

## Editorial



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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A VISUAL ARTIST TODAY? To what extent are these meanings shared? What influences artists as they develop their art practices and how do their art practices influence their decisions, their expectations, and their outlooks? This special issue of *Dandelion* is titled “The Artist Identity” and it serves as a platform for the exploration of these questions.

In May 2015, the General Editors of this issue, Sarah Scarsbrook, Ruth Solomons and Dr Niki Zanti, organised a symposium on the same theme to bring together new, creative and divergent perspectives and explore what it might mean to be a visual artist today. The panel discussions were structured using a trajectory approach with the aim to focus on the ways in which the artist identity is created, nurtured, sustained and challenged, suggesting that the identity of an artist is linked to visual arts education, authorship, myth, stereotypes and ready-made narratives. The symposium concluded by extending the conversation further than we had anticipated and by generating more questions than we had originally posed. This alluded to the idea that research and reflection on artistic identity is current, multifaceted and reaches deeply into the fields of arts policy and management, art history, art education, sociology, marketing, technology, and health.

This special issue open call for papers aimed at encouraging further debate on this notion and invited submissions which engage with questions of artist identity in these related fields. Considering that identities are both the outcomes of situations, as well as elements that contribute to the modelling of behaviour in situations, it is contended that an explanation of the concept can lead to an exploration of its explanatory power.

In the Articles section, Sarah Scarsbrook reflects on arts education, one of the key themes discussed during the symposium, and suggests that while the artist identity is a highly personal attribute, it is variable and influenced by educational experiences. She explains that as the modes of visual arts education continue to shift, becoming more business-focused and streamlined, the artist

identity may become more brand-like and more professional. Dr Mark Wilsher presents a pilot study into British newspaper representations of contemporary art, carried out in 2011. He also examines what influences the development of the artist identity and proposes that the stereotypes, misunderstandings and inaccuracies often reinforced through the media, strengthen specific narratives of the artist and artishood that are subsequently reproduced by artists. Dr Carla Cruz invites another critical view of the artist identity and discusses issues of authorship in collaborative art making through her 'Rastilho' project that aimed to question traditional modes of the singular authorship the artist role assumes. In her article the dynamics that emerged from the project are revealed and, in attempting to instil co-agency and dismantle hierarchies, it became apparent that authority was necessary after all; authorship and authority emerge as one and the same.

In this issue's Short Circuits section, Andy Wild joins our editorial team to discuss his film, 'Art and Empowerment', the ways in which he constructs and negotiates his artist identity and the complex interrelationships between his life, health and art. Connie Gallagher is on a mission to create original performance art that investigates the boundaries, or the lack thereof, between art and (other) work, through her exploration of 'Occupational Realism'. In the text that accompanies her visual art submission, she speaks about the artist identity as something multiple, and suggests that artists can maintain various life roles in a balance. Ryan Riddington uses photography to capture his relationship with his artworks and confront the identity markers he, and others, have 'preselected' for him. In his images he is seen interacting and conversing with his own sculptures inviting the viewer to question the role of the artist and the nature of the artwork.

The theme of The Artist Identity has provided a rich platform for the generation of ideas, in the form of presentations, written text, performance and artworks through our collaborative work on the symposium and for this special issue of the Dandelion Journal. We now hope it will continue to be an important source of inspiration for generating knowledge and understanding on the current and changing position of the artist and of creative practice, from both an academic standpoint and from the perspective of artists themselves.

Special thanks are due to the contributors and to the editorial team for making this achievement possible.

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### Cover Image

Sarah Scarsbrook, *German Man*, oil on canvas, 2012