

In the following the term *I* and *me*
will be used over-extensively

artistic bachelor thesis

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Chapter 1

Straighten out

Note to myself: I have to understand and explain 'Me' to myself before I can place myself into any context. (As I suppose this is requested by the Studienordnung of Kunstakademie Münster).

This text is for myself. For sorting things out. For getting further. For understanding and realizing. Maybe then I will be able to put 'Me' into (art) context...

I take this work as a chance to reflect on myself and my standpoint within what I call 'art'.

To the process of 'making' art:

In the past, I have been confronted with the question of why I study art...the answer changed the over time. In the beginning I didn't have any answer.

So I hid behind the teacher trainee program, which I also chose to study. I said: "I'm studying to become a teacher. I am convinced that in order to convey my understanding of 'art' I need to have experienced 'it'. So an art academy should be the right place for that, right!?" What better place to experience art and what it entails better than at an institution dedicated to fine arts?

Or, instead, I answered: "I do not see myself in an authentic teaching position, now or in close future. First, I want to develop my personality further. I want to feed myself with more life experiences so I can stand in front of a group of young people without feeling odd." How can I be able to encourage young individuals to develop their personalities, how should I be

able to teach young people to think and behave autonomously when I haven't done so myself? So, giving myself the chance, freedom and time to explore my own interests will do good, right!?" Therefore, Art means to me developing personality, to think autonomously.

What drives me to make a piece of (art) work?

To 'watch' and to 'make' art can follow the same mode. In order to have an intense access to a piece of art I often need a sensual experience. The same applies to creating. I need a moment of irritation or appeals to get to the point that something has such relevance to me that I come up with something, that it triggers an idea within me: An utterance in my own means of communication.

Looking back at what has happened so far, I see that my most important works developed in situations that aroused emotions inside of me. Those feelings lead to the urgent need to translate the situation into another language, my own formal language, in order to understand these certain circumstances better.

A certain moment causes urgency: The urgent need to deal with a situation, to document that situation. Reacting to a situation in order to be able to reflect on it myself. The formal language needed to communicate the moment pops up for each situation individually. Formal language as a medium. This "language" is to enable communication: The communication of myself to instances around me. This formal "language" is to connect my micro word (of thought) to an outer macro world (the #real world!?). Being able to preserve my thoughts on a situation. Opening up other thoughts. Giving an opportunity to digest a circumstance in my environment that affects and

influences me.

The very moment of a decision to work with something doesn't follow any noticeable logic or order. I came to the realization that I cannot search for this moment. Or at least always when I try to find it desperately, I fail and it doesn't show up. The moment can only be found. Found in a particular circumstance. I can try, by my experience and knowledge of the above, to put myself in environments that may trigger such moments (or decisions).

The moment that I consider a work is often filled with feelings of anger and disagreement as they are strong emotions I don't see myself being able to process in other ways.

I think back to the first influential and important work of mine from my first year of studies. The installation was a reaction to a drawback I found myself in. My motivation was a feeling I wanted to express: I felt maltreated within the institutional laws of the university. I realized and materialized the huge body of a stone which I felt was in my way of getting further. I placed it in the corridor so that people could not pass. Either they had to crawl on their knees and squeeze through sculpture and wall or walk a detour to reach where they wanted to get to.

It is all about a moment of triggering my personal motivation. (Compared to other positions of my fellow students for example) I see there are different ways of working. Others have a continuous flow of works as an outcome of their personal interplay with 'art'. I always wondered why I was not able to work on a certain topic or a certain medium for a longer period of time. I guess I measured a constant working flow up to an intensity of the works developing. Meaning I understood a work which developed within a

constant working mode to have more context. Where as a work that develops 'like a bolt from the blue' could not be of same value.

Did I measure quantity with quality? Did peer, external and internal pressure lead me to this? Or did I listen, understand and internalise advice that has been given to me? (Again it's a question of how I move within the institution and its structure.)

Maybe continuity is about immersing yourself fully and is not showing itself only in outcomes or in a medium. I was thinking about where my red line was, where my continuity lies...

I see a continuum in my way of working. The approach of reacting to circumstances is a constant in my working process. At least it is noticeable for me in the works that were important to my development. There are works which do not affect me after they are finished. There are others that mean a lot to me. Works where I can connect a feeling to or remember a situation I was in. It is important for me to memorize how these works developed and what urged me to realize them. Situations. Stories.

In the long run, I like to tell stories. Also for myself. In order to remember. Like a diary, I do not want to forget important moments that had a great impact on me.

At a certain point I start to write. I write in strange surroundings and situations. Writing often helps me to express thoughts in situations where I feel that I can't communicate verbally. Putting out a thought –whether speaking to someone or writing it down- helps me to reflect on issues. So, I often write when I am away from home, away from friends who I can talk to in person. Here, in the moment of writing, I want to

note what is on my mind. Putting thoughts into words and sentences clears up a lot. It frees me from heavy notions. It gives me a light feeling afterwards. This mode of urgent note may be the same which leads me to works of mine. Many drawings involve written language. Sometimes words are necessary to fulfill the picture I have in mind. Often I want to document a situation. Like a moving picture with sound. Or the words are comments of mine on the situation underwent. Or quotes heard when I witnessed the situation.



Just go! Drawing. 2015. India.



No Title. Metal, plastic foam, spray paint. 2012. Münster.

Chapter 2

It's supposed to be about me.

About me and art. Puh!

I have been talking about feelings and moments so far. When I look back I notice I had few moments where I felt good about me and art. The relationship is complicated.

(I believe a work of mine to be 'good' when I feel or think something meaningful while observing or remembering me of it. A work is 'good' when it manages to get something across, for me or for somebody else.) But I also notice works turned to be 'good' when I felt bad about something. I don't want to be the 'suffering artist' to produce outcomes!

There was a time when I connected pressure from above, pressure from whatever, to a deeply rooted anti-attitude and punky behaviour. This meant I was simply against persons of authority and I would decline any form of institution causing pressure. I remember this feeling at first to come up back in school times. I was forced to do something I did not understand. I was not convinced that this 'whatever?' should help me in any way or that it would end up being useful for me. By refusing and trying to disturb anything that would not fit me I ended up over-complicating things. Most likely this reaction was provoked by teachers and rules of the institution of 'school'. Of course things did not get easier this way. Still, I chose to act this way. Rebellion was my first and only ever reaction to pressure, at least in school. But at university and academy

I choose to be there, so working against systems and persons I did not like, didn't make sense at all. So how to deal with issues that come along with decisions of free will? Complicated.

Within my studies of English Language I was supposed to have a semester abroad to extend what they call "intercultural awareness." My choice was India. Even though I knew I hated big cities and their restlessness- I gave myself the challenge to live in Mumbai for half a year. During my time in this monster of metropolis I had to face circumstances I was struggling to deal with. I did not want to hide in my apartment from the cruel parts of my decision to come to Mumbai and just ignore what was facing me outside. I was actively confronting myself with this strange world. It was stirring me up inside. I needed channels for me to loosen up. Channels for output. I needed to make notes of what I felt and thought before I felt to be crumbled up from the inside or broke down on the outside. Writing as I mentioned before has always been an important way of reflecting and documenting. But writing texts did not quite have the straightness and the direct accessibility I wanted to evoke. Whenever something struck me I sketched a moment. The topics approached were also clear: Absurdities.... Oppression of minorities within society. Gender. Racism and Tourism. All these topics mentioned in my drawings climaxed in one final action which I had postponed for a long time. I had the idea to collect stones from the railway, paint them gold and put them back in place again. Many questions and thoughts about the Indian culture and society came together in this action for me. It made perfect sense to me. It rounded everything out. Three things: The railway, gold and my humble self. The railway was the most disgusting place I

have seen in all of India. Shit, rubbish, sickness, death and worse were linked to this scene. I was the privileged white European woman. And gold was the biggest visual contradiction I saw. It was everywhere: Shit and gold - Misery and jewelry. And in between: Me. The white, naive, privileged Marie from good old Germany. I couldn't help myself but to ironically connect all this into an absolute absurd action. Of course I needed more than two tries and more than two gates at a train station until I was able to perform. The action itself felt very inappropriate and dangerous. During my stay abroad I was very concerned about not hurting anyone's feelings by acting out of cultural and moral conventions. But in this very moment I did. I did not feel comfortable at all throwing golden stones at the railway while feeling the piercing looks of men around me. Also there was not much time due to the heavy traffic of trains arriving every two minutes, and highly alerted minders at each gate. After the action was performed I was surrounded by men asking me what the fuck I was doing. Unfortunately my friend did not film this anymore- he was too afraid to be connected to the tumult. I made use of the role I was given all this time, I made use of the prestige of being a white rich girl from Europe to talk myself out of any fine. Obviously anything done differently can be fined. So my penalty was a bunch of men surrounding me and shouting at me. Instead of explaining my action I chose to behave as the naive rich bitch from Europe. Almost unconsciously I made use of this prestige. To the question "Why?" I answered "It's funny, isn't it?" To be honest this wasn't the most sensitive thing to say in that moment. I suppose I was so trapped in this prescribed role of prejudices towards me that I stuck to it. Maybe

I needed to confront these men with absurdity. Maybe this was my riot against this system and society that I did not agree with. Of course my action did not encounter the right people I guess, although they were men....It should have been a politician or a powerful man whom my action, (my aggression in this case) should have met. My friend Akshay and I ended up making a fast move and disappeared from the spot. I did not see how people reacted to the golden stones on the railway. The leftovers of the action became a sculptural placement and possible reactions were unknown.

I do not like to be directing situations I put myself in. I am curious of what reaction I will meet. I like to put myself in an experiment. I don't need to have full control. So I am convinced that by moving between being the audience and the performing person, I did not direct the performance. Did this performance work for myself? I guess so.

Important to me: With this action I not only tried to communicate myself but also tried to criticize (the world).

Still these questions remain:

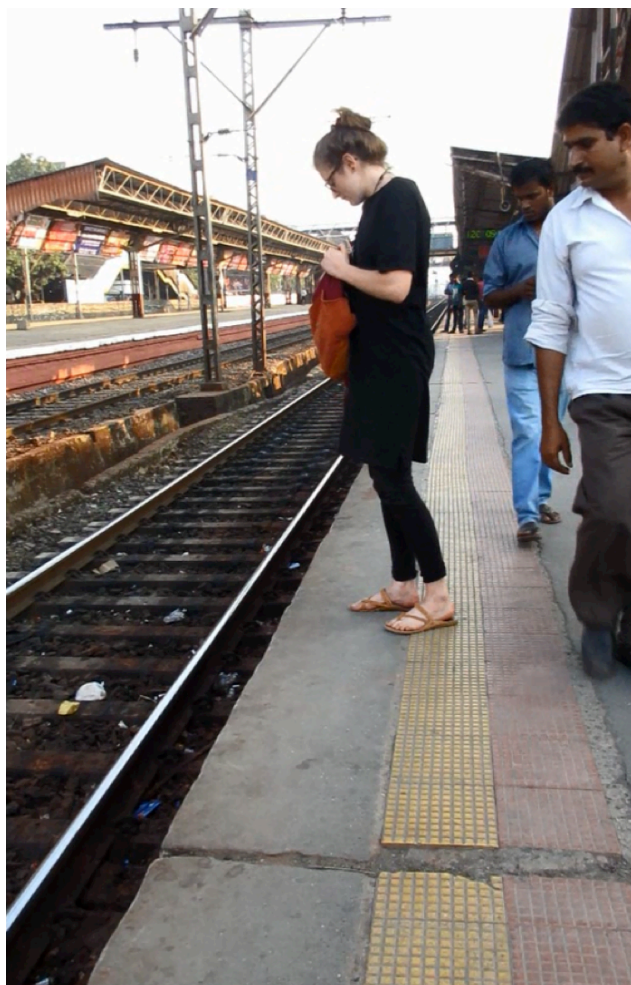
Aggressive performance!?

How to deliver the gesture of a performing act?



Nuggets. Performance/Action. 2015. Mumbai, India.





Chapter 3

All about me, but how about this:

A story about generations

I forgot the birthday of both my grandparents lately. It is not my fault since I no longer live with my mother who used to remind me of important things like that. When I was on the phone with my grandma she made allusions to my failure: “Grandpa was wondering whether I was ok...” When I finally noticed what she was referring to I only came up with the excuse of my generation: “I don’t know what it is about my generation, grandma. We seem to be so busy with our own stuff that we even forget the birthdays of our grandparents, I am sorry!” She answered that her generation then should make an example of my generation and then I would look proper charlie next birthday when I don’t have 50 Euros on my bank account.

So there are settings that cause uncomfortable moods and discontentment inside of me. Which leads further to a certain friction. But what is it exactly that upsets me in such situations? I remember feeling heavily disturbed in my personal comfort zone by cases of limitation of personal freedom. (Not only my personal freedom.) How did I arrive in such a bad state of

affairs and how do I react to that?

I mentioned before that I became aware of situations rooted in free choice and situations based on pre-existing settings coming along with them. Situations I can change and situations I cannot change. Maybe my art of living is to find ways to handle fucked up situations I cannot change.

Or one simply creates a space without parameters and requirements one doesn't want to deal with. Wouldn't that be happy times? No rules, no institutions that claim how to behave correctly. (In the following I get a bit too passionate...) And of course no money! Down with capitalistic systems! Now! At least for me. It's a dream, I guess.

Wouldn't it be nice if there was the chance to build up a space of free choice and free will? There we are.... autonomous spaces and my generation. Am I even able to move freely in this world? Or, more down to earth: Am I able to move freely in surroundings of my environment? Well yes, I have the privilege to move relatively free around the world. I can travel! I have time, I have money. There you are. So what did I go to India for? To experience, by free choice, how it feels not to be free? Or at least I felt a huge piece of my personal freedom cropped off during my stay abroad. Why would I like to put myself in such conditions? Maybe to come back and feel great about my home? (Again very passionate) What the fuck!? There is so much shit going on everywhere, seriously! Is that the kind of tourism of my oh-so-tolerant-and-alternative generation? Having the chance to see the real shit going on in the world... And then? Changing nothing, I guess. Returning, having seen everything, having done everything, but not changing a thing? Well,

then it's easier not to have the freedom of moving across the globe. It would be easier not to have the responsibility of changing things after all that one has seen and experienced...Like my grandma. She was not able to travel and see the world for a long time. Where is the difference of her world view and mine....or better: Who is more to blame for not reacting to the problems of our planet? I guess it would be me. But I am so busy with distracting myself from these unbelievable circumstances.

I see parallels of such ideas I have been working on in the circumstances of my stay in India and further in some of my drawings. For instance, once I needed to note down a striking contrast that was yelling at me: The drawing captures, at least for me, the slum-type constructions of homes I was passing by together with a fellow student from Germany and a Rickshaw driver in the streets of Mumbai. John and I didn't talk much. I did not quite like his attitude. But in this moment I tried to process and understand the pictures flashing by, he commented on the situation, I translate: "Oh, how happy I am. Oh how am I looking forward to my cold shower in a moment." It seemed unreal. I was upset about the fact that a person could think of himself while shocking injustice was omnipresent. Or maybe I have been too monopolized by what I've seen to think of my own self? The contrast of his (in my eyes) selfish utterance and the cruelties of so many was absurd. Did he not see what I saw? Probably not in the way I did. Of course it is way easier not to look. It is easier to put on sunglasses and not see anything anymore. (Sunglasses or black beams became a recurrent theme in my drawings.) What did these drawings do for me? In that moment I could get rid of my anger and disagreement. And

for this moment: I can remember the situation and my feelings right now.

How do other people access works of mine? What do others see in them, when I see so much?

Lately I showed my drawings in class. I spread a selection of my drawings from different periods within my studies on the table. Even though I didn't explain anything, all questions and ideas came up in reaction to the drawings from my time in India. Obviously those drawings, full of emotions and stories for me, seemed to be addressing people the most. Colleagues started to ask "And what happened here?" or "What was this situation about?" I started telling the stories connected to the drawings and let them know my state of being in that very moment. People were listening with concern while I was thrown back into emotions and remembrance. The consensus was that through drawings I make notes to myself so that I'm able to hold on to circumstances that had a great impact on me. People also enjoyed "reading" my stories themselves, but said it was more interesting to listen to me in person. Presenting became a performative moment. Paul Schwer, the current professor of the class, commented that he sees the moment of drawing as a creation of a room for myself, an action that opens up the chance to move back to a private zone where I can engage in soul-searching. Now, I can agree on that. Maybe drawing gave me a time and sphere for myself, when my surrounding did not allow that. (Mumbai did not have many places where I felt truly comfortable.)

So what did the drawings do for me? For now: I can remember the stories and emotions of that moment. Back then: It also gave me a safe haven. India's restlessness surrounding me

caused a procedure of calmness and moments to be withdrawn into myself.

There are circumstances causing unease inside of me.

I am likely to open a monologue inwards to deal with it.

I make this process visible.

I output.

I turn myself inside out.

Ach, bin ich froh.

Ach, wie ich mich auf meine kalte
Dusche gleich freue.



*Oh, how happy I am. Oh how am I looking forward to my
cold shower in a moment. Drawing. 2015. India.*

Ich seh' das schon gar nicht
mehr.



I don't see it anymore. Drawing. 2015. India.

Chapter 4

The real artist or the young horse?

To think about myself in art I need to think about myself in person first. So where do I stand in life now?

Other than conventional universities the institution of an art academy wants to support personalities. Personalities of artists. Artists of personalities. I realized a moment of a turning point in my positioning in art. There was a time that I did not see the quality of my works. For me there was no sense of it all. I compared myself to positions I looked up to and found that I was never going to be the “real” artist. The real artist who is sitting in front of his or her painting night and day. The one who is so passionate about whatever he or she is doing, that he or she forgets everything. Maybe even to eating or friends. The one who can’t live without creating a piece of work in any kind of form. No, I was never going to be like that. But as mentioned before I used to measure quality with quantity. And the presence of accessible works. Works that are there.

With an important work I managed to realize that I had to take myself seriously. I know that people are different. So artists are different as well. Yay Marie, that’s it! You are different!

I found that works need to have an importance for myself. So instead of comparing myself to others that were not working like I was, I began to see value in things that touched me. Even if those were ideas or things which were not spatially present.

In summer 2014 I realized a work of mine *Du bist doch noch so jung und hübsch, mach doch mal was anderes* (*You are so young and pretty, why don't you do something else*). I took part in a group exhibition in Viersen. The Löbber class was given the building and surrounding gardens of the Skulpturenpark Viersen to play with. I chose the elevator. Instead of the originally planned sound installation I ended up performing an action of riding it up and down the elevator. In an overly emotional argument with the professor I was confronted with fundamental questions of why I study art and blamed me to be a senseless act in art. Thinking back I do not remember many times that I had to cry in public. I prefer to cry at home. I preferably do not cry in front of an authority figure, it shows weakness. I had to think this over a lot and I talked with many people about the sense of art or my situation at the art academy. I had wonderfully valuable conversations during the time of building up the exhibition. For the exhibition time I claimed the elevator to be my own personal space. Also here I needed a space as refuge. I continued to search for conversations on what happened inside of me and the sense of art in life. After much thinking, talking and being in the elevator I learned to cherish and value my ideas. Now I am able to say that this action and work of mine helped me to find self confidence and awareness of myself in the context of art. I mark it as a fertile and productive moment for myself. I just had a look in my notebook from that time. I chose to quote and translate excerpts and text passages that open up the dialogue between me and this moment again:

Art gives her the opportunity to do things she is interested in and which she usually wouldn't do.

Giving myself time for questions, things and topics of importance, which I usually don't pay attention too much.

I don't want to act in a non-self-determined way.

Making contact.

To confront.

Facing issues. Working.

Elevator.

My room. My elevator. My collection.

My thoughts. My process.

Me in the elevator.

I place myself in my work.

I am the work.

I cause work.

I am work.

I work.

I am sitting in my non-work. I'm reduced to the essential. With all questions, thoughts, doubts, self-doubts, expectations and relations.

I give myself time and room for me. Is that an artistic process? Without time and room for developing myself - no creative developing possible...? So? Time and space.

“An artist must be interested, research! Has to be on a mission!”
What makes an artist? Why the whole thing?

Art gives room for the development of the individual. It justifies everything.

So what did this experience of despair and crisis do to me? What doesn't kill you makes you stronger? Well, I guess I found myself in a situation my mother wanted to warn me about when I was applying for the academy years back. She used to study painting and I remember her story:

She was on a class trip out in the woods to paint together intensively. After each day out the group met in a hostel-kind of place to talk about the works of the day. The first evening the professor said to my mother the painting was not good. She continued the next day. In the evening the professor said the painting still was not good. She continued the third day and ended up in an argument in the evening because her painting still wasn't good. My mother and the professor left the group to argue outside. He said she was not allowed to paint the next day. She was restricted to broom the yard of the building the whole day. She cried her eyes out in distress and rage. After that followed a day of silence but then she said she could work and paint again. The works still were not brilliant but the professor said now she was on the "right way".

Jaja, I thought when she came with that anecdote. What haven't you experienced, oh wise mother!? Now that I am through with this I can laugh about it. The only question remaining is: Do I need to be broken at certain point? Like a young horse (is broken in)?

Chapter 5

That's so Marie

How to deal with this now?

Or

*Do I have to travel to war zones to
make 'good' art?*

Or

*If I only had known and realized
things earlier – it would have been
way easier.*

I said writing (as well as outputting in any form) helps me to clarify things. Straighten things out. So what does this text do to me? Articulate my thoughts. Straightening things out...

While writing this work I continuously come to clarity of thought. Besides that, new questions come up. I see the meaning of this text. It helps me to intensively reflect on myself. I arrive at a better understanding of myself and my development in art. But how do I deal with this now?

It feels like I have been finding a recipe for a dish that has already been there. The recipe explains how things are mixed together to end up like (in most cases) something 'good'. (And here I censored myself and only examined works of mine which I gave a certain importance to...) Do I now have to follow this recipe? Like a rule to success for Marie to 'produce' (in her understanding) good art?

Is it going to be “Oh, this work of mine is so ‘Marie’”?

I am a little afraid of hindering myself with this kind of found awareness. Is this a manifest of ‘my way of working’? Does this mean I will have this in mind every time when I am about to output something?

No I don’t have to travel to war zones. No, I don’t want to see the shit going down to output pieces of works.

To calm myself down I remind myself of ‘other’ works that arose differently. Yes, there are more working modes of mine which are also part of my artificial development. I don’t allocate much significance to them. They are not linked to strong feelings or stories. Can this working mode of mine, leading to ‘not important’ works, be important as well?

I guess I start to question my whole point of this paper now...Or am I thinking further?

Do these works carry another form of urgency and intensity for me?

Open End (15.08.2016)

...

The open End continues a few months later....

Chapter 6

Trying to find an end

After a long break I had a read through this work again and realized that I have moved. So far I have been researching my micro cosmos of thoughts in this text. Now, after an important time of reflecting on my working progress, other issues become more urgent and significant to me.

(I took advice that has been given to me and) looked at other artists' works which I may inspire me or lead to other stimuli. Still I cannot really say what it does to me, taking other artists' works into account, when my head is busy with completely different concerns lately.

For instance Sophie Calle's work "True Stories" – I can make sense of it: Reading her collection of little stories gave me a very personal but abstract insight of her life. I understand her work as little fragment stories which add up to one big... In a way this was the whole point of my work here. I ended up telling little stories to be able to try and tell (and understand) the big one: *Of what I've got to do with "art"*.

In the end I could write about other positions in art and of how they affect me. I could use my understanding of my working progress to put me into context. Instead I chose to give a taste of what really has an urgency and impact on me at this very moment:

Yesterday (15th November 2016), I was confronted with an idealistic question: **What is my most powerful tool?** And my head went further thinking: How can I make use of art to change

something (in the world)? Can art legitimise (everything)? **Can art enable a breakthrough of systems of our society, such as capitalism, power relations or laws?** (For instance: If I was the curator of a big museum and I offered the museum or exhibition space to illegal refugees, if I gave them a shelter and called it art....it would work, right!? I could declare an illegal act to be art and it would be justified.) Can art therefore be the tool, the solution of problems I see which are not solved yet? (Of course only until censorship comes into play.)

Where do I stand between *conforming to systems* and *being able to modify* them?

I recon it is an ongoing process of reflecting my situation and my position in society. This means: Reflecting and asking which responsibilities do I carry for a greater sense?

(As I also still plan to become a teacher:)
Where do my social responsibilities lie?

I feel responsible to think critically....
How will I criticise systems, move within them or change them?

Of course these thoughts are worth writing a whole new text. But at this point I actually wanted to find an end. This end is to round my chain of thoughts about myself up and to drop a hint at how I continue thinking, moving and working. The only urgent thing left to say is:

I have to continue linking my micro cosmos to the macro cosmos I live in.

Ps.: I very much felt like the woman from *Sex and the City* who is typing her diary while talking to herself.

Anti-Plagiarism Statement

Hereby I declare all contents and stories mentioned in this work to be true. What's the point in lying to myself? I never ever lie to myself.

All ideas and stories come from my own head, my experiences, my grandmother and my mother. The added pictures are taken and worked on by myself.

