

Thor Ludwig Stiefel

T.O.R.A

PORTFOLIO

Paintings –
multimedia

2020



Multimedia



As above – so below

Performance, performed at Iceland National Park Thingvellir
2017

Artist Statement

I make art to understand my Self.

I make art to create my Self.

Art and Life for me are the same.

Through my work I am creating my self – as an artist and as an individual. My art can be understood through a system I call SNART.

Whatever else it may be, for me Art is a proclamation; a statement about my existence in the world. The statement is: I am here, I made this and I am alive. My artwork is an echo of that proclamation; breadcrumbs through a journey that is my life – my story – my Self Image.

My Art is Me and I am my Art.

My Art is **SNART**

SNART is a personal pathway of *Self* knowledge through Art.

The system is based upon reflection on individual's artistic endeavors. It's philosophical view is that not only is one acquiring *Self* knowledge by creating Art but one is essentially creating one *Self*.

SNART proclamation is that Art and Artist can not be separated and fundamentally every artwork created is a *Self* image of the artist.

Seen as a whole, every society's art is the *Self* image of that society – a reflection, the cumulated Narrative, a proclamation of existence.

SNART

SNART is an acronym for Self-Narrative-ART.

It was in the fall of 2015 I fell into the concept of SNART.

The revelation came when I started to reflect at my own art making through the years and explore the reasons why I needed to create art. I had to reflect on my self. I am a trans person and obviously that fact was an important factor in defining who I am.

The term reflection came up and I started to use the word as an outset in my artistic study; Reflection – Mirror – Self. I looked at the word TRANS – did it reflect me? This word fascinated me. It involves so much movement. I found that the word had power in itself and I began to explore what it meant, where it came from and what it stands for.

Artistic play revealed that I could use art creations to reflect me.

To understand myself, I had to contemplate my own story. Who and what I am is the result of thoughts, actions and decisions I have conjured in the past. I began to wonder if one could regard my entire art making as a personal biography – each artwork as a chapter in my life's book; an entry in a diary.

Reflecting on my art making in context as a body of a life-time creation, I sensed a connection. A thread could be spotted – a narrative: The story of the Self!

But, who or what was telling that story? and to whom? and why?

The word SNART is a mirror reflection of the word TRANS. The concept of the existential story of the Self – the Narrative of the Self – materializing in artworks, analogues to looking into a mirror, turned out to be a framework for a system that could be utilized to understand and make art. The concept of Self-Narrative ART came into being. Gradually, the idea that art and art creation, could be a prescription for a certain self-knowledge emerged; SNART could be a key to knowledge that could not otherwise be obtained – and SNART as an art concept and a philosophy was born!



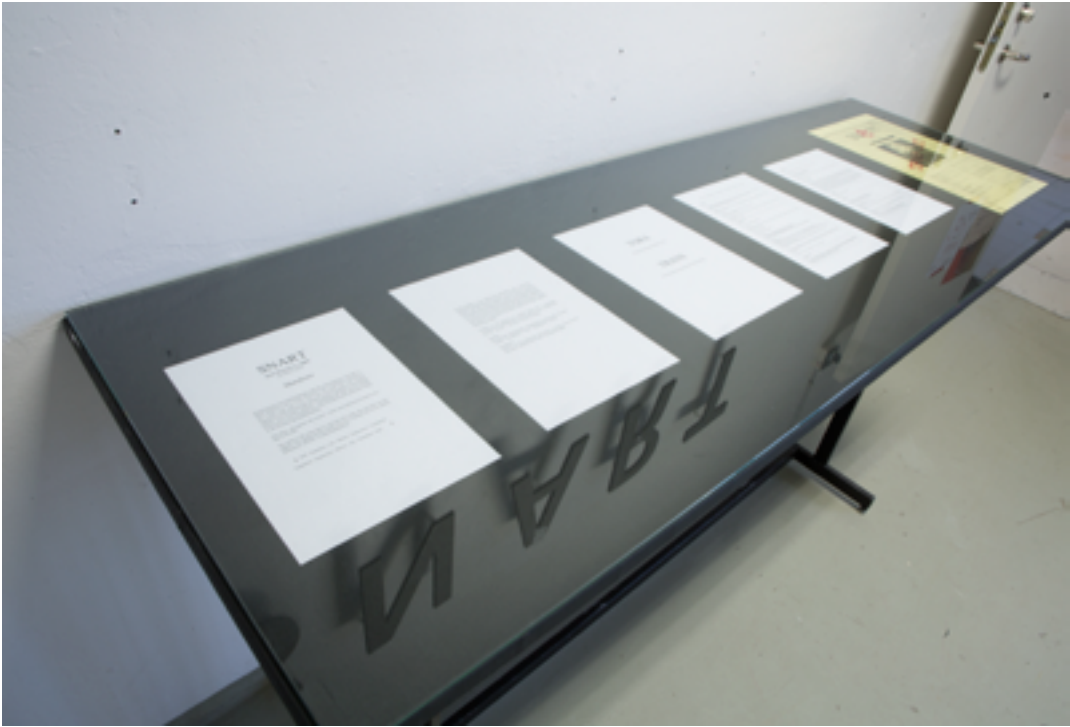
SNART–logo.

Mdf, steel,glass, paper.

For a solo show at the Iceland University of the Arts, the theme was – **Self image**. My overall approach was to reflect society's Self image and use the SNART ideology as a working platform. The purpose was twofold: first I needed to represent the SNART concept and test it and secondly, my aim was to create an art work that mirrored our modern corporate culture that is so force majors in shaping our Self images, i.e. our identities and philosophies.

By displaying the logo in this manner I wanted to refer to the museum and hence the established, valuable and authoritative – something that is above questioning. This was an object–subject merge, creating a Self image by displaying a Self image. SNART logo is the essence of SNART and in effect the launch of the SNART concept. SNART is my Self image but concurrently this piece is the Self image of the SNART.

This piece was a comprehensible example and a good demonstration on how SNART works and what it stands for. It denoted how SNART can be used, not only in art making, but in image making regardless of the context. I created a logo. Created out of modern recycled papier-mâché material the letters SNART were cut out with laser precision. I was in fact creating a self image of the SNART concept! This is of course referred as branding in the corporate world and is analogues to our personal image making. The letters SNART were mounted on the wall in front of the Gallery to imitate the entrance of a corporation. Underneath the logo, I placed a simple black table stand with glass on top.



S.N.A.R.T.

Self Narrative Art

Omnimodal converging dialogue with the surroundings. I think, therefore I am. I create, therefore I am. Cogito ergo sum. Creio ergo sum. Inward inspection of the Self through narrative process. Echo-friendly dialogue. Converge-happening translating the Self into One's existence in artistic form. The Artist - the Ignitor; the Creator - cause and the reflection bound in one; that is Snart. The Artist is the stone that is cast into the water, the Artworks are the Ripples. The Ripples bounce back in an ever waning, but never ending, interaction. Snart is transcendental Art.

┌ Self – Narration - Art – Mirror – Inspection – Transition
Transition – Inspection – Mirror – Art – Narration - Self └

Snart handler is the Object that subjectifies it self. Transverse omnimode androgenous existence that is Art and the Artist at once. Snart, the Self reflective Narration process becomes, transitional Self-creating artistic selection that is natural. The transgressional state of Snart is to break with the programming of the cognitive; Ideas that are learned block the natural – real Ideas, the Platonic Ideas. Snart is about leaving the Cave and inspect the light source that is creating the Shadows. In an artistic context the Snart handler is decoding the Matrix.

SNART – Revolution – Methamorphomosis – TransArt – Abstract – Methaphysical – Unorthodox – Unique – Androgeniuous – Anonymus – Originality – Subjectivity – Contribution – Act

Looking for the Question: "What is Art?"

Underneath the glass I displayed some of the original SNART items that were specifically made with the SNART concept in mind. They were various prints – ink jet and silk screen prints – of the SNART declaration.

The SNART declaration is made out of some initial writing explaining the concept along with dictionary definitions regarding the trans prefix

Trans

Transitive Redodification Artistical Natural Selection

Trans – Transcendental – Transgression – Transition – Transverse – Translate

Trans a prefix 1. occurring in loanwords from Latin (transcend; transfix); on this model, used with the meanings "across," "beyond," "through," "changing thoroughly," "transverse," in combination with elements of any origin: transisthmian; trans-Siberian; transempirical; transvalue. 2. Chemistry a prefix denoting a geometric isomer having a pair of identical atoms or groups on the opposite sides of two atoms linked by a double bond. 3. Astronomy a prefix denoting something farther from the sun (than a given planet): trans-Martian; trans-Neptunian. 4. a prefix meaning "on the other side of," referring to the misalignment of one's gender identity with one's biological sex assigned at birth: transgender; transsexual.
Transcendental adjective 1. transcendent, surpassing, or superior. 2. Theology being beyond ordinary or common experience, thought, or belief - surpassing the natural plane of reality or knowledge; supernatural or mystical 3. abstract or metaphysical. 4. idealistic, lofty, or extravagant. 5. Philosophy a. (of a judgment or logical deduction) being both synthetic and a priori b. of or relating to knowledge of the presuppositions of thought beyond the contingent and accidental in human experience, but not beyond all human knowledge. 6. Mathematics transcendental number. the number π is transcendental; the numerical value of π is: 3.141592653589793238462643383279... the number e is transcendental; the numerical value of e is: 2.718281828459045235360287471352662497757... With the possible exception of π , e is the most important constant in mathematics since it appears in myriad mathematical contexts involving limits and derivatives any number that has a rapidly converging sequence of rational approximations must be transcendental. 7. noun transcendentals, Scholasticism (The terms "scholastic" and "scholasticism" derive from the Latin word scholasticus and the latter from the Greek σχολαστικός, which means "that [which] belongs to the school". The "scholastics" were, roughly, "schoolmen") 8. categories that have universal application as being, one, true, good.



Hate-speech

Oil on canvas, sound, speaker, steel.

Part of the SNART-LOGO exhibition exhibited
at The Iceland University of the Arts
2018



Psychomanteum.

SNART Installation Performance, various media, duration 15. min
 Performed at The Iceland University of the Arts
 2016

The term psychomanteum has been used to describe the act of future telling; the act of gazing into a –often– black mirror.

The work was a composite SNART piece and consisted of performance, installation, sound sculpture and video sculpture. The idea of the work was to show the man and how knowledge – and in particular *Self knowledge* – can rebuild the individual. I worked in a space that was about 150 square meters in size with a 6 meter high ceiling. At one end of the room I put up a stage emulating a dark red liquid flowing with satin cloth to represent the ether. On the left side of the scene, I placed a tree to refer to “The Tree of Life” and Ask Yggrasil – the icons of knowledge. On the right, I set the stern of the ship to indicate linear timeline of the work. To emphasize the Occult nature in the work, I beamed light on the stage that could be read as a full Moon – a symbol of esoteric knowledge.

A human was born out of the Ether. It was cloaked with ignorance of the Self. It stumbled from the womb and shook off the cloak that obscured its vision. It found knowledge represented by a top-hat – a rather illustrative, yet questionable symbol of civilization. After that, a cape and a staff it found. A strobe light started flickering and simultaneously eight video monitors turned on images visualizing the devastation of war. The performance ended with all the monitors emitting the question “What if Lucifer really is the Light bearer?”

This is a SNART performance contemplating on the reflection, the mirror, the black mirror gazing and the essence of the other side of a mirror reflection i.e. the “negative”.





Interview performance.

Part of the *Tora Victoria SNART project*. Performed and taped for the Harmageddon TV and broadcasted at a local TV station in Iceland on November 2013.

At the start of the millennium I started a live long project – *Arte Vitae* – pivoted around the character *Tora Victoria* that is Thor Ludwig's other Self; a projected character created in self defense of the Self. The T.O.R.A project was the catapult for SNART. SNART is an acronym for Self-Narrative-ART and a methodology and a system to approach art and art making.



Tora Victoria Digital photograph 2007

A lone walk

I walked through the Dark forest
not knowing where I was
who I am.

I walked,
and I walked
and walked.

I saw people there

“Hello mister.”
“Greetings to you sir.”
They said.

And they didn't saw me.
Tears were in my eyes.

I – feeble little flower.

Holding on to its roots.
In a storm of superficiality.
“Oh sorry mate – I never get it right mister.”
A little girl hardened by obscurity.

They can not see me; perhaps they never will.
And I walk deeper into the Dark forest.

It is better there.

SNART – Seyður



at Skaftfell Art Center in Seyðisförður Iceland

SNART - Seyður.

Video installation, video, sound, mirror, wood, projector, nylon. Exhibited at Skaftfell Art Center Iceland 2018

For me, the approach to working with video as a medium is to look at the project inter-dimensionally so to speak. The beauty the video, as an artistic medium, has is in its multiplicity: It is a painting – a moving painting, with picture compositional aspects and all the rational picture design elements. It is narrative, both linear and non-linear. It is light and dark interaction. An extra dimensional layer is the sound. The sound can be sculptural in its form audible or not. But a very vital part of the video as an art medium in my works is the installation of the piece. The video it self is for me serves just like the paint for the canvas; it is merely an ingredient for the whole. The piece is the installation; how, where and on what it is projected. I work with the space, the surrounding, the moment. The sound is a crucial element in my work. My video-installations are meant to be taken in as a “wholeness” interacting with the space and the audience.



Seyður video

The video displayed with the installation was of a convergence point. The place where Ocean, Air, Earth, Man-made objects and Nature converge.

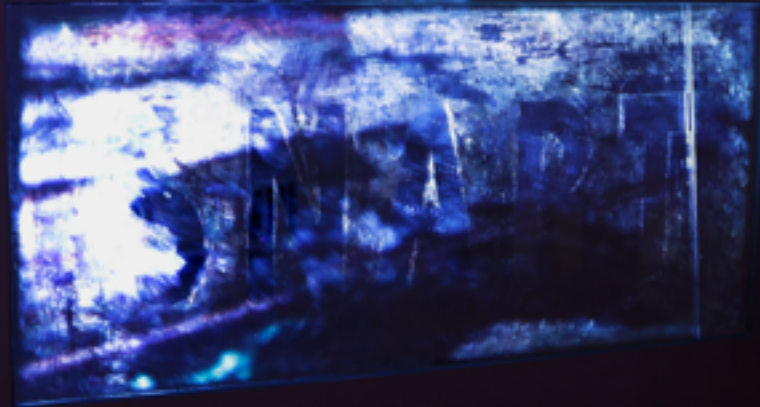


A pivotal point of the Seyður–SNART piece was the mirror. I went to the local garbage recycling facilities in Seyðisfjörður where I worked on the project and found a mirror. The foundation of a SNART concept and approach is the reflection or mirroring. I scraped out the word negatively so only the letters maintained the mirror reflection. Then I placed the mirror hanging from a nylon thread in front of a projector that projected the Seyður video in the middle of the gallery space. Part of the video was reflected on the opposite wall and part was projected through the mirror-glass so that on one wall read SNART and the other TRANS. Part of the piece was the reflection of the mirror-glass that emitted the video lighting into the space in the middle of the room. Part was the video. Part was the readings on the opposite walls. Part was the mirror-glass hanging from the ceiling. Part was the pedestal, the projector and the speakers, located in the middle of the space and an important element was the sound that re-created the Nature-Zen meditative moments I experienced while filming the video and working on the piece in this quiet place in the East fjords of Iceland.

The Name Seyður is derived from the name of the town and means a broth – often in an Occult context.



SMART









SNART-Radio.
Performance at the
Living Art Museum Reykjavik Iceland
2018

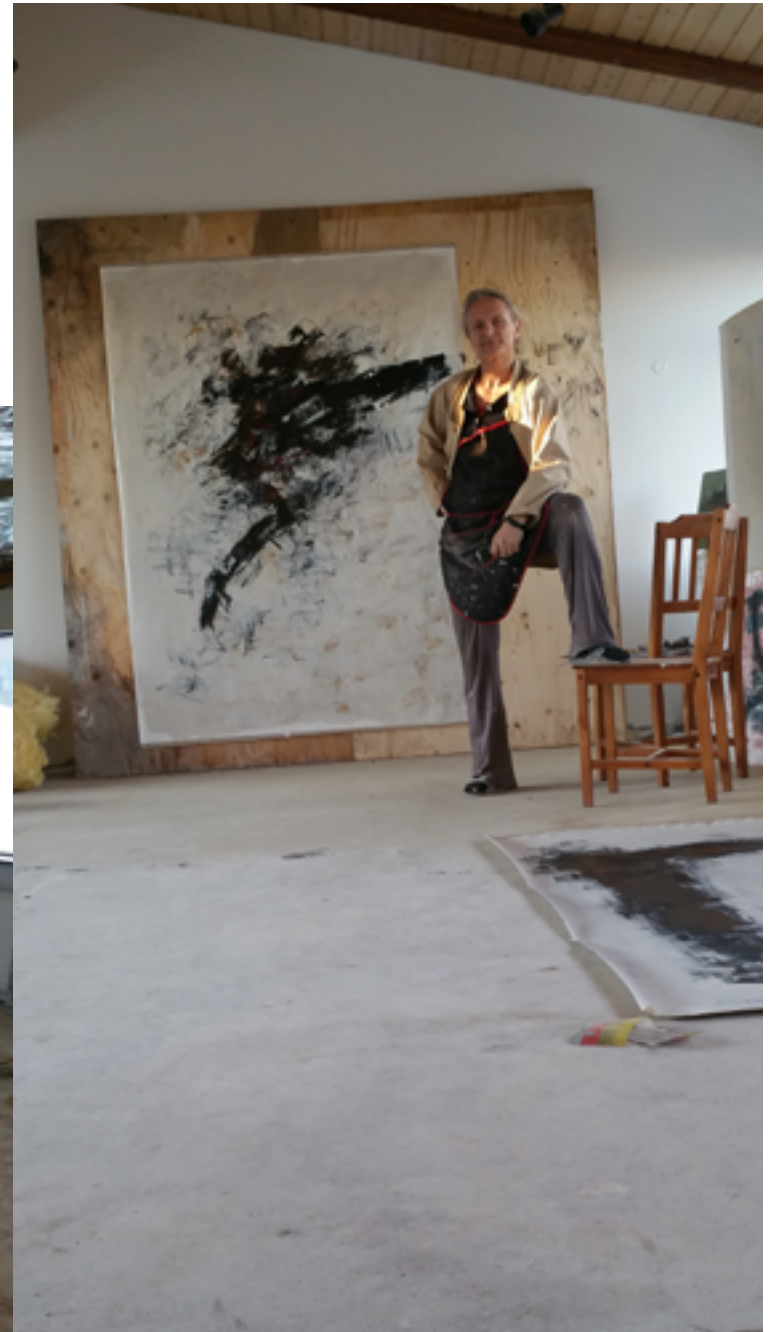


Pietà.

Digital photograph

Exhibited at The Iceland University of the Arts
2018

Paintings





Oil on canvas
200cmx200cm. 2020



Oil on canvas 150cmx200cm.
2020



Oil on canvas 150cmx200cm.
2020

At the moment I am working mostly with oil on canvas in big format on a series I call Brut. These are peintre brut paintings ignited by my fascination with the Béton brut architecture. I am working with emotions, feelings, colors and forms in a dialogue with Minimalism and Béton brut. Those are SNART poems conjured from the depth of my psyche. I feel the need to grow bigger in the format. My SNART intuition and knowledge has allowed me to venture on the path of the Brut. Initially I started with high contrasted works minimalistic in color and forms but gradually I am moving towards broader palette with more detail. I am investigating the boundaries between minimalism and brutalism: When is it not minimalistic any more? How little details added can I go away with and still find it interesting? Where is the place where the color palette is too dominating? This echoes the everlasting investigation of every contemporary artist: where is the boundaries of art?



Oil on canvas 170cmx200cm.
2020



Oil on canvas
200cmx200cm.
2020



Oil on canvas 150cmx200cm.
2020



Oil on canvas, 150x200cm.
2020



Oil on panel, 85x115cm.
2020



Oil on canvas, 90x120cm.
2020



Oil in panel 115cmx120cm.
2020



Oil on panel, 22x35cm.
2020



Oil on canvas, 30x35cm
2020



Bio

Thor Ludwig Stiefel T.O.R.A was born 1967 in Reykjavik Iceland.

T.O.R.A is a multi media artist with roots in painting, music and theatre.

Thor Ludwig Stiefel T.O.R.A studied Fine Art in The Art and Craft School in Iceland in the eighties and received a Bachelor degree in Fine Arts from The Iceland University of the Arts in Reykjavik in 2018.

Working largely in paintings T.O.R.A also engages extensively in conceptual art, performances and video art.

Thor Ludwig Stiefel T.O.R.A has exhibited and participated in Fine Art shows since 1991 and organized various Artist collaborations and Art festivals.

Thor Ludwig Stiefel T.O.R.A is the receiver of Fine Art grants from The Icelandic Visual Art Copyright Association and has engaged in Fine Art Erasmus programs in Germany and France. Thor Ludwig Stiefel. has collaborated with artist, galleries and curators in Europe and U.S.A. as well as working on shows at The Reykjavik Art Museum and The Living Art Museum in Reykjavik Iceland.

Thor Ludwig Stiefel T.O.R.A is the member of The Association of Icelandic Visual Artists and The Living Art Museum in Iceland.

<https://tora.is/>