

ESKE REX

works

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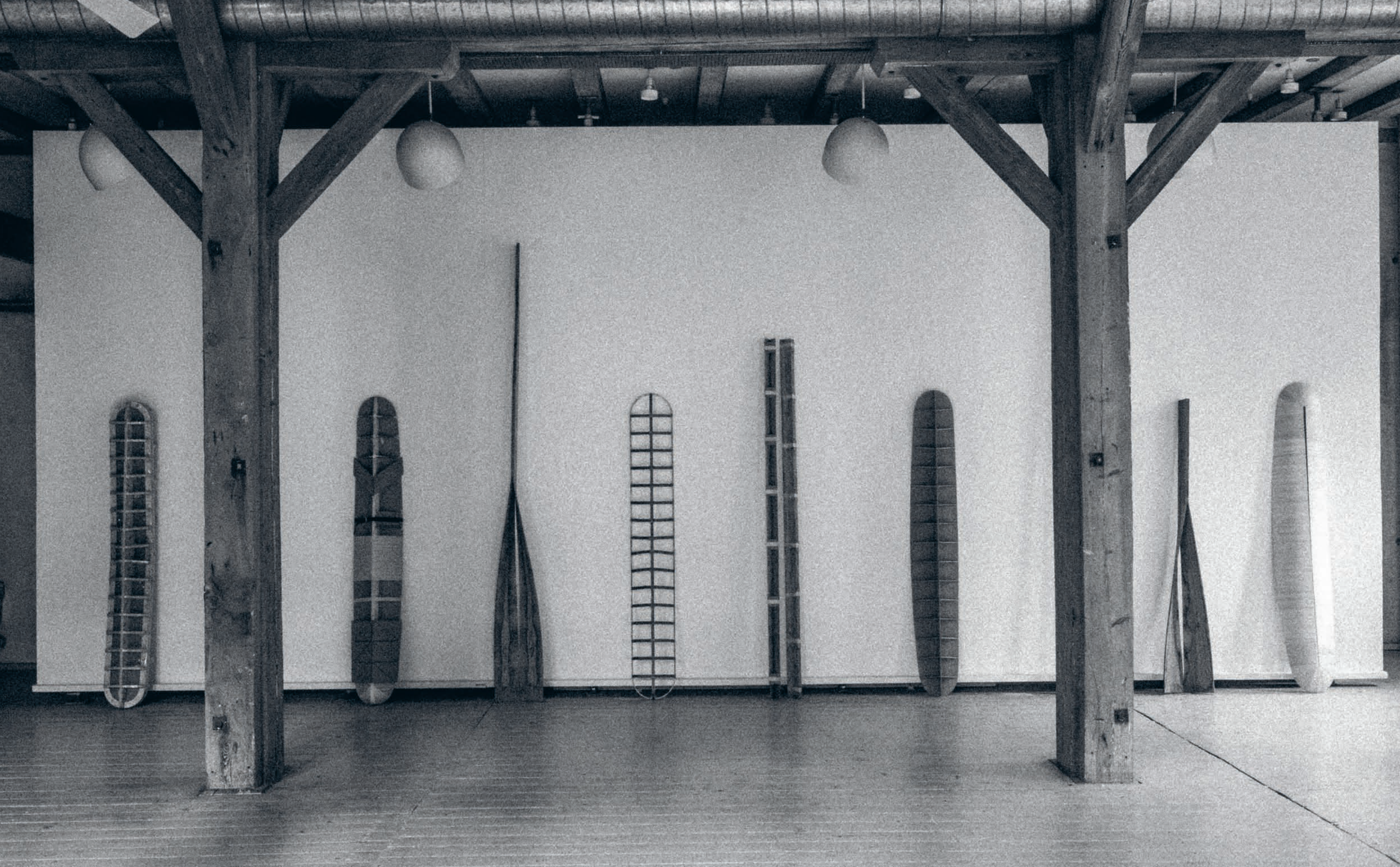
Sculpture Works

Page 96-123

Texts and Travel Registrations

Page 124-159

Installation Works



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PREVIOUS PAGE: Studio view, Danish Art Workshops, Copenhagen, 2018
RIGHT: *Vessel #3*, detail



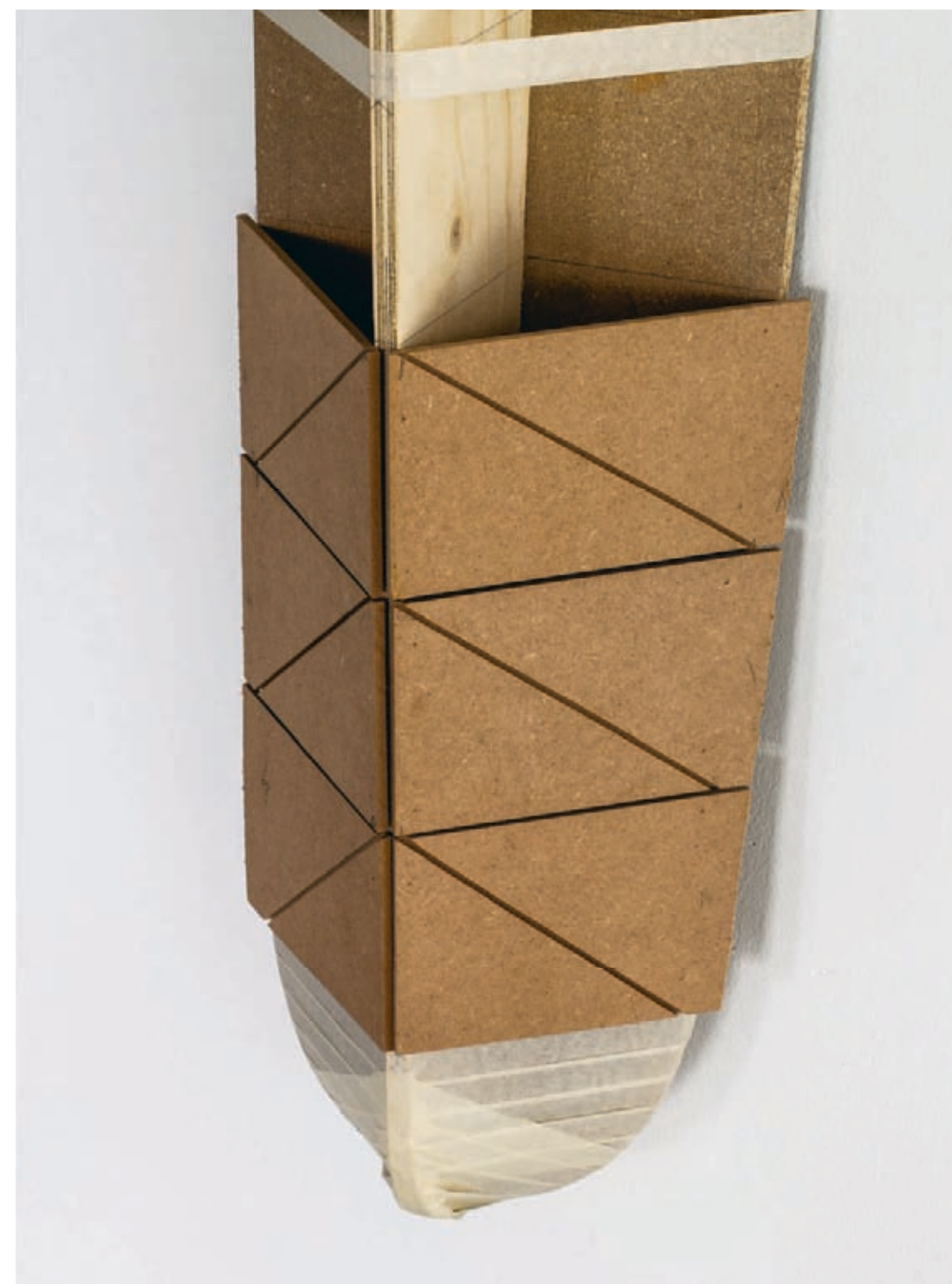


LEFT: *Vessel #2* (variation), detail

RIGHT: *Vessel #3*, ash, 209 x 35 x 19 cm. *Vessel #2*, cedar, 205 x 30 x 22 cm, 2018

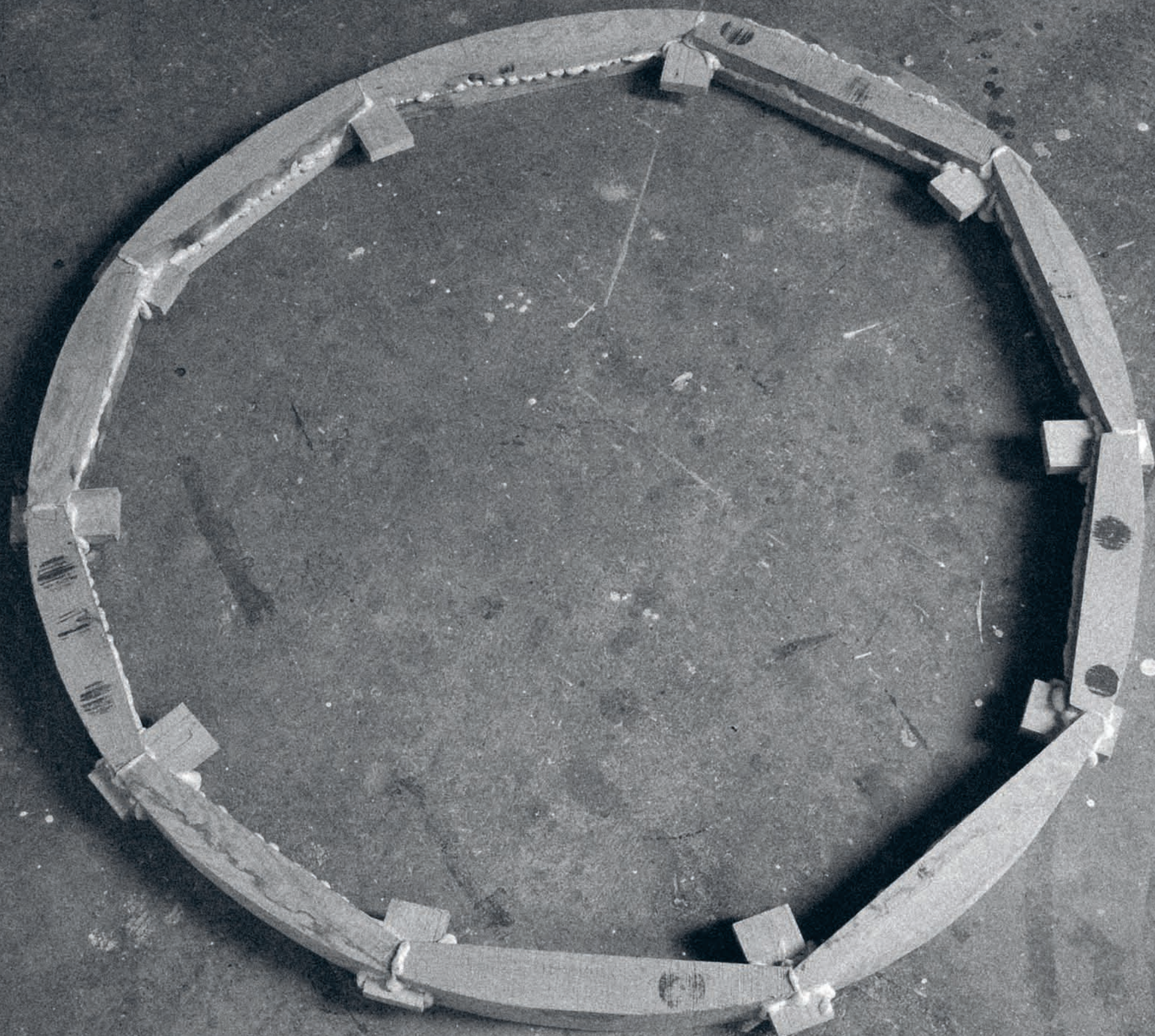


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 LEFT: *Vessel #3*, in progress
 RIGHT: *Vessel #1* detail





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Vessel works, in progress





PREVIOUS SPREAD: *Ring*, oak, foamglue, 5 x 115 x 120 cm, 2010
RIGHT: *Screen*, oak, ash, metal, old blind, 140 x 140 x 175 cm, 2010
NEXT SPREAD: Studio view, Danish Art Workshops, Copenhagen 2010





TOP: *Untitled*, old drawer, shingle, 45 x 25 x 10 cm, 2010

BOTTOM: Detail *Ring*

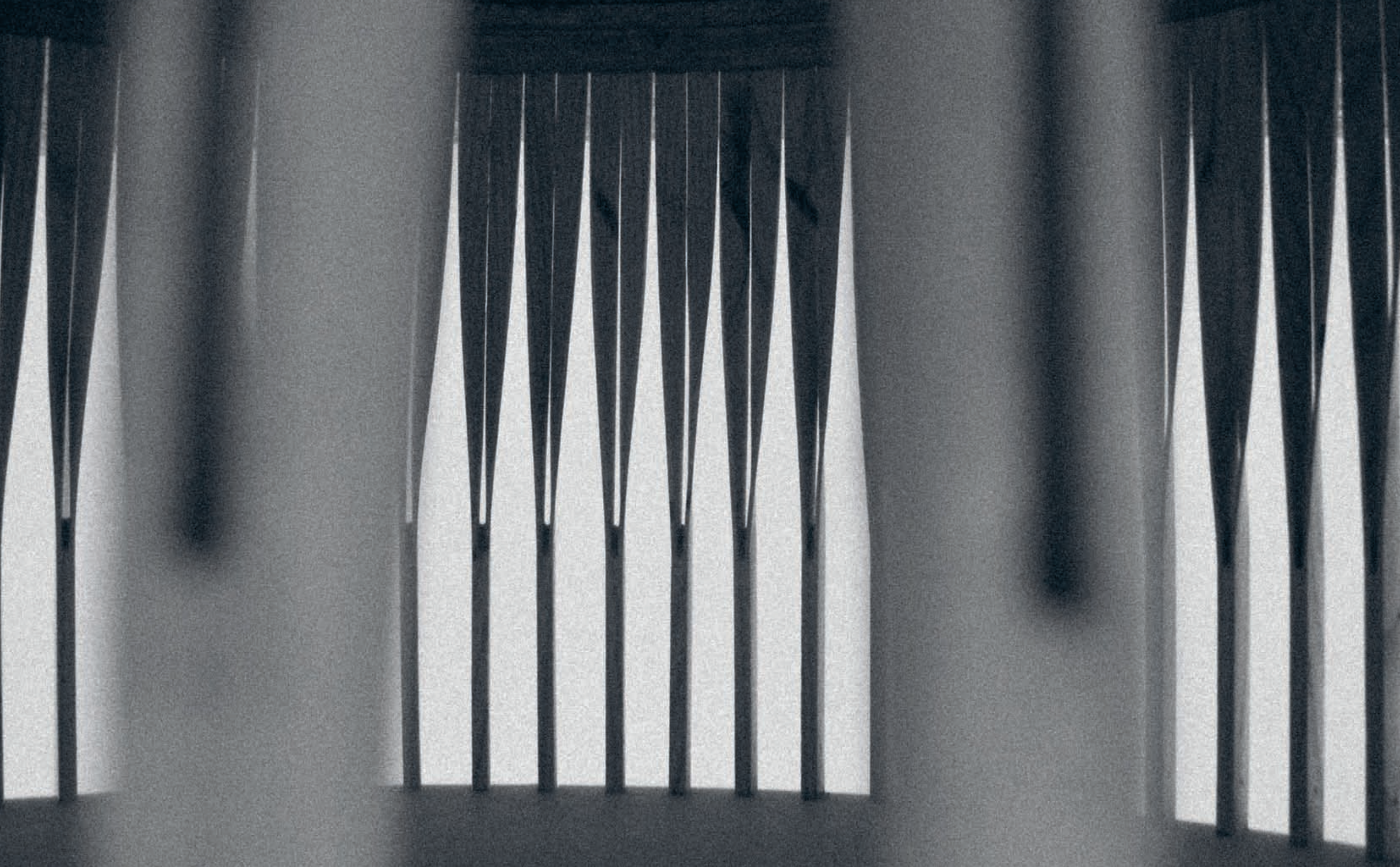
RIGHT: *Self*, oak, 60 x 25 x 20 cm, 2010





LEFT: *Træk* (Pull), oak, unknown wood, metal, 140 x 110 x 115 cm, 2010
 RIGHT: *Untitled* (Eye), ash, fabric, linoleum, 240 x 115 x 20 cm, 2010







PREVIOUS SPREAD: *Doko #1*, close-up
RIGHT: *Doko #3*, oak, leash, screws, 80 x 65 x 65 cm, 2013



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LEFT: *Doko #2*, detail
RIGHT: *Doko #1*, work in progress





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PREVIOUS SPREAD: Steambox, detail
RIGHT: *Unfolded Plank* (turning away), Oak, 54 x 11 x 7 cm, 2013





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Unfolded plank #1, oak, 20 x 40 x 280 cm, 2010



LEFT: *Unfolded plank #9*, oak, 15 x 23 x 75 cm, 2018
 RIGHT: *Unfolded Plank #10*, oak, 151 x 41 x 20 cm, 2018
 NEXT SPREAD: *Unfolded plank #1*, detail, 2010







LEFT: Setup for steambending

RIGHT: *Unfolded Plank* (book #2), oak, 19 x 18 x 300 cm, 2018

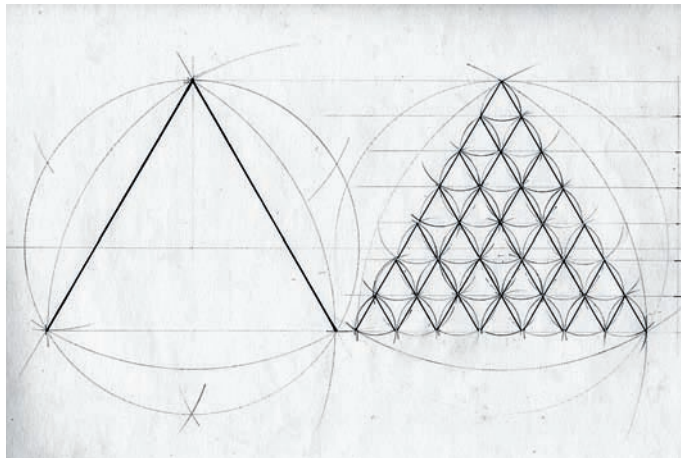
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Unfolded Plank (book #1), detail





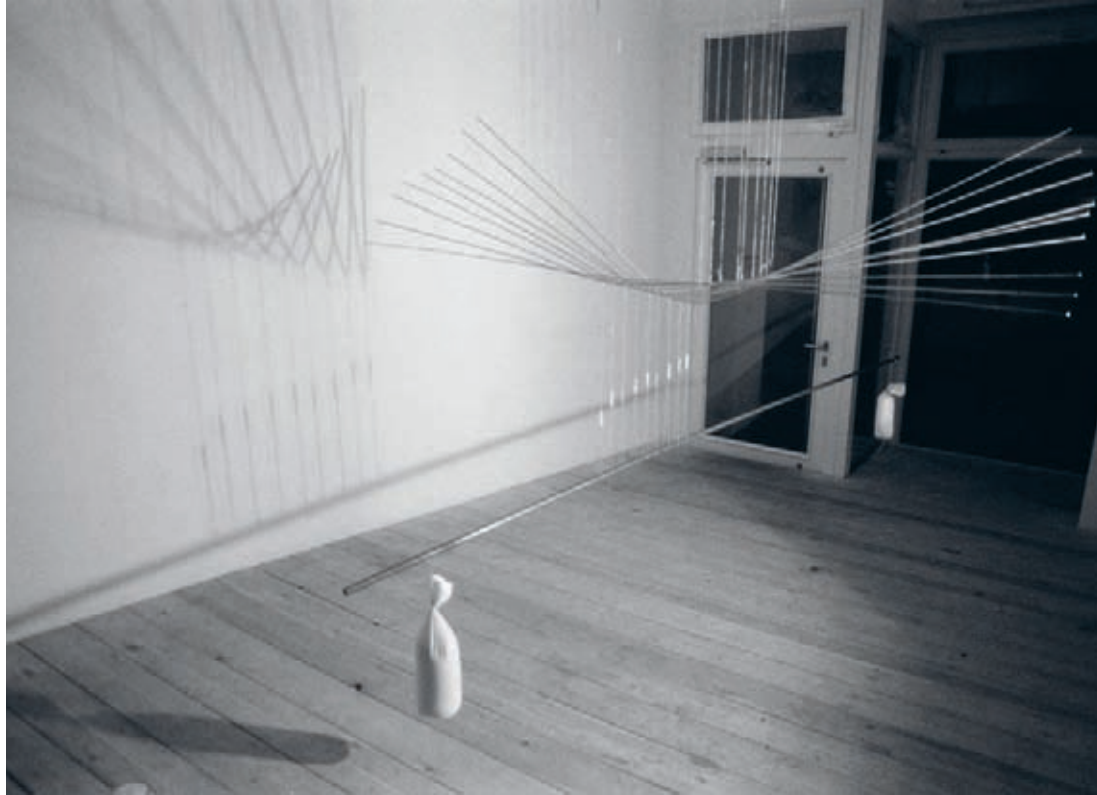


PREVIOUS SPREAD: *Vorschub* (part 1), plywood,
buckle strap, screws, 320 x 320 x 320 cm, 2007
RIGHT: *Vorschub*, detail



TOP: *Vorschub* (part 2), 28 elements on floor, pine, leash, 40 x 320 x 320 cm
 BOTTOM: Drawing (pen on paper 29 x 21 cm) showing the proportional relation between part 1 and part 2
 RIGHT: *Vorschub* (part 1)





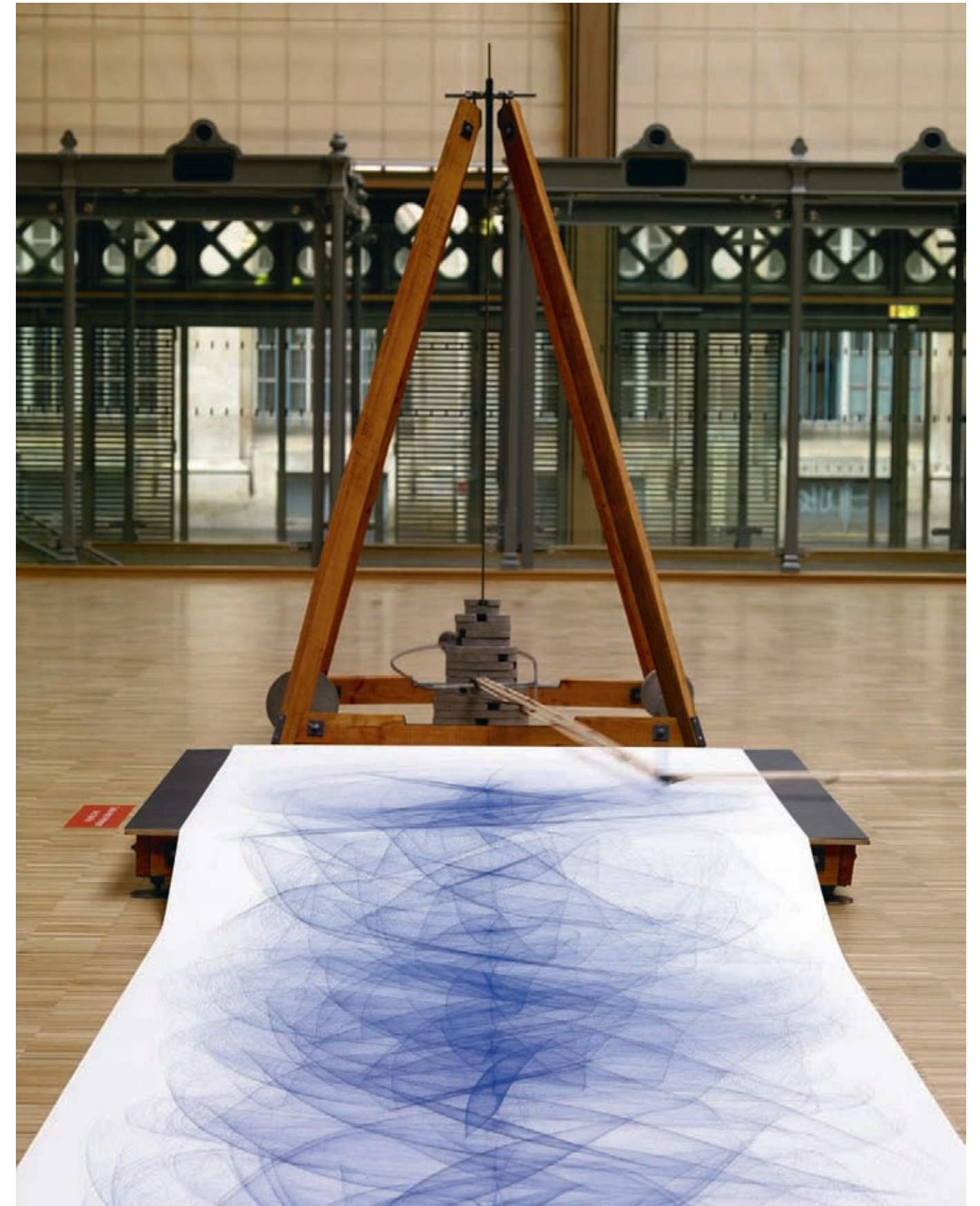
.....
 LEFT: *Flugt*, ash, leashes, metalbar, sandbags, 150 x 200 x 300 cm, 2008
 RIGHT: *Flugt*, detail



Assembled with two towers, each of which has its own swinging pendulum set in motion by hand, and with a common focal point articulated in the tip of a ballpoint pen, “nature’s” strokes are being transferred onto the paper in calm, uniform and circular movements, and constitute the *Drawing Machine*. In series of drawings like ‘Fibonacci series’, ‘Blue to Red’ and ‘Black, Blue, Red, Green’, the *Drawing Machine* examines options for making continuous drawings, sequences of layers and transitions from monochrome to polychrome drawings. Two alternative drawing machine versions have been built on the same principle. A smaller version was constructed in 2011 specially to produce continuous elongated drawings. And an upscaled version called “Grinder” was built in 2010. Whereas *Drawing Machine* operates with pen on paper, the idea behind *Grinder* was to cut directly into a material or even into the surface of the exhibition space, consequently leaving a permanent mark.

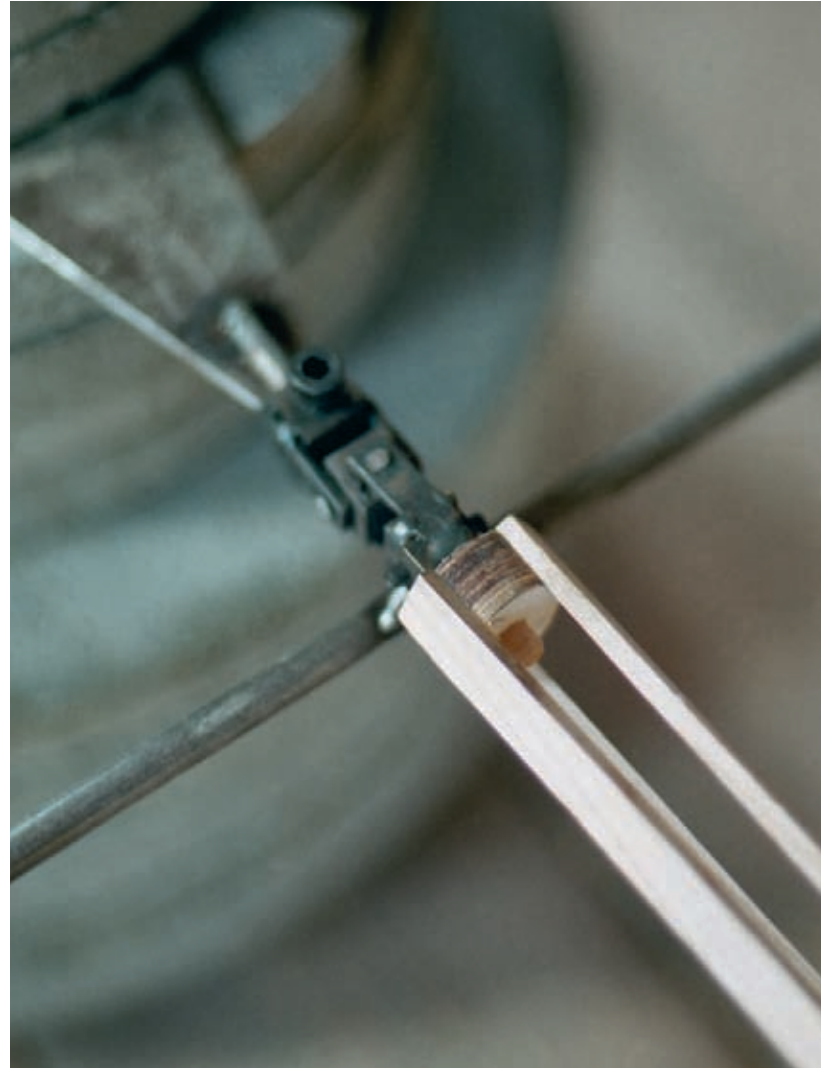
RIGHT: *Drawing Machine 2*

PREVIOUS SPREAD: *Drawing Machine 1* (videostill), pine wood, metal, concrete, vinyl, ballpoint pen. 350 x 600 x 600 cm, 2009

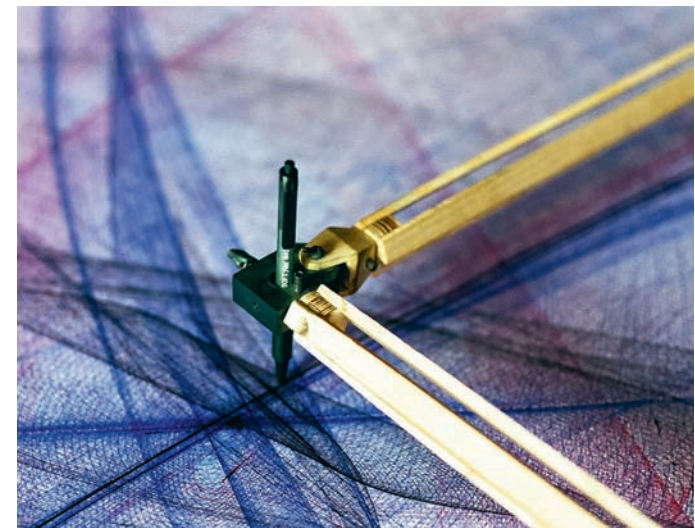
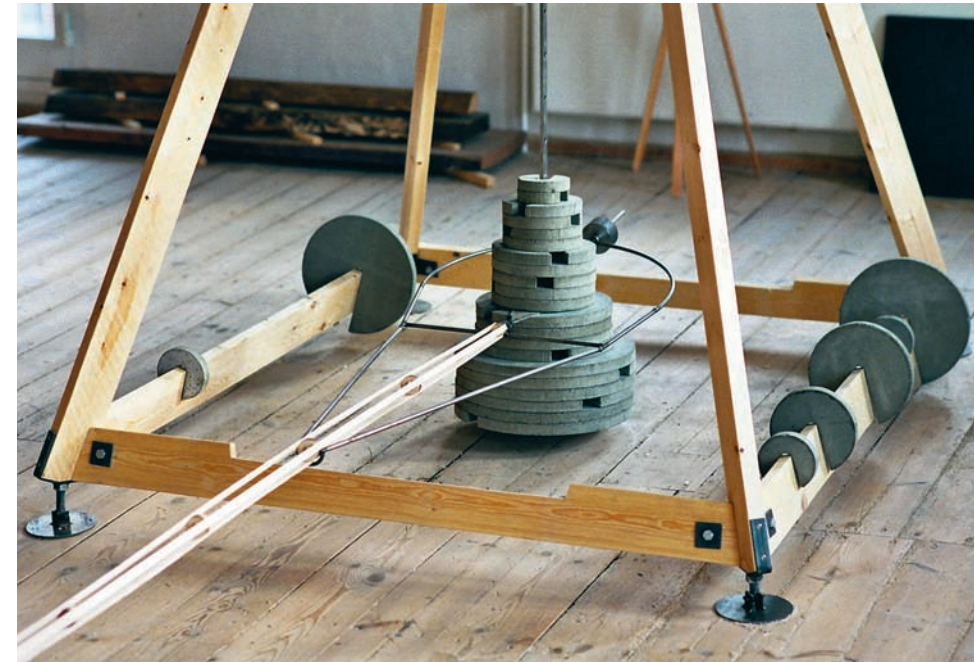




Drawing Machine 2, larch wood, metal, concrete, vinyl, ballpoint pen. 250 x 450 x 450 cm, background: framed drawing from Fibonacci Series 151 x 151 cm, 2011

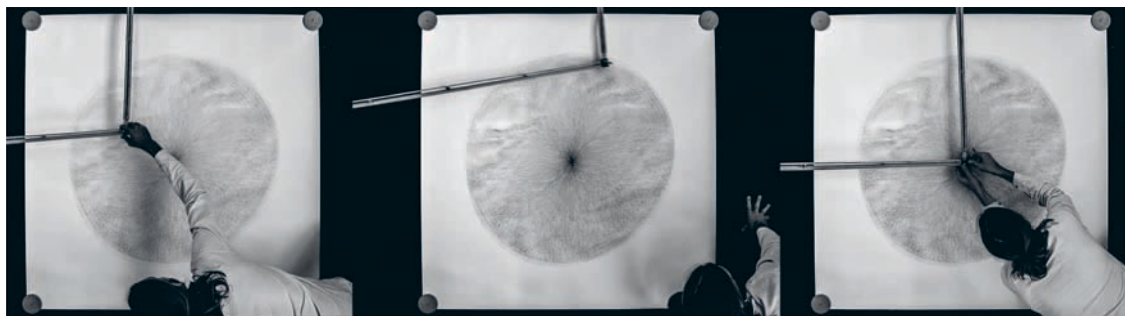
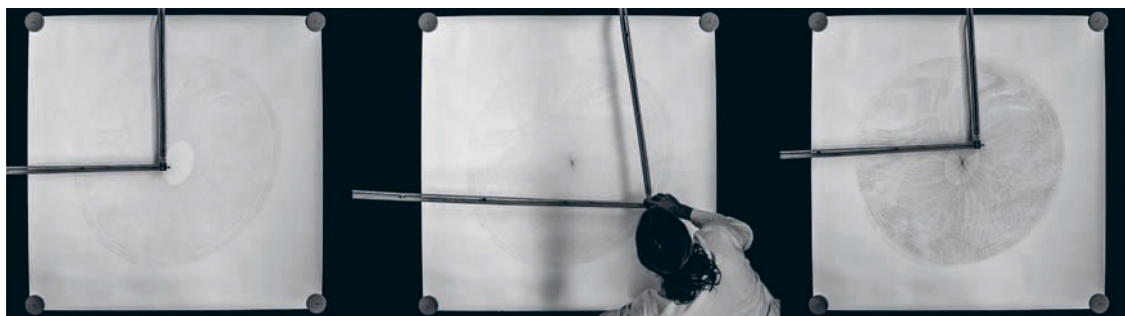


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Drawing Machine 1, details, 2009





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Black, Blue, Red, Green (drawing series), ballpoint pen on paper, each 272 x 272 cm, 2010

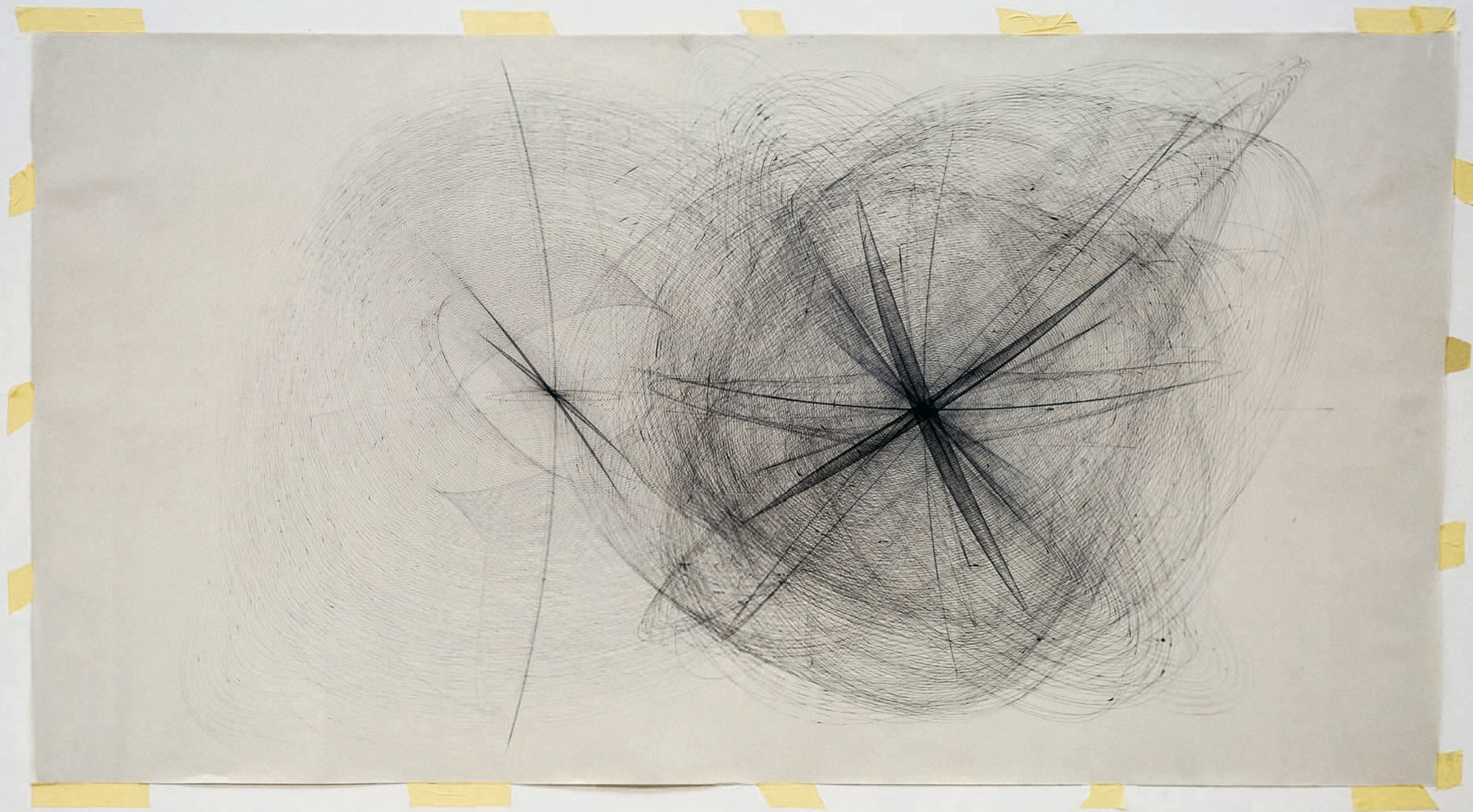


ABOVE: Stills from; *21 Layer Timelapse*, 2014

RIGHT: *34 Layer Fibonacci Drawing*, detail, ballpoint pen on paper, 151 x 151 cm, 2011

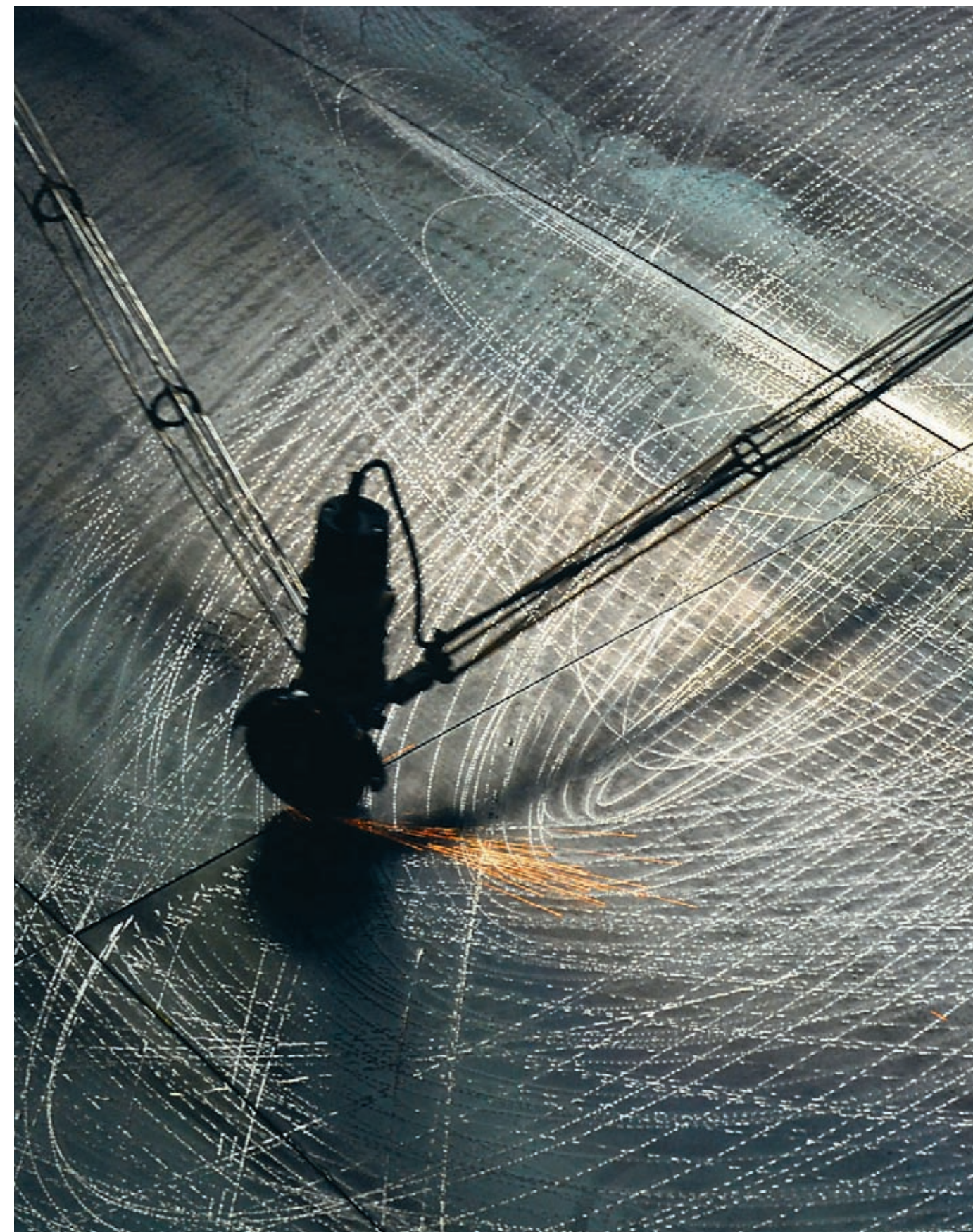
NEXT SPREAD: Untitled drawing, ballpoint pen on paper, 150 x 300 cm, 2011

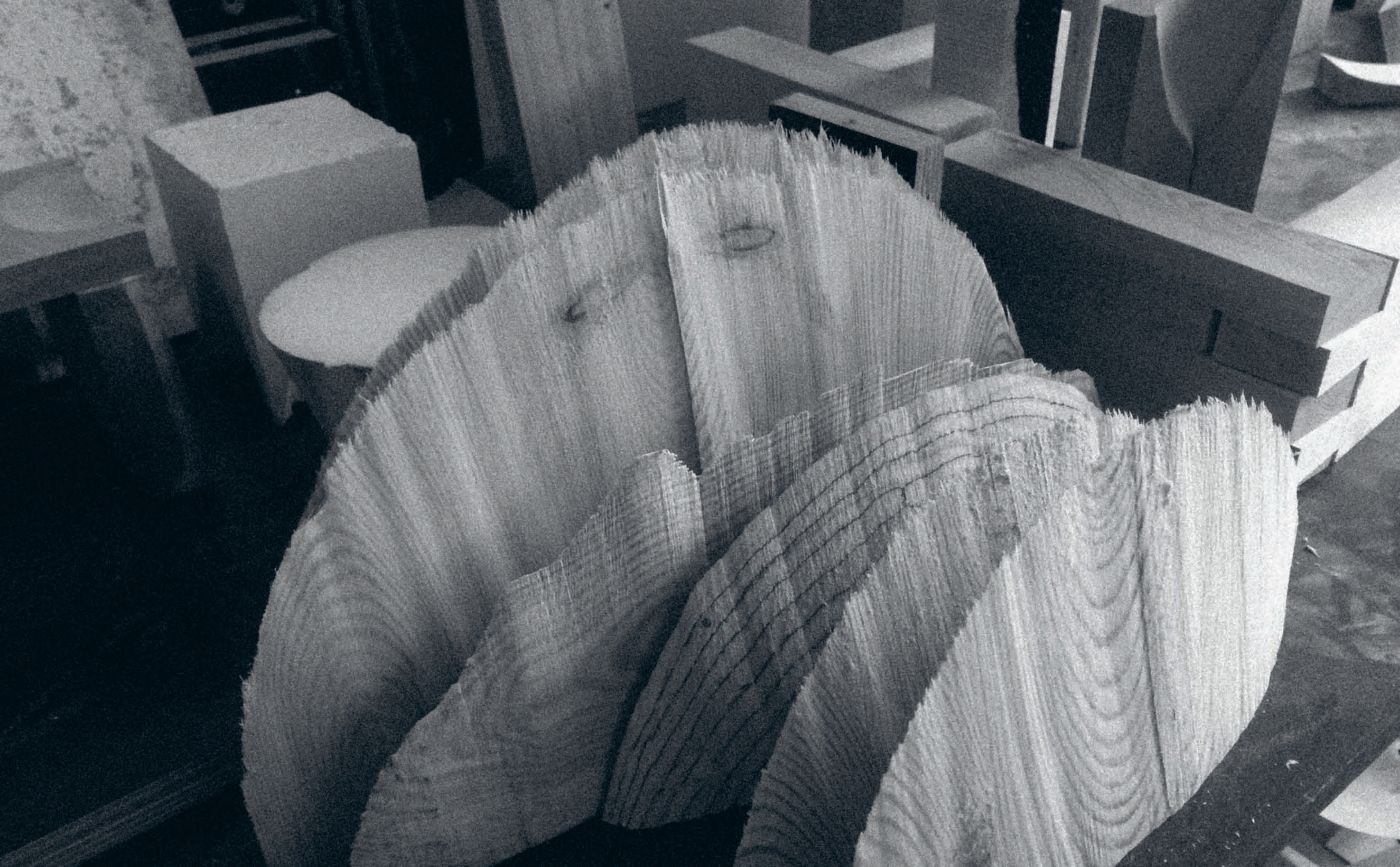






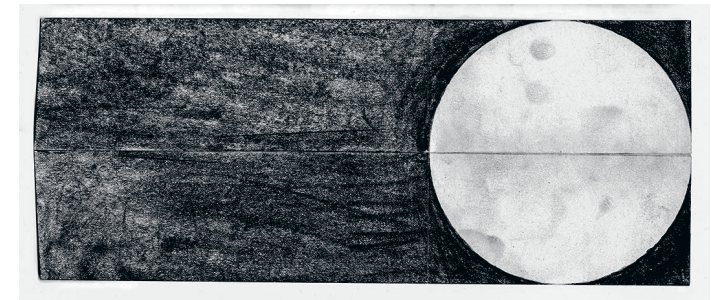
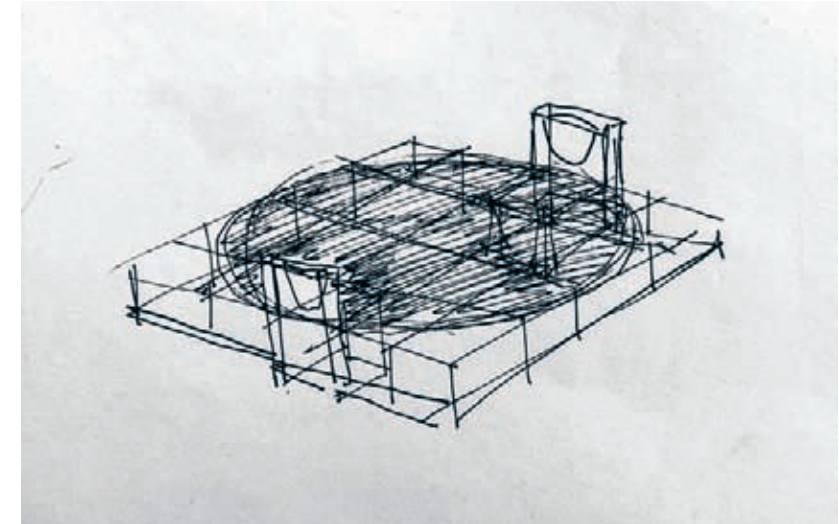
LEFT: *Grinder*, wood, metal, oil barrels with sand, grinder, 600 x 800 x 800 cm, 2010
 RIGHT: *Grinder*, detail







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LEFT: *Sunbed*, detail, made in collaboration with Maria Mengel
PREVIOUS SPREAD: *Sunbed* models



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Sunbed, detail and sketches



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Sunbed, kalmar pine, 86 x 275 x 73 cm, 2017



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Space for Retreat, pine, leash, 157 x 40 x 25 cm, 2014







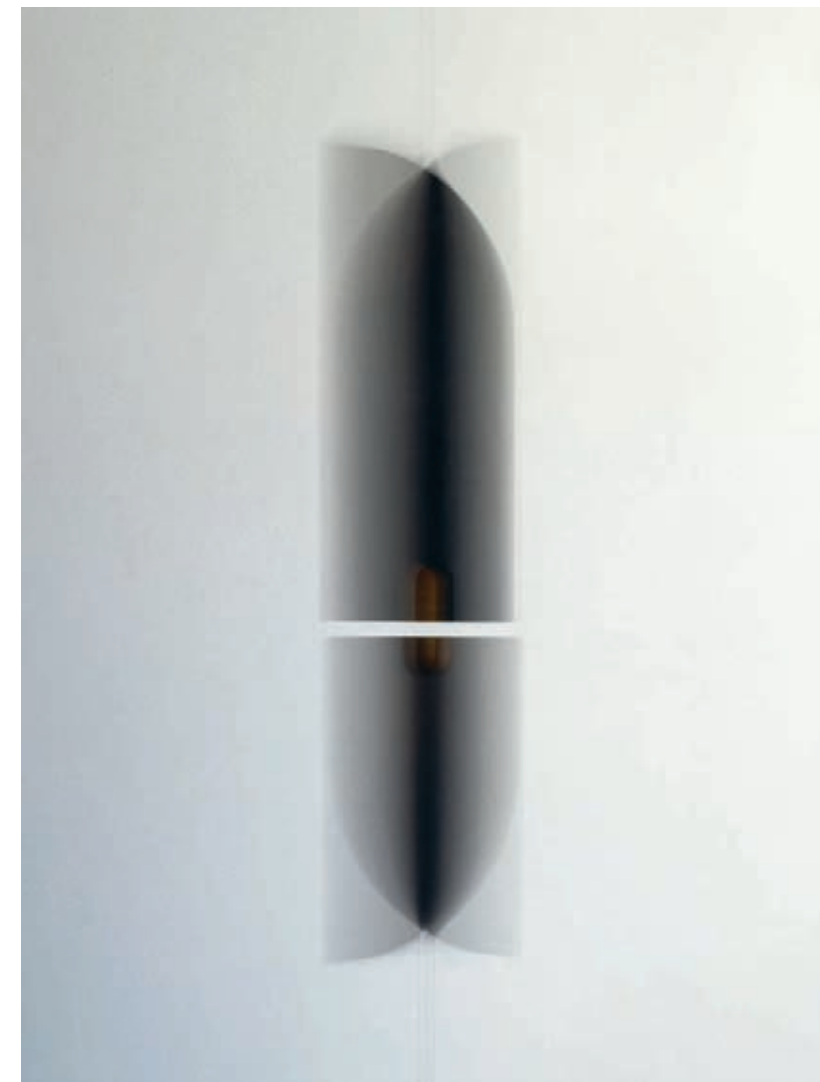
LEFT: *Divided Self*, studio view, Danish Art Workshops, Copenhagen, 2018
PREVIOUS SPREAD: *Measuring Space 6*, in progress

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Divided Self #10, painted maple, leash, magnets. 15 x 27 x 7 cm, 2016





LEFT: *Divided Self #12*, oak, lesh, magnets, 31 x 19 x 2,5 cm, 2017
 RIGHT: *Divided Self #14*, smoked oak, lesh, magnets, 60 x 15 x 3 cm, 2017





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Divided Self, works in progress

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Measuring Space #6, oak, maple, leash, magnets. 7 elements, each 21 x 7,5 cm, installed in a circle, 2013





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Measuring Space #1, oak, magnets, leash. 5 elements, each 13 x 22 cm, 2012



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Selfie, oak, walnut, leash, magnets, putty,
105 x 95 x 12 cm, 2015



.....
Stræber (Social Climber), metal, maple, leash, magnet, 30 x 30 x 11 cm, 2012

Vessel – about the floating body and space for the abstract darkness

by Nina Wöhlk

Two truths approach each other. One comes from inside, the other from outside, and where they meet we have a chance to catch sight of ourselves.

– Tomas Tranströmer, excerpt from *Preludes II*.¹

That's what the Swedish poet and psychologist Tomas Tranströmer (1931–2015) writes about the complex in presences that arises in a shift from a singular to a multi-faceted understanding. A displacement in established views that an emergence of the complex can engender, nourishing movability and fluidity, conjoining polar positions, and loosening up for static praxes and categorical thinking. It is in the light of these thoughts, which Tranströmer sets in motion, that I see Eske Rex's genre-displacing praxis. The methodological transgression of customary approaches can be found in his work, and seems to be nurtured by a presence of movability in his works, which are perpetually rotating and turning. With the naked eye, some are perceived as quivering, through the means of which an inner tension emits a sense of the actual material's potential.

Accordingly, the series of works has been titled *Unfolded plank*, where roughly sawn planks of oak wood have been cut up on the narrow segments and subsequently steamed, after which the open – and now bisected – ends are being twisted apart from each other. While the opposite end continues as it had originally extended, this is now visibly altered, in the spot where the twist in the plank's length manifests this inherent tension in the wood. Movement is being pursued in work-series like *Divided Self* and *Measuring Space*, where horizontally cut circular objects are being held vertically stretched by thin lines that are pulling them apart from each other, while magnets placed in the wood are pulling them toward each

other. There is a continuous dialogue existing between the art works and the force of gravity, and the kinetic objects become easily influenced by the visitors' presence close to them, by small tremors and by wind that causes them to rotate and vibrate. There is a simplicity and a contemplative tranquility over these works as well as an apparent uniformity that, upon closer inspection, discloses itself as covering over a genuine diversity among the individual objects, where no one of them proves to be identical to any other.

An understanding of what is unproductive about genre definitions is pursued as one circles her/his way into the artist's practice. Since the work-object has a central position in Rex's work, it would be imprecise to call him an 'installation artist', notwithstanding the fact that in works like *Udtræk* [Extraction], there is a high degree of dispersion and behaving in relation of the surrounding space. Likewise, it would not be appropriate to call Rex a 'conceptual artist', because he would never transfer the process of creation to somebody else, because he is sensitive to the material's inherent properties and because he assesses the tactile form of appearance as being very important. His interdisciplinary work, on the other hand, seems to be inquiring into what the objects actually are and is to be regarded as a kind of unfolded thinking in and through sculpture. Not in the manner of philosophical illustration, on a par with conceptual art, but rather as an exploration of material, form and space.

Balancing towards an openness

Even more challenging it is to unfold, instead, the themes and interdisciplinary research that run like a red thread through the art works and are characteristic of Rex's praxis. In the *Divided Self* series, red lines are being used that vertically, within the space, distend the two head-shaped wooden shells of which the work consists, in order to delineate the connection between a positive and negative space and also in order to connect and give form to the space around the individual objects. In the dialogue with the encircling spatiality, the art works are wrested free from their autonomous and absolute status. Even the object-oriented work series, *Vessel*, couples the works, in a similar way, with the circumjacent space, through the means of the palpable veil of almost translucent wood of steamed lamellae and its thin skeleton structures.

Thus, the immediate experience of movement is not inherent in the works' physical change or in the material's quivering but also in the transgressions of the independent object in contact with the circumjacent space. It is in the spatially present that Rex frames in the human action in relation to the gaps – in relation to

the air and in relation to physical structures that frame in our world. The art works become implements in the visualization of the relation between them, body and space. In addition to the visualization of the 'gap', Rex makes use of the objects in order to physically enter and contrast the lightness or the weight inside a space, through the means of which he – moreover – often balances against a preferred openness. In this way, the works are not isolated but are rather situated within their way of responding to a scale, a material or a historicity.

The bodily darkness

What is simultaneously distinctive about Rex's site-specific works is that one finds a concentration of layers of meaning, which – through the lens of philosophical and physical thinking – provide access to existential considerations about the relationship between light and darkness. This can be experienced in his work *Retrium's* connection to darkness, to transitional rites and death. Created specifically for Koldinghus, the spatial installation has been built up of charred wood, following the Japanese conserving *Shou-Sugi Ban* technique, and forms a silo that is held together by rods of steel and sturdy iron fastenings, which, as rebuffing barbed wire encircling the rotunda, contributes toward underscoring the securing of the dark enclosure. The wood has been charred on one side and darkens the rotunda's inner side, while the outer side is in possession of the spruce battens original light-colored nuances, and the art work accordingly refers both to Koldinghus's past as a fortification and the conflagration in 1808 that served to alter the place by laying the castle in ruins.

The exterior makes its appearance as an entrenchment and as a defense while the enclosure of the rotunda is in possession of a present and intimate character, through the means of which the experience of *Retrium's* interior and the traces of the artisanship in the materials come to contextualize the symbolic layers of the work. An analogy can be set up for the relationship between the bright outer side and the dark inner side in the thought around the intellect, reason, and the rational light as symbols that were established during the Enlightenment, standing opposite to the bodily and formless darkness, which draws on concepts like sensations and feelings. Rex actually trains a special gaze on the play between the light and the darkness and on the sensitivity and realization that can be found in the twilight, where the light and the darkness converge. It is actually through this means that there lies an experiential potential which is different from reason, and it is right here, in the transgressive space, that rationality converges with the formless darkness; it is here that the abstract and the transformative are to be found. ²

Everything that lives, not vegetative life alone, emerges from darkness and, however strong its natural tendency to thrust itself into the light, it nevertheless needs the security of darkness to grow at all. Hannah Arendt ³

The metaphorical meanings of darkness in Western culture are, generally speaking, predominately something negative. On the contrary, an awareness of its embedded transformative potential irrigates the understanding of darkness as being something threatening. Our understanding of darkness as something threatening is bound up with the irrational and the non-controllable, and we often forget that our experiences with darkness tell us that things can be different. For example, in order for us to be able to sleep and to step into the recreational and creative darkness, we've got to shut off the intellect and place our rationality on hold. During sleep, darkness is a blessing.

In the recreative darkness, there is a sensibility that places us in connection with the creative and embodies the abstraction we know from art. Upon approaching the abstraction with its transformative power, we've got to put the intellect and rationality on 'pause' and move our way, through art, toward a sensibility. In order to get closer to a way of thinking that takes the experiences seriously, we need to bring darkness into the world we are in now and we need to restore a greater balance between light and darkness in such a way that we are not attempting to dominate this. In the direction of a greater diversity, we need to modulate our way of thinking by making the idea of the exalted light a little bit more porous.⁴

The container and the morphological potential of darkness

Nature contains, as does darkness, the unpredictable and morphological potential and fashions a counterpart to culture's Enlightenment. In ancient times and during medieval times, nature's forms were perceived as ramifications of Spirit: as celestial prototypes that held matter and spiritual weight together. This links up to another aspect of Rex's praxis, which has to do with the fact that several of his works enter into dialogue with universal primary spaces, in their reminiscences about primitive containers or dwellings, which the English term *nest* so tellingly encapsulates, with its embrace of the animal's crib and the human being's private place for retreat. Rex's series of works with the collective title, *Doko*, is a protective enclosure, which forms an egg-shaped crib or a uterus, and serves as a fine example of this. *Vessel* is another series of 'individuals', which one is tempted to call the distinctive full-body-sized

works that, in different ways – with their skeleton-like structures or the re-fined re-working of wood – are miming the Egyptian sarcophagus’s dark place of rest, a futuristic container or the butterfly’s larvae out in nature. Some of the ‘individuals’, like *Retrium* and *Retræterum* [Retreat Room], have a slit or a crack that conjoins the enclosure with the encircling bright room, by means of which the twilight, which lays claim to the (re)creative, abstract and transformative, is brought forth.

In Rex’s universe there is order – never chaos. However, there is an active tension to be found in the works that dominate their surroundings with a quivering silence. Even in the embracing *Doko*, each and every strip is an expanded plank. Never does it become stagnant.

In addition to the fact that Rex is working methodically in order to achieve a multifaceted expression that does not get locked into one or more categories but rather contributes to a greater porosity among them, the reading of the works effectuates – in the works’ presence in the gap and in what is complex – a movement toward a more open way of thinking. In reference to the analogy of darkness and its significance today, this would suggest taking the experiences we have of its transformative potential and Rex’s presence in the genre-displacing – in between polar positions – more seriously.

1. Tomas Tranströmer, ‘Samlede digte’, Rosinante & CO, 2011

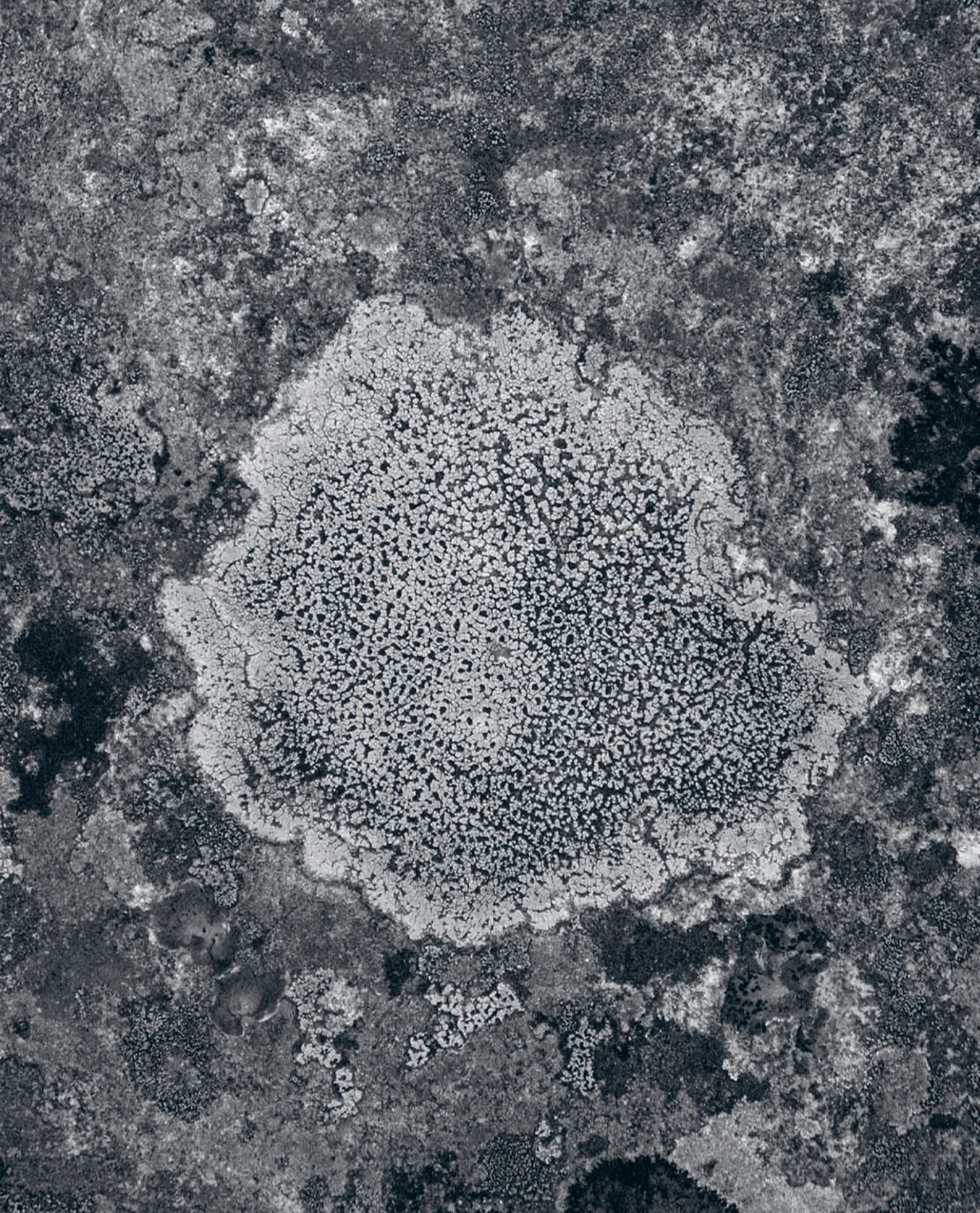
2. Dorthe Jørgensen: ‘The Intermediate World: A Key Concept in Beautiful Thinking’, De Gruyter, 2018

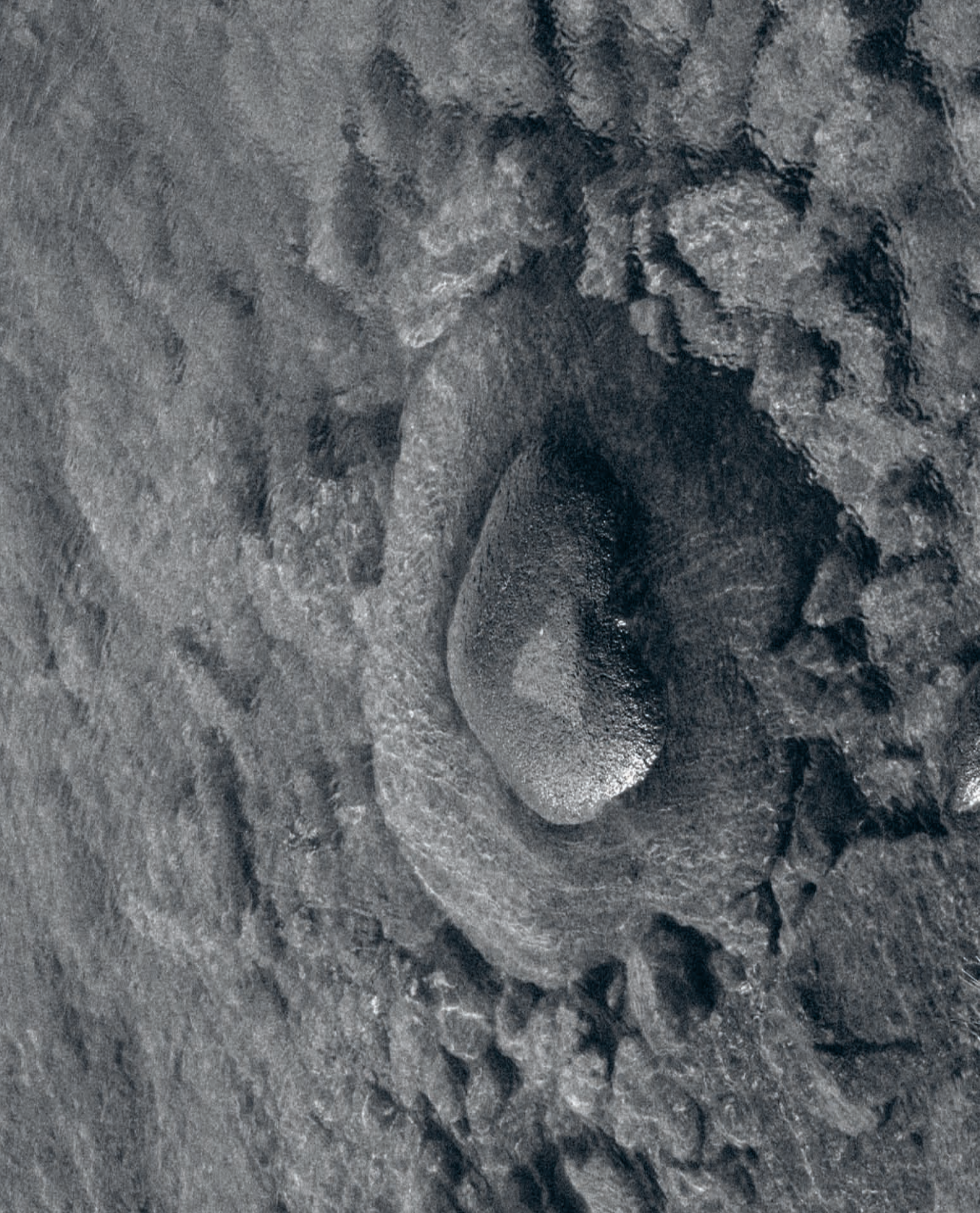
3. Hannah Arendt: ‘The Crisis in Education’, 1954. Accessed on July 20, 2018. <http://learningspaces.org/files/ArendtCrisisInEdTable.pdf>

4. Dorthe Jørgensen: ‘Experience, Metaphysics and Immanent Transcendence’ in ‘Truth and Experience: Between Phenomenology and Hermeneutics’, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015















**The forces of things are not immanent,
but accumulations in eternal currents that we,
with hands and techniques, attempt to lead certain places**

by Kristine Annabell Torp

"We have learned nothing in twelve thousand years," said Picasso after having visited the caves in Altamira, where he, spellbound, had seen the cave wall's paintings, made by people who were living many thousands of years ago. Or, that's how the story goes, although there's nothing to suggest that Picasso ever visited the caves at all or that he would have expressed any special fascination about the phenomenon.¹ A closer examination of this favorite quote that, moreover, is found in several quick-witted variants, including "*after Altamira, everything is decadence*", supports the assumption that it is most likely an aphorism that has not only arisen from Picasso's fascination for the bull as a motive but also testifies to some sort of collective and astounding realization in the meeting with prehistoric art. Because upon beholding the animal groups that have been drawn with charcoal on the undulating walls of the caves in Altamira, in Lascaux and in Chauvet, it really becomes clear to us that art is in possession of an existential dimension, a human sounding board that we

share across millennia. Often, we are fascinated by art's creative aspect: by art as the faculty that propels evolution, that gives rise to ruptures, change and movement, and which is an implement for overcoming limitations in our way of thinking. But when we see the animal paintings and all the handprints, which, as red-colored positives and negatives, offer testimony about an attempt to immortalize the individual human being's presence inside the cave – and on the earth, we come to realize that art also possesses a material and transcending aspect. Art is also a tool for sharing the experience of what it means to be human, and an implement for being in the body, enabling us to bear the certainty of death by justifying our limited lifetime through the poetic and through the fact that one, as a human being, is part of a chain – part of a larger community.

Maybe the prehistorian and cave expert, Jean Clottes, who has been studying prehistoric art for nothing less than an epoch, has been tempted to puff red paint across his hands onto the cave wall in Chauvet, in order to make his presence immortal, along with the other *homo spiritualis*, which he proposes as a more humble alternative for all of us, rather than the more cocksure *homo sapiens*, the rational man.² If we discount science's categorization and look at the language that has been growing forth through centuries of usage, then we can see – through etymological migrations – that the word for human being, *man* is connected to the word *hand*, e.g. via the Sanskrit word *manus*, for human being, and the Latin word *manus*, for hand.³ The question about which connections lie farthest back in time and the question of how the cave dwellers' words have arisen are riddles that we will never come to answer but when the linguists have set out to make a deep exploration of all our words, they've found their way to a certain few words that seem to have outlived fifteen thousand years of sedimentary deposits and changes.⁴ Among these words we find, precisely, *hand* and *man*. As the mammals and gregarious animals we are, it seems obvious that words like *mother*, *hear*, *you*, *I* and *we* would also be included in this exclusive set of primeval-words. What is equally obvious, however, is that the words *fire*, *bark* and *ashes* are also enumerated among these primeval-words, since these point toward a fundamental self-understanding that we can still recognize and that have to do with the hand and its accomplishments. For the hand is not only an important surface of contact between our bodies and the surrounding world, and therefore the point we choose to portray and perpetuate on the cave walls: the hand's capability, its transformational relationship with the world, has enabled us to take fate into our own hands. We are also *homo faber* – the creating human being.

Through technique, with unobtrusive drama, all the quivering interspaces between wood forces, geological forces and human forces are brought forth

With the hands, we use tools to create fire. And with the ash and the charcoal from whatever's left behind after the bonfires, we drew pictures that disclosed a cosmology. The fire and the charcoal and the depictions of oxen inside the cave were the results of a technical investigation, where meaning was brought forth, encountering a material with its own premises. "Technique is a probe oriented toward the material's differences and it is developed only through the concrete surface of contact,"⁵ writes architect Peter Bertram in his book, *Frembringelse*. It wouldn't be too much to say that the human being's forms of thinking arise in dialogue with the material, through technique. In our meeting with the cave paintings, we get a sense of how art, science and philosophy are conjoined on a deeper level, and we also come to sense how our modern urges toward creating order and toward fragmenting are carrying us away from an interconnectedness between body and world. The same sensation arises in the encounter with Rex's works, wherein this primeval order delineates itself as a complex and nonetheless simple synthesis between human being, material, technique and meaning. The works seem to have come into being as intuitive explorations, where earlier processes and experiences with technique and materials fashion the foundations and where meaning arises in parallel with the actual appearance. The works, taken together, can be regarded as a study in the relationship between *making* and *thinking* and as a study of how meaning arises in the oscillation between the two – with technique as the mitigating element.

In this way, Rex's works can be seen as results, not only of investigations into what technique can bring forth, but also of how technique itself is developed when body and material are assigned equal weight in the investigation; this serves to further underscore an important analogous dimension of Rex's explorations. For the same reason, some of the tools take on the character of being art works, and the decision about when an object is finished is, apparently, rarely predetermined. In Rex's work, the templates, the shapes, the steam-, the bending- and the splitting-contraptions are all in possession of their own meanings, and the workshop constitutes a hidden, almost mythical, sensuous bottom in the works, which play a part in giving them *aura*.

The formation of space that the workshop contributes toward bringing forth in Rex's art works is both very concrete and very abstract, and in the gallery's white rooms, the object-like works of art turn into small satellites from a tactile laboratory, about which we do not know the exact circumstances. The situation is somewhat different with the piece, *Drawing Machine*, where workshop, process and artwork are amalgamated, and the piece becomes a clear example indicating that Rex's activity can be described through words that have their source in the ancient Greek *tekhnē*,⁶ words like 'architecture', the Danish '*tegne*' (for drawing), and 'technique'. The room-sized drawing machine stands as an analogous technical marvel and unites a centuries old, finely-embossed pendulum technique with the humblest of present day's writing implements – the cheapest ballpoint pen, in order to generate something that comes close to magic maps, which – among other things – manage to reveal one of nature's fundamental codes: The Fibonacci Series. The piece stands forth as one moment's balance in the story of mankind and machine, and confirms to us that human being's techniques are also nature's and that what is being unfurled between the large pendulums and the little bitty ballpoint pen's ballpoint is a powerful connection between geological forces and human forces.

The same forces are on the move, only in a quieter way, in the art works where hand-sized wooden pieces have been turned on a lathe, have had magnets inserted and have then been sanded down – or finished with a spokeshave – into tactually attractive objects, which belong together in pairs that are facing each other with a vibrating gap, inasmuch as a thin string fastened to the floor holds the one object at some distance from the other object, which is anchored to the ceiling. In the pieces with the unfolded planks, there are similarly silent power exchanges. But despite these wooden pieces' and the magnet works' hushed characters, they are also the results of negotiations between nature's different forces, where the human being, with its intentions and implements stands across from the wood's tensions and from geology's gravity, in meetings where violence is never practiced but where the outer poles in the relations are being investigated, anyway. To what extent can the individual planks be bent, stretched out and steamed? And how can the magnets' distance and strength be controlled in relation to the wooden objects' sizes and shapes? Only by developing the technique in the meeting with the materials does Rex find the interspaces that enable the objects' magical quivering and charge them with potentiality. As is the case with seeds, with stretched archery bows and with new encounters, we are not in doubt about the powers that Rex's

artworks possess. At the same time, there is a sensibility about the relative, insofar as the jump in scale in the investigation of the unfolded wood affects not only the relationship between wood forces and human forces but also bears on how these forces can be controlled differently, according to what the objects are going to be used for: the very large unfolded pieces of wood could be bearing pillars or oars, while the small and thin ones are set together in egg-shaped rings which, in the composition, become sufficiently splendid and safe enough for being able to protect that which we cherish the most.

Material monuments, pocket monuments and the magic of sensation: architecture is not about space but about interspace

When we talk about oars, eggs and pillars in the meeting with Rex's works, this is because, in parallel with the art work's weighting of workmanship and technique, as such, there always seems to be an object at the end of the process. The works are never pure process studies, but engender associations to objects of utility without necessarily having, on that account, an actual program. This serves to impart an interspatial character to them because they evade the categories while simultaneously pointing toward something familiar, just like those few objects in the national history collections that, inside the exhibition's vitrines, are labeled "unknown use areas". Just like these undefined, albeit recognizable, prehistoric museum objects, Rex's works are silent, while at the same time they are pervaded with hundreds of generations of voices and techniques which, as a polyphonic choir, chime in according the same fundamental rhythm, following the actual primeval melody. We come to think of the Inuit people's sunglasses, kayaks and coastal maps, which have been carved right into the edge, on pieces of bone or wood. We see baskets and containers that are interwoven, cut and shaped in way that runs across human history. Through the art works, we understand that it is possible for an object to carry our aggregate experience in itself. In this undefined and consequently liberated accumulation of echoes in the works, there is a monumentality that arises, a monumentality that folds substance and meaning together – quite unlike much of the picture monumentality and image cultivation by which we are surrounded today, and which represents a simulated world, now most recently through *deep fake*, about which we can never have any certainty.

This form of authentic monumentality is also present in the room-sized piece, *Retrium*, in Koldinghus, which, in all its simplicity, activates all the senses:

inside the circular shaped room, encircled by thin vertical pieces of spruce wood, Rex lets the overhead light descend over the circle's scorched interior side, where aromatic particles from the charred pieces of wood collide with the sound waves that are being absorbed by the many small, coal-black fissures in the burnt wood that, upon being touched, would deposit soot on the skin, like a small gift from the art work. We remember that one of the primeval words was ash, and in glimpses of the great collective memory, we see prettified torsos, ash decorations, bonfires and ceremonies. Like others of Rex's works, *Retrium* contains an inherent duration, which awakens resonances inside our bodies, that still are incontestably formed by environments characterized by trees, winds, stones, fire, snow and plants – to put it succinctly, by that which – in the popular jargon – is called 'nature'. In Rex's decoration in the foyer of the International Criminal Court in The Hague, the piece that is titled *Linear Volume*, the circle appears again, and when you think of these two works in connection with each other – *Retrium* and *Linear Volume* – it becomes clear that there is a connection between the circular ring around the bonfire and the highest of all institutions – the law. In one way, the two circular meeting rooms – the bonfire circle and the *thing* [the legislature] – embody the most fundamental institutions in our civilization, and it is as if Rex, through *Linear Volume*, were embracing the seriousness of the place by refining the technique to its utmost expression. With great precision in the approach, in the construction, and in the formation of space, the work consists of a series of long linear sequences of wooden pieces which, from two diametrically different directions, meet, intermesh and then come to form a circular and focused volume before returning to their starting points. The piece, in this way, reflects the building's axes and program, where prosecutors and defense attorneys hold forth on their own respective sides of the foyer's longitudinal axis, and where the volume forms a central point in relation to the meeting between these respective sides, the courtroom's entrance, and the room's vertical axis.

Unpretentious in a different kind of way, but equally site specific, are the small architectonic works from Sejerø, where existing and found materials are assembled into small spaces that carry on a poetic dialogue with their surroundings. It does not seem unthinkable that spending an afternoon inside the little house, which stands buckled firmly atop a stone at the water's edge, with one of the *Drawing Machine*'s maps in the hands, could teach somebody more about life and the world than a whole year spent in front of a computer ever could. This and Rex's other works incite us, in any event, to reflect on the

meanings of actual substance and things, at a time when digital realities are taking up more and more space. The pieces disclose, through their conserving materialism, where we are coming from – and what we are going to need to hold onto, firmly, as long as we’ve got a body. In the same round, they point out a way leading around the material over-consumption, because we are being reminded that things can have a spirituality, that they can be much-needed monuments at a time when friction-less networks are threatening to pare down any meaning and difference. Monuments, which have between them large palpitating interspaces, and which bear within themselves the story of the body and culture. Genuine architecture is perhaps to be found in an egg-shaped basket, in the nomad’s pocket monument, the space of which is dreaming and extensive, or inside a bowl that mirrors the sky or is made of earth. Inside the spacious Grundtvig Church in Copenhagen, every single one of the bricks has been struck and laid in place by human hands, and it is this alluring and simultaneously present and impalpable layer that infuses spirituality into the lofty ecclesiastical space, because without this layer of meaning, of human exchange, the room merely consists of quantitative coordinates. The cave in Chauvet went from being cave to being architecture because we ascribed meaning to the cave’s space and because we decorated its walls with representations about a certain cosmology.

Spaces can be measured in light years, in millimeters, in strings and in steps, while the measuring unit of the interspaces is the individual’s dream

Between some of the cave paintings, five thousand years have passed. However, this fact can only be detected through carbon analyses. From this, we can deduce that our ancestors were living in some other form of temporality, where five thousand years did not appreciably represent visible epochs and changing expressions and cultures. Their world was characterized by a continuity that we, as modern people, can almost not comprehend. Our temporality is progressive and accelerating. And for us, the future is opaque and unpredictable: we only know that it’s going to be different than the present. We cannot even know with any degree of certainty where we, as a species, are headed for, whether evolution is transpiring in our favor or whether other forms of intelligence, which we have orchestrated ourselves, are going to be the next stage in the development. Perhaps some of us will come to make their marks in history as evolution’s winners, in the form of *homo deus*, as historian

Yuval Noah Harari predicts will be the next possible stage of development for mankind; this presumably presupposes a shift from humanism to dataism.⁷ The ruminations might appear to be vast and distant, but we also know for sure that our bodies are in a completely different situation than they were just fifty years ago. Not only because of the digital space, but also in the biotechnological and medical respects. From here, the question about art’s conserving material aspect arises, because the human body, as frontier outpost and as identity in an increasingly boundless world, might be situated in the midst of a paradigm shift. One could raise the objection that placing a question mark alongside the digitalization of man and space is conservative. But as long as we have a body, we have a need to relate to a sensuous world, where the spaces are filled with interspace and where they mean something. The *Drawing Machine* piece serves as a confirmation to us that this is indeed the case. For who would be fascinated to the same extent by a digital version of the same machine that printed exactly the same result, purely graphically? In the large analogue drawing machine, physics, poetry and technique are being fused together in the quest for *something* that we do not know the answer to. And when the large map is delineated, we can – spellbound – admire the patterns that, as variations on a code, appear to touch upon art, science and philosophy. In this way, the large pendulum, pushed into motion by a human hand, is in itself in possession of the question about which of these three faculties came first and about whether they are anchored one and the same foundation. Exactly the same thought that the cave paintings give rise to. After twelve thousand years, maybe *we have learned nothing*. But at least there’s somebody who remembers what we knew at that time.

1. Paul Bahn, ‘A Lot of Bull? Pablo Picasso and Ice Age cave art’, *Homenaje a Jesús Altna* (San Sebastian: MUNIBE, Antropologia-Arkeologia 57, 2005) 217–223

2. Jean Clottes, *What Is Paleolithic Art? Cave Paintings and the Dawn of Human Creativity*, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2016) 29

3. George Hempel, ‘Etymologies’, *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (The John Hopkins University Press, 1901) 426–431, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/288335>

4. Mark Pagel, Quentin D. Atkinson, Andreea S. Calude, and Andrew Meade, ‘Ultraconserved words point to deep language ancestry across Eurasia’, *PNAS May 6, 2013*. Edited by Colin Renfrew, (University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom, and approved April 15, 2013) <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1218726110>

5. Peter Bertram, *Frembringelse, Den arkitektoniske proces* (Kunstakademiets Arkitektskoles Forlag, Copenhagen, 2011) 22

6. www.etymonline.com: ‘tekhne’: art, skill, craft in work; method, system, an art, a system or method of making or doing.

7. Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus, A Brief History of Tomorrow* (Harvill Secker, London, 2015)

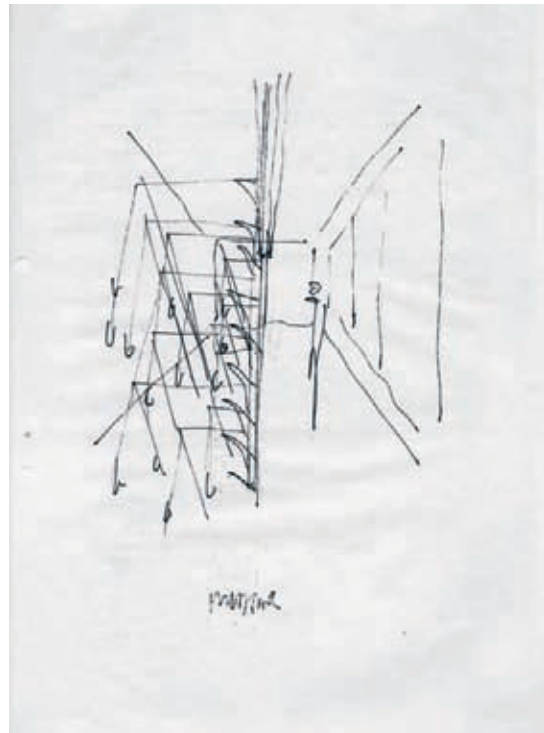


Udtræk (Extract) is an installation made specifically for an 18th century back building in Copenhagen. With textile, wood and weights, the window format's various elements are being mimed and stretched out into the yard's space and into the Modtar Projects' exhibition room on the second floor. In this way, *Udtræk* has to do with an interaction with the building's skeleton while the work plays with the understanding of some of spacious architecture's fundamental principles: the human being's scale in relation to a building's elements, as well as the question of when an element is situated inside or outside a given space.

RIGHT: Detail

PREVIOUS SPREAD: *Udtræk* (Extract), wood, textile, leash, weights, variable dimensions, 2009





.....
Udtræk (Extract) details and sketch





In 2011 and 2012 two site-specific structures were created for the Sejerø Festival, the art and music festival held on the Danish island of Sejerø. *Tribune* is a series of plateaus introduced as a permanent structure in an open gable on a dilapidated farmyard building, while *udkigspost / indsigtpunkt* (Lookout Post / Point of Insight) consists of two temporarily erected 'boxes' that have been placed in the landscape. *Tribune* forms a wide stairway, enabling several people to experience the landscape from a shared viewpoint, while *udkigspost / indsigtpunkt* has been created with room for only one person, with sides that function as clouds that serve to channel the viewer's gaze.

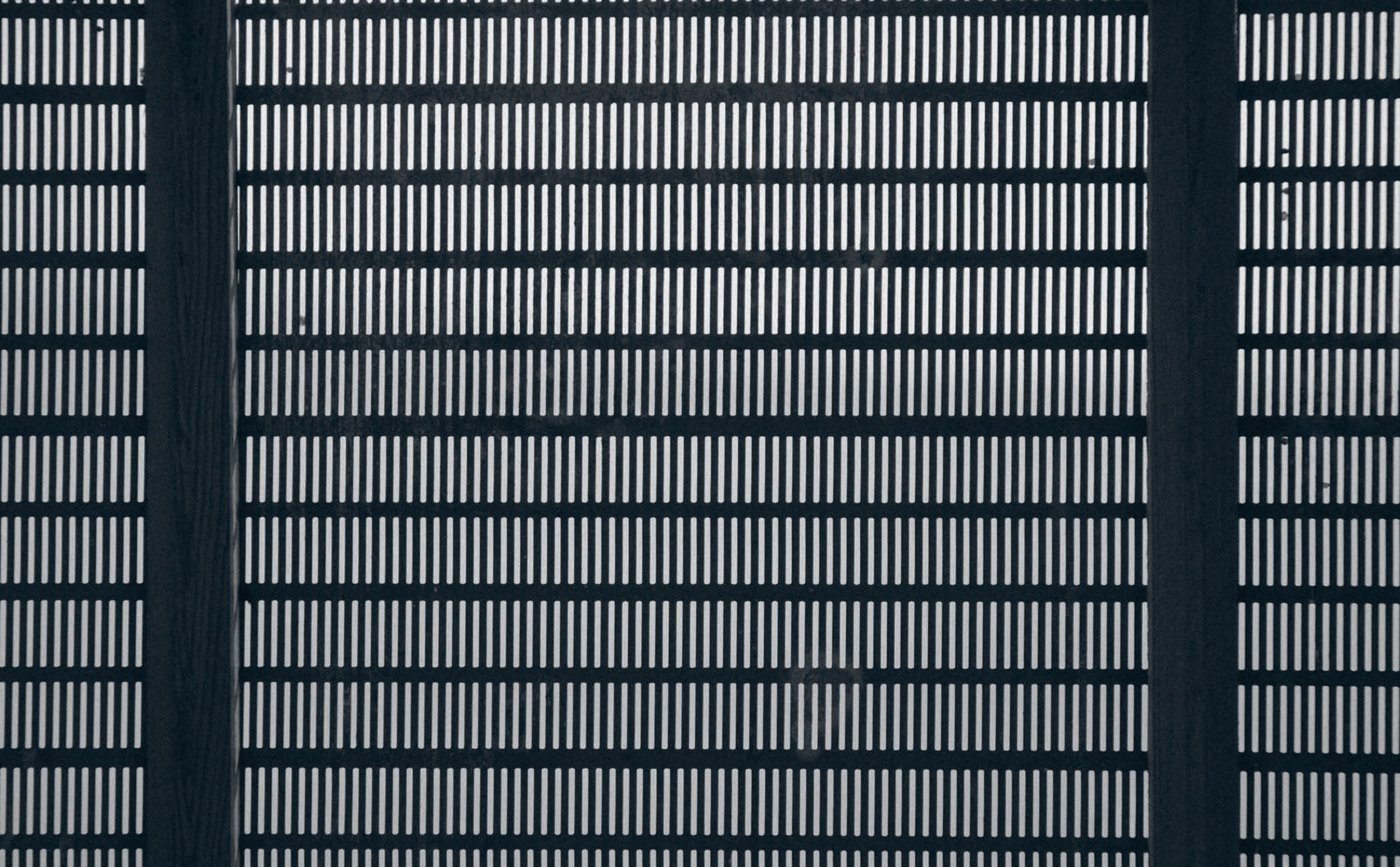
RIGHT: *Tribune*, reused wood from location, 2012

PREVIOUS SPREAD: *Tribune*, view from roof

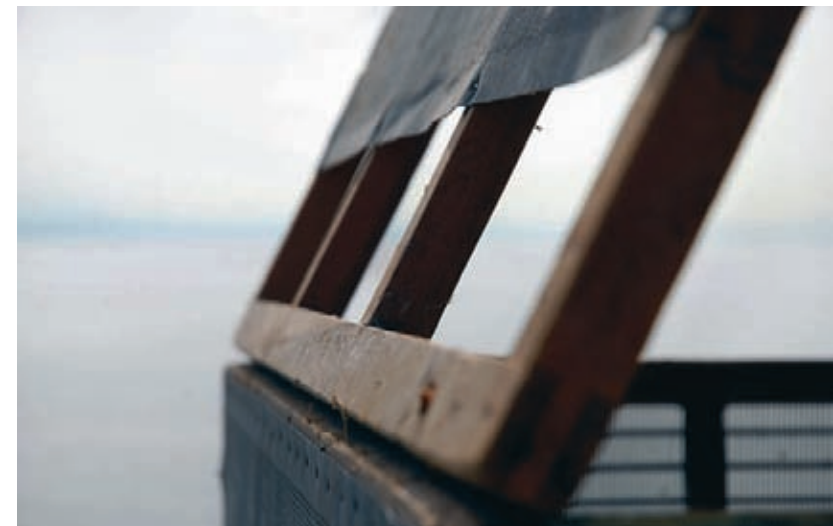




.....
Tribune, details







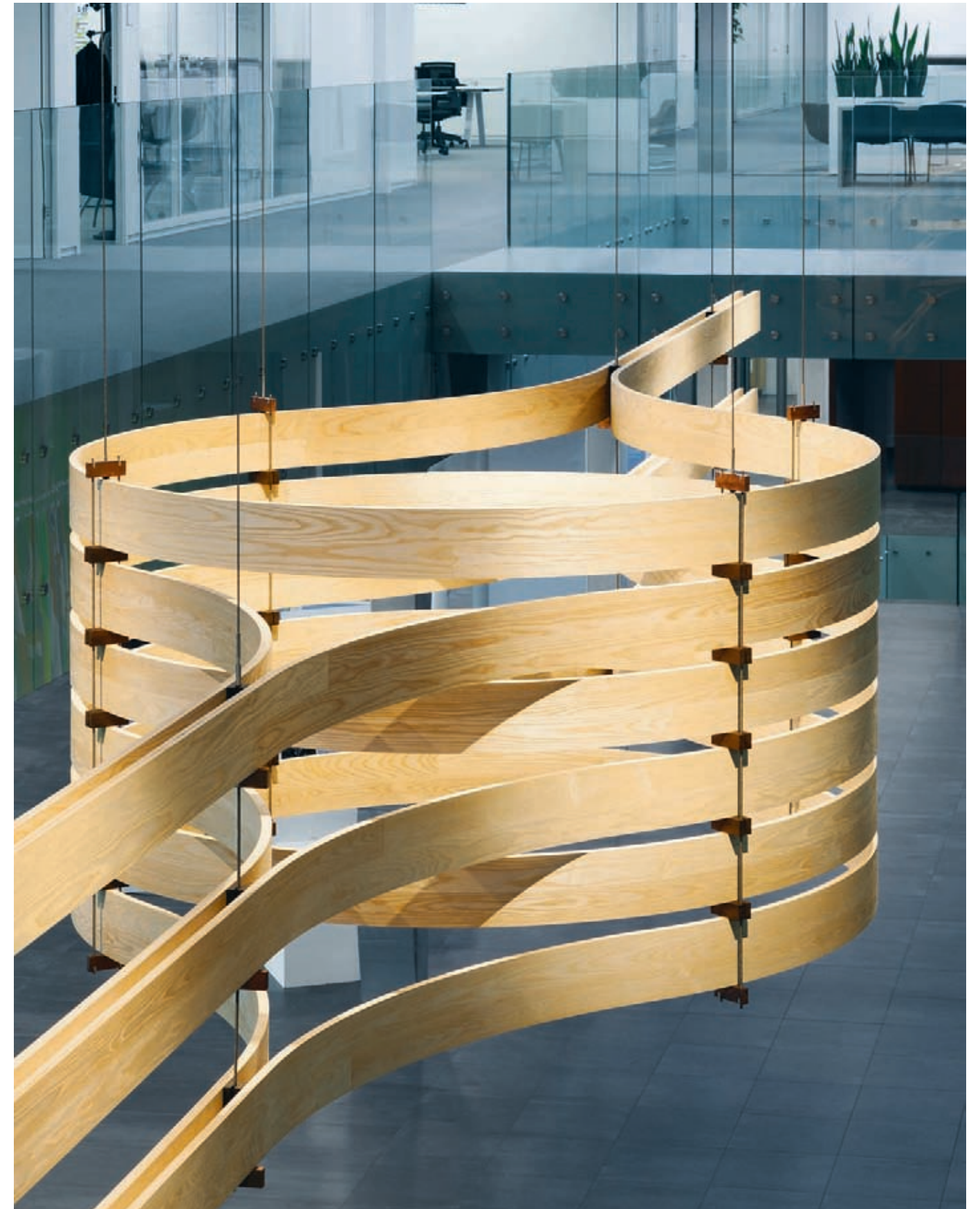
.....
 LEFT: *Udsigstspost* strapped to a stone at the water's edge
 RIGHT: *Indsigtpunkt* placed on the hillside overlooking the fields



Linear Volume is a permanent artwork created specifically for The International Criminal Court, in The Hague in the Netherlands. Commissioned by the Danish Art Foundation.

The sculpture consists of a series of long wooden bands reaching out from either end of the space. The wooden bands come together in the center, forming an intimate, cylindrical space. The main purpose of the artwork was to span the length of the elongated void above the reception desk with a sculptural, dynamic object that hovers in the foyer's space as a generous gesture – reaching out and gathering, in one flowing movement, the restricted footbridges leading into the main court room – one for the defense and one for the prosecution, and conjoining these with the public entrance hall. The spectator can look through – and into – the cylinder from above and below, thus emphasizing a situation of openness between the ICC as criminal court, above, and the ICC as public institution, on the ground.

RIGHT: *Linear Volume*, ash, copper, smoked oak, stainless steel,
150 x 1200 x 250 cm, 2015
PREVIOUS SPREAD: Workshop





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 TOP: Sketch model
 BOTTOM: 1:1 proportion sketch
 RIGHT TOP: work in progress
 RIGHT BOTTOM: 1:10 structural model



.....
 LEFT: Installation view, International Criminal Court, The Hague, 2015
 RIGHT: Detail





Created site-specifically for Koldinghus, *Retrium* was part of the “Zimmer Frei” group exhibition. Installed in the royal castle’s conspicuous south wing, the work occupied a place in the middle of the renovated hall which, after a fire in 1808, left the castle in ruins. The piece fashions a silo of wood, held together by rods of black steel and sturdy iron fastenings, arranged in the manner of barbed wire around the rotunda. The wood has been scorched on one side; this serves to darken the interior of the rotunda, while the outer side displays the spruce battens’ original light-colored nuances, and the work thus refers to both the fire and the place’s history as a fortification.

RIGHT: *Retrium*, spruce wood, charred on the inside, metal thread
415 x 200 x 200 cm, Koldinghus castle 2014

PREVIOUS SPREAD: *Retrium*, detail





Retrium, detail





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Page 55, Marc Damage
Page 52, 62, 81, Videostills, Joseph Barnett
Page 56/92, Mindcraft / Jule Heering
Page 145/148, Stammers Kontor

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Graphic design
Niklas Antonson - NOTATION

Published by
Architectural Publisher **B** Copenhagen
www.b-arki.dk

Printed by Narayana Press
Printed on 120 gr. Munken Polar Rough

Printed in Denmark 2018
Isbn no.: 978-87-92700-23-0

First edition
September 2018

This publication is supported by:
Statens Kunstfond
Nationalbankens Jubilæumsfond
Grosserer L.F. Foghts Fond

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