (2009) way presented in the previous chapter. For the artists I ended up having four “what”, two “how” and three “describe/define” questions. For the mediators I had also four “what” questions, then three “how” and two “describe/define” questions.

I did not use questions of a practical nature. Based on classification used questions by Strauss and Corbin those “provide direction for the theoretical sampling”

(Strauss and Corbin, 2008, p. 72). The questions I asked were both explanatory and theoretical. They helped me shaped the process of mounting an exhibition for an artist and understanding the visual art field with its participants. Such as “how would you describe the interaction between you and the artists/gallery?” - asking this to both the artist and the curator, I was able to frame the relationship between the two parties and see the same practice from both sides. In addition, I also took advantage of having marked down guiding questions to support myself. I aimed at keeping the interview template simple.

All of the six interviews were completed during the spring of 2016 in Helsinki, Finland. In all of the cases I chose the gallery first and then talked with them to find a suitable artist to pair up with. I had some ideas, especially about the HAM gallery and Helsinki Contemporary and suggested these to the mediators. After conducting the first interview with Sorbus’ Sedlerova (10 months after her exhibition) I realized that the shorter the time period after the exhibition has ended, the more precise and fuller answers I would get. Therefore, it was brilliant that both in Hellberg and Ainala’s exhibitions had finished just shortly before the interviews took place. In Hellberg’s case I interviewed her just 11 days after her show finished and Ainala’s case 21 days after the exhibition had ended.

To be fully prepared, I carefully selected the right questions, sent them to the interviewees in advance and agreed a location for each interview where they would feel comfortable. I also asked for permission to record the interviews as part of my research material and all of the interviewees agreed to appear in this thesis with their own names. I had nine questions that were partly the same for artists and the mediators. (Interview guides can be found from appendix 1). It was an advantage that I had followed the visual art scene quite closely for the past two years before conducting the interviews. As I was aware of the field, it helped me to formulate the issue I needed to tackle and based on that I designed the questions.

The first six questions were identical for both parties and the rest were formulated with either the artist or mediator in my minds. In the first part I was asking both to describe the main stages of the exhibition process on a timeline, what happened

before the exhibition opening, during it and afterwards. Then I asked if the artist and mediators had goals for their personal work or in the exhibition process and checked were those targets communicated with all the parties. What was very important was asking about the practical work and interaction. Also if there were some challenges in the exhibition process and talking more about interaction skills and expectations towards the other party.

In the case of the artists, the four last questions left were modified so I could get more precise information about their artistic identity and networks. I asked about their artistic aim and ways of working. I presented the question about networks and their usage, both artist's own and the gallery's networks. The last request was to think about the value working with this specific gallery brought to the artist.

In the case of the galleries the four last questions were associated with the theme of interaction and practices. I asked more about the information text that is written for each exhibition and the process of how all the text is produced and press pictures chosen. Then next I asked about the gallery's' profile; what tools they have to build a profile and how the artistic program is lead.

All in all, the interview guide worked as a good set. It was possible to rearrange questions during the interview and after the first interview sharpen the tools for later meetings. I was able to collect a whole lot of information to use later on. Already within the interview situations, certain themes evolved and I started to form my idea for the thesis structure.

Table 3. Interview schedule

Interviewee	Place & time	Length
Sorbus gallery (Henna Hyvärinen, Sakari Tervo, Tuomo Tuovinen)	17.2.2016, Helsinki	1 h 36 min
Artist Kristina Sedlerova	26.2.2016, Helsinki	1 h 08 min
HAM gallery (Jari Björklöv)	3.3.2016, Helsinki	1 h 01 min
Artist Karoliina Hellberg	10.3.2016, Helsinki	1 h 03 min
Artist Emma Ainala	21.5.2016, Helsinki	0 h 48 min
Helsinki Contemporary (Mikaela Lstedt)	31.5.2016, Helsinki	0h 44 min

3.3 Data analysis

I finished the transcriptions during summer 2016. Three themes followed up from interviews: 1) Practical skills in the exhibition process (for both the artists and the mediator), 2) Networking and its need in the larger scale, 3) Personal development of the emerging artists. I am presenting the outcomes later in the analysis.

It is not possible to start a research process without an issue and where to seek an answer. Through the data I searched for the source of artisthood. That will lead the way until the final stages of writing. Strauss and Corbin remind that “it helps researchers when they are blocked and having difficulty getting started with their

analysis” (Strauss and Corbin, 2008, p. 69). They also also talk about major points of microanalysis reminding the reader that it is a very focused technique. It supports the interviewer to focus on certain tones in the discussion, taking into account interviewee’s interpretations. In microanalysis many questions are asked from the interviewee. (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 65-66) I came to think this style did not fit my research completely but I found elements of it very useful. The foundation for building a theory – themes and classification, will create relevant data also with a more limited and compact style.

3.4 Critical reflections on the research process

As I started the whole data collection at an early stage in 2014, reading generally about the topic, first related to art agencies and business models. Also I was interested in the curatorial models and if I could find out how curators work, what is their connection to the artist and how is the relationship built. I was not able to find solutions before starting with this thesis. I was eager to find out, what functions as a resource and motivation for the curator. Is it more the art than the artist and how the artist feels in the situation, also to see that in what kind of a light the artist sees a mediator in an exhibition process (network, friend, colleague, facilitator) and if the relationship is close or distant.

I have been interested in the subject and previous research covering the larger theme of professional identity and emerging artists. From that I found different data sources of the general features in the art world in and specifically the Finnish art world and its regularities. There was a good amount of material explaining curator’s work and role in the art world and also supporting researches to create an image how artists become professionals. Still I found no research on the topic of artist and a mediator working together or clearly tied to the exhibition process. Managing the research was challenging because studies were restricted and there was no prior data to cover the main topic of my work, the communication.

I first had doubts of choosing only Helsinki-based galleries but then realized there is the same setting in each big city in Finland and the sampling could be from any place. Though of course the number of commercial galleries are different as Helsinki is a far more metropolitan area than elsewhere in Finland. Still I did not see it as an issue and chose to continue with these cases.

Within this research distinguishing emerging artists from the professionals helped narrowing down the artist choices. I wanted to create a typical view through cases that were similar enough (the artist's position) in different environments (different galleries.) This creates a suitable setting to investigate the topic widely enough, not bouncing from one topic to another. "We need to think about how the case(s) we are studying might be typical or atypical in relevant respects – or, indeed, of what population it (or they) could be typical" (Gomm et al., 2000, p. 105).

My wish to create interview circumstances that were reliable and relaxed succeeded. I let the interviewees choose the place where to meet and talk. After a constructive interview situation and creating the connection, it was easy to ask permission to use the interview data and got the permission to discuss the results with the interviewee's own names.

Reliability in the data consists of various classical and exclusive data sources topped up with recent research and social viewpoints. This research could not have been created in a one-sided manner, e.g. only interviewing the artists or mediators. Opinions from both sides were needed to generate a successful and rich research and were important in triangulating the data.

In an ideal situation, I would have enjoyed observing the situation a little longer. To be part of an exhibition process from the starting point; setting the dates, working with new pieces of art, talking with the curator etc. I also could have also conducted more background interviews, but decided it was better to have clear cases and interview pairs. This provided enough data to comparing the results.

When hesitating, I kept in mind the points of need for this research from many sides; “analysts have to follow their instincts about what seems important in data and take off from there. There is no right or wrong about analysis.” (Strauss and Corbin, 2008, p. 71) In a qualitative research there are several analytic strategies. Strauss and Corbin highlights two – asking questions and making comparisons. My topic offers a perfect platform for comparison the data (Strauss and Corbin, 2008, p. 68).

4 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this chapter I will describe my analysis of the cases presented in chapter three. The analysis is based on the data that I have described in the previous chapter. I have identified three themes in the emerging artists’ identification phase: 1) Getting familiar with the art world; learning practices and communication in an exhibition process, 2) Networking; recognizing peers and audiences, validating your position in the art world, 3) Points of personal development, aims and embedding yourself in to the art world. A mediator is strongly present within these three phases. For example, they hold a noticeable role in making artists known to the public, simplifying the access to agents and associations, helping with sales, approach to gatekeepers, widening the networks and acting as a supportive personnel preparing the way for artists to access several opportunities in domestic or international markets.

4.1 Exhibition as a process: practices and communication

The structure of the visual art field can be viewed through “Taxonomy of artists’ support structure”, six dimensions provided by Jackson et al. (2003, p.8). All of these different measurements in the artistic work are featured in the exhibition process: validation, demand and markets, material support, training and professional development, communities and networks & information.

4.1.1 Application process and work proposals

Sedlerova had no preconceived idea of a complete plan of an exhibition when she contacted the Sorbus gallery. She knew the gallery normally invites people, but she relied on her own activity and approached the gallery first. The Sorbus group confirms that there is not only one way in which the first contacts happen. Still, in this situation it was not the most typical way that the artist offered co-operation. In most cases, the gallery knows what the exhibition content and theme will be, as the artist has prepared a preliminary plan of the exhibition. The artist comments about Sorbus that “they were very flexible about what I was going to show there because I did not have any plan.” (Sedlerova, 2016)

In the Sorbus gallery there are no clear steps in how an exhibition is chosen for the program. Usually a member of the group has a suggestion that is taken to others. They admit that overall it is difficult to locate the moment of approval but in each case they could separately do it. They do not nominate someone particular to be in charge of an exhibition but in terms of the practicalities it is mostly two or three persons in charge per project

Hellberg highlights the meaning of the application process. In the beginning of 2015 it was clear that she would graduate next spring and that meant applying for possible exhibitions. In that stage it was already clear that Kluuvin galleria was changing and moving to Tennispalatsi. In her words she would have applied anyway, whether it was Kluuvi or the new HAM gallery.

“The Kluuvi gallery is a so-called rite for graduating artists, you apply an exhibition there already when finalizing your studies. During the process I got to know that the time applied for would be in the new space. It was not an issue for me, but seemed positive.” (Hellberg, 2016)

Björklöv from the HAM gallery confirms that the most important thing for them is that the application process is free and open. Hellberg was one of the applicants like everyone else, there was no invitations sent.

“When Karoliina [Hellberg] applied, it was the first season at HAM. We received 300 applications that is a lot. It is just a small percentage that gets the exhibition slot. Myself and two other curators and two collection assistants looked through the applications and made proposals for the museum director.” (Björklöv, 2016)

In Björklöv’s words it was a surprise to him that Hellberg had applied for a slot at the HAM gallery. He verifies that they had seen her work before, as the curator group is very active in the art field and visit a large number of exhibitions. In addition to a well-made interesting application, the information and knowledge gained in advance also counts when choosing the artists.

“In fact we are so in time when making the choices from HAM gallery exhibition slots that we do not take into account our main exhibitions in the museum program. It shall not alter the choices we make. This gallery must be free from any other and not restricted.” (Björklöv, 2016)

Björklöv says they have not had the need to interfere with the application process, as the level of applicants has been very satisfying. Previously in Kluuvi times they had an informal, free form application but now they use a special form so that the examination of submissions is easier. He admits that sometimes the artist’s proposal could mean a lot if the curators or the museum director are not familiar with the applying artist. Then carefully prepared applications can convince the selectors. It is interesting that Björklöv states how in some cases the fact that the decision-makers can ignore and skip the lack and weaknesses in the application if they are familiar with the artist beforehand.

“In our case some kind of a plan needs to be included in the application. But as there is time (in Karoliina’s case about a year) to

the exhibition, the plan can change and artist wants to create and exhibition s/he can stand for. The plans are allowed to change but we have to be informed before the actual exhibition.” (Björklöv, 2016)

In Helsinki Contemporary’s case there is no application as it is a commercial gallery that curates their program in a different way. Lustedt admits that during Ainala’s studies, the gallery was already following her career. Also some of the gallery’s other artists suggested checking Ainala’s work. First she was invited to a group exhibition at Helsinki Contemporary, which took place a year after the Fine Art Academy’s final exhibition ‘Kuvan kevät’. “These three young artists were not represented by us. After this group exhibition in August we decided to invite Emma to be one of our supported artists.” (Lustedt, 2016)

Helsinki Contemporary’s main working group is the artistic stakeholders. Lustedt has worked together with Mika Hannula and Olli Piippo [who now concentrates on his own artistic career] and evaluates the possible emerging artists with whom it is worth to continue and could join the group of artists the gallery represents. Ainala confirms that she knew this group exhibition was a showcase and that it could be a starting point for collaboration with the gallery.

“When my graduation was approaching, they [Helsinki Contemporary] asked me to join this group exhibition. I knew they have a habit of choosing one or two with whom they possibly continue working with. – All in all that group exhibition was first. When some time had passed, they called about the agreement. There was a period of two years.” (Ainala, 2016)

With commercial galleries the exhibition processes are very structured and plans are made far into the future. Lustedt confirms that in the fall of 2014 they had already talked about having Ainala’s exhibition in spring 2016. In this case the artist had a little over a year to prepare the exhibition. Ainala enjoyed the situation: “I had a life situation where I could not finish the exhibition too quickly. It was very nice that they listened to me at the gallery and realized I need time.”

She says agreeing about the exhibition slot was very flexible and comfortable and her need of working time was taken into consideration.

Regarding work proposals Sedlerova said that the Sorbus gallery trusted her a lot. In the first phase she sent the group her portfolio. She had a clear idea to make something big in the gallery and thought of an installation.

”I told about it to Sorbus and step by step I figured it out what I do and when I started to make it and send to Sorbus the photo of my starting point, of what it is going to be, this fake tv-studio, they replied “yeah of course”, so it was very flexible.” (Sedlerova, 2016)

Ainala told me that she started the process and sent themes, some photos of her work and thoughts to the gallery but she had no specific plan or a proposal. She knew that the gallery would expect some specific work [paintings] from her. First when Ainala presented her thoughts of the installation, the gallery questioned if the artist really knew what she was up to and wanted to hear a more precise plan. This created trust as the artist valued this possibility; there was someone else who also viewed the entity and not only her. She felt the process was educational.

”If I would be doing this to some artist-run space or school’s gallery or somewhere else independently so that there would not be anyone one else responsible for what I will show in there I would most likely leave the set-up to the last minute and work feeling-based with it.” (Ainala, 2016)

Hellberg had some meetings with the HAM gallery crew about the upcoming exhibition. In one meeting with 10 participants she felt she had to present and sell the work to staff, at that point she had a couple of name suggestions and she also needed to think between some main pictures.

”I first had talked about the name “NIGHT ROOM”, but suddenly it sounded pretentious and I felt I do not like that. Then I got the idea of “VILLE” and the feedback was something like “have you thought this

till the end” and the HAM crew thought the previous name was better from viewpoint of communication.” (Hellberg, 2016)

The question of choosing an image that represents the exhibition was also challenging as Hellberg had a wish of a portrait painting but Helsinki Art Museum’s other upcoming exhibitions were marketed with portraits so there was a practical reason why an interior image was chosen.

”Discussion may also be interesting to me. I do not want to start it like, "It is me as an artist against rest of the world" or the marketing team. I should not be against the grain just because they are a marketing. Luckily it was avoided completely, and I hope that they did not read me the wrong way.” (Hellberg, 2016)

4.1.2 Marketing and the press

There are varied ways the artist and mediator works together. All of the galleries have their own practices regarding marketing and communication, such as the information text, description of the exhibition. Mika Hannula has developed a working method that is still used at Helsinki Contemporary. After sending an e-mail and talking on the phone the artist and curator have a chat in the form of an interview, either face-to-face or in Ainala’s case via e-mail. It happens during the artist’s working process and the questions are related to the content. Ainala explained that for both of her exhibitions at the Helsinki Contemporary she has first written a stream of thoughts, text in her own language and her own way. Then later the gallery staff have formalized it; “it was like wow, they have been listening to me and some professional puts it to a form where it all sounds very professional”. (Ainala, 2016)

Curator Lustedt confirms this.

“We prepare a talk in interview style between curator and the artist. With Emma this was accomplished via email, during the artists working process we talked about the contents and maybe exactly through this and my questions Emma was able to verbalize what she was doing. From this interview we edit one version that is presented at the exhibition.” (Lustedt, 2016)

Later the gallery produces a video. Ainala told me that she knew the Helsinki Contemporary produced short clips and interviews of the upcoming exhibitions. She wondered if it was also required from her. “I really do not enjoy it, most of the people probably do not enjoy it (talking to the camera) that much, especially of a subject that is so wide. Like telling about your artistic work, because you can explain it so many different ways.” (Ainala, 2016)

Helsinki Contemporary had asked the artist if she would like to contact some people, someone to invite for a possible discussion event or media representative. They also confirmed whether she was ready and willing to talk about her art. Later they also sent some suggestions and wanted to know how Ainala felt about the ideas.

All of the three galleries have very varied ways of promoting their events. Others spent more time and could offer many resources. The Sorbus group confirmed that they are in contact with the artist the most when the press release is being put together. “Everybody in Sorbus list was invited to exhibition so it was already a lot.” (Sedlerova, 2016) Their aim is for all of the members to contribute to the press release text, but it has been mostly Tuovinen and Karanka who usually do the writing. “Answering to questions made by Hyvärinen helped me to open up and formulate the ideas behind my “Solomento o Everything”-exhibition at the Sorbus-gallery” (Sedlerova, 2016).

“Often what exhibitions I have seen in Helsinki; it mostly seems that the artists have written the info text themselves. I have the impression

that it is “a must”, written in a hurry at the same time when the exhibition is built. It leaves a thought that they might not serve as well as they could.” (Tuovinen, 2016)

Tuovinen is not judging the fact that artists write info texts by themselves but ponders that often the releases he has read leaves an impression that the process is seen as a mandatory task [from the artist’s perspective] even it would not be the primary area of their interest.

Sorbus talks about the practice of starting their artist’s statement in the form of an interview. The way of producing it this way started unplanned. Tuovinen also added that it is not a fixed way of proceeding. They do ask each time if the artist would have something prepared that they wish to use and then the option of the interview is offered. Most of the Sorbus artists have chosen to do the interview and Tuovinen adds: “artist can formulate the answers better, they do not need be exhaustive, and the subject can be viewed from different angles” (Tuovinen, 2016). If the interview is executed in Finnish, there is always a short translation and an English summary in the end.

Tervo from Sorbus believes that people have certain preconceptions of how the text should be.

“When you have black on white, things begin to shift intimidating – you read [your text] and realize oh no, I do not want to say this... That is the worst prison, people become anxious, it is chaotic and then only stereotypic nonsense comes out. In the interview formula is linguistically more laid back and colloquialism can be used.” (Tervo, 2016)

Björklöv said that if the artists want, HAM’s communication staff would help to formulate the information text. He feels they have an idea of what the press wants, something simple: “the artist can make it their own, we won’t force or insist to change it to something else” (Björklöv, 2016). He stills adds it is the best if the artist is responsible for the press release as plans and ideas regarding the

exhibition might change, which means that for others it is difficult to know if anything has changed within the exhibition plans.

In the HAM gallery if the artist wants some kind of brochure it is their own responsibility to pay for it, Björklöv explains. They only laminate the press release and the same material is used to inform visitors in the gallery space. Hellberg says she stretched out the expected boundaries.

“I tried to write a text I thought they expected from me. I think I got it wrong, it’s a mistake an artist can do; thinking what other parties want, and they were actually open-minded at HAM. This (ready-made expectations) is something to avoid.” (Hellberg, 2016)

The reason for this work flow was that she spotted some standards in the previous presentations at the HAM gallery and first felt obliged to follow the proposed rules. Later on as it did not feel the right way to proceed, Hellberg changed her approach. She said her main idea was to describe her work and talk about the exhibition in the same style that she used in her final work in the Fine Art Academy; literary and poetic text snippets. For her this was a more pleasing way to express these personal matters.

In the Helsinki Contemporary they organized a pre-opening a day before the actual opening event. Ainala admits that this was one of the most exciting events there, as she had to present the work by herself. Expressing the whole ideas behind the paintings and installations was challenging even though curator Lustedt was there to help her.

Helsinki Contemporary’s staff also asked Ainala, if she was willing to contact some people or if she knew any specific individuals to invite to the exhibition and if she is willing to be part of a discussion event. Ainala says she appreciates the way the gallery managed it, asking who she would suggest and if there were any particular press or media representative that she liked and checked if the plans were fine with her: “they truly checked my feelings about their suggestions.” (Ainala, 2016)

For special visibility and in attracting a greater audience, the Helsinki Contemporary had invited bloggers to an event that the artist described very relaxing, sort of a 'pajama-party' type of an event.

“It was fun. I think it is always appreciated that like-minded people are being brought together that or somehow interested. It’s not that easy to do it yourself.” (Ainala, 2016)

The Sorbus gallery has had a tradition with hosting specific events, mostly at the end of the exhibition as sort of closure. It is a pleasant and a fun way to bring discussion in the exhibition, also a way to include the artist more. The artists can choose to be the moderator of “Art coffee time” by themselves or the gallery might bring up some suggestions.

Sedlerova articulates it as follows:

“Sometimes in Sorbus gallery they host “Sorbus Coffee artist talk” and I was asked if I want to have one? I saw it was a really good idea and proposed “Artist juice talk” name in the case of my exhibition. As a moderator of the talk, Tuovinen invited Kimmo Modig who brought new points of view to my work.” (Sedlerova, 2016)

Besides this special event she was only once present at the exhibition after it opened. That was the last day when she was in charge of watching the exhibition.

Hellberg was not present at the gallery that much during her exhibition. The HAM staff organized the invigilation of the exhibition. Hellberg explains that she used the backroom as a storage space and sometimes presented her works to a friend. She mostly went to the HAM gallery if there was a specific reason to visit: “during the mounting phase I expressed my interest to be part of some 'artist talk' at HAM. Then they had one on Valentine’s day and I was asked to join. That was a very nice experience.” (Hellberg, 2016)

It was agreed that the Helsinki Art Museum provides the space but everything to do with the mounting [hanging paintings etc.] and demolition after the exhibition

is over, is in the artist's responsibility. Therefore, Hellberg took care that the space was in the same condition as it was handed over to her.

The HAM gallery's Björklöv admits there is not really time for a feedback discussion as the next exhibition is always around the corner and he has other duties too. "It is understandable as we are not a commercial gallery, we are not representing the artists in our "roster" ... the artist will seek new galleries and possibilities and the next exhibition is held somewhere else." (Björklöv, 2016) He says they represent upcoming new talents so it is unlikely that they would work again with the same artist. They had a feedback form during Kluuvi gallery times. The artist could fill out the questionnaire anonymously after the exhibition but at the time of the interview he says this has not been done at HAM yet. The survey results are mostly for internal use, and its purpose is to help the HAM gallery and its upcoming artists.

Sedlerova told me that that after she finished her exhibition in Sorbus, everything was easygoing, she demolished the exhibition herself and both sides were happy with it. The Sorbus gallery asked if they could buy a small artwork now" – a tiny part of an installation and Sedlerova was pleased to give it to them as a present. The Sorbus gallery doesn't have an established method on what happens after the exhibition is taken down.

Ainala had a very different experience. She explained how the works were taken down by the Helsinki Contemporary crew and she did not have to be present – the tapestry had already been scratched off and all the works were packed. The crew was also responsible of transporting the works to buyers. Ainala was pleased, the deinstalling process was very simple for her.

"I did not have to do anything like that, to use my work time for those kind of things. Bargaining of the price and all went through them [the gallery]. Of course some people contacted me directly because they did not know it's the gallery who sells the work, I just told them to send e-mail to Mikaela [Lustedt]." (Ainala, 2016)

Lostedt adds that after the exhibition they were glad to offer assistance to the artist regarding ideas, new works and supporting with practical issues regarding upcoming things. In Ainala's case the solo show at Mikkeli Art Museum. She mentions that at Helsinki Contemporary they have a two to three-year cycle with artists, the next solo show is not planned right after the previous and is always dependent on the artist's own calendar: "we have a purpose to agree it so that the artist has at least one year to prepare it." (Lostedt, 2016)

4.1.3 Skills and challenges in the communication

Part of the Sorbus gallery's exhibitions are based on personal relationships says Tervo. Often one of the group members knows the potential artist in advance but sometimes they only know the person by name through mutual contacts. This is supported by Tuovinen: "when the connection is horizontal, there is a chance for a potential friendship." He also confirms there is no need to deliberately keep the connection distant. In Tuovinen's opinion it's an advantage that they themselves are artists and know what artistic work is: "when we have mutual understanding, it hopefully improves the whole process. Then everyone has better conditions to do their job well." (Tuovinen, 2016)

Sedlerova explains why she chose this gallery in particular. "For me it was very important that it is artist-run and they are young and as I knew some of Sorbus people already from the Fine Art Academy, it made it easier to approach the gallery." (Sedlerova, 2016)

Regarding communication skills to be learned (for the future mediator), in Lostedt's opinion it would be best if discussion would arise through questioning. She talks mainly about being brave and to "have the guts" to ask about the contents in an early stage from the artists and as a curator not be afraid of foolish questions; "I often become an observer; taking plenty of notes and so on, thinking how I can process some text of this." (Lostedt, 2016)

She also talks about supporting Ainala in keeping “her own voice” when she hesitated in answering the Helsinki Contemporary’s preliminary questions in spoken word. Lostedt reassured Ainala that they would edit the text but keep her own nuance in the language. ”There is no way we would expect at that stage that the artist could produce analytic text. Though some artists do it.” (Lostedt, 2016)

Björklöv’s wish is to create direct communication without forgetting the importance of feedback. He emphasizes a lot in preventing stressful situations – though finds it essential to criticize if needed and express hesitation. When asking about the skills a curator might wish they had during the process, Björklöv focused of expressing on the gallery’s aspect: “we must try our all, if there is some antipathy [from the gallery’s side], those can not appear, we have to take care of our side”. (Björklöv, 2016) More on the personal side he is concerned of not getting over the fact that you are representing an institution [the HAM gallery]. Björklöv’s modest wish is “to be a human to a human”. He sees this extremely important especially with young artists.

Tuovinen of the Sorbus group state that communication skills are something that one learns. Hyvärinen agrees that it means being present. They have encountered two kinds of people, some question more how something might function and others have a clear view on their work processes. Regarding the communication skills, Tervo suggests they should form a new habit: “a deinstalling dinner”. In Hyvärinen’s opinion the moment when she has the most time with the artist has sometimes been right after the exhibition. (Sorbus, 2016)

*“I hope I would have had more time to talk with them [the artists], what did they think, did they do things as they wanted and how was the feedback. All in all, to discuss about it [the exhibition].”
(Hyvärinen, 2016)*

4.1.4 Goal-setting and building trust

Hellberg told me that she felt the ambience of a debut exhibition and also had her own goals; creating a functional first solo exhibition. The HAM gallery did not set any rules or requirements regarding the contents but gave her room to create an exhibition which she could feel was her “own”.

“Jari [Björklöv] said that they trust in me, as they have already made the choice that these artists do as they see is the best. The gallery was supportive. – The discussion remained very depressurized – they understood that the situation lives”. (Hellberg, 2016).

Björklöv from the HAM gallery confirms that as they are not commercial, they are not interested in the sales: “we can actually take exhibitions here that are not sale-oriented.” If they need to choose from two options they often rather take more complex exhibitions than the ones that you could result in commercial success. They are proud of the concept; the HAM gallery being part of the museum and visitors can at the same time experience a big exhibition from Ai Wei-Wei and then the gallery side for something completely different. Still he admits that there is no written goals (regarding visitors or media coverage) and they have not talked about exposure in the media. The visitor goals are for the whole Helsinki Art Museum but Björklöv says they still count the people that only go to the free part (HAM gallery).

“We are delighted if there (in HAM gallery) is a thing that attracts audience. – We hope that HAM gallery’s exhibition gets some coverage, we have already now noticed its hard in this museum concept and these (smaller exhibition) can be lost/drown in the whole museum complex.” (Björklöv, 2016)

Hellberg admits she did not even think of the number of visitors. She knew it is hard to count the ones who only visit the free gallery part. She also acknowledged that there would already be a lot of visitors in the whole museum.

“I had inner pressure and expectations. I felt I did not even have time or I did not want to think about if I can sell anything. I thought not so much as the profile leans towards a museum; many might assume it’s a small museum exhibition. People do not attend with an aim to buy art.” (Hellberg, 2016)

Hellberg’s exhibition was a success and she sold almost everything that was exhibited. Björklöv admits that sales-success in a place like the HAM gallery can cause trouble for the artist on a practical level. After the exhibition was over, Hellberg had to organize all the details and agree the transport of the artwork with buyers herself.

Sedlerova says they did not talk about the goals with the Sorbus gallery. Her personal primary aim with the exhibition was to explore the world and question what is behind “black or white” thinking. The Sorbus gallery pays attention to the point that they only work with artist with whom they can trust. They had no visitor goals for the number of goals for the number of visitors, but in terms of visibility and artistic content, it was clear their job as a mediator is to support the artist.

“We do whatever we can in that the artist is able to prepare the exhibition as well as they want to, has space and peace. Our task is to shape the artists’ thoughts of the exhibition to a press release, that is a big part of what we do for the exhibition”. (Tuovinen, 2016).

Tervo adds it’s not only about giving the artist peaceful working time but acting as an assistant; painting walls, setting up the projector and all kinds of practical work. Hyvärinen follows these thoughts about an artist’s own time:

“When we started creating the exhibition text in the form of an interviews, there was a discussion that when artist builds the exhibition, they do not have to create the text at the same time. Artists can focus on the exhibition and we do whatever might be needed for each occasion.” (Hyvärinen, 2016)

In Tuovinen's opinion it is a benefit that core members of Sorbus are artists themselves, they understand what the work means. "When there is consensus of the situation, it hopefully improves the whole process. Then everyone is in a better placed to do their job well." (Tuovinen, 2016)

Sorbus says that their goal is for artists to feel satisfied with creating an exhibition that they are pleased with and all of the general issues go well. They also aim at having common understanding what is actually happening during and after mounting the exhibition. Sorbus also wants to be present and listen to the artist, what thoughts they have and if they need to talk with anybody.

Ainala is aware that the Helsinki Contemporary's staff aim to achieve a greater visibility for the exhibition and to try to reach the right target audience. She said that the concrete goals, such as visitor numbers, were not discussed with the gallery. "They did not prune or disqualify any of my work and there were no demands." (Ainala, 2016)

Based on the interview with Helsinki Contemporary, expressing the goals towards the artist seems to be fairly light. But still there are actually many well-prepared goals in the organization. Lostedt has never thought that the artist would have a need to set a goal for the number of visitors. As a commercial gallery they have a yearly budget with a sales target for each exhibition, but as Ainala told me, until now it has not been discussed with the artist.

"We have thought why we are not doing it, but actually it is a thing what we want to do, talk about sales, also who are we contacting and all that. Rather it is good to talk about what we can do to have good sales. It is just not part of the routine that we would discuss the exact budgets in euros with the artist." (Lostedt, 2016)

She continues to say that the visitor numbers are tracked and documented. They have a daily report and the visitor feedback is checked frequently. Still there is no target number of visitors, it is just being monitored.

The situation is very different for a commercial gallery. The Helsinki Contemporary has many services; they offer a specific transport service for its artists, both picking up the artwork from the artist before the exhibition and delivering it to the buyers afterwards. Ainala signed a contract with the gallery and did not feel there were any conditions she would need to negotiate and was pleased with the terms the gallery presented. Her exhibition was mentioned in Helsingin Sanomat, there was a critique and she also got referred to in exhibition suggestions. Ainala says it is justified that Helsinki Contemporary takes 50% of the sale price because of all the indicated reasons.

“Ainala’s final breakthrough seems to have happened now at Helsinki Contemporary’s exhibition. She shows her place as a strong artist with own voice, who stands out from the mainstream of contemporary painting.” (Helsingin Sanomat, 2016)

Lostedt had high hopes that a newspaper might have written a personal interview Ainala about the exhibition. There was a chance that Helsingin Sanomat would do it as they had recently started a series of articles, “Hopes of Culture” [Kulttuurin toivot], related to young rising stars in the art field. Still no story was written and Lostedt questions the reasons why not and wonders if maybe the newspaper’s schedules that did not match with the exhibition. Nevertheless, she is happy that Helsingin Sanomat wrote a nice review of the exhibition. Three months later (21. July, 2016) Helsingin Sanomat published an in-depth interview of Ainala written by Hirvonen. The story focuses on artists’ persona and thoughts and ways of making art, giving credits to her school and teachers, productivity and loneliness.

4.2 Developing the networks of an artist

The significance of networks is central in an artist’s working practice and cannot be argued with. It is clear through my research that different links help the artist to do their work and take them forward. It is necessary that the artist first recognizes

the people who are part of the art world and also with whom their profession is linked. After that they are able to view all the connections can be used and also process the idea of networks further. All of the interviewees in this research found questions about their personal networks difficult, defining the links was not easy for them. Particularly the way those can be used was unclear.

When asking the question, Ainala needed guidance to define her networks. “I have always thought I am a person with no networks and not someone who goes to talk with significant people.” She had a different perspective towards the subject – Ainala thinks about possible benefits for proceeding as an artist and considers networks as something that comes with sociability. Still the benefits of a certain connection are difficult to recognize. Ainala mentions the value of peer connections, Anna Retulainen and Hannaleena Heiska who had an exhibition at Helsinki Contemporary recommended Ainala’s solo show for the curators.

Sedlerova finds other visual artists and their networks very important to her. “I like to see other artists’ work and to be connected and possibly exchange information about materials and techniques”. She also mentions the significance connections she got from her previous school [Aalto University] who were mostly designers. “I would like to grow my network also outside the art scene, to broaden own social bubble but it is actually quite difficult.” (Sedlerova, 2016)

Hellberg praises the school network, meaning The Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki. She divides these links in to different categories: other students (during her time and after), professors, teachers and advisors. Hellberg also mentions the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London where she was as an exchange student and the David Zwirner gallery in London where she completed her internship. Frilander of Helsingin Sanomat (19. January, 2016) is confirming Hellberg’s special networking talents in her article:

“In characterization by colleagues and teachers, in addition to Hellberg’s artistic talents her sincere personality is being highlighted. Many mention parties, letters and flower bouquets. It seems Hellberg

has charmed everyone. This plays a big role in the future for a young artist, as very few people would want to buy works from someone they would not like as a person.” (Helsingin Sanomat, 2016)

All of the case artist's in the case study recognized the networks gained while studying but did not bring into focus how they used these afterwards. They did not mention much about group shows or sharing information of new techniques, applying for grants together, talking about residencies or other such events. It is clear to see that the whole puzzle of art world participants builds up with time, but surely it would be convenient that emerging artists had mentors right after graduation who would be a stable part of their network guiding them through the first professional challenges.

4.3 Personal growth of the artist and the mediator through the collaboration

Both the artist and the mediator face new and surprising situations when working together. The mutual understanding and supportive attitude does not develop by itself. It is needed that both parties are not too afraid of negligence. For example, Lstedt from the Helsinki Contemporary confronted minor challenges with an installation Ainala wanted to execute within her exhibition.

“I was first like “ok yeah”. She had built an example at her studio when I visited there two months before the opening. I thought the installation was fun but seriously I stressed out how it would fit in the gallery space.” (Lstedt, 2016)

Ainala talked about rationalization related to this issue as she really wanted to experience how the installation worked even though she knew that she was questioned. Ainala knows in this exceptional context the gallery needs know about the idea well in advance and it has to be justified in some way.

“I actually thought at that point when I began to discuss it with them, I thought that damn, although it feels risky already to all of a sudden create this installation, I do not want to feel that I am really a young artist and already have a fear of failure and therefore will not follow my ambitions.” (Ainala, 2016)

Situations as presented above, can work as personal development for both parties, giving room to your thoughts, considering the other parts involved, being willing to talk the issues through and not judge anyone’s ideas based on preconceptions. As part of the mediator’s view they have a task to recognize if the artist does not like something or is not pleased. This goes with both the artworks and practical issues in the exhibition mounting period. Björklöv from the HAM gallery wonders how the young artist sees their age difference and hopes the people he works with can relax although in some cases he could be their father. “My goal is to be active and understand what young artists are doing, this has a direct link to success in my own work. Of course the age has an influence in the this even though I do not always think about it.” (Björklöv, 2016)

Actually Björklöv should not be worried about these issues as in most cases the artists appreciate someone who is experienced and knows a lot about the art world. It is a part of mediator’s role to be critical and explore all the possible options and way to implement something. Without this interaction and discussion, the artist will have difficulties to rationalize some of their ideas in the future. Unexpected challenges are the ones that emerging artists will use as learning-experiences.

4.3.1 Artistic aim and recognizing the value of own work

The source and strength to practice the artist’s profession remains challenging to reach. It is possible that it is different for each artist, for some the materials they use can bring great satisfaction and teach them a lot. At other times reaching new audiences refreshes the artistic work and creates new aims for the artist. Also the

interaction and collaboration with a mediator might turn out to be the defining factor of recognizing the value of own work.

Hellberg finds the question of an artistic aim difficult but significant. She highlights the importance of young artist to be able to recognize why they want to exhibit their own art and is also aware of the responsibility that it brings. Her own goal is to get a response from her work. She appreciates dialogue as that sometimes comes in the form of encouragement; “it is not only about selling the work, but to know someone feels it, it has meant something for someone else. The art work has found a way how to be without me.” (Hellberg, 2016)

“I do not have a specific mission that I’d like to show something, verify my particular truth of this world even though, of course, you can see my own life and philosophy there, which could in my case be jointing varied emotional states, joy or lightness and beauty, to some more harsh or scary elements as I find it interesting. ...It would feel pompous to say it is my goal and all the other would understand and see this world the way I see it.” (Hellberg, 2016)

In general, she trusts in the emotions that art can evoke and ponders the complex and mysterious thought of how a picture can create certain emotional states in its viewers: “it feels then, that its legitimate and will bring something to this world and show new sides” (Hellberg, 2016) She was also surprised about the variety and broadness of the audience at her exhibition. Her aim in a nutshell is to reach a wider public from varied ages and bring art closer to people. In short, she wants to be a good artist and create purposeful paintings even though admitting it is a cliché.

Sedlerova’s aim is to raise questions and to explore what possibilities there are, finding other possibilities and accessing intermediate spaces. “I try to work on the universal level also beyond things and phenomena close to me. I often prefer not to tie down themes I approach in my works in any particular time-scale.” Sedlerova

also finds the question of the artistic aim difficult. She wants to think her work is valuable somehow. For her it is important that gallery visitors “get her work”, even though everyone will understand it differently. Sedlerova mentions that she especially appreciates the way that children interact with her work. (Sedlerova, 2016)

According to Ainala, her acts as a human being are not solely tied to what she does as an artist. She senses the safety and feeling of continuity with her work, as there are people that are interested in it. In her words having an exhibition at the Helsinki Contemporary brought her many things, it increased her self-esteem. Also she felt that the way she articulates and talks about her work is understandable and people are interested enough. She also mentions the financial success regarding this specific exhibition.

Certainly the efforts a commercial gallery can use on their artist is greater than in the other cases. The value of Ainala’s work becomes aware to her when understanding that the Helsinki Contemporary and especially Lustedt standing by her side with the future challenges and practical issues with the upcoming solo show at Mikkelin Art Museum. ”We will be supporting Emma, even though there is a curator, often the human resources of museum’s are poor and I assume Emma is happy to have a possibility to talk with us, to reflect her ideas.” (Lustedt, 2016)

Hellberg believes she gained a lot from exhibiting at the HAM gallery. She emphasizes especially the possibility to show her work to a wider audience: “sometimes visitors thought that HAM gallery’s artist had her own “museum exhibition”. This is interesting as it is still a gallery exhibition that happens to be inside a museum. I liked this fun and positive thought.” (Hellberg, 2016) Particularly the fact that the HAM gallery’s exhibitions often get a good press coverage pleased Hellberg. She states that is a very fine and valuable thing for young artists to have.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

A lot of research and reports about visual artists in Finland has been commissioned throughout the years. The themes of these reports are typically focused on the common art world, future of the artistic work, generation of income or revenue models, internationalization of Finnish artists and everyday networking. Some of the reports examine the managerial activities, but from a distinct point of view differing from this research.

The core of this study is the artist's personal development in the form of a professional identity and the impact of a mediator that can not be ignored in this process. The elaboration of an artistic identity is like a trajectory; a sum of different fragments starting from a young age. This research is not revealing any predestined tools occurring in an exhibition process that would support emerging artists to find their professional identity but it does point out objects of development in the collaboration process and beyond it.

Resch (2016, p. 57) presents a figure "Progress of an artist from art school to stardom" including three stages in the artist's career: the shopping phase, decision phase, and the final phase. Within these three stages, depending on what kind of work opportunities they get, plus, the amount of recognition and collaboration with a mediator, the artist will land on five different roles: superstars, mature/successful artists, local shop artists, vanity artists and poor dogs. This is a rather direct distinction and gives room for a thought about what lies underneath these profile descriptions.

As mentioned earlier, artistic identity has already been studied in Finland – primarily in respect of how it is shaped – but not from the perspective of cooperation with a mediator or, at least not through the process of mounting an exhibition. Similarly, a vast amount of the research deals with all Finnish artists, not a certain age group or point of artistic career.

Herranen et al. (2013, p. 60) have shaped two themes that form an artist's professional role and skills for the future. Firstly, there is the specific knowledge and skills of artishood. In addition to this, different abilities and techniques support an artist's integration into the art world. The second theme Herranen et al. talks about is the artist's "handprint" – the identity, work ethics and self-confidence – the tools that are widely viewed as the artist's intellectual property.

The role of a mediator has not been visible enough in previous research. Furthermore, the studies do not extend to looking into the levels of interaction between the two parties. Without mediators' contribution and resources, it is not simple for an emerging artist to function in the art world, as elements of growing as a person and the discovery of artistic expression and identity forms a strong union and needs encouragement.

There is a lack of practical measures in the existing research. Former studies revealed that Finnish visual artists are not seen as equal partners with the mediators. It is possible that this appears in some cases, but there is an apparent distinction between the participants. Nonetheless, mediators do have an essential role in helping artists in adapting to the art world as individuals, and the roles of art galleries matter too.

5.1 Interaction, skills and communication methods

The artists interviewed in this research expressed a curious attitude to their future. Rensujeff (2010, p. 73) has stated how the professionalism, wide networks and strong identity make artistic work more enjoyable. This requires effective communication and interaction with participants in the art world. In most of the cases artists learn this at a very young age when 'the calling' is acknowledged and the personal life task of becoming an artist has begun.

The mediator's role is tied to the process in all the different phases, as presented previously by Sjöberg (2010, p. 33). By using a 100 percent scaling I have defined the value chain levels of each case gallery. A combination of both parties'

responsibilities in the scale are solely based on my interpretation and interview material. While the practical work and implementations in the process were rather apparent to detect, the general challenge in interpreting the cases was defining the encouraging environment as it is not as easily measurable as the other parts. This is explained in more detail in the following table.

Table 4. Visual art’s value chain in examined cases

Theme	Emma Ainala	Helsinki Contemporary	Karoliina Hellberg	HAM gallery	Kristina Sedlerova	Sorbus gallery
Production	20 %	80 %	70 %	30 %	90 %	10 %
Mediation/Distribution	0 %	100 %	100 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Public relations	10 %	90 %	10 %	90 %	10 %	90 %

Looking at the cases and evaluating the effect of a gallery I found common factors but also exceptions. For example, with the Sorbus gallery there is no clear distribution point or need and traditions for it. In the HAM gallery there is no sense of a pressure of sales but with Hellberg’s exhibition it was proven that a sales success can also happen in the museum environment. The only part where all the cases worked identically was public relations.

All of the three goals of galleries presented by Resch (2016, p. 54-56) were instead clear to measure. His tripartite model presents economic, artistic and socio/ethical roles. All of these appeared in different levels. Especially in the case of Sorbus, demands in convincing the gallery’s artistic standards go hand in hand with its reference group’s approval. The credibility gained through an immersive program is an evident point in their success. With the Helsinki Contemporary, traditions lead the gallery to economic success which is also in balance with their artistic standards.

Strong socio/ethical views were detectable with all of the galleries. The study reveals mediators invested in personal interaction when working together with the artist. Although the quantity varied between cases, there was continuous personal contact with the artist. An encouraging environment is all about the communication and its level between the mediator and the artist. However, estimating the levels and indicating this in percentage terms was impossible. Still what appears to be clear is that mutual trust and liability are required in order for a supportive environment to materialize.

A typical finding in the study was that experiences on a personal level create a sense of reality that teaches the artist. It is true that some proficiency arises from the general communication in the exhibition process but the interaction with a mediator did not offer clear tools and skills for the case artists. The common interaction, that builds trust between the two parties and offers networks and other functions, can outline the artist's professional path and provides the basis for their career. The beginning of this relationship has a great impact on the artist's future and creates the background for fluent decision making.

Capabilities mentioned by Herranen et al. (2013), state details that help artists practice their profession independently as a professional. The researched artists found a few interesting points in the artistic work. Constrictive criticism, internship as an assistant to an artist, practical paperwork and self-confidence are some of the leading parts. In addition, obtaining the image of an artist's everyday life and its functions played an important role. Having the opportunity to test and try out different tasks, that are essential parts of working as a professional artist, such as exhibitions and making own independent work as a student, were also seen as beneficial features. (Herranen et al., 2013, p. 61)

5.2 Identity and personal growth of an artist

Visual artists work as their own directors; the study shows that emerging artists are encountering a situation where they have unlimited trust in their skills and the

feeling that they are controlling the setting. It is not necessarily the moment of achieving something that will push their career forward artistically, but rather an occasion where they know what they want and what they are capable of doing. Herranen et al. (2013) has generated a summary which clarifies the setting of artisthood. Firstly, it consists of the artistic vision and the professional identity. Secondly, a noteworthy part are the practices and policies in the art world, plus, their knowledge of contemporary art. The results show that this subject has to be investigated properly. In particular, the first two points bind the themes of this thesis together and gives meaning to further research. (Herranen et al., 2013, p. 132-134)

When discussing about the above-mentioned research results, the key discovery was that the case artist's had recognized a single pivotal moment. It is significant all three had a different type of a setting that took them forward in finding the status of a professional. Karoliina Hellberg's moment was when she had a discussion about the name of her. She wanted to name the exhibition "VILLE" over some previous ideas and felt that HAM gallery persuaded her to choose a different name. Her feelings of knowing what she wanted were clear; she strongly believed her own idea was the best even though the HAM gallery staff did not agree with her in the beginning.

Emma Ainala had challenges in formulating her own know-how and professionalism verbally, even though she must know her work well. She expressed that usually it is a sensitive moment to talk about fresh work. Ainala's identification moment was to find strength to analyze her own work publicly, presenting it in the marketing video, interview and in a special event to stakeholders. Meetings with the curator and active communication before the exhibition formed a strong trust factor, and Ainala felt that open discussion, expressing all the emotions from hesitation to certainty from the beginning, is the path to mutual trust. The feeling of mutual respect that leads to the freedom of artistic work.

Before her fine art studies, Kristina Sedlerova had already noticed the meaning of diverse networks, such as staying connected, exchanging information about

techniques and materials, with designers from Aalto University where she used to study and with professionals from various fields. The networks are surely limited if the artists do not expand them by themselves. Sedlerova had thoughts of inviting builders to her exhibition and then exchanging information on materials and techniques.

For Sedlerova, curiosity leads the way in networking. She creates links between different factors and makers when looking for new information. Her personal interest in quantum physics led her to ask two professors [unknown to her in advance] to join her for a talk at the gallery. Though they could not make it, the interest remained. Sedlerova's identification moment was when she saw herself as part of the art world, combining intriguing components with her artistic practice. Having observed this, it can be said that finding the source of power for self-confidence appears when visual artists step out of their comfort zones. The route of professional development requires critique and obstacles to overcome.

5.3 Effect of networks and role of the mediator

It is interesting to think where the idea of the artist as 'a pusher' comes from that having networks and using them sometime evokes. Most likely it is connected to the myth of a suffering artist. The Executive Director of Distribution Centre for Finnish Media Art (AV-arkki) said in Yleisradio's interview (16. December, 2013) that internationality and personal networks are an obvious part of the art world among Finnish young artists. Based on my research this is not evident; the networks are built slowly and reactions related to these systems is sensitive.

Pusher manners are seen in a negative light in the art scene. Attitudes towards someone's success or remarkable networking skills are generally linked to being a 'social climber'. Based on Røyseng et al. (2007, p. 11), young artists do not systematically aim at creating and maintain strategic efforts regarding networking. Emerging artists somewhat try not to appear eager and stick to narrow limits with their efforts although they particularly need to make themselves visible.

My results can be partly generalized to other art forms. Thus, in the Finnish art world, practices are not as established as with music (classical, mainstream) or performing arts (i.e. dance). Young musicians can gain success quickly. Still with managerial support or without, they might end up being just a shooting star. This way of building a career is not favored among visual artists. Also when looking at the field of sports, athletes often have a manager and sponsors from a young age; they are noticed at a very early stage. The same moment of spotting the talent can happen with Finnish artists too, but it does not offer the support group to begin with or security of future success.

The artist and the mediator work together; this becomes apparent in the data analysis. Hence, the position of a mediator in the process is still complex – they are both gatekeepers and supporters. A common approach this study shows is that the mediators treat emerging artists as professionals. Gaps in the collaboration between these parties occur. Young artists have realized that predefined expectations towards the gallery are something to avoid in professional communication. This happens often for emerging artists when they get the first glimpse of professional career. Still it is not obvious if the mediator understands their responsibility; how important it is to express and remind young artists of their artistic freedom as it shapes their self-concept and the future. Mediators may not fully realize this. Hence, loose guidelines can help artists obtain a grasp of basic working methods.

The situations mediators have to understand at an early stage are the ones where artists seem calm and sure but feel insecure. This can manifest as sensitivity and criticism towards finished work. Mediator's proficiency is often needed but not requested. Transparency in the process is required if the mediator wants to commit themselves to the artist and help them develop in their career.

Depending on the artist's own vulnerability, the mediator's own opinions and attitudes might have a big impact and effect the co-operation. There is a risk with assumptions. Common understanding of what is actually happening is a general goal for the galleries. The meaning of mutual understanding and supportive attitude rises as the most important factor in a mediator's work.

There are many styles of leadership in the mediator's work in all of the three cases. If observing the definitions by Cray et al. (2007), Helsinki Contemporary was the most participatory leader as the process included several studio visits, interviews and personal talks with the artist. In HAM gallery and Hellberg's case there was some participative moments; phone calls, emails and a bit of a discussion but still it was more transformational leadership especially from the side of the mediator; the relationship turned out to be guiding and healthy.

In the case of Sorbus, the leadership style is not easy to describe by definitions presented by Cray et al. It included parts of several styles but could not be directly labelled with any particular one. The interaction between Sedlerova and the gallery group stayed at a minimal level, but still it appeared extremely reliable. The communications and additional events at the gallery were produced together. The background of the Sorbus gallery's crew being artists themselves makes it natural for them to understand the challenges with transactional leadership; if artistic freedom is being challenged or not. Generally speaking and from the viewpoint of an emerging artist it was positive that there were no charismatic leaders in any the cases. If a controlling curator takes the lead, it can cast a shadow over young artist's progress

5.4 Current state of the case artists' professional development

In the beginning of February 2017 I assessed the current state and artistic position of all the three artists I had interviewed. I asked them to list steps and events that happened after our meetings in 2016 that were relevant to their career development. I aimed at finding out what the moments that developed their artistic identity were or if they acquired new skills that helped them to enter the art world as a professional artist.

Emma Ainala brings up the meaning of recognition and exposure that she sees as an optimistic message in the form of grants received and positive critiques. Despite all the rare favorable feedback, insecurity can not be avoided. During the last year

she confronted an exceptional situation of being without a studio for two months and forced to take a break from painting that actually brought new joy and strength to her work. She has also accepted the fact of how writing helps in analyzing and visualizing the whole process and in the end it is just good for her.

Kristina Sedlerova still has a good understanding of the versatility of her networks and utilizing them. She has been working with other artists and has had group exhibitions which opened new doors. She praises the possibilities of sharing responsibilities related to exhibitions and exchanging profession-related information with other artists of the same age.

A lot has happened to Karoliina Hellberg in a year. Professionally she has gained extraordinary possibilities. The first significant event was creating an exhibition for Galerie Anhava that expanded from a half to full space, and was followed by Hellberg joining the group of gallery's representative artists. Secondly she appreciates a recent co-operation with designer Laura Väinölä at the Finnish institute in Stockholm. Third dream come true -event for her was to be invited to create a new cover for Tove Jansson's book Moominpappa at sea.

5.5 Further research

This case study of emerging Finnish visual artists opened doors for other future research in the field. Soft signs are changing attitudes in the art world. Rationalization, fading borders and technical developments are the primary aspects when viewing the future. Artists develop all the time, new people enter the scene bringing their approaches and fresh attitude to the art world.

First, the role of a mediator is not studied enough and the research of collaboration of different art world practitioners seems to be underdeveloped. Not to forget the other assessment – to investigate how emerging artists value mediators' work. This creates new perspectives for research.

Secondly, I would be interested in seeing if the Finnish visual art scene has room for interdisciplinary learning environments supporting the artistic innovation and entrepreneurship. Already based on the previous research and this case study, it is possible to see that education is partly responsible for creating the supportive and preparatory environment, however, there is room for new models.

As a third emphasis, the need to encourage the post-graduates creates a motivating research topic. Providing the support and showing the practices is not only a task for the universities but mediators too. The moment, when an emerging artist is most vulnerable, but also clearly willing to take advices and to create networks, is the moment to catch. Hereby the subject of a relationship between artists and mediators forms a complete new area for future research.

5.6 Closing words

The aim of this research was to look deeper into the process of becoming a professional visual artist and to see what impact working with a mediator has on the artist. With the work I wanted to clarify the communication and understand the meaning of different networks and to discover which kind of tools the artists get and how those can be used in the future, when working as a professional.

It has been stated by many that art is becoming demystified and the reason behind it is the shifting society. From a sociological viewpoint, the Finnish art field is under-investigated. Even when approaching the status of a professional artist, the interviewees in this thesis are still settling to their own places in the art world. While they have understanding of modern and contemporary art, techniques, materials and ethical principles, the general challenge lies in the practices and policies in the ever variable society.

Through this work, I want the reader to examine the well-established practices in the Finnish art world and learn to explore what is behind the artist's work that is displayed in a gallery. I wish the reader will acknowledge the need to support

emerging artist's vision and artistic identity also as a consumer and get to know the conventional art world and its participants as a whole.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

Interview template

Part one – Common questions for all the interviewees

- Describe the main stages of the project exhibition process? Define what happened before the opening, during the exhibition and after it?
- What kind of goals were set? Did you talk about it together with the artist/gallery?
- Could you outline the practical work and communication – did you talk on the phone, write emails, have meetings?
- How would you describe the interaction between you and the artists/gallery? What was the connection and trust level between you two?
- About interaction – is there some skills you wish you had during the process? What did you expect from the other party?

Part two – Targeted questions for the artists

- What is your artistic aim? Do you prefer to use some specific materials or techniques when working and mounting an exhibition? Were these considered at the gallery?
- Describe your personal networks – how do you use and benefit from them?
- How did the networks of the gallery benefit you as an artist?
- What do you think is the value for you having an exhibition at this gallery?

Part three – Targeted questions for the galleries

- Please explain how the info/press text of the artist and the exhibition is formed?
- What kind of tools you (as a mediator) have to build the gallery's own profile?
- What is the artist's value for your own work?
- How do you see the role of the gallery you are representing as a mediator in the art world?

APPENDIX 2

Exhibition texts

Kristina Sedlerova

Näyttelyssään SOLOMENTO o EVERYTHING Kristina Sedrelova pohtii autenttisen ja keinotekoisien keskinäistä suhdetta. Mikä on totuuden ja fiktion ero, kuka niitä luo ja missä ylipäättään kulkee niiden raja?

Sedrelova kiinnostaa ihmisluonteen epäjohdonmukaisuus, ihmisten viehätys järjestelmien luomiseen, käsitteiden muodostamiseen ja tarve uskoa niihin.

Kristina Sedlerova (s.1987) opiskelee kuvanveistoa Kuvataideakatemiassa maisteriopiskelijana. Tänä keväänä hän valmistuu kuvataiteen maisteriksi Aalto Yliopiston Taiteiden ja Suunnittelun korkeakoulusta näyttämölavastuksen linjalta. Kristina viihtyy sekä pienen että ison mittakaavan projekteissa, tilasuunnittelusta pienimuotoisten liikkuvien veistosten tekemiseen.

Haastattelimme Kristina Sedlerovaa sähköpostitse maaliskuussa 2015.

Sorbus: Mitä sinulta on tulossa esille Sorbukseen? Mitä teemoja galleriaan tulevaan teokseesi liittyy? Kristina Sedlerova: Arvostan nykyhetkeä suuresti miljardineen vivahteineen ja ihmettelen loputtomia määriä digitaalisesti tuotettua ja tallennettua materiaalia mitä itsekkin kasaan. Näin ollen päätin toteuttaa low-fi TV-studion, missä kaikki tapahtuu vain reaaliajassa ja kuka tahansa voi tuottaa mitä tahansa uutismateriaalia paikan päällä. Teemat: informaation ja sisällön tuottamisen + suodattamisen kompleksisuus sekä primitiivisyys; mielikuvien rakentaminen ja näiden palvominen. Nämä prosessit tuntuvat jollain tavalla pelimäisiltä ja sen takia halusin nostaa niitä esille.

S: Mikä on inspiroinut sinua työskentelyssäsi?

KS: Idea feikeista luista. Jos on mahdollista luoda väärennetyjä identiteettejä mm. sosiaalisessa mediassa niin voisi olla myös feikkeja luita, joita arkeologit löytäisivät

500 vuoden päästä ja ihmettelisivät niiden alkuperää ja käyttötarkoitusta. He ehkä keksisivät jonkun kivan teorian aiheesta. Myös asioiden loputon kierre ja nollan määritelmä kvanttifysiikassa inspiroivat. Kvanttifysiikassa nolla ei enään olekaan olematon vaan sisältää kaiken, olen tästä edelleen ihan kiksessa.
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S: Kuka tai mikä on SUPERNATURALWOMAN?

KS: SUPERNATURALWOMAN tekee mitä häntä ikinä huvittaa ja pyrkii välttämään järjestelmiä, määritelmiä ja tylsiä asioita.

S: Voitko kertoa jotain näyttelyn nimestä? Mitä Solomento tarkoittaa?

KS: Solomento o everything tarkoittaa `ainoastaan o kaikkea`. `Jotain` tai `vähän` ei kelpaa.

S: Sorbuksessa on tämän haastattelun tekohetkellä vielä meneillään ruotsalaisen RESTLESSMINDS-duon näyttely jossa aikaamme leimaavaa informaatiotulvaa käsitellään nimenomaan valinnanvapauden näkökulmasta. Se mihin yksilö usko on riippumaton lähteiden totuudellisuudesta ja totuudenmukaisuudesta. Näyttäisi että autenttisuus ja keinotekoisuus usein kietoutuvat yhteen. Mikä mielestäsi voisi olla taiteen rooli yrittäessämme selvittää informaatiomeressä (jos suhtaudumme taiteeseen vielä jonakin, joka ei ole osana sitä)?

KS: Minusta taiteen kautta pystytään tuomaan esille se, miten kaikki vakavat asiat mihin yritämme epätoivoisesti uskoa ovat itsemme keksimiä.

S: Opiskelet tällä hetkellä kahta eri tutkintoa, kuvanveistoa ja näyttämölavastusta. Osaaminen molemmilla kentillä varmasti täydentää toinen toistaan. Miten koet näiden kahden työskentelytavan eroavan toisistaan taiteen ilmaisumuotoina?

KS: Sinänsä en ole tottunut erottelemaan työskentelytapojani toisistaan. Ehkä en halua jumiutua selkeisiin työskentelytapoihin tai manereihin joille olisin uskollinen tai ottaa niitä lähtökohdiksi. Käytän mielestäni parhaiten sopivia ja minua sillä hetkellä kiinnostavia keinoja ja materiaaleja ryhtyessäni johonkin projektiin, keisistä riippuen. Suurin ero veiston ja lavastuksen välillä itselleni on se että veistossa minä en neuvottele.

BONUS

S: Kenen taiteilijan näyttelyn haluaisit nähdä Sorbuksessa?

KS: Vaikka Henrik Rakitin (EST).

///*English*///
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In her show SOLOMENTO o EVERYTHING Kristina Sedlerova is pondering the relation between authentic and artificial. What is the difference between truth and fiction, who is creating them and where does the border between them eventually even go?

Sedlerova is interested in the inconsistency of the human nature, the attraction of the mankind towards building systems, creating concepts and the need to believe in them.

Kristina Sedlerova (b.1987) is currently studying in the MFA program of the Academy of Fine Arts Helsinki in the Sculpture department. This spring she is graduating from Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture with an MFA in stage design. Kristina enjoys working both with small- and large scale projects, moving from spacial design to making small-scale kinetic sculptures.

Karoliina Hellberg
Karoliina Hellberg: VILLE

VILLE is all about places and people, simultaneously. The exhibition features paintings on canvas and paper, and waterlily orbs of glass.

It's a sweltering day and the house can barely take it.

There are mountains here, and a pink sky at sunset. By the shore lies an abandoned house, and palms and low bushes grow nearby.

The sea appears odd.

One building has a circular room in the middle of it from where you can set off in any direction.

Another room lies empty, only a woven Gobelin on the floor with images of geese, pheasants and swans – all this to show the property.

In the park is a bulb-shaped tree. On a night flight a hint of frozen landscapes.

The lights should be off.

A night room – trees swaying in the wind, and a beach house – a pond in the middle of the expanse.

Pictures of people alive, and each room has pictures.

Karoliina Hellberg (b. 1987 in Porvoo) is an artist who lives in Helsinki. She has a Master's degree from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts and works primarily with paintings and drawings, though she also presents work as installations. She writes about painting and visual portrayal. Hellberg's dissertation at the Academy of Fine Arts dealt with the aesthetic ghosts that can manifest themselves in people, sounds, images or places. Such apparitions may be a secret felt between oneself and another, a recollection that determines the present, or a meaning sensed in an object.

Hellberg took part in the 2014 exhibition of Academy of Fine Arts dissertations. In the same year she was awarded grants from Helsinki Litho and Friends of the Academy of Fine Arts. In the last three years she has lived and worked not only in Helsinki but also in Paris and London: at the Cité Internationale des Arts residence in Paris in autumn 2014 and on a student exchange at the Slade School of Fine Arts in London in 2013.

Hellberg's works can be found in the Fund of Päivi and Paavo Lipponen collection, which is deposited at the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, and in private

collections in Finland, the United Kingdom and Belgium. Hellberg's work has previously been shown in private exhibitions at the Kulma Gallery in Porvoo's Art Factory, Gallery Kapina and Gallery Napa. In 2015, Hellberg was awarded a six-month grant for artistic endeavours by the Finnish Cultural Foundation.

Emma Ainala

Emma Ainala's (b. 1989) much-anticipated solo exhibition *Sensual World* will fill Helsinki Contemporary on April 8–30. Ainala paints intuitively and with a childlike approach, producing works whose interior world often conceals within it a tense atmosphere, which the artist's characteristic painting style and its fantasy figures further accentuate.

“When you're painting you have to trust your intuition, which can often not be put into words. It's a knowledge in your body, a *gut feeling*. When I am painting, I don't try to formulate a story, but more to create a contradictory atmosphere, a tension. I want to pass on my own experience of wonder,” Ainala says.

In paintings that exude nostalgia and a 1980s, 1990s and 2000s aesthetic Ainala draws on the banal imagery of popular culture: pictures, music, characters from films, and celebrities, which become part of the works' own interior world. In the object installations that she constructs the reality of the paintings spreads out into the gallery space, delicious and tangible.

Questions of identity, such as themes of femininity, recur in Ainala's works. The figures that appear in the paintings can be seen as psychological archetypes or as different aspects of personality, which represent various modes of consciousness. The figures live in the painting's inner world, as if in some intermediate space between conscious and unconscious brimming with nostalgia.

The works combine retro-aesthetic imagery with a melancholic, and even wistful mood. The oversupply of information and the accentuated individualism of the Millennium generation, and, on the other hand, the insufficiency of material existence in the absence of an afterlife give rise to a feeling of incompleteness. A

longing for something shared and a desire to belong to a community fill the void left by the spiritual life.

“A kind of identity crisis has collectively arisen alongside questions of existence. People are constantly asking how we are supposed to live a good, or preferably perfect, life that is just for me. I myself really am totally a part of that world, not just an outside critic. That’s why I paint about experience that contains a contradiction,” Ainala says.

Emma Ainala is one of Finland’s most interesting young contemporary artists, who came to the awareness of the general public in the *Young Artists 2013* exhibition at Kunsthalle Helsinki. In 2014, Ainala’s works were shown in the *Time that Remains* collective exhibition at Helsinki Contemporary and in a solo exhibition at Huuto Gallery. She lives and works in Savonlinna.

A special thank you to the Arts Promotion Centre Finland and Finnish Cultural Foundation for supporting the artist’s work.