

BEING-ASIDE: VIDEO ON ENCOUNTERING SELF AND OTHER

Mira Kallio-Tavin



This essay explores art pedagogy as an ethical encounter between two people, and it is discussed through the video *Being-Aside* (2012). The video was produced in connection with a research project on an artistic and art pedagogical collaboration between a person with autism and an art educator. The encounter that the video represents is discussed through philosophical theory, especially Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy. The aim of this essay is to introduce a new philosophically based ethical conception of art education. Mapping the possibilities of art practice research within art education, this essay also provides a methodological example of artistic practices in research. It offers a possibility to perceive how artistic collaboration can aim to describe, question, interpret and negotiate pedagogical conditions.

The video discussed in this essay represents a two-year collaborative project between myself and Thomas, exploring the possibilities of varying modes of dialogue and non-verbal and non-cognitive interaction through collaborative artistic work, mainly repeated and shared painting sessions. The video is part of my

doctoral thesis: *Encountering self, other and the third: Researching the crossroads of art pedagogy, Levinasian ethics and disability studies* (Kallio-Tavin, 2013). Thomas was twenty-one when we started working together. Our cooperation was formed through an international educational¹ project called 'Art without borders' funded by the European Commission. Of the two years that we worked together the first half a year was part of the project. The project took place between 2004 and 2005 in Helsinki, Finland, and in four other European countries as well: the Netherlands, Greece, Bulgaria and Lithuania. In each country ten pairs of practising artists and individuals with disabilities were formed for the purpose of artistic collaboration. The intention was to work on a regular basis to produce collaborative artwork and individual pieces, and exhibit the artwork nationally and internationally. Thomas and I worked in a small room designated for us at the Autism Foundation in Helsinki.

Although I call the collaboration art educational, Thomas' and my artistic work did not include teaching in the way that teaching is usually understood. Instead of a teacher, my role in this project was as a collaborative artist and researcher, and encountering another person was understood as a type of pedagogy.² While educational research often concentrates on changes that are assumed or perceived to occur in a student and/or collaborative artistic partner, in this study the pedagogue is the primary learner. The pedagogue is the person subjected to change and, consequently, the project challenges established educational

notions and pushes pedagogical boundaries. Pedagogy often calls attention to the fact that students are not just passive objects receiving input from the teacher, and that the pedagogue should be perceived of as a learner too. Regardless of these ideologies, the pedagogue is rarely seen as a learner, and education continues to aim at changing the other: building and propping up the students as *becoming*, as subjects. In this research project the other person, Thomas, was not educated, changed or directed towards a certain goal (Biesta, 2006; Todd, 2003; Rancière, 1991).

As an art educator and researcher I could have written this essay based on my experience, such as notes and memories of the actual events. Choosing to discuss the encounter through a video aims to bring another level into the discussion; writing from the edited video material is writing from representation and therefore very different from an attempt to write directly from the event. The video, *Being-Aside*, uses strategies and tactics of contemporary art such as reconceptualisation, juxtaposition and projection (Marshall, 2011) to address concepts of our encounter. The video material has been edited and reconceptualised from the video documentation material produced during the two years we worked together. This reconceptualisation offers three different and simultaneously possible projections of the same event. These three possibilities, *(Un) becoming educated*, *Touch* and *Other*, are juxtaposed as a conceptual collage. They are the three sections and subtitles of the video, *Being-Aside*, and they are also used as titles for sections in this essay.

The video, *Being-Aside*, is fourteen minutes and thirty-seven seconds long.³ All of the material was videotaped during my meetings with Thomas. It shows Thomas and me on different days and in different situations. In the following pages I examine the video and the pedagogy, and I ask: What pedagogical understandings about (un)becoming arise in the crossroads of ambitious ethical goals and pedagogical desires? By ambitious ethical goals I am referring to Levinas' ethics on

passivity, openness and vulnerability in front of the O/other.⁴ According to Levinas, the biggest obstacle in the ethical encounter is the ego, which is at the centre of our inner reality and which also calculates everything from the subjective objectives and seeks to dominate other people (Wallenius, 1992). Our own needs and aims, guided by the ego, are therefore misleading us. Challenging our own needs requires a certain degree of passivity which is key to transcending the ego's power and taking a conscious position outside of our own apparent laws and limitations. By challenging the ego's power one might be more open and vulnerable in front of the Other. A critical pedagogue's self-recognition and introspection are important in the process of becoming more conscious of pedagogical prenotions and their regulations. According to my thesis in this essay, acknowledging pedagogical prenotions and desires in the self would lead towards better and more ethical pedagogy.

In this essay I will elaborate the pedagogy of (un)becoming. Through the complex concept of (un)becoming I try to challenge the ultimate goal of a transformative learning process, a change that makes it possible for an individual to become something else, something new, as a continuous growth that pushes the individual towards fulfilment and satisfaction. While my intention is not to give up the idea of change and becoming in education, I try to challenge them by revealing my own pedagogical notions, desires and fantasies. This is why (un)becoming includes both becoming and unbecoming.

Un(becoming), as Jagodzinski and Wightman (2005) refer to it,⁵ also includes both becoming and unbecoming in a pedagogical sense. Within this ambiguity and uncanny tension between becoming and unbecoming it is possible to see the paradox of the pedagogical fantasies about transformative education and the incomplete and unsettled realm of (un) becoming. The transformative learning process turns out to be something very different than becoming – or becoming knowledgeable.

While reviewing and editing the video material for *Being-Aside* I paid critical attention

to how, and why, I reacted to the other person during our collaborative work. I focused on what types of behaviour were repeated and during which particular situations. I was especially interested to see if I reacted based on my pedagogical or artistic desires or fantasies and how they influenced my ethical desires: passivity, openness and vulnerability in front of the Other. By assuming a certain pedagogical responsibility for the way I reflected these desires in front of the other's face, I found it necessary to recognise that I sometimes reacted based on my own desires and fantasies when becoming more conscious of the affects and educational preconceptions and regulations impacting the art educational situation. For Levinas, a face-to-face meeting is the most important type of encounter. An ethical endeavour does not come from a person as such, but from encountering the Other. When standing in front of another person, one is open, exposed, receptive and without one's own aspirations. Another person's face is an entrance to the infinity. A face *means* infinity, whether hostile or friendly. The face of another person can break the thread of making the Other out to be the Same as me and expose clearly and momentarily what is not the Same as me, but what is truly Other (Levinas, 2008; Varto, 2005; Wallenius, 2005).

While the video shows our dialogue, it also questions naive approaches to dialogue by raising critical questions of power and all the complexity of a pedagogical relationship. All education and every moment of dialogue include power relations that are partially obvious and partially hidden. Power, being part of knowledge, discourse and pleasure production, should be acknowledged in all human activities, but especially in those that try to look closely at people's relationships, such as dialogue or pedagogical situations. There are power relations in all encounters, between learners and educators, between each teacher and student, between each collaborative partner, as well as between Thomas and myself.

As my pedagogical approach, I set ethics as

the first and most important factor of pedagogy, before knowledge. Following Levinasian notions of asymmetric ethics, I believe ethical responsibility to be unequal and non-reciprocal (Levinas, 2009). It means that what I can insist on from myself I cannot insist on from the Other. The ego cannot demand reciprocity. It also means that even though I cannot demand anything from the Other, I must be extremely responsible towards the Other and always put the Other before I. Even though this ideology seems utopian, it is the nature of the ethical requirement, and it can be implemented momentarily via our actions (Wallenius, 1992). This ethical requirement is obvious in pedagogical relations. A pedagogue is always responsible for the pedagogical situation, and he or she cannot insist that the student should be as responsible as the pedagogue is towards the pedagogy in question. However, the ethical asymmetry that Levinas writes about goes deeper than that. He claims that I am also responsible for the Other's sense of responsibility (Levinas, 2009). I understand this to mean that I must also be responsible for what the Other is responsible for.

(UN)BECOMING EDUCATED



In the first part of the video *(Un)becoming educated* I struggle with the educational presuppositions of learning and with what our collaborative work is supposed to be about. It breaks through the preconceptions and fantasies of art-making and art teaching of there being a lack of development and of the

reactions caused by disappointments, such as frustration.

Thomas sits by a table, cutting little pieces of paper. I get started. I wet the piece of paper. I organise the paints and brushes. I am in front of the camera – at the centre of the event, as a knowing subject. I chew gum in a relaxed way – I am in control. Thomas sits and stares. He scratches his head. While he is looking bored and not interested in anything that I am preparing us for, I seem to be confident. I am the artist and pedagogue who is preparing the artistic moment for us. I have no hesitation about what is to come. I do not know exactly what we will do, but I trust that art will be created. The large wet paper in front of the camera is intended for our collaborative artwork.



Thomas does not collaborate with my intentions. The only time he looks at the paper is when he casts a strange gaze upon it, raising his eyebrows, rolling his eyes. He listens to music from his headphones with all of his body, while cutting little pieces of paper with scissors. I am persistent with the idea of painting with him. I try to get him involved by changing places with him. While grasping his scissors, I indicate that I wish him to continue with the painting that I have started. This effort does not help. He goes dancing in the corridor. I cut the paper into pieces. Doubt and frustration: He will not come back to paint with me. Working together in a quiet atmosphere seems like my fantasy in this part of the video. In that fantasy there are embedded desires of an encounter with another that includes a certain level of interaction with the art materials and with each other, perhaps reactions to one another that would lead to us making works of art together and learning from each other. I am trying to create a placid, smooth, programme-free, tacit moment, one that takes into account my partner's own will. Instead, I end up in an awkward situation, since my partner does not want the same things that I do. He wants to listen to his loud music without sharing it with me. He wants to dance.

I am just sitting there, staring. I sit still without moving, just staring straight ahead while Thomas keeps cutting away. I am bored and frustrated, and I feel forced by the situation to try to do something else. I just do not know what that would be. One might wonder, who is supposedly the person with autism in this video? After a little while I go closer to Thomas: more cutting paper into little pieces. I try to go back to my painting. I change colours so as to get more interested in the insipid work. Changing colours does not help. Instead, I slowly become more interested in his work. I go closer to him to learn more about his cutting work. There are hundreds of pieces of paper in the box and, in a way, the job is endless: He can keep on cutting them into smaller and smaller pieces endlessly. It seems to be important that the pieces are the same size. When he sees a piece that is bigger than the others, he cuts it into smaller pieces. And, when that piece is smaller, all of the other pieces need to be cut into smaller pieces too. The pieces are lying on top of each other.

On the side of the box is an area that he keeps clear of paper. Clearly he has a system. He looks happy and laughs, and then continues cutting.



In *(Un)becoming educated* we do not look at one another. We seem to be isolated in our own particular and idiosyncratic worlds, being aside each other without any interaction. I touch Thomas once, when I take the scissors and the box away from him. He touches his shoulder, showing me that he wants me to tickle him. I scratch him and then we move on, we go back to our isolated and separate being-aside.⁶ This is the only encounter in the video. It is a short, inconspicuous, physical touch that happens so rapidly that it can easily be overlooked. *(Un)becoming educated* is a tedious part of the video. It has moments that are difficult to tolerate, because they are so slow and ponderous.

In *(Un)becoming educated* my pedagogical desire was to transfer my desire for painting to Thomas. I initially thought that just pulling out the art materials and starting to paint in front of him would induce him to the flow of art-making. It is a paradoxical notion in the first place, that desire could be taught and learned. The desire to teach the unteachable constitutes, in part, the unsaid in the educational encounter (Todd, 1997). Instead, the one who becomes the object/subject of change is the educator. I call this change (un)becoming, because it is a struggle against all that one has learned within formal education. By formal education I mean institutionally framed education that aims for

development, effectiveness, becoming, producing, accomplishing and achieving.

When taking into account Levinas' radical notion of responsibility for the other, it is clear that the pedagogue is no longer in the position of power. Understanding pedagogy as consisting of less power and control brings along with it other factors, such as the guilt of not being responsible enough. The pedagogue is then, in Levinas' terms, given over to the Other as a hostage, he or she is vulnerable and exposed to the Other, obliged to take into account the demands of the Other that he or she encounters, and, therefore, teaching 'brings me more than I contain' (see Levinas, 2008; Todd, 2003). This means giving up the position of being on the safe side of knowledge; meeting the Other means taking responsibility for the Other from a position of vulnerability. In part, this vulnerability comes from the unpredictability, uncertainty and open-ended situations where responsibility is located.

In this first part of the video I struggled with the situation as I tried to entice Thomas to get involved with the painting materials. The artistic materials seemed to be much more relevant to work with than the materials that Thomas was interested in. While painting is a legitimate artistic form, cutting paper seemed a useless job, just something that a person with autism does as a repetitive fixation. By immersing himself in the cutting, Thomas practised the 'black hole of the dark side' of autism that is usually tolerated because it is understood as something that calms the person with autism, but it is hardly understood as a 'constructive' way to make something. Nevertheless, I opened myself up to this practice and at the same time to the other person. I first got frustrated and then became interested in the other's logic, in the other's way of thinking and acting.

Teaching Thomas would have been forcing him into my Same. Levinas calls this type of totalising thinking that limits our conception of other people through our own sameness *same*, *totality* or *economy*, which is an opposite of *infinity*. A totalised world is the conceptual

totality mastered by I, which means that it is mastered in only one way. Levinasian resistance to any sameness is infinite (Levinas, 1996; Varto, 2005; Joldersma, 2002). A somewhat similar perspective to Levinas comes from disability studies that argue for the 'politics of difference' (see, for example, Young, 2001). Compelling Thomas to paint seems ridiculous now. Why was it important, and for whom? Was it important for me, or just for the project? Why did we not cut paper as a type of artwork? Why did I insist on painting? On the other hand, turning pieces of paper into artwork for a gallery exhibition would not have been much different from any other practices of my sameness. In the video I want to show that cutting paper – the action of cutting itself – is a type of art-making. More importantly, cutting paper is Thomas' practice, something that gives him pleasure. Thomas' happiness is evident from the look on his face at the end of the first part, his concentration and laughter while cutting the pieces of paper. This frame ends the first part of the video *Being-Aside*.



TOUCH

While the first part of the video is about separation, the second part, *Touch*, offers a different insight into the idea of being-aside. *Touch* is about coming to the border of touching one another; it is about tacit communication, about touching the paintings with paint and brushes and about rhythmic movement together and next to one another. This movement continues from one image to another. *Touch* illustrates Thomas and me on different days, in different situations, but it maintains the idea of one event as a continuation. It is about (un)becoming and repetition, and it is about an event that seems to repeat itself without much variation, without becoming anything else except for what it is: repetition. *Touch* has been edited from the video material from many separate meetings during the two years' time that we collaborated and created artwork together. Still, it may not register as many different events, but more as one continuous event. The idea is that this part of the video is a collage, one that creates a single entity. This event, *Ereignis*,⁷ maintains the singularity of each individual moment, showing that any of these moments would be enough to tell us about the aspects of touch and togetherness between us. Including many moments in the video is more of an artistic choice, a reconceptualised conceptual collage; by creating a rhythm, the video presents an image of the touch and the (un)becoming of our painting moments.



Touch starts with an image of us sitting across the table from one another:

Thomas tickles his hand with a clean paint brush. I start doing the same thing to his hand with another brush. We both smile. The brushstrokes continue in the next frame, where Thomas is painting with thick red paint. His hand is moving slowly, and then he begins tapping. The paintings and the particular moments change, but the movement continues: little yellow spots and long red circles. First, I cut little scraps of paper, and later on he continues this action. We take more paint, thicker paint, more water. It seems as if this painting will never be finished: Painting as an act is a happening, the (un)becoming, one that does not really go anywhere. As an act, a happening, the painting seems important for both of us.

Again, I am tickling Thomas with paintbrushes. He tickles himself as well. He has moved on to brushing his neck and chin. I continue tickling his hand with the brush. Later this view changes and Thomas tickles my hand with a brush. We are sitting and standing, we reach out to the other side of the paper, and we sit next to one another, side by side. Thomas spreads blue paint and I mimic his hand movements with dark brown paint. He cuts the paper into pieces while I paint, then I take a turn, and after that we paint together. Later on I sit and watch him paint. I watch him paint the paper. In the next clip he is tickling my hand with a clean paintbrush, and then he is painting a piece of paper again: happiness and enjoyment of painting, with a hint of awkwardness. I cannot hide my sense of being disturbed by Thomas' touch. I smile, but when his tickling continues for too long I pull away. Thomas paints again with thick layers of paint. It is so thick that it constitutes a third dimension. We work in a quiet atmosphere, we are serious, and the brushes make sounds that mix with Thomas' humming noises.

The participants do not know exactly what they are doing, but they are doing it intensively.

The sensorial and immediate reactions to the other's touch and to the continuous painting movement are like an unknown game. Embodiment and touch play a significant role in part because language is not used much between us, in part because it is Thomas' way of being, the main way that he communicates, and in part because painting itself is an embodied medium.

He reaches towards my neck and tickles me again. At first I do not pay any attention, and then I take his hand away, smiling. I am cutting scraps of paper and placing them in a box while Thomas is painting. My clipping is slow and clumsy compared to his quick hand movements. He fills in the circles that I have painted: deep brown circles. Then he moves on to painting the colour palette. The palette is covered in thick, deep red-brown paint, just like the painting itself, which by now is covered in many layers of paint. I am still painting hard, trying to keep up the speed. We continue for a little while with another painting, standing around it. He paints the palette with slow movements. The earlier fast repetition has now become a lazy touch. The paintbrush touches the palette gently every once in a while. He crosses his hands. The painting sessions are over.

The physical and embodied borderline of both our personal spaces was pierced already during our first meeting. Touching, tickling and scratching took place while painting and drawing. Painting is embodied through its own materiality, and through the gestures by which paint is spread on the surface of a piece of paper, with the touch of a painter's body. Through moving, feeling, sensing and perceiving body (Heinämaa, Reuter & Saarikangas, 1997) the painter transfers his or her own flesh on to the surface. For me, touch was an indication of being part of the flesh of the world, and the phenomenological view seemed to support my experience. Touching and tickling might have felt awkward occasionally, but they also made sense to me, just as did the painting and our togetherness. In the video we react

to the tickling differently: Thomas wants to be tickled more and more, while I am trying to avoid his touch. I feel that I might be hurting his feelings by pulling away from him, but I cannot just sit and let him tickle me everywhere he wants. In this part of the video I do not know how to deal with his touch. I learned to appreciate Thomas' different embodied experiences, which were previously unknown to me. I was able to expand my understanding of embodied experiences only by including other than abled body perspective.

Western phenomenological and embodied philosophy seems to have been written for and by abled individuals (Merleau-Ponty, 2006; Husserl, 1990). It is written for those whose sense organs function without needing any specific attention. Being a firm part of the flesh of the world and letting go of the dichotomy between body and mind is consequently an ableist assumption:⁶ The knowing body is an able body. Although phenomenological flesh is the flesh of the world, and not attached to any singular body – abled or disabled – an embodied experience must also be involved. Flesh and knowledge of the body have assumed a position related to an experience of the body at some point in time. There seems to be an encapsulating idea of a metaphysical subject, which serves as an example of a knowing and normative body that needs to be unravelled. The ableist body within Western phenomenology needs to be confronted by adding ideas concerning all kinds of bodies. Scholars in the field of disability studies argue that all bodies are socially constructed. This argument encourages criticism towards the notion of the body and its alleged freedom (Osteen, 2008; Swain & French, 2000; Campbell, 2008; Eisenhauer, 2007).

In the section on *Touch* we draw while sitting next to each other on different days; the video shows a succession of movements. Thomas looks at my drawing hand, at me sitting in front of him and at the camera a couple of times. This is different from the first part of the video when he did not react at all to me, or the camera. Some parts of *Touch*

show me in a way that is odd. While it had been important to be critical of my withdrawing from his touch, I was surprised to see how differently I reacted to his tickling on different days. Thomas' attempts at tickling me in these images are strange for me to review. He tickles me under my chin and he tickles my hair, as if I was a puppy, and he makes me laugh like a young girl. While in these parts of the video I seem relaxed and happy, at the same time I hardly recognised myself. By forcing myself to review material that is not very flattering, I am able to confront my defences and reactions. I thought of myself as someone who tries to struggle with Thomas' tickling and who confronts the fact that I sometimes pulled away from him or moved his hand away impatiently. I was stunned to see this other part of my reaction to his tickling, when I was relaxed, enjoying myself and giggling. For some reason it had been important to me to keep up the idea that I had been withdrawing from him. That is what strikes me as responsible and appropriate for a pedagogue. Withdrawing, however, is not necessarily an ethical encounter, and it brings new dimensions to responsibility.

Standing on a threshold and living with uncertainty and the uncanny nature of the encounter with the Other – whatever it might entail – and abstaining from truly knowing something is at the core of the pedagogy, and perhaps especially at the core of the lived, messy and incomplete pedagogy of the flesh, which forced me to encounter my ideological fantasies. This statement addresses the question that I have been discussing throughout the essay: What pedagogical understandings of (un)becoming arise at the crossroads of ambitious ethical goals and pedagogical desires? (Un)becoming stems from taking seriously the concept of not-knowing. For Levinas, *knowing* means mastering and controlling the Other. Knowing is part of a natural attitude, one which tries to make everything the same for me and to totalise the Other. The one who knows does not value the Other. Knowing is a form of egoism (Wallenius, 1992). Knowing is also evidently an inherent

part of education. To be able to teach, one has to be knowledgeable. No doubt, one has to know about the subject that one is teaching. However, Levinas emphasises, what one does not know is the other person. The pedagogical approach of not-knowing makes room for being-aside, a pedagogical space where togetherness meets singularity, where incompleteness is valued and where one can ponder and be amazed and stunned by the Other and the self. I find the amazement of self to be of the greatest value in this part of the video. This sense of amazement has to do with the strangeness of the otherness in me, which will always remain with me, since it is not something that I can ever know about myself. I can only acknowledge that this foreign and hostile strangeness exists within me (Levinas, 2008), but I will never get to know what it is exactly. However, I think that by knowing about this Other in myself, I will be able to value the otherness in the Other and, consequently, become more ethical.

Responsibility is at the core of ethics. Being responsible means having an ethical awareness of another person's difference; it has to do with understanding that otherness and difference are also a part of who I am and that I exist and live in relation to them – not to destroy them (Varto, 2005). Responsibility in pedagogy means deeply appreciating the other person's difference and alterity and resisting a totalising type of thinking in ourselves that tries to shape the Other to be the Same as us. Unless we consciously decide to act ethically towards others, we fall into an automatic routine of taking bits and pieces of the other person, grabbing from the Other only the parts that suit us, while ignoring the parts that do not please us and filling in the gaps that seem to be missing from our own sameness.

In this part of the video we interact more than in the first part. This interaction is not just an easy type of togetherness. It is the 'risky uncovering of oneself [...] where no slipping away is possible' (Levinas, 1998, p. 48, 50). *Touch* is an assembly of our different encounters. It is a juxtaposition and collage of those

moments that touched me, when we were busy together, when we were sitting next to each other. In this part of the video I have learned that our togetherness does not require making eye contact. Learning this took a long time: While practices of looking are deeply significant in the culture generally, in an art education context they seem to be even more so. However, eye contact is not needed when working side by side, when being-aside.

OTHER

The third part of the video, *Other*, illustrates the affects of our being-aside, such as our pleasure at being together. This part of the video unveils certain pedagogical desires and fantasies and how they often stem from an aspiration to enclose the Other into the Same space with I. Nevertheless, the Other remains separate. The Other is never what one assumes. As soon as the Other seems to be comprehensible, the Other escapes. The Other is always more than I can imagine; I have no control over the Other. I can never understand the Other, and the Other is not just a representative of his or her different cultural or ethnical background or of his or her particular disability; rather, he or she is Other precisely because of his or her radical alterity. But I can be curious, and remain curious, about the other's difference. The basis of the ethical relationship is to reply to the other's different and unique invitation. That means that in every relationship I am the only one responsible and my responsibility is unabandoned and endless.

In all encounters it is essential to take seriously the other person's alterity, meaning that I may find that the Other inhabits a world that is basically other than mine, and that he or she is essentially different from me. In everyday contexts we seem to get along with people that think and act in the same way as we do. These situations can easily make us forget that the other person is the Other, separate from I and infinitely unknowable (Levinas, 2008; Todd, 2003). It is important, however, to realise that I am also the Other to myself.

In this part of the video I become an Other to the spectator: The *Other* shows Thomas as self and me as the Other. I am the object of the gaze when Thomas is behind the camera. Thomas is behind the camera even when his own face is shown – he is behind and in front of the camera at the same time. This ability to be on both sides of the camera is possible because of the technical feature of the camera. The video camera has a flip screen that made it easy for Thomas to see himself on the video camera while it was taping him and me.

The third section of the video, *Other*, takes a different approach than the other two. While the first two parts of the video show issues that are interesting for me as a pedagogue, the last one gives space for Thomas' perspective. Almost all of the video material in *Other* has been taped by Thomas. It starts with an image of him gazing off into the distance. He sweeps the room with the camera, showing the space, a porch, a little part of me and the ceiling. All of a sudden the camera's movement changes direction and then takes a different turn again, finally zooming in on me washing the paintbrushes. Throughout the entire section Thomas is playing an active role: He grabs the camera, he gazes at things, he touches them, and then, at the end, he tells me that he is done with videotaping by saying 'no' when I ask him whether or not he wants to continue. In this part of the video the camera is moving differently and the entire perspective has changed. One can see Thomas' gaze, what he is looking at, whom he is looking at and how he wants to be seen in the video.

The lack of eye contact was one of my first struggles during our collaboration. That is why I initially thought that Thomas was not looking at me at all. I was hopeful to see some reaction on his face, even though the eye contact that I anticipated would probably not occur. I was aware of the fact that people with autism often avoid eye contact. This knowledge did not make it much easier for me to learn not to pay attention to the lack of it. As Ashby and Causton-Theoharis (2009) point out, eye

contact is culturally learned. They stress that a lack of eye contact can be seen as a marker of autism in Western culture, but that, conversely, in many Eastern cultures it is not described as a manifestation of autism; instead, eye contact can be a sign of disrespect. In several parts of the video, however, Thomas is clearly gazing at me. His gaze at the beginning of *Other* is especially important because it does not strike me as an empty 'autistic' gaze, but one that is seemingly circumspect and thoughtful. Through this gazing, as well as by touching, Thomas partially objectifies his partner, me. For example, he records my back while I am washing paintbrushes. I become the Other in the narration. He is in charge at this point.

At the end of the video it is difficult to know who is recording whom. The camera moves around rapidly, showing the two of us sitting together. The camera shows the ceiling and both of our faces next to each other. The camera seems to be on our lap, as if we were both holding it. I look at Thomas and smile. Suddenly, he comes closer to me and it almost looks like he is going to kiss me. He holds my face between his hands and gives me a gentle hug. He also glances at the camera, as if he knows this hug is being recorded.

CONCLUSIONS

The process of using the recorded material to produce a video helped me generate a more complex and versatile interpretation of the collaborative art practice. When an event is interpreted through a visual work, the researcher might arrive at different interpretations than he or she would have when relying solely upon diary notes or other more traditional documentation materials. I believe, however, that this supposed difference is only fictional. A documentary, just like a diary and other written material, is already an interpretation; it represents a series of choices, such as the themes and perspectives used in each method of interpretation and description. The difference between, for example, a documentary and a work of art has nothing to do with their level of truthfulness; rather, the

difference has to do with the ways in which the 'truth' is reported. Actually, in many ways artistic forms are more *honest* because they do not claim to be *true*. Varto (2007) states that a documentary is the most dangerous form of artistic research because it gives the most power to the researcher. Visual documentary is nevertheless a fascinating method of research, since it gives the researcher the possibility to discuss issues that might be difficult, or even impossible, to discuss only through written language in a way that is, on the one hand, tied to the reality, and, on the other hand, to an attitude that does not avoid revealing varied perspectives (Varto, 2007).

The visual work with the video material made it possible for me to see things in a new light and to interpret and describe things differently than before; for instance, it made me more aware of the process and my own involvement in it. This awareness was different from reviewing and writing about the collaborative moments. Whereas writing the narrations was a way to describe and interpret the phenomena as openly as possible, through the visual work phase I was able to further elaborate and concentrate more deeply on the themes that I had already discovered when writing about what took place. Making visual choices forced me to see and interpret the events differently. When I wanted to state something in the video, and reviewed the material that showed me making the statement, I realised that the events had not always played out in the way that I had remembered. For example, my interpretation and my understanding of the self changed when I saw myself giggling while painting with Thomas or when I found material that I had not paid attention to before, such as Thomas' own video production at the end of one tape.

To conclude the encounter that I contemplate in *Being-Aside*, I find it essential to argue for the pedagogy of (un)becoming. (Un)becoming means moving towards something that is not already known. This kind of pedagogy does not aim for something specific. In this essay I have stirred the (un)becoming subject: who is the one who (un)becomes. While the

collaborative art-making required a negotiation and transformation of Thomas' and my own existing realities, the critical pedagogical notions needed a closer and deeper analysis. Seeing the Other and self as subjects of learning to become is tied to the notion of continuous growth. Both becoming and growing represent movement in a certain direction, towards fulfilment and satisfaction. We know, however, that this will never happen; we know that after we have grown, we will need to grow more, and the one who is to become will keep on becoming. A person and the entire moment of encounter will therefore always be incomplete. This incompleteness gives space for amazement and wonder. When claiming that an encounter is a process of unbecoming rather than of becoming, something needs to be in transition. Hence, it is the existing educational and pedagogical realities that must continuously change.

REFERENCES⁹

Ashby, C. & Causton-Theoharis, J. (2009). Disqualified in the human race: A close reading of the auto-biographies of individuals identified as autistic. *International journal of inclusive education*, 13 (5), 501-516.

Biesta, G. J. J. (2006). *Beyond learning. Democratic education for a human future*. Colorado: Paradigm Publishers.

Campbell, F. (2008). Exploring internalized ableism using critical race theory. *Disability & society*, 23 (2), 151-162.

Davis, L. J. (Ed.) (2006). *The disability studies reader* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Eisenhauer, J. (2007). Just looking and staring back: Challenging ableism through disability performance art. *Studies in art education*, 49 (1), 7-22.

Heinämaa, S., Reuter, M. & Saarikangas, K. (1997). *Ruumiin kuvia: Subjektin ja sukupuolen muunnelmia*. Tampere, Finland: Gaudeamus.

Husserl, E. (1990). *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy. Studies in the phenomenology of constitution*. Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

jagodzinski, j. & Wightman, W. (2005). The paradoxes of un(becoming). *The journal of social theory in art education*, 25, 1-13.

Joldersma, C. W. (2002). Pedagogy of the Other: A Levinasian approach to the teacher student relationship. In S. Rice (Ed.), *Philosophy of education yearbook* (pp. 181-188). Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society.

Kallio-Tavin, M. (2013). *Encountering self, Other and the third. Researching the crossroads of art pedagogy, Levinasian ethics and disability studies*. Helsinki: Aalto University Press.

Levinas, E. (1996). *Etiikka ja äärettömyys. Keskusteluja Philippe Nemon kanssa*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.

Levinas, E. (1998). *Otherwise than being or beyond essence*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Levinas, E. (2008). *Totality and infinity. An essay on exteriority*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Levinas, E. (2009). *Ethics and infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Marshall, J. (2011). Creative strategies in contemporary art. Retrieved from: <http://www.eksperimenta.net>

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2006). *Phenomenology of perception*. New York: Routledge.

Nancy, J. (2000). *Being singular plural*. Stanford: University Press.

Osteen, M. (Ed.) (2008). *Autism and representation*. New York: Routledge.

Rancière, J. (1991). *The ignorant schoolmaster. Five lessons in intellectual emancipation*. Stanford: University Press.

Swain, J. & French, S. (2000). Towards an affirmation model of disability. *Disability & society*, 15, 569-582.

Todd, S. (1997). *Learning desire: Perspectives on pedagogy, culture, and the unsaid*. New York: Routledge.

Todd, S. (2003). *Learning from the Other. Levinas, psychoanalysis, and ethical possibilities in education*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Varto, J. (2005). *Filosofian taito*. Retrieved from: https://wiki.aalto.fi/download/attachments/.../varto_filosofian_taito.pdf

Varto, J. (2007). Dialogi. In M. Bardy, R. Haapalainen, M. Isotalo & P. Korhonen (Eds.), *Taide keskellä elämää* (pp. 62-65). Helsinki: Like and Kiasma.

Wallenius, T. (1992). Kohti Toista. Johdatusta Emmanuel Levinasin etiikkaan. In J. Varto (Ed.), *Fenomenologinen vuosikirja* (pp. 200-214). Tampere University, Finland.

Wallenius, T. (2005). *Filosofian toinen – Levinas ja juutalaisuus*. Tampere, Finland: niin & näin.

Young, I. M. (2001). Justice and the politics of difference. In S. Seidman & J.C. Alexander (Eds.), *The new*

social theory reader (pp. 203-211). London: Routledge.

ENDNOTES

1 The 'Leonardo da Vinci programme' is part of the European Commission's 'Lifelong learning programme', and it funds practical projects in the field of vocational education and training (see: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/ldv_en.htm).

2 Education and pedagogy can mean very different things. However, in this essay I use them interchangeably to emphasise the pedagogical aspects of art education.

3 Contact the author for access to the video (mira.kallio-tavin@aalto.fi).

4 The Other, as both a word and a concept, is used in at least three different ways in this essay. First, the Other, when capitalised, refers to the philosophical and sometimes psychoanalytical notion of otherness, the ontologically given alterity. Second, the other, when not capitalised, either refers to another person, namely my artistic partner, or applies to the field of social justice. Third, Levinas' notion of others' otherness (alterity in people) makes this division between the capitalised and uncapitalised forms of the word much more complex. The fact that the word is both capitalised and not capitalised in many quotes from, and texts written about, Levinas' work necessarily manifests into complex and seemingly contradictory usage of the term. When otherness is discussed among people, it does not have anything to do with a person's characteristics, such as autism, except perhaps when discussing otherness within the context of social justice. Social otherness is, however, in a minimal role in this essay.

5 Similar to jagodzinski and

Wightman, in this essay there is no significant distinction between (un) becoming and un(becoming).

6 I have developed the term being-aside from Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of being-with (Nancy 2000). Being-with is always impressed and touched by the other. Being-aside emphasises togetherness that allows space for being distinct and singular.

7 Heidegger's term *ereignis* translates into the Finnish language quite well: *tapahtuminen*. The English equivalent is often translated as *an event*. I have chosen to use the term event throughout this essay to describe the temporality of the moments we shared together. *Ereignis* might also be understood as *concern* and *coming into view*.

8 Ableism refers to an abled-bodied norm in society, which is akin to racism (see, for example, Campbell, 2008; Davis, 2006; Eisenhauer, 2007).

9 The original titles in Finnish have not previously been translated into English. Due to their philosophical character I have chosen not to translate them, but to provide only the original titles in Finnish.

READ ABOUT

Arts-based research (01, 02, 07, 09, 13, 17, 18)

Collaboration (01, 04, 17, 18)

Disability studies (17, 19)

jagodzinsky, jan (15,17)

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (02, 13, 17, 18)

Nancy, Jean-Luc (12, 17)

Phenomenology (01, 02, 13, 17, 18)

Todd, Sharon (15, 17)

Varto, Juha (01, 17, 18)

Visual (02, 05, 07, 09, 17)