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# International Artists-In-Residence 1990-2010 : Mobility, Technology and Identity in Everyday Art Practices



## Overview

**Rita Vargas**, PhD, artist and curator based in Finland, focused on the analysis of **artists' statements and contemporary art** produced in a context of travel, more specifically, in association with **mobility programs**, which have been growing exponentially in the last 20 years.

## Research topics and results

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The research focuses on the analysis of artists' statements and contemporary art produced in a context of travel, more specifically, in association with mobility programs, which have been growing exponentially in the last 20 years. Due to the development of these programs, in parallel with information technology supported by travelling facilities, artists have been challenged by unsettled transnational working practices and competition. Viewed by most of the artists as an opportunity for exploring creative processes, in one hand, changes of geographical environment impact in a lifelong learning and cultural maintenance, but in the other hand, artists' statements reveal the dichotomy and paradox between globalization, collaboration and dispersion versus isolation, individualism and concentration.

Travelling possibilities, despite being a fuel for creativity, are challenged by uncertainty. However, this uncertainty is based on artists' openness and willingness to travel internationally, which in turn, helps to develop the acknowledgment of cultural differences and barriers. Artists' cross-cultural environments are then composed of international and intercultural communication issues and practices, where the sense of place, environmental awareness through multisensory experiences and the importance of everyday routines are reflected. Expressed by artists in the most varied ways, especially through performance art and site-specific installations, cross-cultural environments are negotiated by artists' hybrid identities, situated at the intersection of Western and Non-Western aesthetic traditions.

## Motivation for research

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The study focuses on artists who travel into artistic residencies, and not yet on artistic residencies, neither specifically in a residency program per se. One of the reasons I focus on artists instead, is because I have been also working since the 90's in Japan, Germany, Portugal, and Finland as an artist. This provided an experience within social and cultural spheres important to better understand the whole phenomenon as a researcher in the academy. As an artist, the expectations, confrontations, time and space changes, encounters, all cultural and social environment provided an intense self-transformation, which was not expected, neither enough prepared. I felt the need to research in-depth these issues, in order to understand the phenomenon in myself, and at the same time, help others in the same situation, by sharing results of research.

## Contribution to the field

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My research contributes to the general knowledge of art residencies around the world at different levels. From drawing and connecting the history of travelling traditions into nowadays artists' travelling fashion into art residencies, this research also wants to remind how important is to ensure artists'-in-residence supportive environment.

## Key learnings

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In art residencies, there is a creation of a negotiation space, that is based on the recognition of cultural differences, acknowledgment of mobility as a cross-cultural enrichment of cultural practices, contributing directly to the revitalization of the local community's daily life quality, environmental awareness, sense of place, and overall well-being.

**Rita Vargas** is a Doctor of Philosophy in Art and Culture Studies (Art History), by the University of Jyväskylä (FIN), with the support from the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT). Vargas accomplished artistic residencies in Japan (2007–2008), in Finland (2009–2010), Portugal and Germany (2010). Vargas' artwork is represented by Jyväskylä Artists Association (Galleria Becker), Ratamo Centre for Printmaking and Photography (Galleria Ratamo), Galleria Patina (FIN), and Casa das Artes de Tavira (C.A.T), PT. Vargas is also represented in public and private collections in Portugal, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany, New Zealand, Russia, Japan and Finland. At the moment, Vargas focuses only in her artistic practice in Grafiikka-ja Valokuvakeskus Ratamo (Jyväskylä), although still discussing her academic research in national and international art history and cultural studies conferences. Vargas is also a mother.

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