

Tricycle

A forum for creative processes



Sketch of a structure on an apple tree (Astrid)



Leena's apple orchard

Shelter

The workshop entitled Shelter took place in Helsinki from 22nd – 26th June 2008 and was arranged by the artist group Tricycle, which was established at the Nordic Ceramic Symposium in Norway, Art/Works 2007. The founding members of the group are Astrid Heimer (Norway), Malene Pedersen (Denmark) and Leena Juvonen (Finland). This workshop constituted the group's first official meeting.

The theme "shelter" was chosen because it both offers an opportunity for discussions about aspects of sculpture and embraces the concept of *a room* for sharing experiences, knowledge and ideas. The aim of the group is to develop a network of Scandinavian artists who work with *paper clay*. As a sculpting material, paper clay allows the artist to make thin and lightweight constructions without them cracking. The inherent plasticity of the material provides great potential when it comes to sculpturing/shaping processes. Unfired paper clay is also much stronger than ordinary clay and can be handled and moved without difficulty. The works created during the workshop differ widely in both form and techniques. The workshop may be seen as a *visual discussion* about using paper clay as a material in creative processes. Once the works had been documented at the end of the workshop, they were recycled. We had originally planned to collaborate outdoors for one week, with a view to creating works related to nature. The venue chosen was Leena Juvonen's beautiful apple orchard. But due to heavy rain, we were obliged to do most of the work inside in Leena's studio. Working on the sculptural aspects of the word shelter was very inspiring and interesting, especially in the surroundings of the orchard. The workshop fostered conceptual discussions and experimentation with different techniques.



Leaves and structures



Undulating forms of trees

Materials, shapes and structures from the trees were used in different contexts, for instance for sketches of different branch structures and how these are used in new shapes, as seen in Astrid's works. Another example is Marlene's large sculpture, where she uses the branches as a structure on which to build and fix the sculpture, while Leena uses the branches as a pattern imprint, which she presses into the clay and stains black. Her works are made of slabs of clay pressed into a mould made from the back of a human body.



Shelter (1): Work by Malene (a wooden structure covered with thin slabs of paper clay)



Branches Works by Astrid (paper clay and wire string)



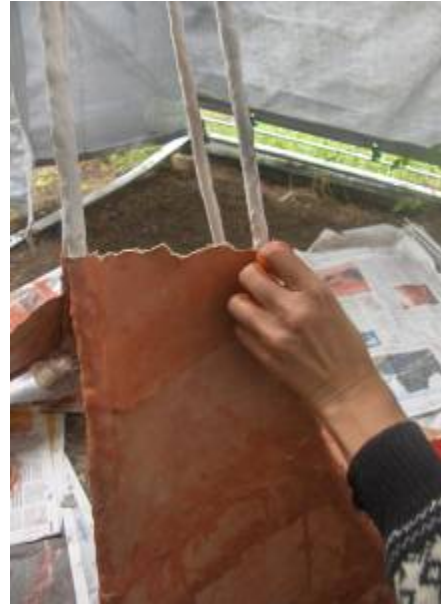
Detail from Leena's work



Leena working with terra sigillata



Shelter (2); Malene Pedersen



Shelter (2) (detail)

To make more space for the workshop, a large tent was used. There, Malene built one large sculpture on a construction made of several thick ropes gathered at the top and then suspended from a hook on the ceiling. This type of construction makes it also possible to work on the piece while it is upside down, thus changing the spatial working process with clay as a material. For Astrid, this was a totally new and important experience.

The strength of the green ware of paper clay is amazing, especially if the shapes are well constructed. Malene has been doing a great deal of work on installations made from unfired paper clay and she shared her experience in using wood glue to strengthen the ware still further. She covers the surface with several layers of glue, using a brush. This type of surface can even withstand some rain for a while, before it disintegrates.



Astrid's work – upside down



Malene's work: the sculpture is strengthened with layers of wood glue



In the apple orchard

During the last two days, it stopped raining. As a result, we moved our sculptural work out into the orchard and the environment it was designed for. The theme shelter can be interpreted in many ways, for example an inner and an outer space. Leena's two sculptures, made in the form of contours from a human body, create a large, negative inner space. When these were placed in the orchard, Leena bared the earth by digging a hole in the lawn matching the size of the negative space of the forms. The shape of the moist, black soil functioned well as a contrast to her sculptures.



Malene's work (detail)



Malene's work joined to a tree



Leena's works in contact with the earth



Astrid's work hanging from a tree

Our intention at this first workshop was to discuss techniques and concepts and make some kind of documentation of our collaboration. During the workshop, we decided to continue our interaction by making new works as *visual comments*, based on each others' pieces. In addition, we made short written comments, describing our impressions and results. The end result is a *recycling* and sharing of techniques and a deepening understanding of content; making something of one's own, but based on the work of the others. We have so far shared the results of this first working process.



Astrid's work (2), hanging from a tree



(detail)

Leena's comments on Astrid's work:

I see your work as a vision of a dancing woman, her skirt spinning up and round wildly. The upper part of the sculpture reminds me of something beautiful, yet uncomfortable when it comes to dressing: a corset that is too tight, or a hairstyle or even a crown. This wire makes me think that it would be too narrow for the dancer. In your work, I see my way of pleasing others: as a garment, a corset is for supporting or shaping the body in order to be beautiful, to be looked at. Of course, it is also a provocative garment, full of feminine power.

I like the way you combine metal wire and paper clay. Sharp wire makes a good contrast to the smooth surface of the clay. It divides the figure into two parts, like mind and body, or senses and emotion. The form is precisely shaped at the top, transforming to a more organic movement on its way down to the hem of the skirt. The wire directs my gaze, while being delicate and threatening at one and the same time. The wire also makes the construction more moveable, like a mobile, so that it appears to be dancing in the air.

I feel like loosening my own corset of outer needs and expectations so that I can breathe freely. For me, the practice of breathing means a longing to make life more simple and natural. I have made open corsets as a landscape of the body. This is not just about living a visually beautiful life, but feeling the environment, as one does when one wanders in a landscape and has time to see values in small things.



Furrow (Leena's visual comment)



Ocean (Leena's visual comment)



Shelter (1, 2): Leena's work

Malene's comments on Leena's work

What struck me first was the red colour, its sensuousness, on a back, which reminded me of a mountain - a mountain with a cave for hiding or protecting - or a nest perhaps. The idea of a shelter is very strong in this work. The tree that marks the spine is very delicate and poetic, while still giving the impression of holding this body in a strong, upright way. Yet it is in fact empty and hollow, as if its inside has disappeared (like a bird from its egg), or has not yet arrived. The black soil also evokes a strongly sensuous feeling and the feeling of a hidden secret.

I will plant my hands in the small garden
 I will grow green
 I know I know I know
 And the birds will lay eggs
 In the grooves of my inky fingers

Forugh Farrokhzad



Visual comment 2 (Malene)



Visual comment 1 (Malene)



Visual comment 3 (Malene)

From the technical point of view, I found the process of covering something exciting; the idea of mummies/cocoons/cases. I decided to cover body parts or objects with plaster and then cast paper models, which were to be covered in bands of porcelain. The paper casts were difficult to make and I had to change the recipe for the paper, as it shrunk too much. But I like the long, ritualistic process and the idea of the inner form burning away in the furnace. My hollow objects are made of porcelain with kaolin terra sigillata. They are to be fired. (The pictures show unfired pieces).



Detail of Malene's work



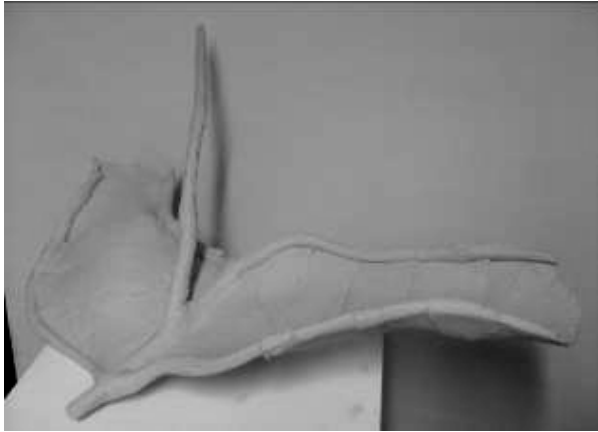
Malene's work

Astrid's comments on Malene's work

Structure: dynamic lines, movement. The sensitivity (closeness) of the combination of clay and branches is beautiful. I see that the aesthetics of the materials make a clear and strong expression. The movements and lines give an impression of human movements, as when bending over to cover or protect something. The way the thin slabs are built onto the structure gives an extra rhythm to the whole piece. In my visual comments, I have so far been working with the same elements as Malene has used in her sculpture. This is still more of a new technical experience than a new sculptural form would be.



Visual comment 1 (Astrid)



Visual comment 1 (Astrid)



Visual comment 2 (Astrid)

In my work, I have changed the structure so that it is made from clay, not branches. I like this way of working: starting with lines and structures, instead of a base and a wall, as I always find myself doing when working as a ceramist. In my future work, I would like to use this working process to open up my forms. I want my work to function better spatially, to start with a clearer, inner structure. (The pictures show unfired pieces).

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