

## “Self-Made”

Instagram Curation by Jacquelyn Davis

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“Pull yourself up by your boot straps!” “Do it yourself!” “Get ‘er done!” In light of the Jeff Koons retrospectives at the Whitney and Moderna, the notion of the “self-made man”—whether or not this trope actually exists or is pure myth (especially for artists)—demands attention. Can a successful artist ever claim that they “came from nothing” or have built their perceived empire thanks to their ingenuity alone? How many esteemed artists have a valid rags-to-riches narrative? If the myth is collapsing in the United States, how does it pan out in Sweden?

Jacob Dahlgren has been instructed to search for this “self-made (wo)man” artist in Sweden by asking pointed questions to creatives who cross his path—Q's which revolve around one's socio-economic status, whether or not their income (and what %) comes from hard work and perseverance vs. inheritance, privilege or the state—amongst other related inquiries. It is suggested that all t-shirts worn during Jacob's quest are “self-made” in some form or fashion—whether it be the stripes, stitching, material or design—and were purchased with funds that he earned himself. Due to the personal nature of the Q's, Jacob is instructed to replace the artist's presence in each photo with an object suited to represent the artist in question—to protect privacy.

### *sample questions*

1. Do you work for money?
2. How much money (%) that you earn supports your artistic practice?
3. Are you a student, worker or both?
4. What do your parents/guardians do for a living?
5. What socio-economic class do you identify with (working, lower-middle, middle, upper-middle, upper, etc.)?
6. How do you fiscally support your artistic practice?
7. On a scale from 1-10 (10 = most difficult), how difficult has your life been compared to others around you?
8. What is your definition of 'work'?
9. Do you consider yourself to be a rich (wo)man?
10. What is your definition of 'wealth'?
11. How many hours weekly do you work for money vs. work on your art?
12. Is there any value in hard work?
13. Have you ever inherited money and/or property? If so, how much?
14. Have you ever been poor?
15. Have you ever begged for money or food?
16. Has your artistic practice been stifled by not having enough money for materials?
17. What constitutes the 'self'?
18. How much does your creative progress directly depend upon your finances?
19. What is your definition of 'success'?
20. Do you make art alone and/or collectively?
21. What does 'self-made' mean to you?
22. Have you ever done anything 'unsavory' or 'illegal' to support yourself?