

LIFE SPORT presents photographs by Andreas Simopoulos of Vasilis Zarifopoulos. On 25 May 2016 Andreas and Vasilis met for a photoshoot. The photographs were not intended to become an exhibition

*however,*

'*Vasilis*' is an exhibition of oversized portrait photographs of LIFE SPORT's company representative 'Vasilis'.

Taken in a professional studio setting, the portraits are subject to scrutinization, e.g. for a job application, a dating site, mum and dad, facebook. They aim to professionalize, optimize and extract a considered version of self, without trying to hide that intention. Allowing for projection and (dis)identification, the portraits determine qualities of evaluation within social comparison and competition, e.g. competence, friendliness, trustworthiness, handsomeness, ambition, youthfulness, honesty, etc.

The portraits' professional aim emphasize the human potential in search for opportunity. The formality of the photographs convey a seriousness and urgency to please, to be marketable and of worth. Capturing the desire to be seen and validated for one's self, they expose the awkwardness and insecurities of that intention, as well as the hopes attached. Presented in the commercialized setting of LIFE SPORT sweatpants shop, they take the form of advertising and marketing of the self, whilst '*Vasilis*' is a stand-in for all. The "I" is capital, the self an asset. The photographs are promotional and outcome oriented. We identify with the requirement of self-representation and performance. The enlarged headshots are confrontational. '*Vasilis*' asks for assessment that questions identity (nationality, politics, religion, gender, family) simply by making visual contact. He addresses our external and internal value systems. We are reminded that opinion is never harmless, the same way the subject can never not be political. 'Vasilis' is automatically a stereotype and representative of a generation. He is by default gender inflicted within a patriarchic society. Yet there is a vulnerability and powerlessness, even innocence, to judgement and interpretation. To what extent is identity a product of external evaluation, and how can we convey our own sense of self through the medium of portrait photography?

As creative producers we are required to represent an individual artist brand (name and face). '*Vasilis*' counteracts this expectation by being an appropriated identity, 'the company representative', a collective and a real life muse. It's a way to operate under a guise, in order to value collective over individual achievements and blur the boundaries between one and many. The portraits of '*Vasilis*'

present us with an authorless work, allowing for the voice of a multitude and a new set of ears to listen.

If 'we are all', then who is I?

Having our photo taken implies a personal quest for selfhood by defining individual characteristics that make us unique. We are all subject to judgement and in need/search for a self, regardless of our given (birth) identity. The process of individuation is corrupted by the need to capitalize upon, as it may be the only means towards social and economic upward mobility within an increasingly abstract situation and fewer opportunities. To become a self is primarily to become a utilizable self whilst other aspects -that are complicated or 'negative'- are deducted from view (profile edit).

'*Vasilis*' speaks of self-determination, perhaps reminiscent of new age belief that our fate lies within us (not the state, not austerity). An uncertain passion and optimism driven by the idea that it is all already within us and just waiting to be activated, if you just focus hard enough you can make it happen for yourself. It's up to us whether we keep believing or address the obvious, that it is often not up to us and not our fault.

LIFE SPORT is a sweatpants shop and an art space based in Athens since 2014. We aim to build a structure for arts funding without ties to institutions, a pursuit for selfsufficiency and independence through the sales of sweatpants. Utilizing a self in the way we do '*Vasilis*' mirrors our intent to work with what we have got readily available and turning that into greater effect.

- LIFE SPORT. We are all

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