

MATTER AT HAND

Ten Artists in Denmark

HOSTLER | BURROWS
NEW YORK
LOS ANGELES

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MATTER AT HAND

It was in the early hours of March 12 in 2020 that I was “recalled” from a two week Nordic tour after just 36 hours in Copenhagen, enough time to complete only two of the countless artist visits I had planned in Denmark. The pandemic was closing borders swiftly and I couldn’t risk being stranded in Scandinavia; never mind that Copenhagen had turned into a ghost town overnight in those early and pivotal hours of international flight restrictions.

I returned home and we settled into what we now know as the first Covid 19 “lockdown”. One of the meetings I had missed in Copenhagen was with Signe Marie Jacobsen at the Danish Arts Foundation, who some weeks prior had contacted the gallery to propose a collaboration in support of contemporary Danish design. After our initial Zoom meetings we agreed to move forward in spite of the pandemic, and that much could be accomplished remotely. This turned out to be a huge understatement. Kim and I embarked on a monthlong itinerary of Zoom studio visits, all from our dining table in the woods. It was a little awkward in the beginning as everyone adjusted to connecting virtually, but the intimacy and immediacy of these introductions from our respective quarantines were exhilarating.

Out of these visits the essence of a show emerged from a very inside place - an exhibition that would celebrate the intention and commitment of these ten artists, and the humanistic approach(es) they take in their work. As Glenn Adamson writes in his essay “To Will One Thing”:

“...these objects do exemplify a philosophy: a way of being in the world. Whether clay or wood, metal or glass, each represents the direct engagement between a living, thinking person and the obdurate, external, and uncaring domain of materiality. The very fact of the objects’ excellence attests to the absolute commitment that was brought to these encounters.”

In addition to the ten artists whose works form the exhibition *Matter At Hand*, we wish to thank Signe Marie Jacobsen and the Danish Arts Foundation, Glenn Adamson, Dorte Krogh, Charlotte Jul, Laura Silke, Line-Gry Hørup, and Nanna Balslev Strøjer.

Juliet Burrows

TO WILL ONE THING

by Glenn Adamson

Existentialism comes from Denmark. At least, so say historians of philosophy, who trace the source of that school of thought to Søren Kierkegaard. He is best known today for the phrase “fear and trembling,” the title of a book he published in 1843, under the rather wonderful pseudonym Johannes de Silentio. In this text, he explored the anxiety brought about by religious faith, which demands a leap into the irrational. But there was also a more positive side to his philosophy, which Kierkegaard expressed in the notion of possibility. Every state of affairs — every “actuality,” he would have said — contains overwhelming, indeed infinite potential. Faced with the awe-inspiring scope of our own choices, it is all too easy to become non-committal. This is how he saw Romanticism, the primary art movement of his own day: just a dreamlike wonder at the sheer grandeur of things. He counseled the opposite. As the title of another of his works had it, *The Purity of Heart Is To Will One Thing*. To commit absolutely, no matter what the consequences: that was his advice.

For Kierkegaard, the leap of faith was synonymous with Christian belief. Yet subsequent philosophers have found in his uncompromising thought a possible foundation for secular culture: the imperative is to find a way to act, in the face of all doubt. And that challenge could not feel more urgent today. As I write this, in the eighteenth month of a pandemic, wildfires are raging on the west coast of the United States, so enormous that their billowing smoke is affecting the air quality where I live, 3000 miles to the east. Unprecedented flooding is happening in Germany and China. Denmark would seem relatively insulated from the worst, by virtue of its geography and world-leading environmental protection regulations. But of course, nowhere is really safe when it comes to climate change. Fear and trembling is tipping over into actuality. This existential threat is undeniably — to cite the title of the present show — the matter at hand.

At first glance, the works in this exhibition might not seem particularly relevant to this pressing topic. While marvelously wrought, they offer no obvious critique of our unsustainable consumer culture, nor credible large-scale alternatives to it. Yet these objects do exemplify a philosophy: a way of being in the world. Whether clay or wood, metal or glass, each represents the direct engagement between a living, thinking person and the obdurate, external, and uncaring domain of materiality. The very fact of the objects’ excellence attests to the absolute commitment that was brought to these encounters. Look, for example, at the astonishingly perfect spirals that unfold across Yuki Ferdinandsen’s silver vessels. And the crystalline glass of Stine Bidstrup, excavated from blowing molds, as if were mined rather than made. And the intertwined ceramic tubes of Martin Bodilsen Kaldahl, gutsy in every sense of the word. All these works resemble the forms of nature, but more importantly, they convey a sense of its fundamental conditions — the mathematical, geological, and organic forces that give shape to the world around us.

This is not to say that the virtues of these objects are somehow scientific; that we should value them as merely factual, or diagnostic. This would be to misunderstand the nature of “possibility,” as Kierkegaard theorized it, and as artists seem to instinctively understand it: action as a fulfillment of freedom, which requires no further justification. This is very much a matter of ethics, not just aesthetics. Indeed, the two are inextricably bound together. Another Existentialist philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre said this, in his seminal 1946 lecture “L’Existentialisme est un humanisme,” which introduced the general public to his philosophy:

We never speak of a work of art as irresponsible; when we are discussing a canvas by Picasso, we understand very well that the composition became what it is at the time when he was painting it, and that his works are part and

parcel of his entire life. It is the same upon the plane of morality. There is this in common between art and morality, that both have to do with creation and invention. We cannot decide a priori what it is that should be done.

When he made these remarks, European artists were asking themselves how to go on making at all, in the shadow of World War II, the atom bomb, and the Holocaust. Today, for very different reasons, we have returned to that condition. The question confronting artists today is not so much what shall I make in the studio today, but rather, should I go to the studio at all?, or perhaps, should there even be studios anymore?

To these latter questions, I want to offer an emphatic “yes” — on the basis of objects like the ones in *The Matter At Hand*. Would anyone really want to live in a world where such things go unmade? But this is easily said. The real test, as Sartre understood, comes when an artwork has been made, offering testimony to one unique human viewpoint, freedom plucked from the thicket of constraint. This is how we must ground our critical judgments, today: not in terms of individual taste, or even art historical precedent, but rather as statements about the value of humanity itself — the glory that we can bring into the world, even as we inflict ourselves upon it.

This is a heavy weight for any artist to carry — a truth that Bjørn Friberg, for one, seems to recognize. Go to his website and you’ll find a montage of his high-octane doings in the hot shop, beginning with a quick shot of him in boxing gloves, slugging a blown vessel with a succession of right jabs. The glass swings right back at him, giving as good as it gets. It’s an unusually explicit visualization of the core dynamic of craft, maker meeting material. That dialectical energy is preserved in his completed works, which are torched, spiked, dripped, and otherwise manhandled into being.

Another kind of dialectic can be seen in the contrasting works of Astrid Krogh and Jakob Jørgensen: she draws on evanescent atmospheric effects, he on heavy-duty metal-working procedures. (Krogh works in several media, including textiles and brick mosaic; Jørgensen uses a metal press capable of up to 100 tons of pressure to realize his sculptures, as well as selective heating with an oversized torch.) In both cases, though in diametrically opposed directions, we have craft juxtaposed with one of its natural limits: immateriality and industry. Interestingly, a certain parallel movement arises in these gestures beyond the domain of the handmade, capturing the macroscopic rhythms that contain and condition our human lives.

Speaking of the human condition, have a look at the polymorphous creations of Pernille Pontoppidan Pedersen, one of today’s most brilliantly generative ceramic artists. Taking her cues from Donna J. Haraway — famous for her analysis of the “post-human” condition, an updated existentialism that embraces the potential of animals, machines, and even inanimate objects — Pedersen attempts the seemingly impossible task of representing contemporary multivalence itself, the teeming contradictory state of affairs in which we find ourselves. And she succeeds.

Then, finally, at the other end of the exhibition’s aesthetic spectrum, we find focus: the cast glass columns of Maria Sparre-Petersen, the totemic timber works of Anne Brandøj, and the “frozen” textiles of Hanne G. All are concise essays in texture and density, achieved through processes that — for all their technical specificity — seem to efface themselves at the last, in favor of direct experience. These objects are anchors in space and time. And in that fixity, they offer another version of craft-possibility.

Thus, in the works of these ten artists, we find a wide diversity of personal sensibility and conceptual direction.

Yuki Ferdinandsen, Stine Bidstrup and Martin Bodilsen Kahldahl all explore the mimetic potential of their respective disciplines, and dwell in the domain of theme-and-variation: Ferdinandsen's subtle arare (Japanese for "hailstones"), Bidstrup's translucent faceted forms, Kahldahl's segmented and knotted pipes. Bjørn Friborg inhabits his workspace as if it were a sporting arena, a site of physical contestation, of spills and thrills. Astrid Krogh and Jakob Jørgensen are large-scale thinkers and makers, transcending the parameters of the human-sized object to evoke the full dimensionality of aesthetic experience — what we might call the sublime. For Pernille Pontoppidan Pedersen, complexity is its own reward; her works embody the layered, perhaps ambiguous tenor of the times. And finally, Maria Sparre-Petersen, Anne Brandøj and Hanne G exemplify craft as a centripetal undertaking. Their richly textured, formally concentrated works bespeak a lengthy journey of form-finding, in which possibility is gathered to itself and simply held there, offering the experience of materiality in its pure state.

It's an impressive itinerary. But what do these artists have to tell us about the matter at hand? What do they share, and why should we value their work so highly, at a time of incipient global crisis? I can think of three things, which taken together show why craft still counts for something, in an age of digital expansion and ecological meltdown. Let's take them, in conclusion, each in turn: tactility, transmutation, and temporality.

First, tactility. An unavoidable aspect of human life, hardly something that could become endangered, one would have thought. Until recently. For while bodies still bump up against the environment at all times, we're more and more distracted from that primary realm of experience. Our attention is constantly pulled elsewhere, into the vast panoply of the virtual. Ironically, this happens increasingly

through interactive "touchscreens," a term that is narrowly accurate but also sadly misleading, in that the tactile experience it offers is minimal to the point of unawareness. Using our phones, the traditional ordering of our senses is inverted: touch becomes so transparent as to be taken for granted, while visuality is textured and rich in incident.

While this technology is certainly amazing (let's not lose touch with that), to the extent that it has led to an impoverished relationship to the physical things around us, it threatens to undermine our direct connection to the environment. To redress this phenomenon, which has possessed human society at sickening speed, it's necessary to do more than insist on the importance of tactile experience. We need (as it's often said) objects to think with, things that attest to the infinite variety, depth, and — yes — pleasure of the material domain.

Second, transmutation. Again, not something you would initially think we're lacking, in the 21st century — just look around. Unless you are a forest-dwelling hermit or a technical polymath, you are probably in easy view of quite a few objects whose operations you could not easily explain. Humans have more transformative power than previous generations, even fifty years ago, even dreamt of. And this skill in transmutation is derived from what I like to call material intelligence — the ability to understand and shape materials, a human faculty with craft at its heart.

So what's the problem? In brief, it is a matter of agency. As our collective world-shaping capacity expands exponentially, each individual looks weaker and weaker by comparison. This is really the origin story of modern craft, which defined itself in response to the industrial revolution, against the machines that outstripped human capabilities. This narrative continues today, as futurists debate the notion of the singularity — the point at which Artificial

Intelligence surpasses human decision-making, overwhelming those foolish enough to have built it. Just a ghost story for the internet age? Perhaps. But its very currency indicates how important it is that we continue to invest in transmutation at human scale.

Third and finally, temporality. We live in accelerated times. History barely pauses before proceeding to the next upheaval — or at least, this is how the media report events to us, in a constant tickertape of catastrophe, instant gratification's dark double. It's often remarked that a great virtue of craft is its slowness, and this is certainly true. We could all use some time to think. But that's a maker-oriented idea, which does not translate all that well to others; it doesn't help anyone, much, to create a subculture of slowpokes, while the rest of the world hurtles toward possible oblivion.

More important than the downshifting implied by craft is the way that it articulates time, putting us back in control of the clock. Look for a moment at the process images in this publication, and notice how — even in freeze frame — they capture the elastic rhythms of the working day. Not just making, but also lifting, holding, looking, sitting, standing, thinking. These are portraits of awareness in action.

And this, at last, brings us back to where we began: to Kierkegaard, and his call to commit. To will one thing. It seems like it couldn't possibly be enough, given the challenges we face. But thinking like that is our biggest mistake. More than ever, we do need to take leaps of faith — faith in ourselves. It's a principle utterly exemplified by each of these wondrously inventive humans. Each in their own way, at their own speed, they are taking matter in hand. Right where it ought to be.

ANNE BRANDHØJ



Anne Brandhøj draws out the qualities and characteristics of wood in her work, highlighting and honoring the imperfections that represent natural variations in a material that is as old as ... the beginnings of life on this planet? Knots, cracks, resin pockets, fungus attacks and variations in color are present as narratives, each contributing to the story of the wood. By accentuating these irregularities, Brandhøj signals that her pieces are born, shaped and proportioned by nature and on nature's terms. That they are sustainable in form and content, in process and outcome. As a recent furniture design graduate, Anne Brandhøj was not moved to design new, flawless products, and while working on her graduation project at the Royal Danish Academy-Design, she was able to go into the forest and witness how trees became the planks that arrived at the workshop. In the woods she absorbed any knowledge that the local foresters were willing to share with her — and later, she learned how to cut down a tree. Brandhøj was fascinated by the slow growth cycle of trees, spellbound by the wonder of opening up a trunk and seeing what lies hidden under the bark — the mystery of traces and stories.

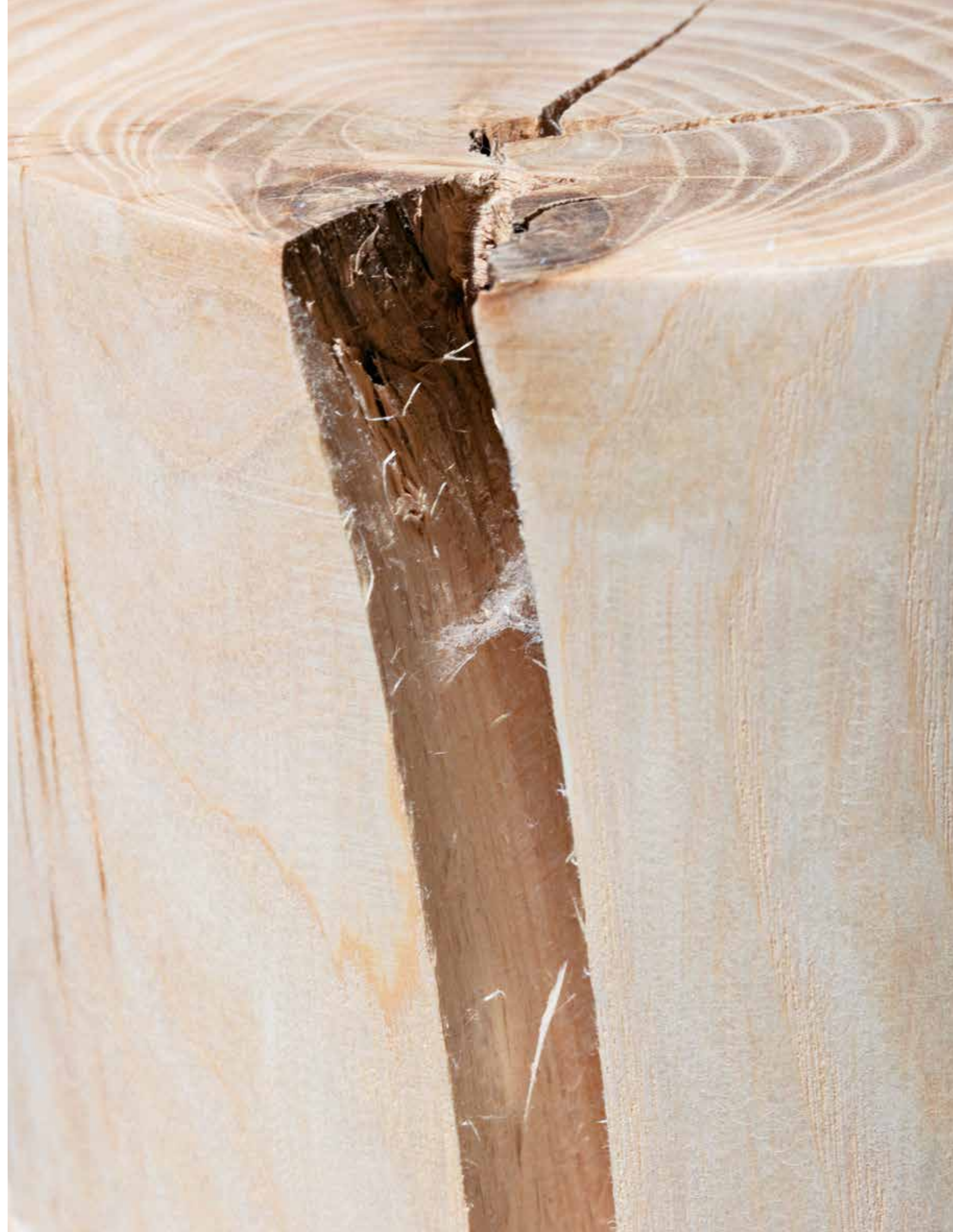
In an ideal world, it takes up to 20 years to dry a log with minimal stress to the wood. Brandhøj experimented with a faster method, which often resulted in cracks. She became focused on these cracks, on the conflict of the smooth, processed, perhaps oil-finished wood and the natural, tactile knots or cracks, which most people are not accustomed to seeing or touching. Brandhøj believes that the only way to read the full story of her works is to touch them, to feel the variations of the surface by running one's hands over it, how rough turns to smooth, and the fingers intuitively stop to examine the irregularity. To explore its unfamiliar feel and

unique appeal. The contrasts anchor the objects, creating a tension and inner balance in works that stand upright or feature a flat surface, reminiscent of furniture. Brandhøj's background as a designer is easy to spot in her works, which contain both abstract and concrete aspects and act as a link between nature and culture. Her creative practice is driven by a goal of eliminating superficialities that do not relate to anyone or anything. In order to be in the world, an object should connect to people and to other objects, just as we do in our lives — in relationships that develop, are used and worn and get a few dents and scratches along the way.

Brandhøj spends many hours a day in her workshop. Prior to arrival, she may have been to the forest to find the perfect piece for her next project, which she carries home on her cargo bike. It is necessary that Brandhøj engage in every step of the process, including the heavy lifting, in order to maintain her dialogue with the material. Brandhøj always works in fresh wood, which she shapes and then leaves to dry for 6–12 months. After drying, a round object may become oval or some other shape entirely, at which point she re-engages, reshapes and reinterprets the material, because she has learned through her practice that wood has a mind of its own. Wood breathes and gives, depending on air humidity and other factors, and as a maker she has no choice but to work with circumstance — to balance the will of the wood with her own artistic will and motivation.











STINE BIDSTRUP

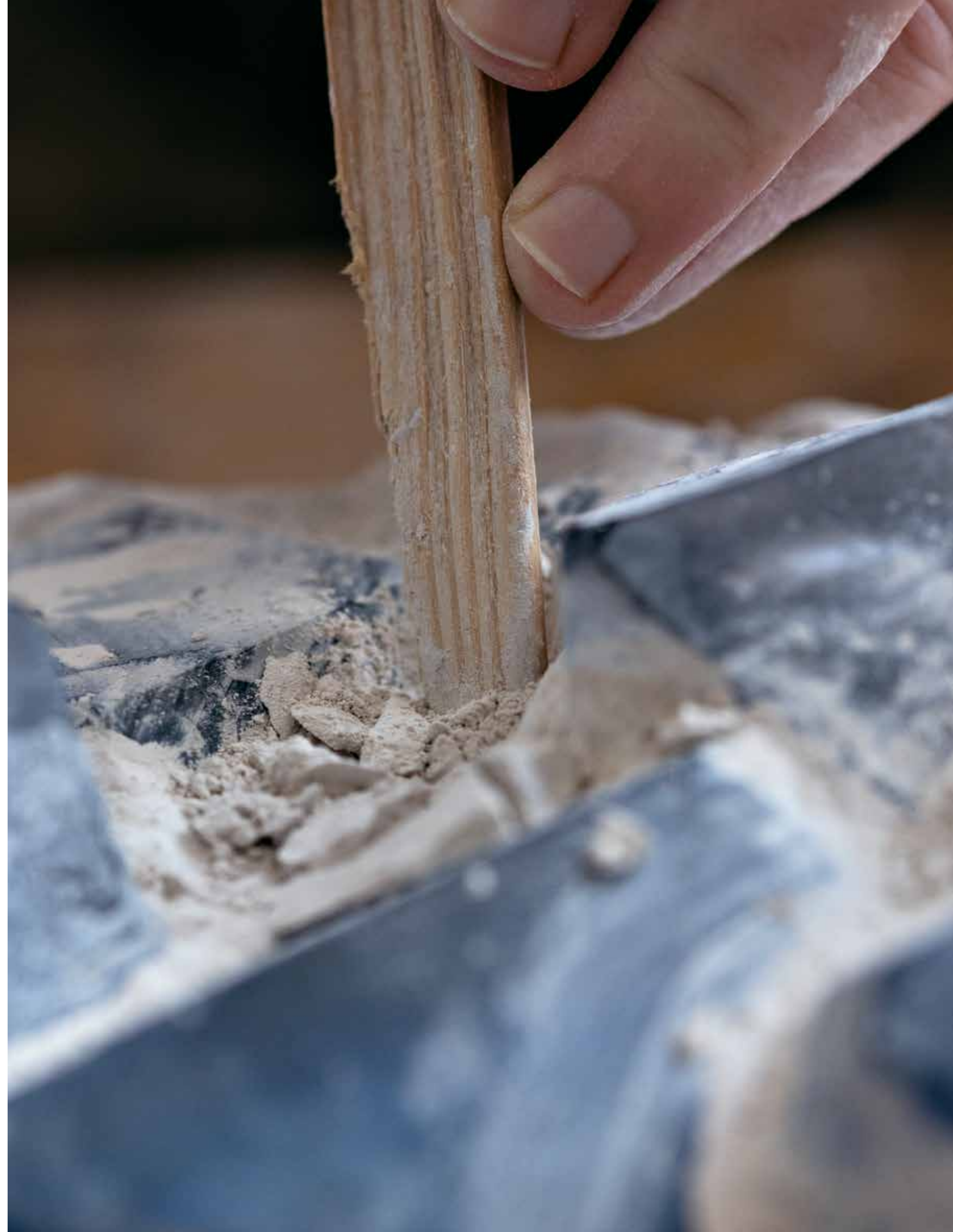


Glass artist Stine Bidstrup's works are about seeing. Seeing many things at once without seeing everything. Seeing reflecting surfaces. Seeing through the material. Seeing patterns, edges and contrasts between matte and shiny, rough and smooth, transparent and opalized. Seeing mirror images, spatial qualities and depth from different angles. Seeing multiple shapes in one form and discovering art historical references as you form your own impressions. Bidstrup's colorful works position themselves between past and future. Inspired by historical stylistic periods and created using traditional techniques in a classic material, they are old-school. But by sampling techniques and raising the technical bar ever higher, Bidstrup deconstructs the traditional craft, blowing the glass into a customized hand-built mold. Through this technique, the familiar and characteristic organic glass blob at the end of the blowpipe changes into mannered form, conceived and designed by Bidstrup. The objects then re-emerge as new, ultra-cool hybrids, each one designed to highlight the unique characteristics of glass.

Bidstrup combines ancient techniques and methods with a strong conceptual grasp in a contemporary interpretation. The making of her sculptures requires time and skill in each stage; it is an intense and demanding process, involving three experienced makers at the final stage. Glass is not a material that can be manipulated once it is cast or blown — the artist only gets one shot at it. Those are tough odds — or disciplining conditions, depending on your perspective and inclination. But Stine Bidstrup wouldn't have it any other way. The demanding tasks of creating the molds, designing the digital patterns that are fused into the glass, the high-intensity process of blowing in front of the hot

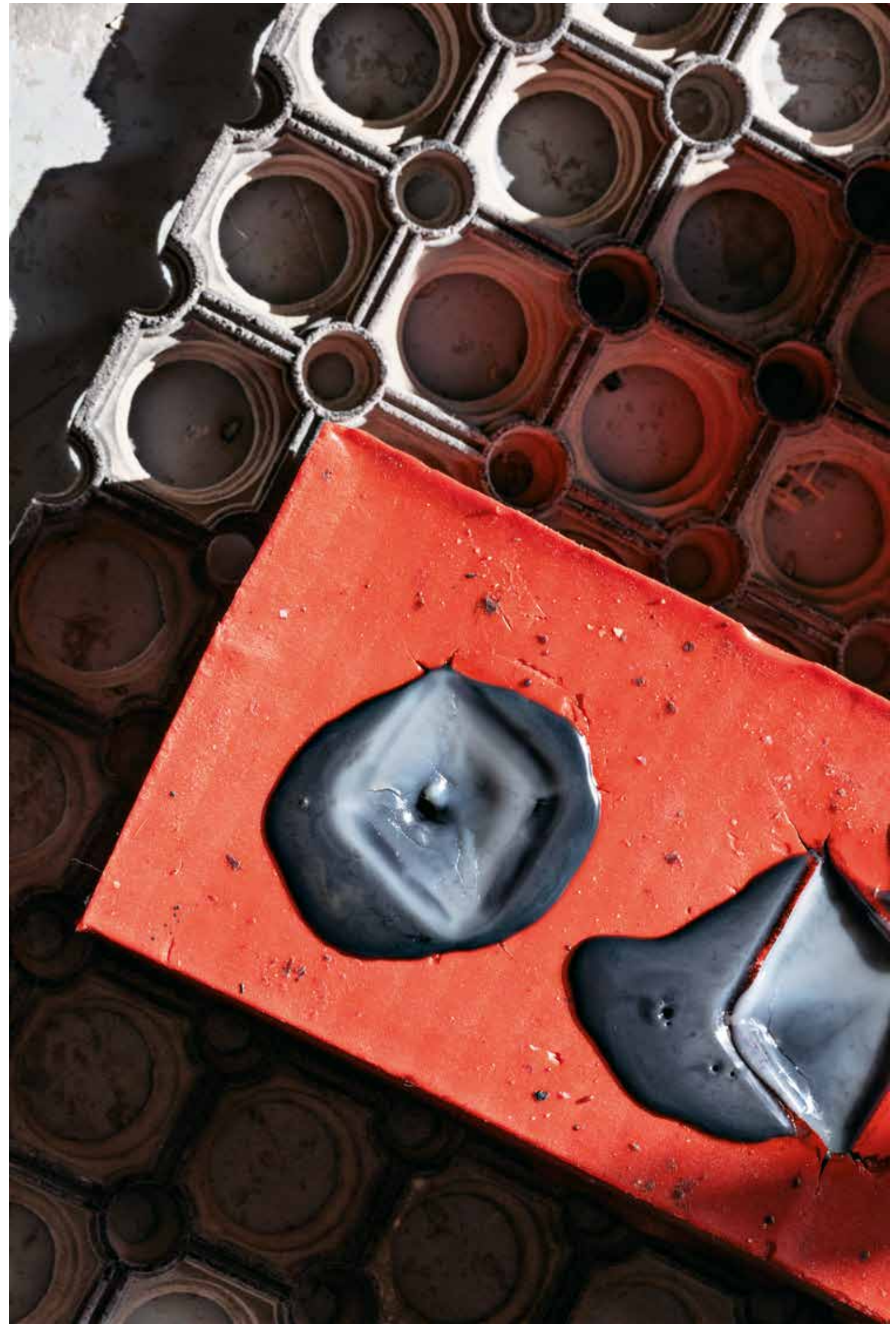
kiln, and the final, painstaking stage of cleaning and polishing the finished object are all vital steps in a wonderful and unpredictable process.

Glass is an amazing material, according to Bidstrup, who in addition to training in Denmark and the United States holds a bachelor's degree in art history. Having a foundation in art history is a vital parameter for Bidstrup, who has an affinity for the groundbreaking Cubist and avant-garde architects of the 20th century. And though Bidstrup's works can have a futuristic sci-fi feel, resembling miniature crystalline architecture from a Superman movie, they are all handblown. That is part of their fascination: they look like something that was coded on a computer, but in fact, they take weeks to make, with every element in the process shaped by hand in the workshop. They are composed of countless references, and while open to interpretation Bidstrup's glass sculptures defy quick and easy decoding. Old-school glass transformed into objects too cool for school.











ASTRID KROGH

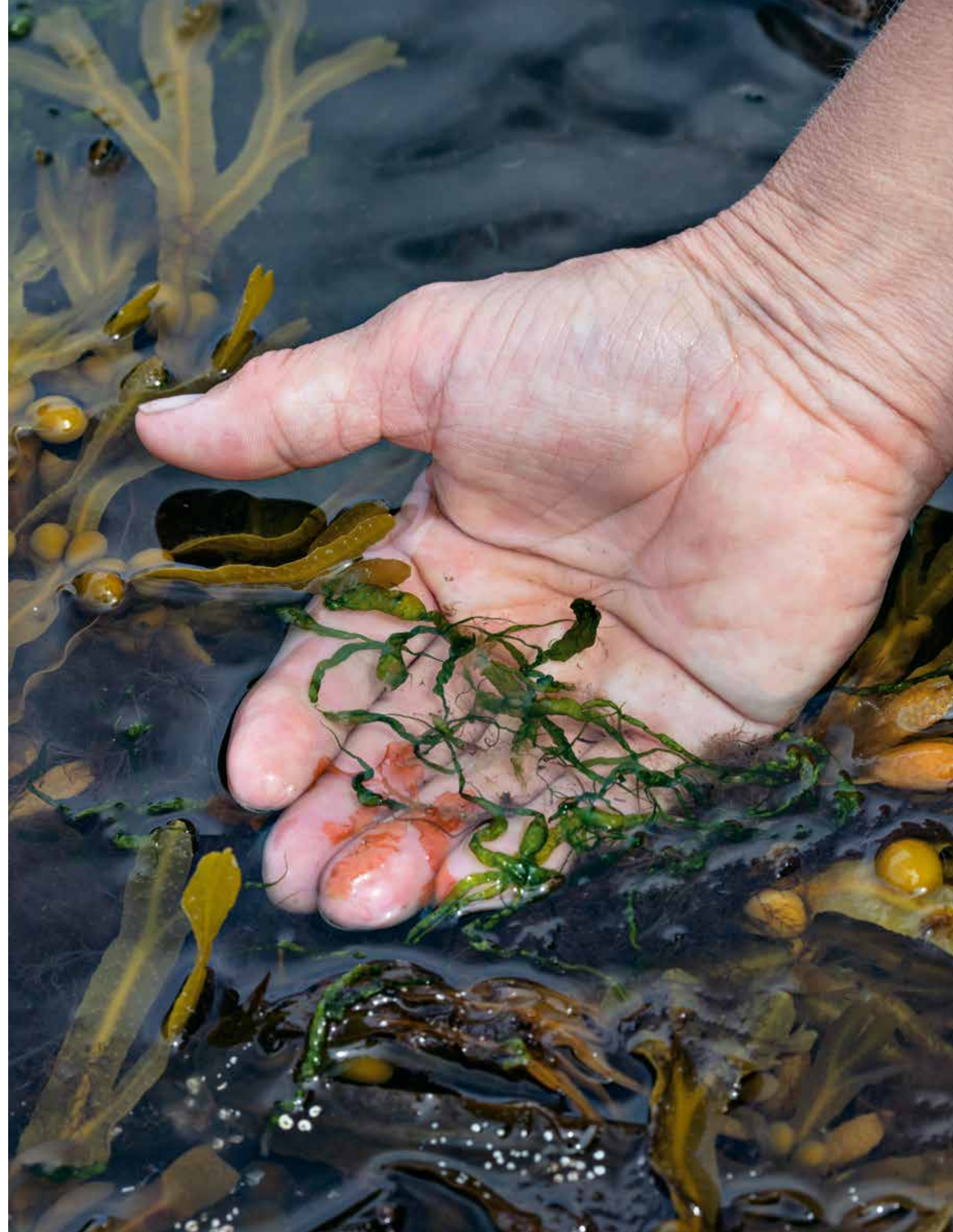


Astrid Krogh is a translator, an artist who sees the world through a textile lens. Whether exploring the power of light, the galactic complexity of the universe or the aesthetic ramifications of seaweed, Krogh's work always springs from a textile approach and mindset. Formally trained in classic textile design, anything can serve as her material; thus she is not restricted to one medium, but seeks to reproduce natural life through patterns, fibers and structures. Throughout her career, Krogh has worked with light, its patterns and variability, and sought to reflect nature's tactile mutability — in neon. That may sound contradictory, but it is not, as Krogh's deep respect for nature and textile craft drives her to create her own interpretation based on layers of knowledge and experimentation. Krogh steers her projects down unknown paths, as when she "weaves" with neon or fiber optics, a novelty when she first set out. Over time, the digital medium has become part of her creative expression, always with a textile foundation. In addition to light, repeated patterns with minor variations have been a recurring theme in her work: in large scale digital wall panels, graphic flowers change color at the same intervals as the light that moves through the course of a day, or the Milky Way is depicted as a pattern in fiber optics that we can understand and relate to as a wall-hung work of art.

For the past two years, Krogh has turned her artistic eye to the galaxies, seeking to convey the patterns created by light-emitting objects in the universe. She has even consulted with Dr. Margaret Geller of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory at Harvard, a pioneer in the mapping of the universe. Geller's work provides a new way of seeing the vast patterns in the distribution of galaxies, such as the Milky Way. In their email correspondence,

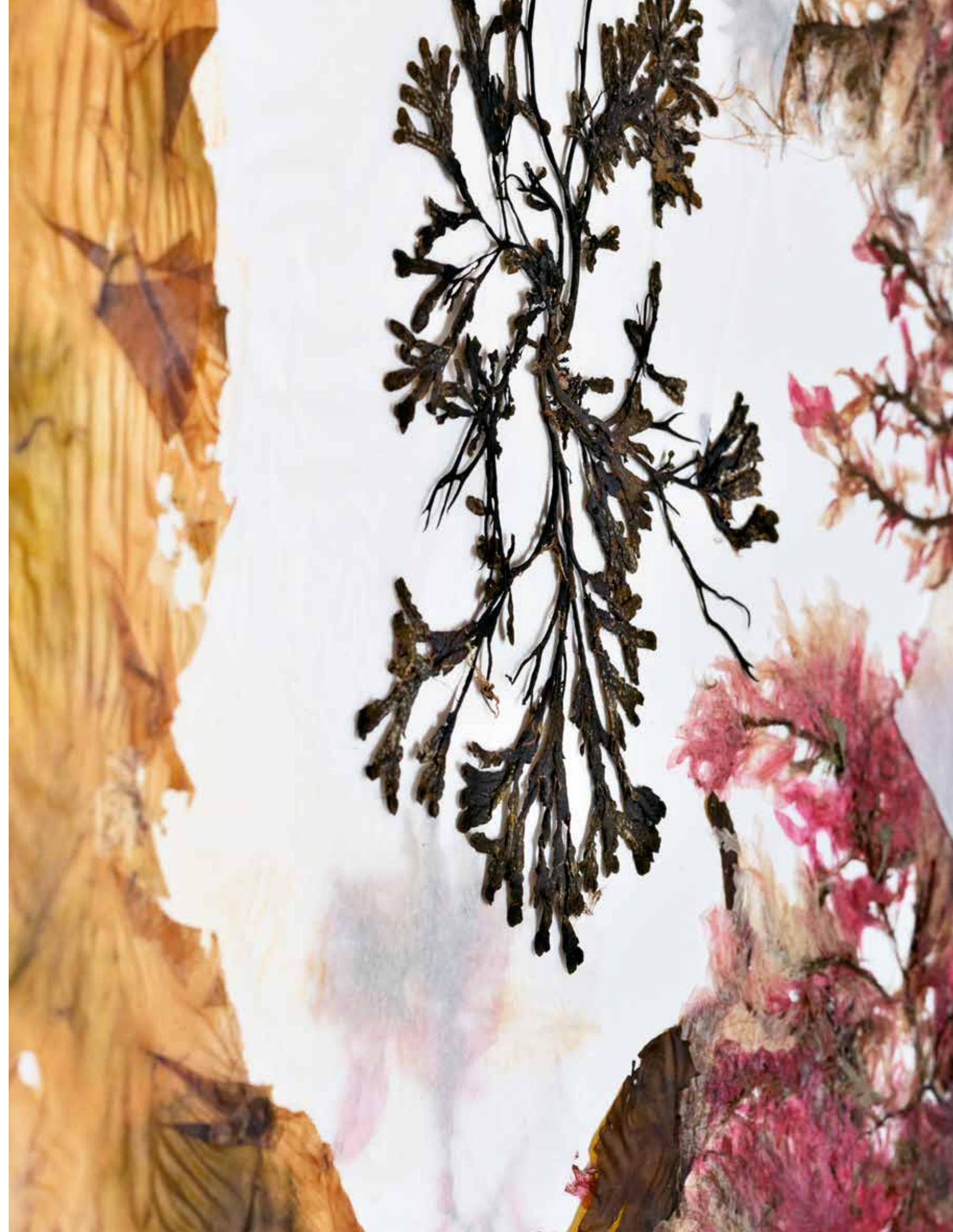
Krogh found a fruitful and contagious connection between science and art, and her dialogue with Dr. Geller enabled a new practice and understanding of the world.

Krogh's latest projects, however, turn the gaze inward rather than up, as her work dives beneath the surface of the sea to discover the equally complex world of seaweed and marine plants, which form patterns and connections of which few people are aware. Seaweed and its ramifications are as complex as the galaxies and almost resemble them, with equal parts diversity and regularity. Krogh looks for the regularity in order to disrupt it, to find the repetition and the minute variations that prevent complete uniformity, the tiny ramification that is close to but not quite like the other. Through her constantly evolving experiments she expands her own understanding, delving into unknown worlds to translate and interpret, to share her findings through art that opens our senses and eyes to the beauty and power of nature.



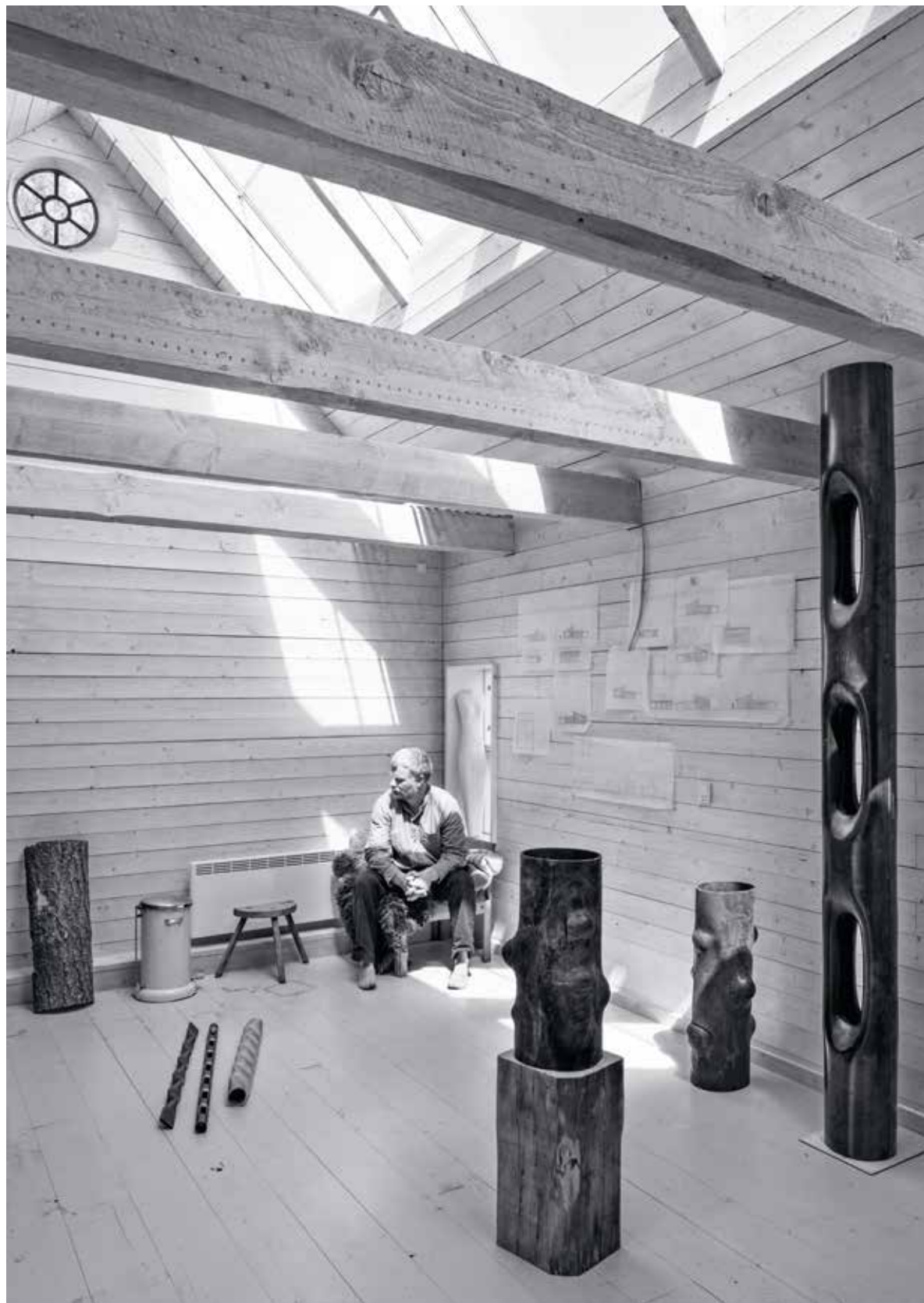








JAKOB JØRGENSEN

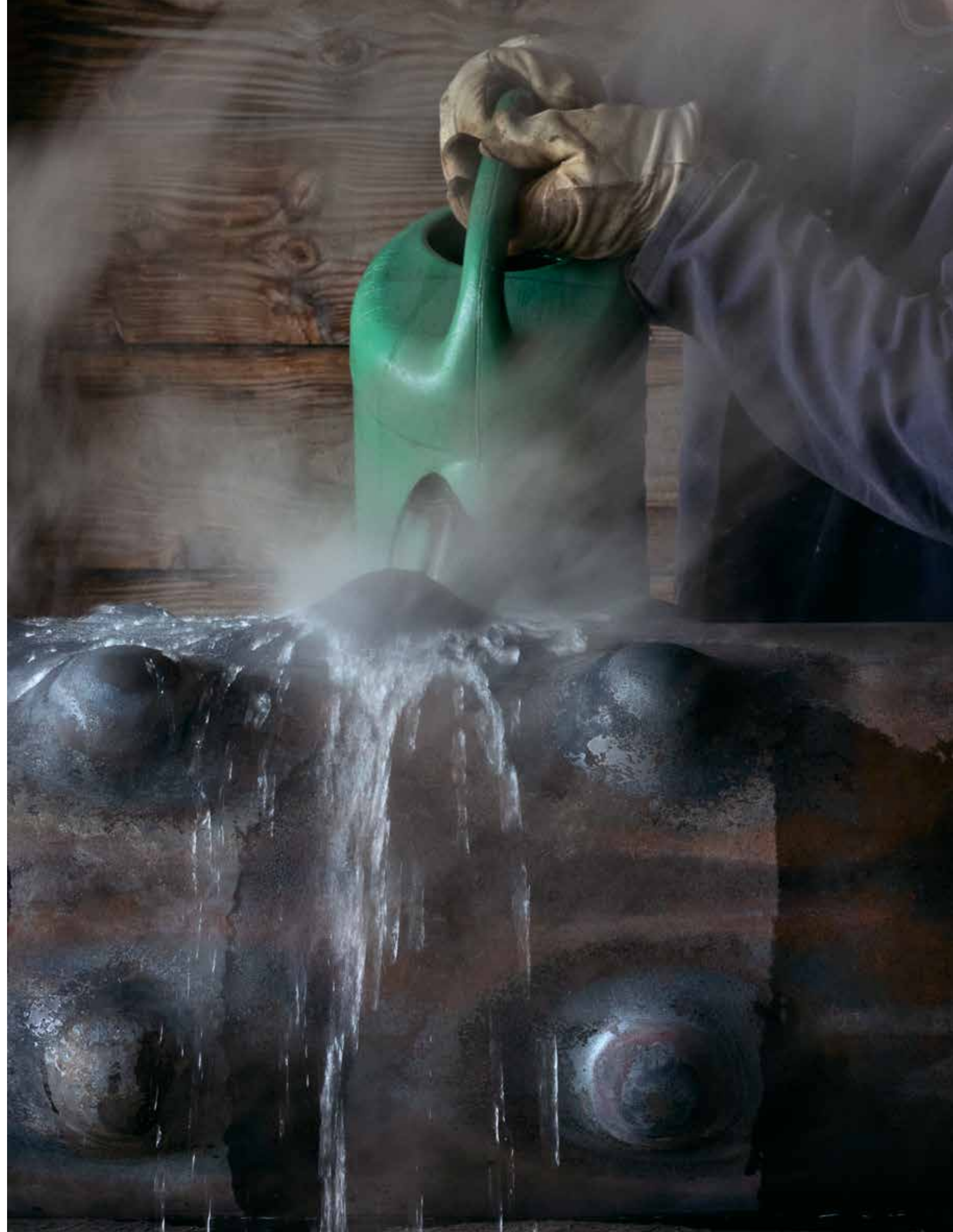


Jakob Jørgensen is a hands-on artist, deeply involved in the tangible material he is exploring as well as in the intellectual perspectives of a given project. Resistance is a key focal point for Jørgensen, who is thrilled when materials put up a fight and he has to grapple and tussle with them in order to bring out their core. Grasp the essence and pull out the form, despite any inherent defiance. Engaging in this process is a deeply personal experience, and one that captivates him.

For many years Jørgensen has made wood the basis for a range of poetic and epic furniture, many of them chairs and storage pieces with narrative titles. These works occupy a continuum between the commercial and the artistic; Jørgensen is fluent in both idioms and works in a continuous cross-fertilization between set and free tasks. He's also an accomplished craftsman, who masters virtually every step in the artistic process, whether the material is wood, stone or steel. And he does nothing by halves. Why should he, since he can achieve whatever he sets his mind to, using his hands and his tools? Although graduating from school as a furniture designer, Jørgensen also trained as a sculptor, working mainly in stone in his 20s. Now, two decades later, he has embraced steel. Always curious about the material, he is now driven to explore its plasticity, discovering how an industrial cylinder can be transformed to hold an organic and artistic potential that challenges conventional thinking.

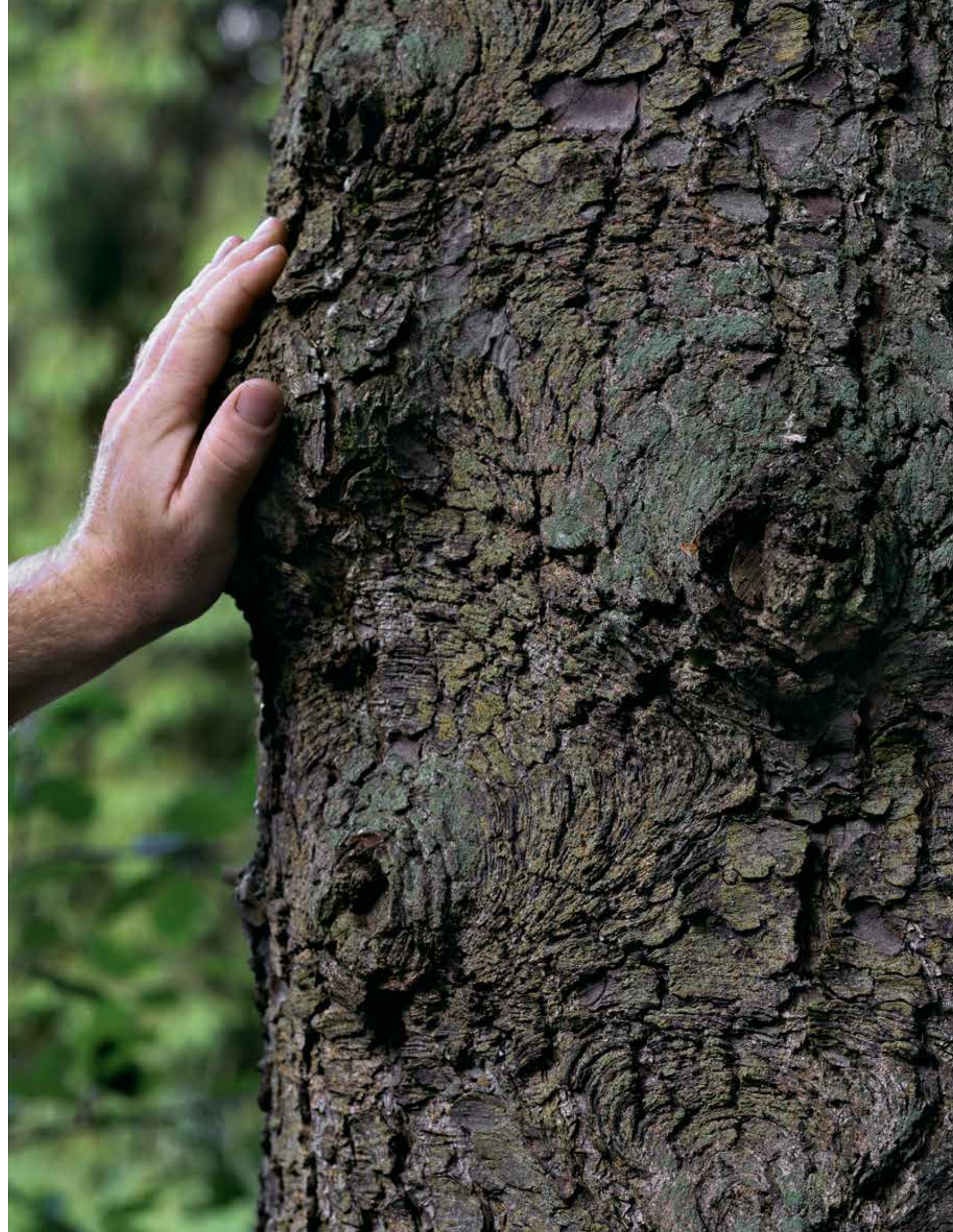
In his work with steel, Jørgensen investigates how the basic geometry of a steel tube is affected when the material is subjected to pressure. The result is an organic articulation with strong references to nature — and to wood, a material

he knows by heart. Jørgensen has learned the techniques involved: welding, forging, using a hammer and anvil, and using a jack to compress the steel. Five targeted pressure points, and the steel tube begins to look like a bench. His organic expression stands in stark contrast to the industrial universe of machinery. A steel tube becomes a totem symbolizing the link between nature and industry. The act of reshaping the tube and wrestling with its artistic potential appeals to Jørgensen, and during the creative process he is more interested in what the material affords and how it reacts than whether the result is art or design. To him, the goal is to explore a material and the possibilities it can offer in order to arrive at his own unique synthesis of matter and idea. Scale also plays a compelling role in Jørgensen's work; a simple scaling up of a design or an idea brings out the unexpected and magical. It allows the steel to dominate the room with a grounded materiality; the totem has a palpable impact as it bellows out its strength. Jørgensen does not raise his voice but lets his restrained and powerful sculptures speak for him.











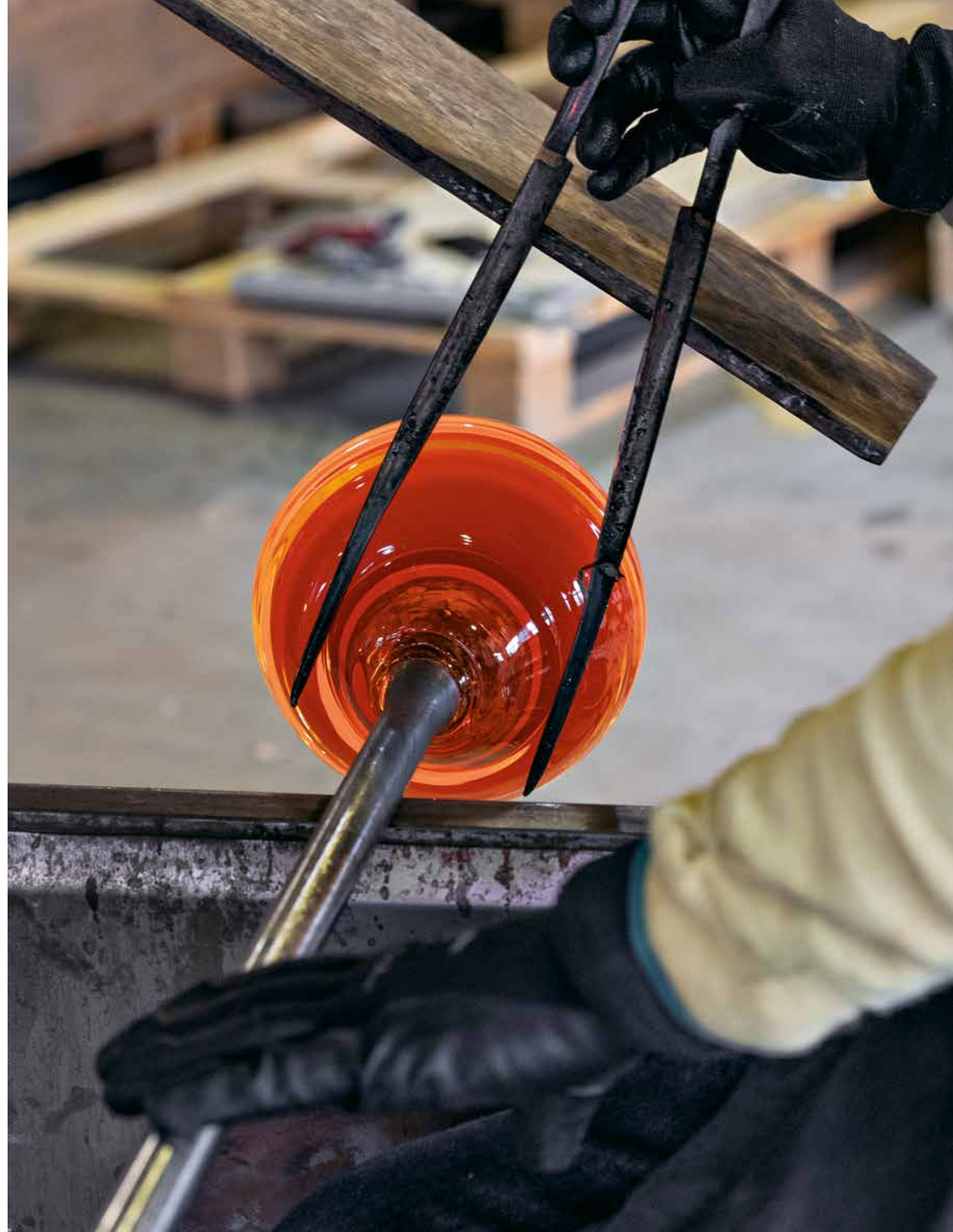
BJØRN FRIBORG



Bjørn Friberg has a loud and powerful expression, an expression that is equal parts art and craftsmanship. The dramatic titles of his two series, "Implosion" and "Penetration", have wild connotations because to Friberg, life is wild and sensuous. His glass sculptures are beautiful, roaring and seductive — transparent oval displays filled with dynamically twisted life in tantalizing colors. They are also slightly unsettling and provocative, almost like an aching tooth that you can't stop poking at with your tongue. The sculptures make you want to stick your hand inside and touch, although that feels like it would be a transgression. Friberg feels it is important to speak loudly and clearly, to be honest and unpretentious in order to arrive at a genuine expression. His works of art are an extension of his person, of a desire to touch and penetrate deeper and seem to be explosive discharges of personal and artistic energy. He is impassioned about the creative process, during which everything has to come together in close coordination with the different makers; it is a team effort, and as demanding and disciplined as any form of elite sport. That is part of the rush: the uncertainty; that split second when the artist does not have time to think or hesitate but simply acts. Glassmaking is an extremely intimate process, emotionally speaking, and according to Friberg it is so euphoric that it compares to sex or violence. Many things can go wrong, and even if everything has gone right, all can still be lost when the kiln is opened.

Friberg is a high-energy personality. He talks so fast you catch yourself leaning forward to make sure you don't miss anything, even during a phone conversation. His explanations and thought sequences often leap ahead, skipping intermediate steps, so you have to stay on your toes to fill

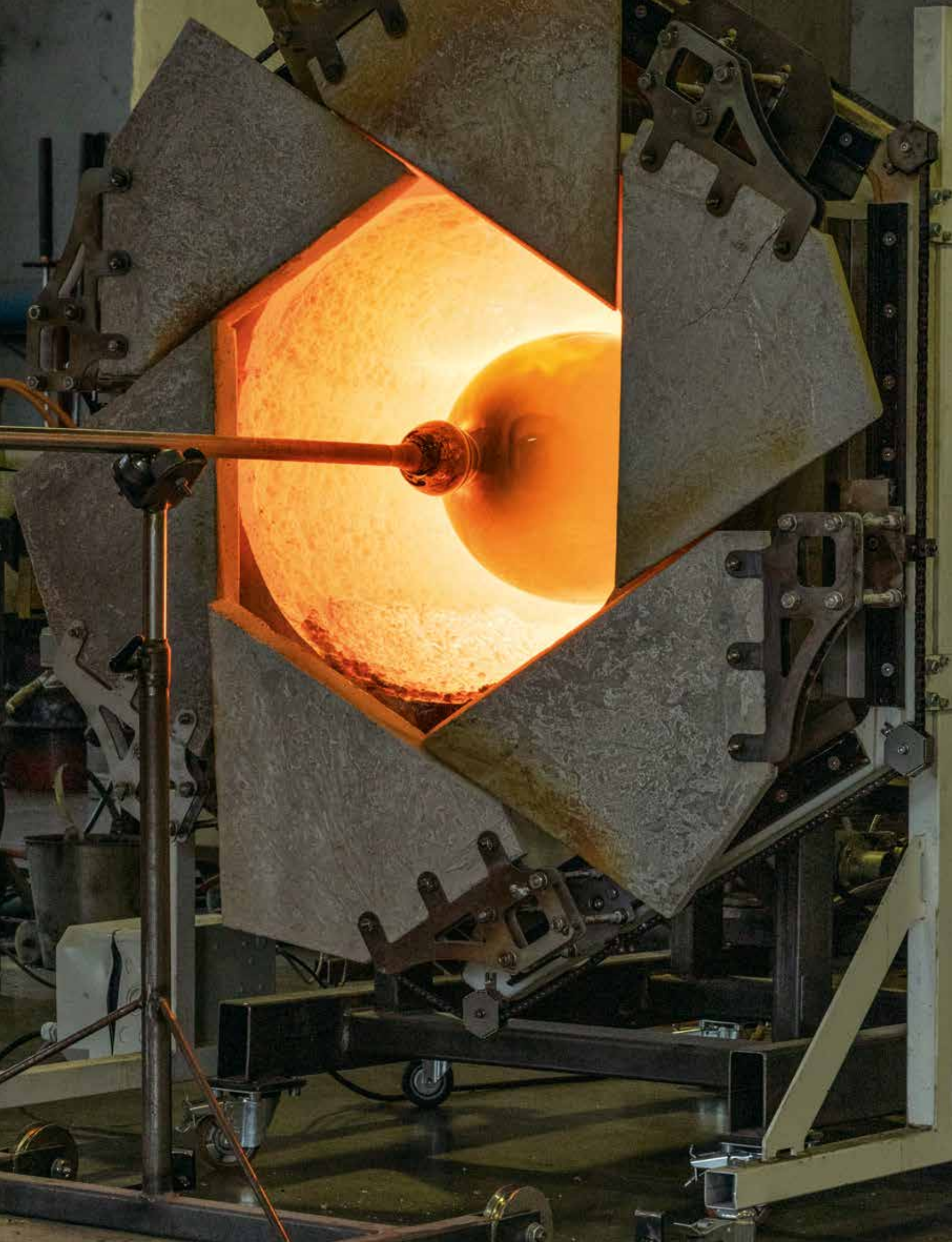
in the gaps. He is in a hurry, has no time to waste. In addition to several projects in the works, Friberg recently took on the position of smeltery foreman at the reopened Holmegaard Værk, the renowned Danish glasswork which has been resurrected in an ambitious and fresh renovation after falling into obscurity and struggling economically for years. Now it is time for Danish glass to reclaim its former position under Friberg's leadership — a clever appointment as Friberg is one of Scandinavia's leading studio glassmakers, who has mastered every aspect of the craft. He learned from the best, a senior, hardcore master, who took Friberg under his wing when he came to Sweden in his youth to learn the trade. Sweden has historically had a stronger glassmaking tradition than Denmark, and "Glasriket" (The Kingdom of Crystal), a town where everything revolves around glass, is a hotbed of industrial and artistic development. In addition to his training in Sweden, Friberg has also trained in Denmark and the United States and has developed an artistic practice concurrently with his work as a master craftsman. Glassmaking runs in his veins, and for Friberg, art and craft are inextricably enmeshed in the creation of sculpture that is not afraid to walk on the wild side.











HANNE G



Hanne G is a master of tactility, in both a concrete as well as a metaphoric sense. Using the precise tip of the crochet hook, she creates palm trees, light bulbs and machine guns as tactile symbols delivering political salvos, often cloaked in humor. Her breakthrough in the Danish art scene came with her 2007 piece “Weapon Collection — Crocheting for Peace”, which attracted attention due to the obvious contrast between weapons, war, toxic masculinity, death and destruction and the soft, crocheted material, rooted in a feminine handicraft universe. Power, status, gender equality, craft, politics and homeliness offered additional, obvious connotations. All of that from crocheting a controversial object and placing it into an artistic context ...

Hanne G was one of the first Danish artists to crochet messages with a convincing trinity of expression, content and an exquisite finish. That the simple technique, based on the combination of a crochet hook and a ball of yarn, can be used to manifest large sculptures is fascinating to the artist, who learned to crochet in her teens. According to Hanne G, crocheting can create ANY form. When she came out as an artist after several years as a graphic designer and, later, a TV-concept developer, she was first drawn to painting. However, once she encountered the textile craft, she realized the potential contrasts of the medium and the opportunities it afforded for artistic statements. She found that crocheting was like riding a bicycle, you never forget. And she excelled at it. Her hands remembered the craft, aided by memories of her grandmother, who had helped her learn. And it was not just her grandmother cheering her on from the beyond but a wider, contemporary audience, who felt a sense of the familiar when they saw her work, a liberating joy. We are all familiar with this soft medium

and have a relationship with it — we wear textiles, dry ourselves with a towel after the shower and use a tea towel in the kitchen. Perhaps this every day engagement makes us more receptive to textile art, even when it is placed into an unfamiliar context.

The flip side of this everyday familiarity is that the medium and the material have a low status in the artistic hierarchy and a historical link to homely, feminine pursuits — a fact that only drives Hanne G to be more conscious of her techniques, dimensions and narratives. She desires her works to have strong impact, to move people and invite reflection. The handmade imprints and tiny flaws that invariably arise during the process reflect the human perspective, human dreams, human flaws — themes that she finds only more compelling with age. These imperfections hold profound potential, the capacity to deconstruct aesthetic conventions and touch on the essence of what life is — much like the palms she created for this exhibition are positive metaphors for the strength to withstand a storm, even the storm of a global pandemic — existential symbols of triumph and paradise, with all their ambiguous connotations.











MARIA SPARRE-PETERSEN



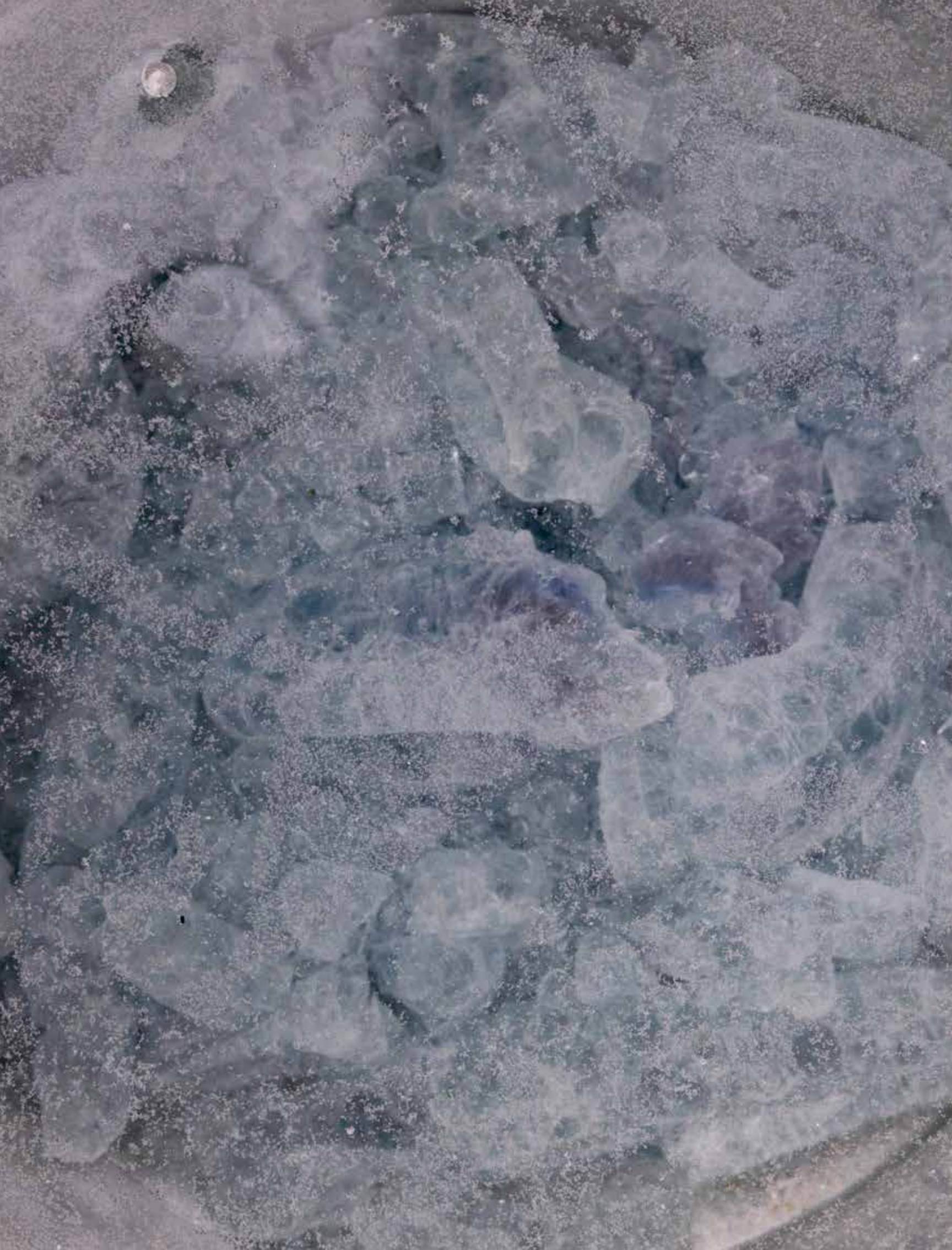
Maria Sparre-Petersen makes sculptures from recycled container glass, a material that has all the poetic qualities of virgin glass but is much kinder to the planet. She is fascinated by the plasticity and uncertainty of this hybrid material, which is rarely used by studio glassmakers. Sparre-Petersen melts containers in a furnace and then shapes the molten glass into balls, which appear like spherical drops of childhood mystique; she then composes these balls into a pattern which is fused in a frame of high-fired concrete. When heated, each sphere develops a membrane that remains visible as the balls fuse in the kiln, becoming of one piece but appearing distinct, like soap bubbles adhering to each other. An artistic chaos in an ordered array, or graphic elements of liquid mass in a structured frame. Form, pattern, color and light enter into a dialogue and create new stories. In some places, the glass appears matte or translucent — depending on how the light refracts in the material and its depth of the color.

Sustainability is a lifelong passion that Sparre-Petersen pursues with an experimental and socially oriented outlook. She includes the titles of sailor, designer, teacher, Master of Fine Arts and PhD on her CV. Together, these diverse skills paint a straight line to the practice that motivates and inspires Sparre-Petersen today: to spread awareness of recycled glass from a sustainable and ethical perspective. It is a crucial and deeply meaningful ambition, not least because it leaves the virgin materials in the ground, where they belong, and avoids exposing the maker to hazardous substances. Furthermore, used glass can be recycled infinitely without losing its material qualities — a capacity that textile, plastic and many other materials lack.

The particular material qualities of recycled container glass make for an interesting process. The recycled glass has to be handled differently because it is “shorter” when it is blown, so the glassmaker has to work faster. With this technique it is not always possible to fuse two used window panes because they may be made from different recipes, which means they do not expand in the same way and therefore develop stress that will cause cracks — immediately or over time. Hence, recycling container glass requires a high level of craftsmanship and technique. And though the challenges of working with recycled materials are greater, so is the satisfaction of cracking the code and knowing that one is making a difference for the planet. Sparre-Petersen is continuously challenged by the specific qualities of the material, which throws up obstacles that she can resolve and also take advantage of.

According to Sparre-Petersen, this only makes her conversation with the glass more intriguing. The material talks back and sometimes strands the artist on thin ice. This provides new insights, which lead to new methods and techniques that she then can develop and incorporate. Her many studies and experiments have given rise to an aesthetic vocabulary that she could not have arrived at through strategic planning. This is part of the alchemy, when material and idea come together in unpredictable constellations, often rife with contrasts. Like organic playmates in a framework that is only semi-controlled and does not allow for anticipating or planning colors, density, transparency or translucency. The glass artist has to surrender to the will of the material, regardless of experience and technique, which is a beautiful part of the process — a sustainable process that holds good news for a planet under pressure.











MARTIN BODILSEN KALDAHL



Martin Bodilsen Kaldahl has worked with clay for more than 50 years. Although he was lost to the material from the moment he got his hands on it at the age of 14, it is not the actual plasticity of clay that most holds his interest, but rather the sculptural process of shaping the clay, coaxing the form out, painstakingly, step by step. Or bit by bit, since Kaldahl's "Spatial Drawings" are extruded and precision-cut clay tubes — used not unlike a plumber's pipes. The tubes are assembled at angles that bend or twist outward or inward, or form straight lines, like complex tubing in clay. His construction principle is simple, almost commonplace, in his words, but the characteristic quality lies in how the tubes are used, how they turn into form that moves and extends into the space around it. It is all created in a semi-planned, rhythmic and random unfolding of form that Kaldahl constructs without a model — because a model would in itself already represent an interpretation of his line drawing, his concept. Kaldahl shapes his sculptures by hand in a process guided by his graphic mindset and focused presence. He lets the tubes angle in and out as they want on the day, as he wants on the day. Eventually they form an undeniable and coherent statement enhanced by monochrome glazes that underscore the mood of the work.

In a general sense, Kaldahl's contrasts stem from the tension between lightness and heaviness. His overall idea begins as a loose line drawing — a doodle, a knot — inspiration from the commonplace and often overlooked forms of everyday life, like a piece of string that has fallen on the floor and happened to twist itself into an interesting shape. Or a freeway interchange Kaldahl takes from Google Earth and manipulates into a drawing as a basis

for sculpting. Sometimes he spends months unraveling a mystery, exploring the knots and visualizing them in clay as he ponders his options for translating the lines into form.

Kaldahl prefers it when a conceptual phase takes him into uncharted territory, out of his comfort zone and into an intuitive place of freedom, where a persistent strand of an idea begins to take shape and is transformed in its passage from mind to hands into sections of clay tube — manipulated, angled and twisted inch by inch, until form emerges. This is where the weightiness comes in. The challenge is to achieve the intuitive lightness of the line drawing while adding expressive weight to the meticulously constructed form of the living material. The sense of weight is positive and deliberate. A ceramic statement that insists on being an embodied and impactful presence in space. An encounter that requires our receptive presence. This is Kaldahl's ambition: to create works of art that are felt by us without reservation and premeditated bias, from the uncomplicated lines of a drawing to the intricate knots and twists of clay. Scaled up in size and taking up room, they are sculptures of intrinsic proportions that actually weigh something — "Spatial Drawings" imbued with the focused, intuitive presence that created them.









PERNILLE PONTOPPIDAN PEDERSEN



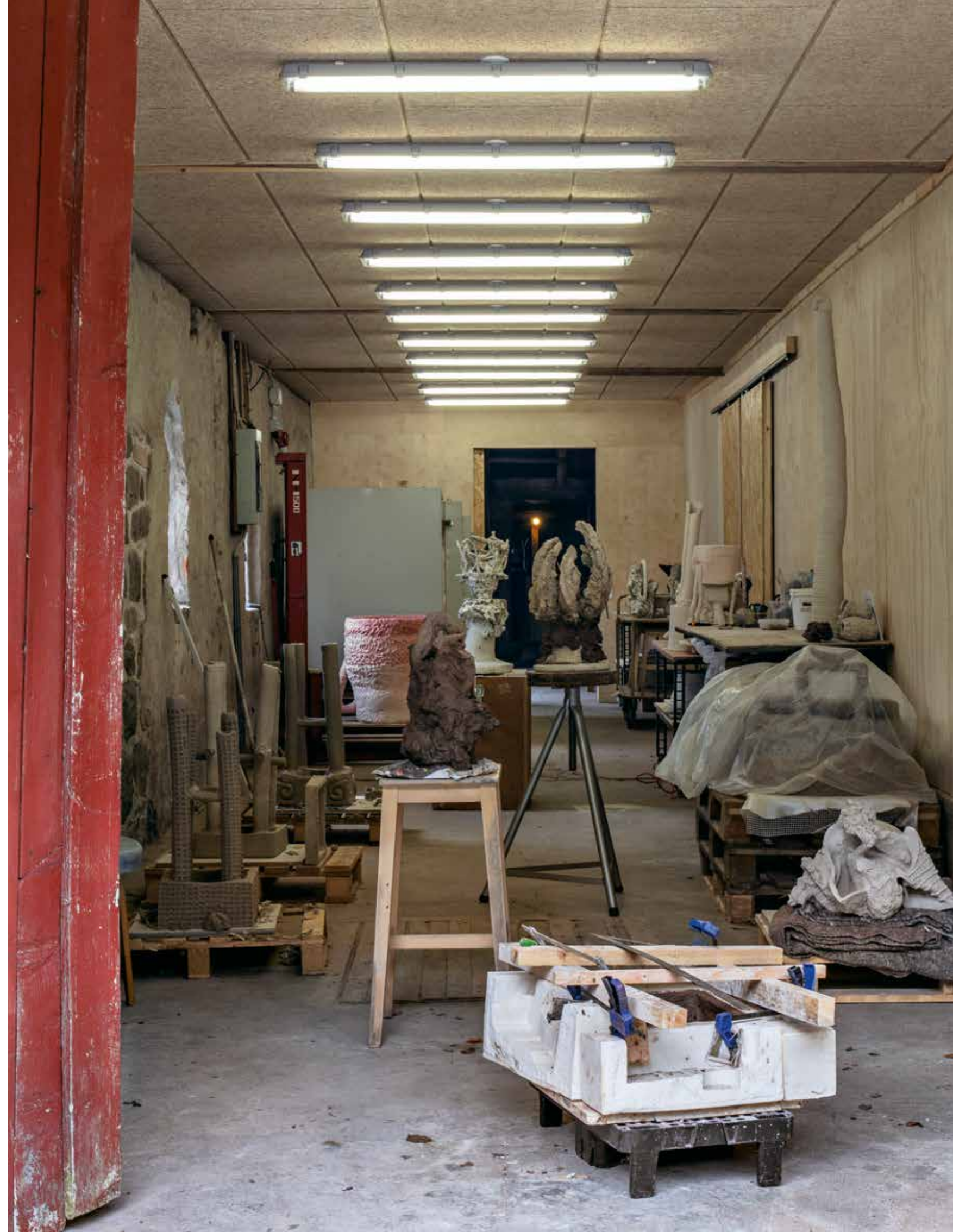


Pernille Pontoppidan Pedersen has never aimed for classical beauty. However, even when she challenges the norms of her discipline, she has her feet planted firmly on a foundation of craftsmanship. And because she knows her craft, she is able to dismantle, reinterpret and provoke a subject and a material she knows in depth. The core of her process is the meeting: the meeting between the artist and her material and the imprints her hands and tools leave on the clay. But when is it a meeting of equals? When is the artist in control, and when does the material take over? Pernille Pontoppidan Pedersen aims for the equal meeting and is anarchistic in her aesthetic expression, which is profoundly personal and profoundly universal. When is something beautiful or ugly? When does an expression touch us, and when does it fail to connect?

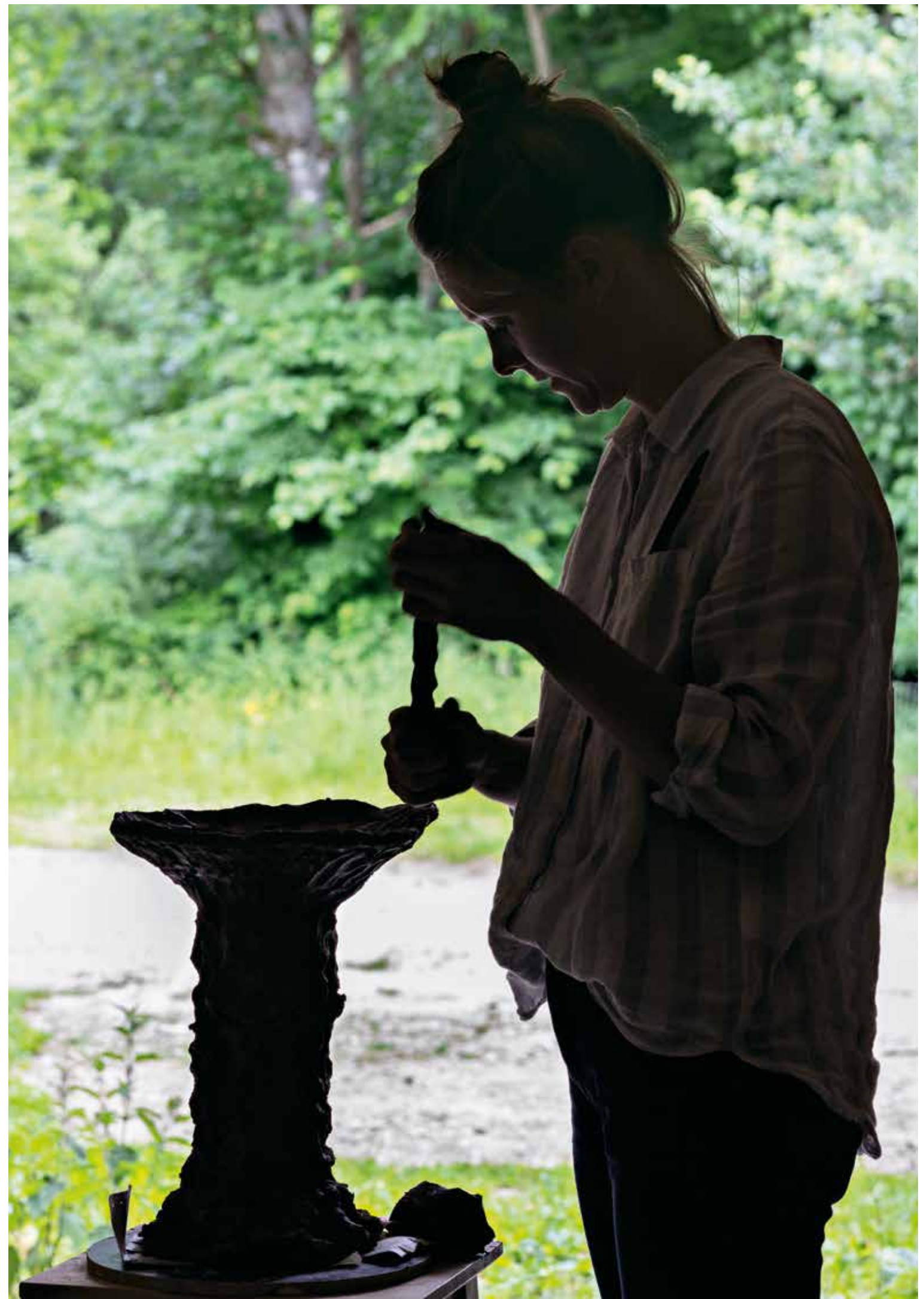
In Pernille Pontoppidan Pedersen's works you will discover aspects you recognize and some you will not. You might see something that looks like handles on a jar or like a layer cake that is so delicious and vibrant you can't wait to sink your teeth into it. Pontoppidan's works recall hybrids from another world created in a novel encounter of textures, colors, contrasts and stories sampled from random sources. She might draw inspiration from a nicotine-stained wall in a dive bar, a coupling of two songs from different genres or a pine tree with an odd growth. Pontoppidan Pedersen seeks to merge forms, expressions and textures in tension-filled compositions. Two elements that might seem mismatched find their way and balance on the cusp of something new. There is a connection, an alternative language, where contrasts co-exist as equals. This can make her works seem difficult to decode, because they take us someplace new, an unsettling place with references

we don't recognize. And how are we supposed to respond to that? The titles may aid our comprehension, and here, too, Pontoppidan Pedersen is playful, playing with words, combinations and meaning, so that her titles often seem more like a riddle than a clue.

Pontoppidan Pedersen pinches her sculptures by hand, and sometimes a surface texture appears spontaneously as she kneads the clay. Any choice implies the rejection of an alternative, and when does the artist dominate the clay? When do the two engage in a dialogue? When and how can the artist's intuition and feeling find an expression in the material? Pontoppidan Pedersen can sense it, the tension that so easily tips from interesting to overdone and then loses its justification. At that point, the artist's co-existence with the material is lost. Pernille Pontoppidan Pedersen must have been an amusing and inquisitive child, constantly questioning the established and the expected. This naive and philosophical reflection lends Pontoppidan Pedersen's works and her practice their original, relevant and engaging quality. Her works are a contemporary manifestation of an ancient tradition, a new language, full of sequences where we might recognize individual words but cannot quite grasp the full meaning. That makes sense to Pontoppidan Pedersen, who strives to penetrate behind language, expectations and the classic notion of aesthetics in order to reach a place that has not already been colored, coded or articulated into fixed concepts or categories. "Square peg, round hole." Pernille Pontoppidan's works are both — in a crisp, taut, equal balance.











YUKI FERDINANDSEN



Yuki Ferdinandsen lives and breathes her work in silver. She no longer hears the noisy hammer blows as she works in her studio; rhythm and sound accompany each other in meditative waves, surrounding her and resonating inside as integral parts of her person and artist. Silver has been Ferdinandsen's material for the past 40 years, and her refined hollowware objects represent a fusion of Japan and Denmark through the ARARE technique. In her own words, she sees Denmark through a Japanese lens, and vice versa. And it truly feels as if the two countries have fused into one in Ferdinandsen's silver objects, which draw on the samurais' nearly 400-year-old defensive technique of hammering round chased bumps on their armor to fend off the enemy's arrows. Ferdinandsen took this historical and legendary technique and made it her own, creating her singular expression after diminishing the size of the bumps. Now, they appear as graphic dots, which are first drawn on the back of the silver and then hammered, one by one. Twenty blows per bump. An impressive piece such as "Silence", which has 4,048 bumps, requires 80,960 hammer blows – or four months' full-time, concentrated work in the studio.

But it is intended to be hard work, intense and challenging, requiring complete focus and discipline. Ferdinandsen finds the work relaxing, even if that may seem like a contradiction in terms. But when you are your material and your process, and the result sets the bar so extremely high, that makes sense. Ferdinandsen enjoys every stroke and every sound and taps her foot to the rhythm, joy rippling throughout her being. Her ambition and her work never suffer from fatigue. This is her Hammer Dance, and this is how she works. Ferdinandsen's sculptures are the ultimate in refinement

of technique and material, and their aesthetic balances those of Danish Modern and contemporary design. For decades she has earned recognition and accolades from around the world for her unique designs in silver, a material that is simultaneously cool and warm, matte and shiny. Her works have weight and volume but also shimmer with an ethereal quality when light reflects on their surface.

Yuki Ferdinandsen makes her own tools, and her studio is full of punches in different sizes. Chasing a flower – another technique she uses in addition to ARARE – can require up to 30 punches in different sizes. Unable to leave that degree of precision to anyone else, she personally designs all her own punches. The works carry titles with meditative references to nature and the world around her, such as *Silence*, *Sound of Ocean* and *Hanabi* (Japanese for fireworks). The Fibonacci sequence is a natural phenomenon that informs Ferdinandsen's practice; the innermost and outermost circles of a design comprise the same number of dots, producing a visual impression of infinity – meticulously chased silver dots in a never-ending circle dance. In recent years, she has begun to subject the Fibonacci sequence to tiny disruptions, challenging expectations ever so slightly while her signature essence remains intact and recognizable in the new interpretation. The countless dots may seem insignificant, but together, they are invincible, an army of tiny, high-precision silver bumps, a sublime manifestation of Ferdinandsen's mind and spirit.











ARTIST BIOS

NAME ANNE BRANDHØJ
YEAR OF BIRTH 1984

TITLE Designer and artist
LOCATION Lives and works in Copenhagen

EDUCATION Royal Danish Academy – Design Copenhagen
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence

BIO Besides a vast number of national exhibitions, Brandhøj has participated in several international exhibitions throughout Scandinavia and Europe and was recently included in the permanent collection at Designmuseum Denmark with three site-specific sculptures for the garden

CONTACT Website: www.annebrandhoej.dk
Instagram: @brandhoej

NAME STINE BIDSTRUP
YEAR OF BIRTH 1982

TITLE Designer and artist
LOCATION Lives and works in Copenhagen

EDUCATION Royal Danish Academy – Design, Bornholm
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence
University of Copenhagen, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies

BIO Bidstrup both teaches and frequently exhibits in Scandinavia, Europe and the US, just as she was the curator of the 8th Tallinn Applied Art Triennial, 2021

Represented by Heller Gallery, New York, Gallery Fumi, London and Hostler Burrows, New York & Los Angeles

CONTACT Website: www.stinebidstrup.dk
Instagram: @stine.bidstrup

NAME ASTRID KROGH
YEAR OF BIRTH 1968

TITLE Designer and artist
LOCATION Lives and works in Copenhagen and Ebbeløkke, Sjællands Odde

EDUCATION Royal Danish Academy – Design, Copenhagen

BIO Krogh has made commissions for several international brands and buildings and has exhibited throughout Scandinavia, Europe, Asia and the US for the past twenty years

Represented by Galerie Maria Wettergren, Paris and Hostler Burrows, New York & Los Angeles

CONTACT Website: www.astridkrogh.com

NAME JAKOB JØRGENSEN
YEAR OF BIRTH 1977

TITLE Designer and artist
LOCATION Lives and works in Bornholm

EDUCATION Royal Danish Academy – Design, Copenhagen

BIO Jørgensen's furniture is available at HAY and TAKT. He has been awarded several prestigious prizes like the Finn Juhl Prize and the Wallpaper* Design Award

Jørgensen has exhibited his design and art pieces throughout Scandinavia, Europe and Japan

Represented by Galerie Maria Wettergren, Paris and Hostler Burrows, New York & Los Angeles

CONTACT Website: www.jakob-jørgensen.dk
Instagram: @jakobjoergensen

NAME BJØRN FRIBORG
YEAR OF BIRTH 1983

TITLE Glass artist
LOCATION Lives and works in Fensmark, South Sealand

EDUCATION Kosta Glass School, Åfors Glasbruk,
The Royal Danish Academy – Design, Bornholm

BIO Head of Holmegaard Glass Workshop since 2020

Friborg has practised his art and craftsmanship as Head of the Glass Studio at The Glass Factory, Boda, Sweden and exhibited throughout Scandinavia, Europe and the US

Represented by Galleri Montan, Copenhagen and Hostler Burrows, New York & Los Angeles

CONTACT Website: www.bjornfriborg.com
Instagram: @b.friborg

NAME HANNE G
YEAR OF BIRTH 1963

TITLE Textile artist
LOCATION Lives and works in Copenhagen

EDUCATION Royal Danish Academy – Architecture, Copenhagen

BIO Independent graphic designer and TV-concept developer before turning artist in 2007

Hanne G has exhibited mostly in Denmark and Europe with MINDCRAFT17 in Milan as one of the key exhibitions with site-specific crocheted cabins. Included at the permanent collection at Trapholt Art Museum, Kolding for her site-specific installation and interactive workshop LightHope, 2020 and the crocheted installation "Weapon Collection" (Crocheting for Peace), 2007.

CONTACT Website: www.hanneg.dk
Instagram: @byhanneg

NAME MARIA SPARRE-PETERSEN
 YEAR OF BIRTH 1967

TITLE Glass designer, Master of Fine Arts, PhD
 LOCATION Lives and works in Copenhagen

EDUCATION The Royal Danish Academy, Copenhagen
 Rhode Island School of Design

BIO Included in permanent collections at Designmuseum Danmark, Copenhagen, The International Exhibition of Glass, Kanazawa, The Danish Arts Foundation and Museum of American Glass, Millville. Solo and group exhibitions nationally and internationally

Represented by Hostler Burrows, New York & Los Angeles

CONTACT Website: www.sparre-petersen.com
 Instagram: @mariasparrepetersen

NAME MARTIN BODILSEN KALDAHL
 YEAR OF BIRTH 1954

TITLE Ceramic artist
 LOCATION Lives and works in Copenhagen and Sjællands Odde

EDUCATION Royal College of Art, London

BIO Curator and co-founding member of the exhibition platform Copenhagen Ceramics. Included in the collections at V&A Museum, London, Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Paris, National Museum, Oslo, Röhska Museum, Sweden and MIMA, Middlesborough. Solo and group exhibitions in galleries and museums throughout Scandinavia, Europe and the US

Represented by Hostler Burrows, Galerie NeC, Paris, Puls Contemporary Ceramics, Brussels, Galerie NYC, Paris, Taste Contemporary Gallery Geneva and Marsden Woo, London

CONTACT Website: www.martinkaldahl.com
 Instagram: @kaldahlmartinbodilsen

NAME PERNILLE PONTOPPIDAN PEDERSEN
 YEAR OF BIRTH 1987

TITLE Ceramic sculptor
 LOCATION Lives and works in Silkeborg

EDUCATION The Royal Danish Academy, School of Design, department of ceramics, Bornholm and Copenhagen

BIO Included in private and permanent collections at CLAY Museum of Ceramic Art, Middelfart, The Danish Art Foundation, Copenhagen and Science Center Uppsala, Uppsala, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris. Solo and group exhibitions in Denmark, Scandinavia and Europe

Represented by Galerie Maria Lund, Paris, Køppe Contemporary Objects, Bornholm and Hostler Burrows

CONTACT Website: www.ernillepontoppidan.com
 Instagram: @ernillepontoppidanpedersen

NAME YUKI FERDINANDSEN
 YEAR OF BIRTH 1958

TITLE Silversmith
 LOCATION Lives and works in Copenhagen

EDUCATION Saga Junior College of Art, the Tsuibu Metal Art School, both in Kyoto, Japan
 The Institute for Precious Metals at the Goldsmith High School, Copenhagen, Denmark

BIO She has been exhibited through Japan, South Korea, Scandinavia and Europe, and her works are represented both in private collections and in public collections, including The Danish Design Museum, Denmark, The National Museum, Stockholm, Sweden, The Silver Museum at Koldinghus, Kolding, Denmark and Nordenfjeldske Museum of Decorative Arts, Trondheim, Norway.

Awarded with several prizes and accolades like Winner of The Schoonhoven Silver Award, The Netherlands, 2015

CONTACT Website: www.arare.dk

MATTER AT HAND
Ten Artists in Denmark

Graphic design by
LAURA SILKE & LINE-GRY HØRUP

Photography by
DORTE KROGH
dortekrogh.dk

Artist portraits by
CHARLOTTE JUL
charlottejul.com

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DORTE SILVER

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glennadamson.com

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HOSTLER | BURROWS
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35 EAST 10TH STREET
NEW YORK NY 10003

6819 MELROSE AVENUE
LOS ANGELES CA 90038