

Wetterling Gallery

Talk between Director Simone Schmid and Liva Isakson Lundin September 2016

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Simone Schmid:

Your works require a lot of space. They take up, and often occupy, entire rooms, but in an elegant and organic way; the rooms are visualised and become inseparable from the works. Can you tell me what the different rooms mean to you and how you approach a room to work in and with?

Liva Isakson Lundin:

I often work with rooms in a practical way. I draw the room in a 3D program and twist and turn, thinking of the distance between the walls. I also spend time in the room, looking for what defines it and what the other conditions are. It can be a rafter, a ventilation system or other possible points of attachment. Prior to my separate MFA Graduation Exhibition at Galleri Mejan, I started thinking a lot of rooms as an installation component, the existing flat surfaces as a skeleton or a stability that can be extended to materials and objects. For the exhibition at Wetterling, I have worked differently in relation to space than I have done in the past. It is a small room located in the middle of the gallery, and I fill it with a group of sculptures that are turned inwards but push outwards. Only a thin membrane prevents an impending expansion. A kind of inverted spatiality.

You have, during the summer, worked in an outdoor environment for the first time. How did you experience the difference in the work process, for your work, and for the experience of your work?

I actually worked in the same way as when I work with a room. But there were quite other components to relate to, which was a challenge. The place they gave me was a steep downhill, full of ferns and trees. I displayed a version of the installation *Stimuli* from the spring exhibition at Mejan, changing only the fact that the downhill slope could decide the shapes, rather than the gelatine blocks and walls, and the anchorage became an important part of the work. They felt smaller and more passive than in a room, where they took over in another way. They were also more camouflaged.

In all your installations, materials and materiality play an important role. You emphasise material properties and experiment with them. However, you do not use classic materials, such as wood or metal castings, but rather “intermediate products” – pre-processed industrial materials, such as steel strip, latex or gelatine. How do you find these materials and what triggers your interest in a material?

My process is based on experimentation with what different kinds of materials can do. I often get stuck with a property, such as the elasticity of latex, so I use that as a starting point. In the studio, I surround myself with materials I like, carry out plenty of tests, sometimes it takes several years before I include them in a work. That was the case with both the gelatine and the latex.

I have not looked at it as, I never use “classic” materials, but it is interesting; to some extent I think you have a point. One of my greatest motivations for creating is precisely solving problems, finding my own ways of doing things. The search for a suitable technique triggers me and I often choose materials with completely different intended uses. The technique or work process is an important part of my works. Both with the steel strip and the latex, how the materials behave when I process them, is also visible in the finished installations. I rarely am drawn to an established technique in that way, making castings, for example; I get very uncreative of thinking that I have to cast something. Which I many times have thought I would like to, since I think it seems lovely to use such a tight-reined process. But I never know what I would cast and in what material; there are too many options. Once I made a casting that I think was interesting. It was the inside of a clenched fist in bronze that I hung on

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a rope, so the weight of the bronze stretched the rope. I also cast the gelatine cubes for *Stimuli*. So maybe you will see more of that.

Is there a correlation between material and shape?

Very much so for me. The material properties in combination with the spatial conditions largely determine the shapes in my works; I let the materials react to the situation. But I also work with composition and on finding shapes that feel a certain way or create a different kind of feature. I have, for example, the apex as a recurring shape, both with the steel and the latex, which I use as a scanner/tentacle, but also as something potentially dangerous.

Many people think of art as something static. Your works however, live from being “tense” and in motion. What role does movement play in your works?

That is right, I often use, for example, tension, weight and balance in my work. I have never made any actually moving works, apart from video, but there is usually an opportunity for movement. Movement or tension is something I associate with a physicality that you can relate to with your own physique. I also try to work with movement in a way that allows the installations to become a process rather than collections of objects or materials. I look at the exhibition situation as a state or as a temporary positioning. Something that is going on in the room.

You seem to use contrasts as an approach, both in shape and material. Is this related to the above-mentioned tension?

Yes, that tends to be the case! A contrast that I return to is soft and hard, as with the latex and steel in this exhibition. I use materials that have a tension between them, where the different properties can meet in showdowns, where they shape, stabilise or deform. Contrasts can clarify the materials for each other.

When experiencing your installations, one feels a definite relation to the human body, both in the proportions of the sculptures, the position in the room and in relation to oneself as a viewer. Not least, your works trigger a wish to touch and feel them. What role does the body play for you in your creation?

I drew a lot before I started at Mejan. It was always bodies in distorted positions; they often merged with each other and their surroundings, and were part of a sequence of events. I have partly returned to that now, but in sculpture, both in the actual shapes and in the tension. I am interested in posture, balance and muscles. What keeps a body upright. My works of steel strip, both in this exhibition and earlier, are very much about just that. They are part of different systems to be held up or fixed, supporting functions. It is also a question of what controls what in the installations, which component is dominant in the situation.

One might describe your works as minimalist. Do you see yourself in that tradition, or how would you describe the way works relates to it?

I understand the analogy; I work a lot with repetition and am sparse with colours and the number of components in my works. But I also try to make shapes that are expressive and organic. My installations of groupings often involve a kind of shape, but where each part in itself is unique. The details and differences are important. In the practical set of rules where the shapes can be found, I still want them to have their own characteristics.

Is there humour in your works?

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I believe there is an absurdity that can be humorous, definitely.

Do you have a dream project, where you just have to find the right material to carry it out?

Hm, no, it is hard to imagine a project without considering the material! But in general, I would say that it would be helpful to be able to turn off and on the force of gravity. To be able to stop things in the middle of a fall, for example.