There is no word for the difference between me and the world.

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ABSTRACT

In my master project I have investigated the island - as a container - as a person. I wanted to figure out what it is we do when we build walls, close in, shut out and make something or someone into an island. Or when we make ourselves into islands, no longer dependent on, or interested in the the rest of the world. Through materials such as concrete, raw hide, steel wool, shellac and silicone I try to find clues and ask questions of how we live our lives and how we sort the world to better understand and control it. The journey starts with the idea of the island, which I investigate from the perspectives of isolation, exploration, greed and worry. The interactions between these concepts puts focus on the border and the meetings between the inside and the outside that happens there. The building of, the meeting at, and the crossing of the border has been my focus while making my objects, all of them relating in some way to the island, the container and the person.

Key words: Island, Container, Border, Isolation, Meeting, Sculpture, Exploration, Corpus, Materiality

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INTRODUCTION

What is it we're shutting in and shutting out to make something or someone into an island?

In this paper I will try to relate the thinking around my master project and the process (both in mind and materials) that led to the objects it became. In short, this is my attempt at trying to answer the question above.

I have separated theory and practice a lot in this text, not because thinking and making were not simultaneous and mixed, but because I hope it will make it easier to understand jumps in focus that might otherwise seem illogical.

My investigations starts with the island, and the thought that every island - is a container - is a person. This leads me to think of the isolation of the island, the container and the person, and how that isolation is threatened or released (depending on perspective) by exploration.

It continues with the tension between isolation and exploration that brings, and gets enhanced by, greed (pushing on) and worry (holding back). The intersection between these four concepts makes stories and questions form in my mind. I think of islands evolving in their own direction due to their isolated location, islands being claimed and filled with new content like empty containers, islands used as nothing more than resources by passers-by, islands that pretend that the rest of the world doesn't exist and islands fighting to be left alone. It also makes me think of how we make ourselves into islands these days. How we build walls and draw lines to contain ourselves and the ones we identify as us; controllable islands of sameness in an ocean of otherness. And how we keep forgetting that there is no word for the difference between "me" and "the world".

The walls and lines bring me to the border, the only place where the inside and outside can meet and where isolation and exploration, driven by greed and worry, also meet and *become*, or cross and dissolve. At the end the border is dissolved and what is left is the meeting and the movement across, the shift between singularity and multiplicity: every person is an island, entire in themselves, but all islands are connected beneath the surface and the border turns out to be nothing more than a temporary rest stop between two waves.

BACKGROUND

In this project my backgrounds are those of Explorer, Introvert, Organizer and Corpus Maker.

As the Explorer I stood on the top of the cliff, right where Tenerife ends and the ocean begins. I looked out over the strait towards La Gomera, the neighbour island, its green pointy contour completely dominating the horizon. I could probably swim there if I wanted it badly enough. Still, there was no contact between the original populations of these islands. Why is that? How could they stand not knowing what was going on on that other piece of land, the only other piece of land visible to them? But as the Introvert I was thinking: maybe that's not so strange? The people living in an apartment building in a city, have no idea what's going on in the one next to theirs. Even though nothing but a thin layer of concrete separates these different worlds, they could just as well have existed in different dimensions. As the Organizer I wanted to sort the world, draw the lines and put everything in its right box. That's what we do, to try to understand. We pick everything apart, sort through the pieces, categorize them, find their use, put them in different piles and give them names. But the more I divided things into groups, the more the categories kept failing and unless I made a box for every single thing I could never understand the world that way anyway. As the Corpus Maker I've been thinking a lot about the container that changes its contents' value and how objects store memories and can be tools to change how we relate to the everyday of our lives.

When you make a container you place borders around pieces of emptiness. The emptiness is given shape and becomes a space inside the border. This space is often used to protect or separate matter of different value from each other or to sort the world to make it easier for us to use. For instance keeping the sugar from being mixed with all the other things on the table until we decide the time has come to mix them, or separating the bones of a saint from all mundane materials inside a reliquary, or building walls to make sure people stay in there assigned places. In short: to protect what is contained against unwanted influences or to contain and isolate what is unwanted. The border (the material divider) can itself be used to tell you something of what it encloses and how important it is, and also if it is closing something in or closing something out. But can it also contain the movement between the inside and the outside?

THEORY

"Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out.
And to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,"[1]

Isolation begins with the Island

I am an isolated container of life. Is it just these people I'm outside of, or is it everyone? When I read the book "Atlas of Remote Islands" by Judith Shalansky, where she tells stories of some of the most isolated islands on the planet, a direction starts to form in my mind. The book makes me think of an ocean full of islands and a city full of people. In our contemporary society we learn to see ourselves as separated from the rest of the world, with our own unique map of rivers and mountains, even though mountains are created by tectonic movement involving the whole world and rivers are made up of water that evaporated in another island's forest: close and far away, isolated and connected, we are raised as islands.

Worry pops up

According to the book being an island is both liberating and dangerous. Deciding to be free of the continent, to stop referring back to it for truths and answers, makes you able to think for yourself, but at the same time it enables logical fallacy to flourish without question. On geographically isolated islands, with little or no contact with the rest of the world, strange habits often evolve: infanticide and rape have sometimes been known to become part of the normalised culture.[2] Isolation makes for fewer minds to question the way of things. Islands are also a little too inviting to colonisers, who see them as bite-sized kingdoms just waiting to be claimed.

Exploration and Greed swoop in

During the romantic age of discovery the explorer got the credit, not only for finding something that was already there, but for the actual creation of new land with a blank history and innumerable possibilities: an empty container to fill. No matter that the island was already populated. The world was there to be claimed and used. Darwin, who took his famous journey to the Galapagos islands during this time, describes the islands he's passing as larders. He talks about one of the Galapagos island as still containing food for at least 20 years, he never questions his and his travel companions' right to empty entire islands.[3]

Exploration was the first step, but to fully own something you need to be able to define it. Historically the defining (possessing) of an island was done by determining its location, naming it and constructing a convincing map of it. This still holds true today: Norway is claiming the right to Peter I:s Island based on being the creators of the most accurate map of the place.[4]

After defining the container, you can start to fill it with your own content. Only what is documented can be remembered, "only that which is written about has really happened".[5] What happens then, when you get hung up on what you managed to define and forget everything outside of that definition?

1   Frost Robert https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/mending-wall, excerpt
2   Shalansky Judith, "Atlas of Remote Islands" (Swedish version), Pequod Press, Malmö, page 18
3   Darwin Charles, "The Explorer's Eye",The Overlook Press, Woodstock and New York, page 61
4   Shalansky Judith, "Atlas of Remote Islands" (Swedish version), Pequod Press, Malmö, page 20
5   Shalansky Judith, Atlas of Remote Islands (Swedish version), Pequod Press, Malmö, page 19 (translated by me)

The meeting at, and the disappearance of, the Border
In the interactions between isolation, exploration, greed and worry there is movement and shift. From one place to another, from one state to another. And a crossing of borders. Some of these borders are drawn on maps, some in our minds. We use borders as a way to control and understand the world. Smaller portions of the world are easier to relate to, to contain. Like the island. In theory it has a clearly defined border, but where is it? The shoreline? In that case: low or high tide? Stormy weather or calm waves? Do the rivers belong to the island or to the ocean? What about islands that are connected during low tide but separated during high tide? And between the islands there is the ocean, that from one perspective is the divider, the border between them, and from another perspective is the thing that connects them and makes it possible to cross the border. And both these perspectives becomes irrelevant when you consider that it is not really the ocean that is separating the islands, but that the islands together, as a structure of solid ground and ocean floor contains the ocean like water in a bowl. The more I think about this, the more the borders disappear as fixed places. Instead they appear as the meetings between a something and a something else. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari talk about these meetings of systems (or rhizomes) as a double-becoming and a constant process of change on both sides of the border.[6] In their way of viewing the world the borders are the temporary places where change happens, where things *become* as a result of the meeting with something that is different from itself. From this perspective the island only becomes the island when it meets the ocean or the continent or the explorer, or something else that is different from itself. And the border is the place where it happens, it doesn't need to be a pinned down line on a map.

The movement between Singularity and Multiplicity
According to island expert Anders Källgård, the famous John Donne passage "No man is an island" is lovely, but wrong. From his point of view every person is an island. But what he means by this is that islands are not the isolated entities we usually picture them to be. Humans and islands may both have a kind of natural border towards the rest of the world (skin or coast) and constitute our own biological systems, but we are both also connected to, and effected by our surroundings. We are simultaneously complete in ourselves and at the same time part of a much bigger and more complicated whole.[7] "All islands" says Källgård, "are connected below the surface."[8]

The focus on borders in my project gives a constant motion from the isolated entity to the whole or the many and back again, a back and forth between singularity and multiplicity. The island, as a one, becomes a many, as a part of an archipelago contained by the ocean. But the many of the archipelago turns into a one as it is the structure that contains the ocean. Or as with containers: the space inside is an isolated singularity cut off from the world by the walls of the container, but the multiplicity of inside-spaces are connected by the emptiness that fills them all, just as we all are connected by the air every time we take a breath and the breath is both inside of us and outside of us at the same time.

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6   Sutton Damian and Martin-Jones David, "Deleuze Reframed", I.B. Tauris & Co. page 6
7   Källgård Anders, "Nära Nauru - Varför vi behöver öar", Carlssons, Stockholm, page 30
8   Källgård Anders, "Nära Nauru - Varför vi behöver öar", Carlssons, Stockholm, page 28 (translated from Swedish by me)

METHOD

"How will you go about finding that thing the nature of which is completely unknown to you?"[9]

In the beginning there is no map. Not even the empty paper on which to draw a map. There is only a direction. The direction pulls on the compass needle and I start walking. I am an anxious explorer, I don't believe in my right to claim whatever space I want. I explore carefully, one small step at a time. When I've found the direction, I can begin making a map. It starts as a blank space with the destination hidden somewhere in the middle. I then chart the edges of the blank space to get closer and closer to the destination. It goes something like this:

Calibrating the compass
I look for pictures online that relate to the archipelago of "islands" I see in the project. I collect them in a folder until I have about a hundred or so. At this stage, I don't know how pictures of squid eggs, moss-covered ceramics, old diving suits and Rachel Sussman's photographs of the oldest living things on the planet[10] relate to each other, I just know that I will find or make the connections while working. I then print the pictures and sort them into the different groups I can start seeing among them and place them on a wall where I can easily access them if I need to. The groups can be formed by similarities in my associations, their atmosphere, their portrayed function, shape or subject matter, among other things. The pictures function as a way to triangulate: they all point from different directions towards my unknown destination. When I get stuck I can come back to them and find another possible road forward.
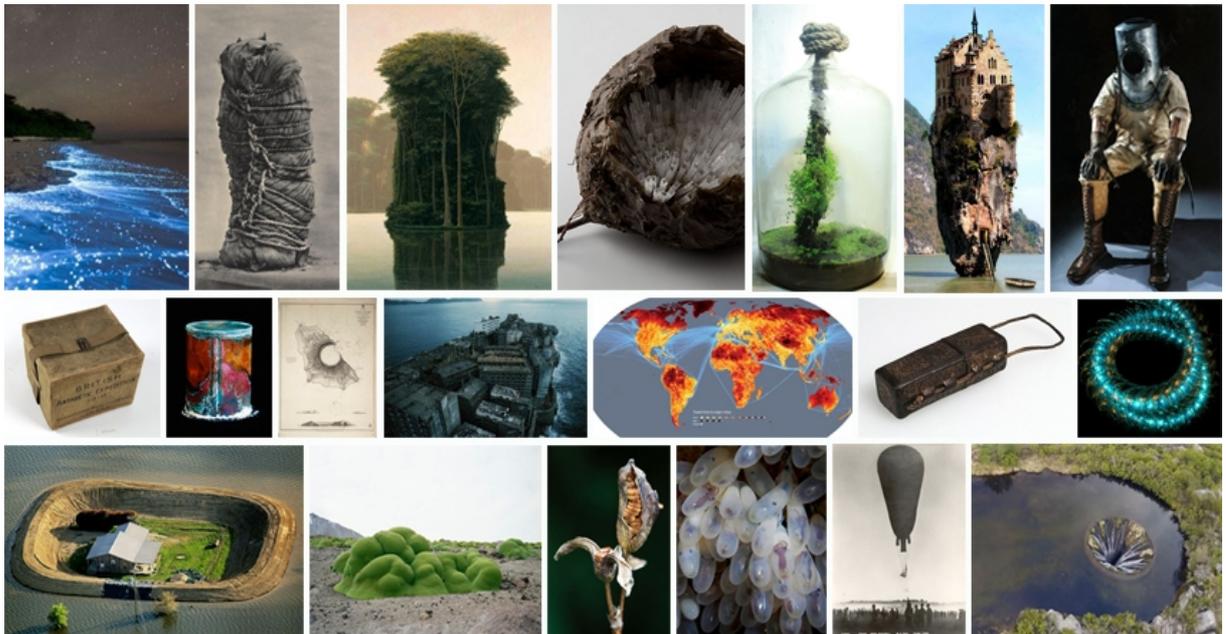

Image 1. Parts of the picture research, various sources.

9   Solnit Rebecca, "A Field Guide of Getting Lost", Penguin Books, New York, 2005, page 4
10 http://www.rachelsussman.com/portfolio/#/oltw/

Exploring the edges of the blank space

To find my materials I pick ones that I instinctually relate to the project and then try their relevance by making many material sketches and experiments. I start with steel-wool. This material is 100% steel, but has almost none of the characteristics we normally expect from steel. It is soft to squeeze, weak to tear and coarse to the touch. It is and isn't steel in the same way the ocean is and isn't a border. After this I try green velvet and tree branches. The velvet insulates and protects the branches as well as hiding them and making them more visible at the same time. After this I try different ways to use concrete. And raw hide and silicone and sand and iron mesh and tin and paper and iron powder and fabric and shellac and salt and bandage and horn and plaster and wood veneer and yarn and moss and hemp twine. The materials I end up coming back to all create a border or a shell that seemingly protects the inside or distances it from the outside. But they are all, in different ways, failing: the concrete bags only pretend to have an inside but instead add a heaviness and something of the hardness of our cities. The silicone looks like a shiny glass surface but dents when you touch it, changing the shape of the space inside. Shellac protects and waterproofs what it covers but breaks easily when you touch it. And so on.

Image 2. Concrete (30x8x5 cm), silicone (20x10x20 cm) and shellac (3x10x5 cm) tests, T.D. 2015-2016

Stepping into the blank space

I combine my different materials to find form and successful interactions. I keep coming back to stackable "container"-shapes (cylinders, cubes and bags as seen above) and smooth surfaces (cast concrete, hammered steel wool and thick layers of shellac). As if I'm trying to build a storage room with anonymous containers and efficient use of space.

Image 3. Concrete surface (7 cm across), hammered steel wool sewn onto branch (ca 20 cm long) and thick layers of shellac (detail of 7x7 cm test), T.D. 2015-2017

Re-calculating the co-ordinates

"But the terra incognita spaces on maps say that knowledge also is an island surrounded by oceans of the unknown."[11]

All new knowledge needs a foundation of old knowledge to build on. I continue on someone else's conversations and add my own parts without them knowing. Maybe someone else will continue on my conversation another time. Now and then I step away from what I'm making to see what it actually is that I've made. Writing helps to formulate my thoughts, while going to exhibitions and reading helps me to get new perspectives and a ground on which to stand. I talk a lot about my work and my thoughts surrounding it with the people around me: classmates, friends, family and people I happen to meet. Just as with writing, it helps me to realise what it is that I'm doing, or perhaps should be doing instead. With a different group of people around me, my work would probably have become something else, due to the different conversations I would have had.

Image 4. Shellac combinations, laid out for comparison and evaluation, sizes between 2x5 cm and 30x30 cm. T.D. 2015-2016

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11 Solnit Rebecca, "A Field Guide of Getting Lost", Penguin Books, New York, 2005, page 163

Drawing the map

"As the world started to become more understandable, it also started to shrink, and the cartographer's roll changed from scientist to administrator, who slowly filled in the blank spaces of the earth's surface."[12]

I go back to the materials and shapes and the meetings between them. Keep making, keep deciding which experiments takes me closer to my destination. I combine materials and shapes into objects and combine objects into groups. What are the containers made for? What would they be holding if they weren't made to be empty?

Image 5. Concrete and silicone, sizes between 4x7cm and 20x30 cm. T.D. 2016-2017

Image 6. Hemp twine with iron powder (20x12 cm), raw hide and concrete x2 (6x6x6 cm and 8x5x2 cm), velvet and brass (30x15x15 cm). T.D. 2015-2016

During my experiments I learn what I need to learn to make the choices for the finished objects. Some techniques I keep coming back to are casting and sewing. The casting fills an imprint of something that was once there and it blurs the border by being both surface and inside at the same time. According to Louise Bourgeois sewing is a process of emotional repair.[13] Maybe I'm trying to mend the border, keep it in place? But the seam is also a hint at the border's impermanence or movability: you only need to snip the thread for the seam to unravel.

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12 Brotton Jerry, "Fantastiska kartor", DK Penguin Random House, Hong Kong, 2014, page 14 (translation from Swedish by me)
13 http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/bourgeois-sewing-p77683 (20/3-17)

Arriving at my destination

Stitch by stitch I'm enclosing a positive impression of a branch made of air, keeping it separated from the surrounding air which ends up having a negative branch-shaped hole in it. Is the function of the border to uphold the division between inside and outside?

Image 7. Raw hide and branch (160x100x40 cm), T.D. 2016

By making a hollow shell I start to understand that the border could be the only place where the inside and outside can meet and that the meeting is the actual border; the inside becomes the inside when it meets the outside, and the outside becomes the outside when it meets the inside. I also begin to see that this division I've stretched through the air is like the lines drawn on paper - a way to make sense of the world or describe reality in a way that doesn't actually exist. There are no lines around bodies, still the bodies emerge within the lines, like in the drawings of Egon Schiele below.

Image 8. Egon Schiele: Self portrait (1910) and detail from Self portrait in shirt (1910). My skin branch, detail T.D. 2016.

While coiling hemp twine into cactus-like structures, I realize that without an opening there is space, inside and outside, but that in itself does not make the object into a container in my eyes. The lack of opening also prevents the movement between the inside and the outside. I cut a hole in the wall to let the inside out and the outside in, and I find myself thinking about the illustrations in Shaun Tan's "The Arrival", where the unfamiliarity of the places we meet together with the main character makes you an explorer, but keeps you outside even when you step into them.

Image 9. Shaun Tan: The Arrival x2 (2006) and coiling hemp twine and covering it with hammered steel wool (40x20 cm) T.D. 2016.

Suddenly the idea of the container, that's been with me from the beginning, shifts from something that holds something inside of it, to a place where things are passing through. This movement between inside and outside is the reason I specifically need to think of my objects as containers: the way matter is filled/put/stuffed/placed into containers and poured/taken/dripped/flung out of them. But also to talk about the separation between inside and outside, in the way containers are used to keep matter apart. Maybe I could build islands out of containers, like the crammed city of Malé on the sinking Maldives or the abandoned city-island of Hashima outside the coast of Japan.

Image 10. Malé, capital of the Maldives. Silicone bottles (each 20x6 cm) T.D. 2016. The abandoned city-island of Hashima.

DISCUSSION

The Corpus Island

The corpus-field is in itself something of an island floating in the ocean of art fields. It is a very small and little known island dealing with the containing of human memories and rituals. I have used aspects of corpus in my objects, mainly those of containing and remembering, but I have also come to see my objects more as sculptures than actual corpus pieces. In saying that, I feel like I leave the safety of my corpus-island and behave like an old-time explorer, stepping into someone else's territory. Or maybe me and my field have just bumped into another field and are in the process of changing because of this, moving the border a bit, making some room for myself to work.

Claiming and placing space

This room I've made is a new space for me. Not only the metaphorical room between corpus and sculpture, but also the physical room and how my objects relate to each other in it. Previously my scale has always been "table-size" or smaller, and my way of thinking has been to create finished objects and then place them together according to what they do to each other. This time I come into the process from a slightly different direction. I want the individual objects to be fragments of a whole. They don't all necessarily need to stand on their own, or at least not tell the whole story on their own, as long as they work together to create a bigger picture. I also want the body of the viewer to respond to the work, and be invited to move among its different parts, so the scale has grown from "hand-held" to human size in some of the pieces. I'm thinking that standing in front of a container big enough to contain you makes you notice your body in a different way than when holding something in your hands. Will it make you feel smaller, less restrained, or does your mind place your body inside the container, as its content?

Sorting my findings

Some of the pieces are still small enough that a person needs to come up close to them. While the bigger objects become bodies, or containers for bodies, in the space they share with the viewer, the smaller ones stay as artefacts and objects in their hands. Sorted into groups these smaller pieces become bigger fragments of the whole I'm building. I have found that sorting, and organizing objects into groups, is a method I often use when displaying my work. Sorting is a way to both create and uphold the norms, but it is also a way to question them, because every time you place something in a category you have to question why it belongs there. When I place stitched scrolls of hammered steel wool in piles or group bottle shaped concrete pieces on the floor I'm organizing my world and making it easier for a viewer to enter.
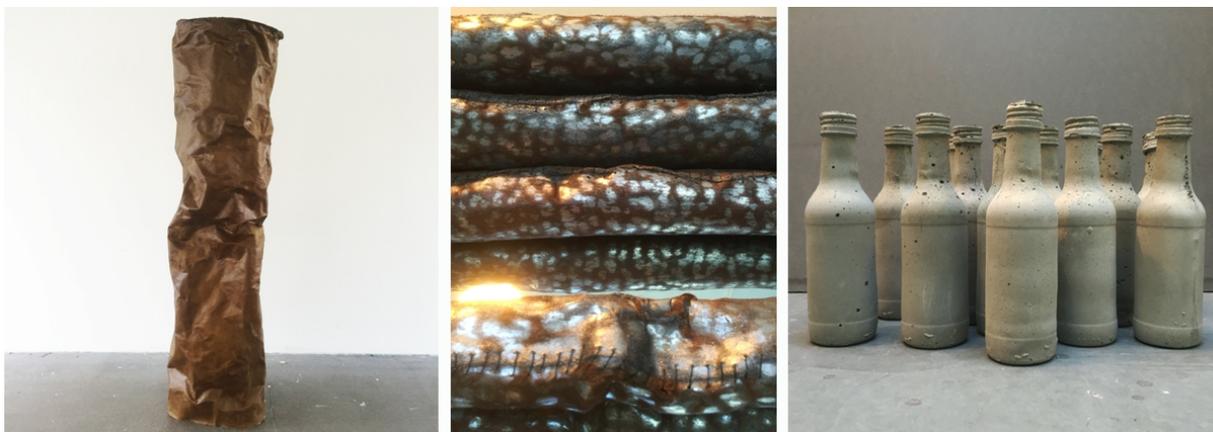
Image 11. Shellac tube (220x60 cm) T.D. 2016, Hammered steel wool scrolls (40x6 cm) T.D. 2017, Cast concrete bottles (20x6 cm) T.D. 2017

CONCLUSION

Back to the Island
This project began with the Island, and the idea that every island is a container is a person. At the start that meant that every island, container and person is isolated and cut off from the rest of the world. During my investigation of this divided isolation, I've come to shift my understanding of what the border (the divider) is, or could be, in regards to the island, the container and the person. Where something ends, something else always begins, and that makes the border the place where something passes into something else, or the place where *somethings* meet. The place where the crossing hasn't happened yet. So when I come back to the island, the container and the person, their separation makes them connected, more than isolated. And the borders around them become interfaces where the connections are made.

There is no word for the difference between me and the world
Most of my objects deal with this interface; the place where they end and the world begins. The materials help me to formulate this place in different ways. The translucent raw hide forms the skin that doesn't exist around a branch that isn't there anymore. The cast concrete bags have no border between inside and outside, other than them ending and the air taking over the space around them. The steel wool is being changed from a fluffy but coarse surface, to a fragilely hard and shiny definition of collection and protection. In looking for the border that's framing us from the world, I find that it slips away. But in the constant motion between singularity and multiplicity, it becomes the only rest stop, the only place where we can organize the world.

Image 12. Skin branch, detail (original size 160x100x40 cm) T.D. 2016, Cast concrete bags, detail (original size 30x40x75 cm) T.D. 2017, Hammering steel wool.

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Image 2.
Tilda Dalunde, experiments and material sketches:
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-Thick layer of shellac on poured and pressed concrete, 2016, detail of 7x7 cm test piece.

Image 4.
Tilda Dalunde, experiments and material sketches with shellac together with other materials, 2015-2016, sizes between 2x5 cm and 30x30 cm

Image 5.
Tilda Dalunde, experiments and material sketches with concrete and silicone, 2016-2017, sizes between 4x7 cm and 20x30 cm

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-Sand filled velvet bags on brass base, 2015, 30x15x15 cm

Image 7.
Tilda Dalunde, stitching raw hide onto a branch, details and finished result, 2016, 160x100x40 cm

Image 8.
Egon Schiele:
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Tilda Dalunde:
-detail of raw hide branch, 2016, 160x100x40 cm

Image 9.
Shaun Tan:
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Tilda Dalunde:
-Coiling hemp twine and covering it with hammered steel wool, 2016, 40x20 cm

Image 10.
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-Hammering steel wool, 2017