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Digital reconstruction of photography - a case study of Tyyne Savia

Study concentrates on photographer Tyyne Savia (1887-1959) whose portrait photographic production does not exist as a complete collection. Savia had a long career and she took thousands of portraits in her photographic studios 1918-1959. It would be an enormous work to manually pick up all Savia's photographic portraits from museums photographic archives which are arranged alphabetically by name of sitter.

Destiny of Savia's collection is not rare in the history of last century Finnish photography. After the closure of studio it was not usual to offer negatives to an archive or a museum. Relatives usually threw them away.

In this case study I will focus to find out is it possible to reconstruct digitally a collection of Tyyne Savia's photographic portraits from 1920s. As a source I will use digitized portraits found online. One of sources is Finnish National Digital Library, Finna (www.finna.fi). Finna provides open access to collections of Finnish museums, archives and libraries.

Main questions of the paper are: Is it possible by using digitized photographs found online to get coherent sampling, reconstruct a collection of portraits and to get relevant understanding of Savia's photographic style and expression? Paper is not based on digital analysis or data mining. As a humanist I use methods of history and art history: close reading and image analysis. In future it would be tempting to find out what new perspective automatic indexing could give to visual analysis.