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## Autoethnography In Photography Research Of The Self

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**Abstract:** The focus of this research is to describe a concept of auto-ethnographic research that is based on an understanding of the ethnographic view. The aim is to encourage those with a background in the arts to get detailed information about this type of auto-ethnographic research. The urgency is to strengthen auto-ethnography into artistic research (about art) from their own experiences. The research departs from the literature review. Data was obtained through literature research by relying on primary data in the form of an article entitled An Autoethnography on Learning About Autoethnography. This article was written by Sarah Wall (2006). The work, Fitting the Methodology with the Research: An exploration of narrative, self-study and Autoethnography written by Mary Lynn Hamilton, Laura Smith & Kristen Worthington (2008) as supporting methodology. The work Artistic Research: The Thoughts And Ideas Of Mika Hannula written by Guntur (2020) to support the artistic. The case study used Self-Reflection in Mirrors in Photographic Works by Sepba Fri Atnin. (2018). The results of the study are first the concept of research on qualitative data sources that come from the researchers themselves. Second, its application in the field of arts such as recording media arts, visual arts, fine arts, dance, and performing arts.

**Keywords:** autoethnography, photography research, self



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## Introduction

In the opening section of this study, the question is raised as to whether or not it is possible to conduct literature research based on personal experiences. Doesn't this illustrate subjectivity that is not in line with scientific principles that glorify objectivity? There is a bright spot when the claim of objectivity on the one hand is a situation where one subjectivity meets and joins another subjectivity. Over time, the subjectivity increases and becomes objectivity. That part is open for debate. The debate is also experienced in this paper by taking an illustration from the writing recorded by a teacher. The teacher experiences the situation just before teaching, followed by the situation during teaching and afterward and then he records it. (Jyi-yeon Yi:2008), (Hayler:2011), (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington. :2008). For the time being, we don't mind what medium she takes notes on because of the advancement of technology, no more having the diary.

Let the notes metaphorize in various forms. The essence that comes to the fore is that notes have been taken by the teacher. Notes where the students walk with him into the classroom. Some students enter the class after the teacher is in class and there may even be students who enter late. The teacher takes notes on all of that. During the lesson, the teacher explains the material in the classroom. The behavior of the students varies. Most of them pay close attention, while a few are not serious. Some were even sleepy and playing with writing utensils or drawing on their books. The teacher takes note of that too; she knows who is sleepy and playing. In one day, the teacher takes notes on what, who and what happened in the class. Does the teacher record in his/her memory which is later put into electronic media, does the teacher record in his/her observation paper, until the teacher is able to record the best student at that time. In summary, the teacher has done the activities of an ethnographer.

The word autoethnography in the Oxford Advanced Dictionary of Current English by AS Hornby, is not found as a single unit but consists of two words that combine, namely Auto which is interpreted as self or by one self which in Indonesian is interpreted as self or self. The combination of these two words into ethnographic autos is meaningfully interpreted as a description of the culture of ethnic groups written by themselves and about themselves. This also happens in another word but which has a similar case, namely the word autobiography which is interpreted as a biography written by oneself. Thus we come to know that Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing in which self-personal experiences are woven into an ethnographic notes.

Research with auto-biography as a method for the art world may not be popular and very limited. So far, auto-ethnographic research has been found in the world of



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education and teaching, especially research cases with data obtained from oneself such as one's own diary records. To find out how close the art world is to the research of this ethnographic method, makes this proposal an interesting research urgency.

## 2. Literature Review

### Artistic Research

The term Artistic Research refers to: Arts-based action research (Jokela, T, 2019); practice-based research, practice-led research (Gray and Malins, 2004); studio-based research (Sullivan, 2005; Niedderer and Roworth-Stokes, 2007); arts-based research (Thompson, 2006); practice as research (Smith and Dean, 2009); arts research (Kjørup, 2011); research through practice; and artistic research (Borgdorff, 2011; Nimkulrat, 2011); research involving practice; critical inquiry; practice through reflection and/or research (Niedderer and Roworth-Stokes, 2007: 6). All of the above statements inform us that artistic research places art practice (*praktik seni*) at the center of both the research process and the research results.

Artistic research has different characteristics than other research, because it focuses on the artist as a researcher and the artist's creative process. Artistic research is fundamentally research in art or research through creative work in art. Artistic research is a form of knowledge production. The subject matter of artistic research is not formal knowledge, but thinking in, through and with art (Borgdorff, 2011: 44). Recognition of the inseparable relationship between the person/self and ART and to give place to forms of inquiry and expression. In this autoethnography (we discuss below), the artist explores understanding as a method of research and describes one's own experience.

### Autoethnography

The term autoethnography refers to here the concept of ethnography and its application in several cases.

An article entitled *An Autoethnography on Learning About Autoethnography*. It was written by Sarah Wall and published in the International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5(2) (2006).

What is interesting about this paper is the philosophical view of autoethnography and its intensive study of efforts to open up space for non-traditional studies and expressions. This article is placed as primary data with fundamental considerations on the definition, philosophical and theoretical exposition, applications and examples of ethnographic bibliography in a simple and thorough manner. She had considered



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epistemological and ontological assumptions and methodological approaches, familiarized myself with a number of autoethnographic examples, And come to conclusion that using oneself as a subject is not a problem but how oneself is used is very important.

### Photography research

Photographic research refers to the every steps of research that embraces the field of photographic studies. (Pasternak , 2020). The field of photographic studies is very dynamic, and on this occasion, it is presented that analyzes the field's histories, theories and research strategies; discusses photography in academic disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts; draws out the main concerns of photographic scholarship; interrogates photography's cultural and geopolitical influences; and examines photography's multiple uses and continued changing faces. Larsen, J., & Sandbye, M. (Eds.). (2020).; Glaw, X., Inder, K., Kable, A., & Hazelton, M. (2017).; Bates, E. A., McCann, J. J., Kaye, L. K., & Taylor, J. C. (2017).; Mena-De Torres, J., & Roldán, J. (2017). Ana Peraica (2017).

The very dynamic, activity of photographing can be known when oneself becoming the object of photography as well as being the photographer is called self-portrait. What is interesting about self-photo research is that the self-identity that appears in photographs is often related to the character, personality, social status, relationships, profession, and age of the subject. In photographs, the self-object is always strongly visible, because the photograph usually shows only the self without additional objects. Self-portraits, on the other hand, are not done to emphasize self-identity. Identity is a person's special characteristics or circumstances or identity. In self-portraits, it is not just about highlighting the face as an object. In every photo shoot, always pay attention to the composition of each photo made. Sorokowska, A., Oleszkiewicz, A., Frackowiak, T., Pisanski, K., Chmiel, A., & Sorokowski, P. (2016); Gorichanaz, T. (2019); Holappa, A., Lassila, E. T., Lutovac, S., & Uitto, M. (2022); Pivac, D., & Zemunik, M. (2020); Fried, O., Jacobs, J., Finkelstein, A., & Agrawala, M. (2020)

### 3. Methods

The object of research is literature that discusses ethnographic bibliography both as a writing method and as a research genre. These are:. An Autoethnography on Learning About Autoethnography by Sarah Wall. Next, Fitting the Methodology with the Research: An exploration of narrative, self-study and Autoethnography by Mary Lynn Hamilton, Laura Smith & Kristen Worthington.



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The design of the research is to the Autoethnography as a stream of research or writing that deals with the multiple consciousnesses that are able to connect the personal self with culture. Ethnographic inquiry is clearly illustrated in Mike Hayler's 2011 examples as well as Mary Lynn Hamilton, Laura Smith & Kristen Worthington's 2008 grounding of the application of auto-ethnographic methods in education and teaching.

This source of data is included in the type of library research. According to Mestika Zed, library studies have characteristics, namely (1) researchers are dealing directly with text (nash) (2) library data is ready-made, which means that the source language is already available (3) library data is generally secondary data in the sense that researchers obtain second-hand materials and not original data from the first hand in the field (4) the condition of library data is not limited by space and time (2008). Library research has its own form of records. The right form of library research notes can play an important role in the success of library research. There are several ways of taking notes. (1) verbatim extracts (2) summaries (3) references (4) descriptions (5) reflections. In this study, a summary note form is used, in which the researcher summarizes the reading using his own words and not the words of the source (Mestika Zed, 2008: 55). Also Mary Lynn Hamilton, Laura Smith & Kristen Worthington's (2008).

In this study, data was collected through document analysis. Document analysis was used to collect narrative data. (Creswell, and Creswell , 2017) The purpose of document analysis is to identify and collect research data. In document analysis or content analysis, researchers not only record the important contents expressed in documents or archives but also about the implied meaning.

Data analysis: stages of analysis and analysis methods. here are two approaches that can be taken, namely distinguishing between narration and narrative analysis.:.

a. Narration analysis

Narration analysis is a paradigm with a way of thinking to make descriptions of themes written in stories or taxonomies.

b. Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis is a paradigm by collecting descriptions of events or events and then shrinking them into stories. Here data analysis 1) exploration, a step after data collection is the exploration stage, which is the initial stage of shooting to find out at this stage a direct visit to the place. 2) experimentation process is carried out in terms of shooting angles, field situations, supporting objects in the photo, and not forgetting the aesthetic elements of the photo including composition, color, lighting and several other elements in each photo taken. 3) Giving specification 4) Narrative analysis.



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#### 4. Result

**The first result** relates with the urgency of An Autoethnography It is such a perspective on qualitative paradigm. Meanwhile it can also be applied into other disciplines such as arts.

As a perspective, what is Autoethnography?

Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable Self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations.

As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition.

Usually written in first-person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms – short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose.

In these texts, concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness are featured, appearing as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture, which themselves are dialectically revealed through action, feeling, thought, and language. (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739, in Andrew Miller 2009:910).

From the above, it can be understood that ethnographic bibliography is a perspective of using self. Here it is applied in study of Arts and photography.

**The second result** relates to artistic methodology.

The article entitled Fitting the Methodology with the Research: An exploration of narrative, self-study and Autoethnography was written by Mary Lynn Hamilton, Laura Smith & Kristen Worthington. The article was published in the journal Studying Teacher Education: A journal of self-study of teacher education practices, 4:1, 17-28 (2008). The article talks about an appropriate research methodology frame. In this case research refers to a narrative inquiry, self-studies including ethnographic self-studies.

Autoethnography (hereafter used to refer to the term Autoethnography) is a qualitative research method that allows the author to write in a highly personalized manner, describing his or her experiences to expand understanding of a societal phenomenon. Autoethnography is based on postmodern philosophy and related debates about reflexivity and voice in social research. The intent of Autoethnography



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has the relationship between person and arts and make room for nontraditional forms of inquiry and expression. Here the detail of artistic research propose to alternative research:

1. Researcher's Position in Artistic Research
2. Purpose/Purpose of Artistic Research
3. Originality
4. Knowledge and Understanding
5. Questions, issues and problems
6. Context
7. Methods
8. Documentation and Dissemination
9. Data Sources in Artistic Research
10. Creative Process as a Data Source

(Guntur:2020)

These are the points of artistic paradigm can be applied in the process of this autoethnography. The author, the artist, the photographer (himself or herself) explores his/ her understanding. As a research method and presents her experiences as an emerging qualitative researcher who is both novel and ideological.

**The third result** shows the supporting of autoethnography and artistic methodology in photography research. Photography is one of the visual media that can express all the ideas that the artist has. People who do photography are called photographers. The choice of self-reflection in the mirror as an object in the process of realization in this photographic work is the result of observations about activities that are often carried out in daily life. In the form of visual photography works, the viewers can easily understand and comprehend the ideas of the artist. In each work created, the author works by photographing himself reflected in a mirror that becomes the media. The activity of looking in the mirror is often done in daily life. This activity is not only done to see oneself, but it is often connoted as a means of self-correction. This became the basis of the photographer's own interest in visualizing self-reflection in the mirror. And it can be done by yourself. This is where autoethnography comes play more. Here are the more that photographer can do:

1. Search for reference sources from books and the internet.
2. Looking for places where there are mirrors
3. Exploring the angle.



4. Exploration of the pose.
5. Observation of object composition.
6. Observation of light direction
7. Adjusting the angle.
8. Adjusting the composition of supporting objects.
9. Determining the pose

(Sepba Fri Atnin. 2018)

## 5. Discussion

An auto-ethnographic study in arts research is a challenge to be tested and further developed the work of arts. Alternatives in the field of art can simultaneously be shown in the following artistic research.

The young photographer in the process of becoming a photographer goes through stages between his personal self and the culture that colors his life every day. This photographer records every detail of his photographic objects. Sepba Fri Atnin. 2018, Self-Reflection on the Mirror in Photographic Works. Bachelor Thesis. Indonesian Institute of The Arts Surakarta.

**Self portrait 1**  
(photo: Sepba Fri Atnin, 2017)

Media : photo paper Size : 60cm x 90cm  
Shutter:1/25sec Aperture:f/4  
ISO:1600 Camera : Canon 60D  
Focal Length:18mm Year:2017



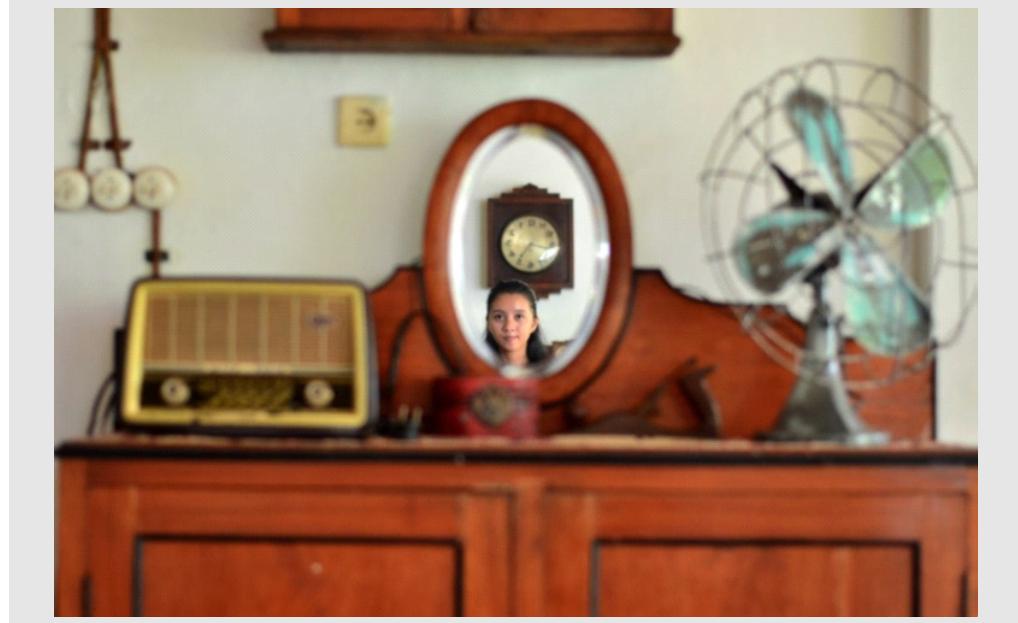
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Visualizing the photographer herself among objects, in this work the artist found an interesting place where there are many antique objects, the arrangement of these organized objects makes a very interesting visual and looks artistic in the photographer's photo. This photo has the impression that it is not bad to reflect on the past. Using antique is symbol of the past, the author feels like returning to the past where the author does not feel lonely at home during the day.

The artist is the photographer that combined the psychological elements at that time with a pile of artifacts that found as products of his culture. Finally, she will have a lot of valid data to be used as ethnographic research. To visualize the creation of photographic works, several observation methods are needed about photos of self-reflection in a mirror from various sides so that the visualization can be understood and enjoyed by connoisseurs of photo art.

**Self portrait 2**  
(photo: Sepba Fri Atnin, 2017)

Media : photo paper Size : 60cm x 90cm  
Shutter: 1/100sec Aperture:f/1.8  
ISO: 200 Camera : Canon 60D  
Focal Length: 50mm Year: 2017



The photo entitled "Memory" is the artist's personal memory in taking this work. The wall clock in this work is a marker of when the work was made, in this work the author also finds a balanced composition on the right and left sides so that the composition in this work looks interesting. Memory is all the photographer's memories of what the author has gone through in the past.

This is an autoethnography case showed by promoting self-reflection to the work. After searching and finding reference sources, continue to the experimental stage by photographing self-reflection on a mirror with several different angles and poses using photographic techniques that emphasize composition and point of view.



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After experimenting with shooting techniques, the next step is the editing stage, by adjusting brightness and contrast using photo editing software.

**Self portrait 3**  
(photo: Sepba Fri Atnin, 2017)

Media : photo paper Size : 60cm x 90cm  
Shutter:1/30sec Aperture:f/4.5  
ISO:500 Camera : Canon 60D  
Focal Length:16mm Year:2017



The photo entitled "Angan" (dream) is the artist's thoughts or memories in various ways, visualizing the photographer who looks up as if all his wishes are above his head while the lines on the mirror are as if the author's wishes hope that each wish will be achieved soon. The artist has wishes that he wants to realize for the future.

Color photos are intended to show the original color of the reflected self according to what is worn when shooting the work. A self-portrait using a round mirror held by a person immediately becomes the center of attention.

**Self portrait 4**  
(photo: Sepba Fri Atnin, 2017)

Media : photo paper Size : 60cm x 90cm  
Shutter:1/60sec Aperture:f/3.5  
ISO:640 Camera : Canon 60D  
Focal Length:15mm Year:2018



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The photo entitled "Bound" shows two self-reflections in different mirrors. It is like separating two desires of the self in a hope. The self-reflection at the top shows a reflection in a box-shaped mirror, as if the self cannot get out of the boundary line. While the reflection at the bottom shows more limbs, as if showing the hope of the self who wants to be free not to be hindered by boxes. Bound is what the photographer feels, always following all forms of rules, written or not, but actually the author wants to be free to do the activities as desired.

The black and white nuances of the photo make a dramatic impression on the photo. In photography work, the researcher and also photographer also found several difficulties and obstacles, including when shooting erratic weather because shooting outside during the rainy season. When the weather was cloudy, the shooter was hindered by the lack of light and rain that came suddenly while shooting.

**Self portrait 5**  
(photo: Sepba Fri Atnin, 2017)

Media : photo paper Size : 60cm x 90cm  
Shutter: 1/640sec Aperture:f/1.8  
ISO:100 Camera : Canon 60D  
Focal Length: 50mm Year: 2018



The photo titled "Bimbang" (Indecisive) is a self-reflection that shows a person lying on black sand with limbs separated between his face and legs. The mirror shows a face that looks tired and wants to rest, but the feet look like they want to continue their journey. Indecisive is the photographer's feeling when he wants to do something but it is not what he wants to do, but it must still be done.

In using more than one mirror, the artist was hindered in looking for self-reflection from each mirror or when the mirror was not visible. The artist wanted the mirrors to



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reflect each other but was hindered by the tools brought when shooting outside the city.

**Self portrait 6**  
(photo: Sepba Fri Atnin, 2017)

Media : photo paper Size : 60cm x 90cm  
Shutter:1/250sec Aperture:f/1.4  
ISO:400 Camera : Canon 60D  
Focal Length:19mm Year:2018



The photo entitled "In One" visualizes several members of the author's body in several mirrors, even though they are separated, the reflection of the author's self remains in one unit. There is a reflection of the foot that supports the body, body, and face of the photographer. In one is the entire self of the author from toe to head which is an inseparable unity.

## 6. Conclusion

The term autoethnography has been used since the early 1980s. The intent of autoethnography is to acknowledge the relationship between person and culture and to make space for nontraditional forms of inquiry and expression. In this autoethnography, the author explores her understanding as a research method and presents her/his experience as an emerging qualitative researcher who is both novel and ideological. Furthermore, the application in art fields such as fine art, recording media arts especially in photography as *photography research*. And we are so grateful to Sepba Fri Atnin for being her best practice for self-photography works.



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## Acknowledgement

It is suggestion that self-report notes have been used because they are not really objective in research and for art research. Such notes have been used in teaching and educational research. By using autoethnography, it is the alternative answer being that subjective can be objective.

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