

If I were to explain my project to a stranger, it would sound like this:

Tell me about your mother

"She was 21 years of age when I was born. She was very self-conscious about her appearance. I remember once as an adult, seeing a woman with long hair riding a bicycle – in Berlin, I think it was - and I thought, that's how my mother would have looked with grey hair.

She died before her hair turned grey.

She often asked me, "How old do you really think I look?"

Why did you go to Athens?

"I wanted to get away from Copenhagen. I didn't know anything about Athens or Greece. I hadn't been there since '89 – on inter-rail and earlier as a child on all-inclusive holidays with my mom and grandma. I really didn't know what to expect."

Who do we see in the pictures?

"The gallery of people in **Preparing for the Beach** is housed in 25 different municipal clubs spread through-out Athens. The clubs are called Friendship Clubs or ΚΑΠΗ.

They are located in villas, apartments or basements. In some of them local retirees are offered gymnastics and self-defense training. The classes are given by beautiful male Greek former top athletes who in the morning hours travel around to the many clubs, populated by the city's older women "

Who do we *not* see in the pictures?

"We don't see the translator or the gym-instructor. And we don't see me.

Or my mother.

In fact, the number of pictures I have of my mother is rather limited.

Images and memories blend together a bit. I have my pictures and I have my memories.

And then there's probably a lot I invent myself.

I have a picture of my grandmother at the Benaki Museum, the main museum in Greece.

She has written "On top of the Benaki Museum" in her photo album.

She was there on an all-inclusive holiday."

Tell me about the concept of 'time' in your project?

"There is *my* time, where time has just passed, where it was just about getting away from Copenhagen.

There is also Time which passes quickly. As I looked at the women; I thought, this will be me, very soon.

Then there is a more measurable time. The exercises are all fixed in time. All these exercises are repeated, day after day, year after year. Always counted in sets of five, and always repeated five times. The instructor counts out loud - to five.

It's the nature of gymnastics – has been ever since ancient times.

These old people stand before me, and strangely carry out these ancient exercises.

It's like time is looping all around me.

Could you say something about how you use Sound?

"I would like to integrate four speakers into the exhibition.

In one corner we hear the women's choir sessions, which are also part of the clubs' activities. This is where American pop songs from the 80s are translated into Greek, such as a Greek version of "I Will Survive" by Gloria Gaynor. Elsewhere, a noisy Greek TV is heard broadcasting political debates throughout the day, interrupted by commercial breaks, which are also part of the clubs' everyday life. Occasionally, we hear the interpreter's voice in English as an underlying translating soundtrack. In the last corner we hear the instructor counting to five, over and over. He looks a bit like Richard Gere. He reminds me so much of the 80s.

He was *the* ultimate sex symbol back then."

How was it to be so far away from home?

"It was a bit like being in the theater. After all, I've been a kind of audience to these 30 sessions of gymnastics. The exercises have a fixed script. The instructor has his or her lines.

It's like watching a movie that is equal parts workout video and social realist drama. Told in a language I don't understand. The photographs are stills from this movie.

I don't know the cast. I fantasize about their life stories by looking at their bodies.

I imagine what lives they have lived. Who they are outside the confined scene where I meet them."

"The pictures are accompanied by short quotes from the daily scenes at the clubs. Here the women are in dialogue with the teachers and my young interpreter.

Together, they reflect on the past and present in a one-year cycle. The quotes will be installed on the walls of the exhibition like excerpts from a screenplay, where each generation has its' specific roles and lines."

Why are all the women alone in your pictures?

- Gymnastics is something you do together.

"Is it? My mom did it on the living room floor alone.

I look at them as individuals. I always saw them come to class by themselves. It was probably also the only time they had to themselves. After all, they were insanely busy. They had to hurry home and cook for their husbands and care for their grandchildren, due to the economic crisis, you know.

I also don't know how much others care about them anymore.

They deserve a portrait."

What in essence is your project about?

"Ultimately, the pictures are about my mother.

Who she would have been today and whether she would still be doing gymnastics? A kind of Vanitas Motif that reflects on the volatile nature of life told through photography, choir singing and Jane Fonda.

That life is precious. And sometimes much too short.