

SUMMARY

Visual Research Project “*The Daycare Diary*” portrays the everyday lives of individuals with mental special needs through the example of a day center in Viljandi. At the Vinger Day Center, I meet nearly twenty individuals whose stories and characters I get to know more closely with each visit. These encounters and stories are all completely unique yet ordinary. The aim of the thesis is to raise awareness about this marginalized societal group and normalize their inherent distinctiveness for the public.

During the practical work part, an extensive collection of analog photographs of the members of the Vinger Day Center in Viljandi was created. For the exhibition, I presented 20 enlarged photographs in the size of 30.5 x 40.6 cm in a specially made photo box. The photographing process will continue at least until autumn 2025, with the aim of publishing a comprehensive photobook. I consider the thesis as an work in progress of the entire project, which helps to achieve my ultimate goal.

The written part of the thesis consists of four parts. In the first, I provide an overview of my journey as a photographic artist so far. In the second chapter, I describe my encounters while capturing the nightlife of Tartu and my enthusiasm for collecting stories. The third chapter analyzes the entire practical part of the process. I describe which cameras I handled, which working methods I used, and what my work routine was before and after photographing. In the last, fourth chapter, I touch upon the ethical issues of photographing vulnerable groups of people and highlight examples from the history of photography that I found interesting for myself.

My works are often autobiographical, depicting myself, relationships with family or strangers. However, the photos always feature a person and a personal desire to show human relationships. Having grown up with a severe physical disability, I have found an interest in documentary photography and a calling to normalize disability through art during my studies. To better understand my authorial position, I studied professional literature concerning the photographing of marginalized and vulnerable groups. My focal points were critic Susan Sontag's book “*On Photography*”, and Maija Tammi's “*Sick Photography*”.

I wanted to challenge myself and develop technical skills in the field of analog photography. I took a big step out of my comfort zone by starting to use a medium format camera beside the

compact camera I have been used to working with so far. I revived my knowledge of film developing and photo enlarging and adapted to photographing in diverse lighting conditions.