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Since some time, it has been a focus in my work, that the visitor does not actually observe the work. What I am concerned with is self-observation through a kind of experience inside of the exhibition context. With the tools of an installation I am trying to create a situation in which one can have an experience. The visitor turns into the protagonist, instead of observing from the outside. For this reason I call my installations atmospheres. To me the meaning of an atmosphere is to enter an organic relationship, to breathe, to think and to become one.

In the moment that I am making an experience, I already think about the other, how I can share this experience with other people, therefore the others are already inside me in the moment of the experience. The *selfie*-phenomenon shows this very clear. The *selfie* is a means to communicate an experience to others directly. Taking a *selfie* wouldn't make sense if you didn't already think about its communication.

*Selfie* is a collective attention that is absolutely crucial to human communication. What we call common ground is actually a common visual attention. It means we are watching a particular thing together. Humans have arrived at a point, where they have developed a common understanding that goes beyond visual perception. When somebody is observing himself, he is really observing a complex being, composed of many different facets, for example the natural evolution of primates, history, ancestors, family, social status, experiences, sex, interests, profession and so on. In reality the "self" does not exist. It cannot survive without a social context, it needs a community, the exchange, to feel itself and to experience itself through the eyes of others.

There are thousands of self-portraits in art and none of them is a reflection of reality. They are all an idealisation of it. Here in Leipzig, in the Museum of Fine Arts there are more than twenty different self-portraits.

Every day we create an image of ourselves, through clothing, hairstyle, make up, added status symbols, our facial expression and other things alike.

Because I am an artist, I would like to mention a quotation **Berthold Brecht** often used in the context of his epic theatre and people believed falsely, these were his words. In fact it is a statement by Karl Marx.

*"Art is not a mirror to reflect the world, but a hammer with which to shape it."* **Karl Marx**

To me, the shaping hammer means, becoming aware of what you don't want, and hence the resulting change in your behaviour and actions. Art, in my case the installation art, is a tool for creating awareness.

The psychologist **Philippe Rochat** says that the "self" is a product of our social engagement. In a word, "self" is a common project. According to the thesis of Professor **Michael Tomasello** from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology says, that contrary to other primates, human beings can not only do something together, but they can actually put themselves in the position of the other.

The human urge of self-expression has a long tradition. Through the technical possibilities it has now become a mass phenomenon. Selfies are subject to a natural evolution. The developed primates began marking cave walls with their hands. Their eyes watched their hands and the cave-man become aware.

The hand is the tool and later this tool turns into the means for the beginning of agriculture and thus also of culture. Since then the new technologies, which in the end really are nothing else but tools, change constantly.

The first affordable camera for a broad public was put on the market in 1888. But only in the 20th century in the period between the two world wars, the photograph established itself as the dominant and most "natural" way of referring to appearances.

In relation to the *selfie* phenomena, the classic self-portrait is changed. With the introduction of smart phones with front camera in 2010, the *selfie* went viral. Your images are uploaded to Instagram, Twitter or Facebook, they are tagged, tweeted and shared. You are liked or ignored. You know that others perceive you. A *selfie* describes how we live and learn from each other. It is a way to receive information through self-exploration, about who we are, about our common nature, beyond national and cultural differences.

The exploration of who we really are has a long history. The oldest known recorded epic of humanity, is the 'Epic of Gilgamesh', which is almost 5000 years old. It tells about the journey of king Gilgamesh, in which he seeks to find the elixir of eternal life. In the end the possibility of knowledge wins over eternity. Whilst observing himself, he realises that the sense of life is not living eternally but the actual meaning of life. The struggle to be like an animal or a god runs through the entire narration. In the "myth of Narcissus", this struggle is continued, this time it is a struggle between idol and ideal.

A few thousand years later, inspired by biology, the sociologist **Niklas Luhmann** says, that society is observing itself and that this

To empathize with the events in history is what distinguishes man from other primates. We, the evolutionized primates watch the world, we have an idea of it in our thoughts.

As the philosopher **Wolfgang Iser** says, man is the centre of his constructed world, the difference between man and the other primates is exactly this constructed world, which only exists in the mind of man.