
DIARY

My reflections upon "Performative Landscapes" during my residency stay in Copenhagen 2020, organised by Metropolis.



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Foreword

All become performers during the walk, social choreography, to choreograph movement in society, by society, which may lead to the movement of society. Social movements start with the public movement of one. (Walking Art Practice - Ernesto Pujol).

I was among seven artists spending one month of residency in Copenhagen, we all came from different art backgrounds with the common purpose of investigating the various landscapes in Copenhagen. Working on individual projects the force of being in a group was to share practices and reflections throughout the whole period. I normally research one project at a time, so this opportunity to work alongside other artists introduced me to various new work tools, which helped me to open up for a new reflection on my own creational process.

Born in Copenhagen, but based in Brussels since 2003, I was already familiar with Copenhagen as a city. Coming to research "Performative landscapes" resonated from an earlier project, a vernissage that I had been part of developing together with the architect Michael Lynge and students from KADK, under the project "Bosætning" curated by Metropolis and The Royal Danish Academy of Architecture in Copenhagen in 2017. Coming back to Refshaleøen, the location of the residency in Copenhagen 2020, was for me a natural prolongation of the work that I had initiated through my experience of collaborating and researching body and architecture in landscapes in 2017.

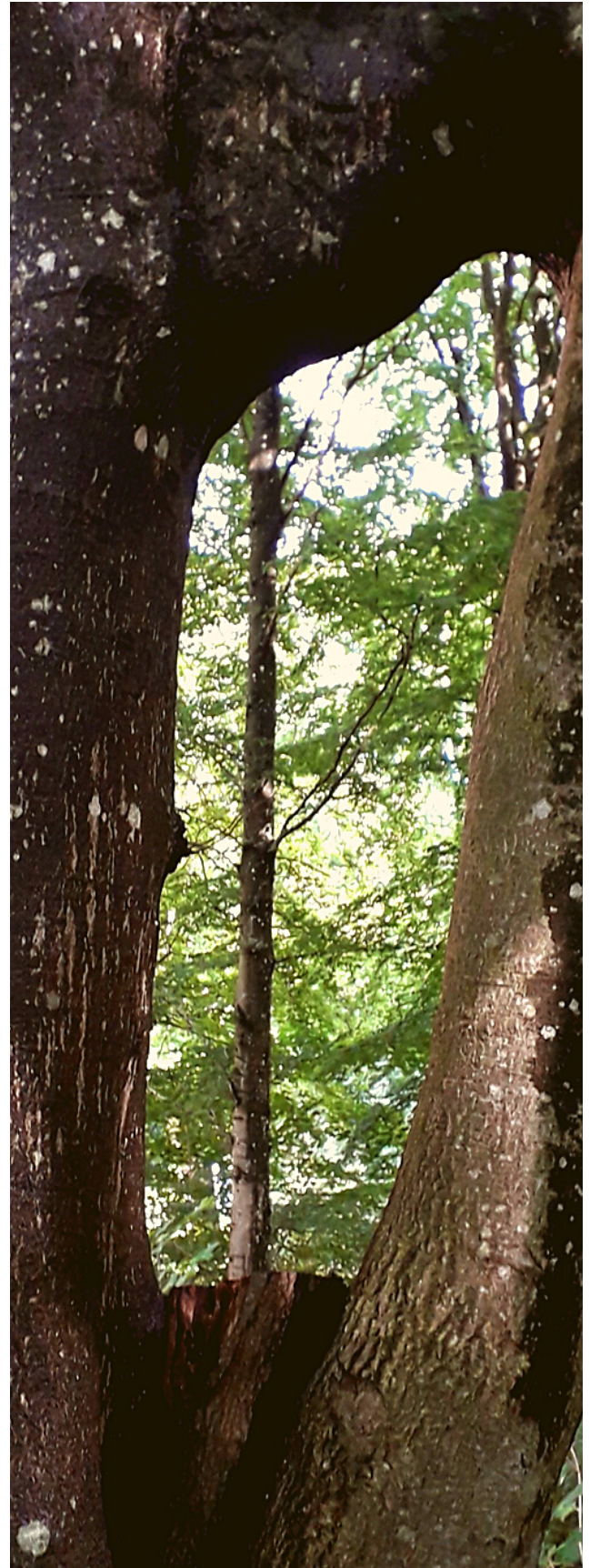
Bringing my project "Structures" to the residence, I wanted to research the structure of the body, landscape, sound and architecture. I wanted to challenge the position of each element, merge them into one or treat them as opposite individuals. In my project "Structures" I question the relationship between human and landscape, how to become part of a landscape and how to step in and out of a landscape. I examine the history of the landscape, its use and the presence or absence of human interference, how I can open a landscape up and make it visible to visitors.

I am placing my artwork in the intersection of performance, circus art, visual art, sound and photography. I am interested in the settlement of how the body and space can be folded and turned so that they create a break in our usual way of perceiving places and situations.

I believe that one of the art's ways of acting is to be able to break with the conventional and provide different angles.

A short introduction to landscapes in Denmark.

To obtain a thorough understanding of landscape structures and landscape entities, cultural circumstances and natural processes influence the landscape structure, the regulation of ecosystem and the biological diversity. The elucidation of factors which influence present plant diversity in natural habitats subjected to human exploitation has been a major issue in Denmark. The primary means of enhancing natural values in the Danish landscapes is to restore the natural vegetation (mainly deciduous forests) and to restore the natural hydrological regime. The primary threats pertain to the industrialization of agriculture, and urbanization. But whereas technical and management solutions seem within reach here, the urbanization and intensification of infrastructure are apparently harder to handle. (Open Edition Journals).



Inhabiting a landscape

"Times of change"

2000 years ago, the Roman poet Ovid wrote The Metamorphoses. It was his masterpiece. In it, people become transformed – into stone, water, animals – and for centuries Ovid's epic poems about transfiguration have had a defining influence on European literature and art. Whether by coincidence or not, Ovid always seems to be popular and relevant in "times of change". Our time is no exception: new ideas in contemporary philosophy on the non-human and post-human seem to fit closely with the Roman poet's works. They start this piece with a question: who decides what is human and what is not?

When a metamorphosis takes place, is one party subordinate? Most often, it seems, it is women who become victims of these transformations, continually oppressed as they are by importunate men or gods. Sexual violence and inappropriate behaviour are woven through The Metamorphoses like a golden thread. From this perspective, The Metamorphoses seem to be the stories of the ultimate patriarchal society. No wonder then that alt-right groups today venerate these classics as models of behaviour for the twenty-first century's modern men ...

(Manuela Infante and Michael De Cock).

Inhabiting a landscape is about how to connect, how to interact and how to communicate with the outer environment. If we, in order to understand another substance, undergoes a transformation, is it then a way to step out of oneself? Do we need to become familiar with this "other" to accept it's existence? Perhaps it is only through knowledge and experience that an acceptance of another matter and a co-existence can be produced? Or can we meet as opposites and still co-exist?

I walk into a new landscape reflecting on different methods to increase awareness of the landscape that I visit. To start a dialogue between non-human and human. I let sound, image, touch and smell be part of the way that I perceive my surroundings. What can I learn from this walk? What can I pass on to others and to the landscape through this meeting?

"It matters what stories tell stories," it opens up for new narratives from non-human perspectives too. The performative landscape that I seek can suddenly become a possibility to uncover a new narration that can open awareness and focus on other species and other substances than mankind. Who decides what is human and what is not? Is questioning ourself as an alter-ego specie that eliminates other kinds and creates solemnly from our own perspective and needs. If we thought of our surroundings as a human would we then ease to care more? To conclude this short term of thinking process I relate to this slogan that Haraway offers to speak to push beyond the human: "Make kin, not babies!" For Haraway, kin refers to a connection above and beyond the boundaries of the traditionally "human" Homo sapiens: making kin is about "becoming-with" all life on earth. (Donna Haraway)

Walking a landscape can be like establishing a new friendship, details occur over time when you least expect it. Perhaps it is a way of respecting the difference of each tree and each leaf that leads you to appreciate the whole. It is interesting to search for this awareness of the transformative process within yourself. Going from a transformative landscape into a performative landscape, I become the guide of a specific land that I am walking and moving in. I feel responsible for opening the awareness up to the visitor so that they too can walk their landscape, the landscape that lies within and without them.



A walk

Meaningful steps

We do not need to know the destination.

We do not need to know the way.

We only need to know ourself.

(Ernesto Pujol)



I arrive at the outskirts of the island Refshaleøen in Copenhagen. I am a visitor walking unknown land. My eyes first meet the water, several windmills lined up on land, big stones, concrete ground, two abandoned cars, two isolated men fishing, some boats in the water, and green. The diversity is great on this vast land meeting the sea. I decide to climb the big stones lying close to the sea. I start to walk bare feet to feel the stone's surface on the soles of my feet. My rhythm has a slow pace which makes me aware of placement and balance. The stones are tilted and placed in resting positions, they reveal different patterns and colours. I place my body weight with care as if I am stepping on the backside of human bodies. I decide to lie down on the stones to interrogate the open sky with my sight. This position makes me feel connected to the ground. Looking up at the sky a windmill catch my sight.

The repetitive movement from the blades turning system envelops me in a slight trance. The blades reaches out into the open sky while the core of the mill is deeply rooted in the ground. The windmill seems alienated to the rest of the landscape here, yet it is now somehow part of it. All is upside down, the sky becomes sea and the sea becomes sky. Getting back to my walk, I find myself at the end of the path of stones. I put my shoes back on and approaches the last standing windmill on land, many more are positioned out in the water creating a synchronised dance. placing my back against the core of the windmil. I feel the steel and sound through my back.

"According to a report from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, wind turbines are predominantly made of steel (71-79% of total turbine mass), fiberglass, resin, or plastic (11-16%), iron or cast iron (5- 17%), copper (1%), and aluminum (0-2%)".

Regarding the windmill, the sound and the architecture of are very present, the movements from this enormous engine that converts wind power into rotational energy, moves me.

The meeting between windmill and nature is complexed. "The construction and operation of both onshore and offshore wind turbines can result in potential negative local environmental impacts on birds and cetaceans, landscapes, sustainable land use (including protected areas), and the marine environment. All the same the negative environmental impacts from wind energy installations are much lower in intensity than those produced by conventional energies". (Wind Energy - THE FACTS).

After my free walk, I guided the group of artists through a silent walk on the same land.

Exchanging Practice – Physical dialogue

During the residency period, we all shared a practice during a morning session. A great opportunity to get an insight into the other artist's mindset. I shared my practice "Physical Dialogue" which I first started to develop in 2018 during the encounter "Circus Dialogue" held in PAF in France, initiated by the Belgian dramaturge Bauke Lievens.

Physical Dialogue – a practice form of touch and sensibility.

Traditionally speaking, experiencing art has always been linked to the sense of sight. So, how come art that's intended to be listened to, smelled, touched and even tasted, was and still is so neglected?

The idea of experiencing art through basic senses inspired me to create this practice that would engage our bodies to interact with the world around us, with all the senses at our disposal. This practice is a focus on establishing a physical dialogue using our body as a matter to communicate.

Using our senses is essential to our physical as mental health, for example, there is one study that reports that brain scans have revealed that affective touch activates the orbitofrontal cortex, a brain region associated with learning and decision-making as well as with emotional and social behaviours. In this practice I engage the body as a tool for communicating that can convey to deeper layers of the physical and emotional system.

A physical dialogue opens up for a tactile perception of the body and the in-situ. The practice that I propose is a variation of exercises that I have gathered through encounters with singers, choreographers and visual artists. The material I use is based on breathing exercises, action and re-action schemes, sensitive contact exercises and dynamic physical exercises.



Photo from the
workshop "Bosætning"
2017

Landscape Intimacy

Research on Kalvebod Fælled proposed by Nana Francisca schottländer, co-curator during the residency, her work is placed in the intersection between dance, performance, installation and conceptual art.

Move into the landscape

Walk slowly and with awareness. In silence.

Listen to your own breath as it blends with the sounds of the landscape.

Feel the wind against your face, the way it hits your body, the sound it creates as it hits you.

An opening,
I enter
forest
density
vegetation
immobility
The thicket scratches
sting my eyes
skin
vulnerable
I am still standing
unfolding.

An opening,
gazing
soil
trees lying down
twigs, leaves and moss
three trees
entangled
I step
bare feet
sensing
touching
listening.
.

An opening,
wind
movement
leaves and reptiles
up close
softness
welcomes my body
carries my weight
heartbeat and small insects
vibrations in my ear
a moment
awareness.

An opening,
contours
growth
raising
walking
searching
the exit.



Movement linked to the brain

A short introduction to Mark Schram Christensen

Tora Balslev performance artist and choreographer was part of the residency and invited her husband Mark Schram Christensen, (Associate Professor. Cognitive Motor Neuroscience, Department of Neuroscience, University of Copenhagen (UCPH)), to talk about his research on movement linked to the brain.

Mark:

My research is focused on understanding the neural mechanisms underlying human control of movements. I focus on the brain's ability to use predictions to inform the sensory system about ongoing movements. These predictions seem to influence the conscious perception of movements and may be responsible for our sensation of control. I am currently investigating early development of cognition in infants, among others infants' abilities to predict the consequences of their own movement. (in.ku.dk)

How do you perceive movement?

Part of the brain controls movement, a tactile system received by touch creates signals to the brain. The whole body is mapped in the brain. Brain, body, surroundings are as a close loop, a memory map, a sensory map. What we perceive is not an objective matter but necessities the move, we influence what we see through movement.

A short introduction to Hermann von Helmholtz a German physicist and physician (1821–1894) which Mark referred to in his talk.

The Theory of Perception.

It has long been known that humans, in their perceptual experiences, are susceptible to illusions. Aristotle had noted the illusion of a stick appearing to be bent when half-submerged in water. The fact of illusion, thus, to some people at least, made it quite apparent that, no matter what one perceived, there is always the possibility that one's perception is in error. Through the means of sensory experience, we act in an inaccessible world and regulate and modify those actions upon the basis of subsequent sensory feedback.

We do not know the world. We do not have direct access to it. What we do know we know only through the medium of the senses, and the medium of inferences, and, hence, perception is indirect; the world as it is will not be made available to us.

Hermann von Helmholtz



Stone revealing a bird. Photo from small cliffside at Silkeborg bad.

Impressions from Louisiana Museum of Modern Art

Kirkeby meet's Rodin, a text about the body's presence in space.

Rodin

From the French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), Kirkeby learned that a complete body is not necessary to depict a figure or to describe the body's peculiar presence in space: we are here, present in the entire space, but as a circumscribed entity. Where do my physical boundaries lie? What are they? After visiting the Rodin Museum in Paris, Kirkeby writes, "Where does the flesh meet the surrounding world? Can the body be circumscribed, when you really consider it? A painter can make many lines for the contour, so that the contour encloses a point of particular density in the material. For a sculptor, the problem is almost unsolvable. However, Rodin often succeeds by the simplest tricks. Leaving things fuzzy, not carved into details. Limbs looking like they were bandaged. Bandages of matter that is light ..."

Rodin is a midwife for Kirkeby, as he has been for many sculptors. The prime exemplar in Rodin's oeuvre is *The Gates of Hell* that Kirkeby considers one big synthesis of image, form and material. Gates remain a theme for Kirkeby throughout his work – an existential emblem of liminal situations in life.

Under the open sky at Louisiana

Knud W. Jensen changed the Danes' attitude to going to museums and looking at art. His own magnificent museum in Humlebæk came to form a model for museums throughout the country.



The Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama's (b. 1929) work Narcissus Garden was first made for the 1966 Venice Biennale (photo) and at Louisiana it was installed in a version adapted to Louisiana's Lake Garden (entrance via the North Wing or Children's Wing). The installation consists of 800 spheres made out of stainless steel and is presented at the museum mediating its surroundings – with the sky, water, and trees reflected in countless shiny surfaces as light as bubbles. The title refers to the ancient Greek myth of Narcissus, a beautiful young man who falls in love with his own reflection in a forest pool.

Free writing

Lisa Brüning is a theatre maker and performing artist that took part in the residence. She invited the group to the beach on Amager and created a space to exercise free writing.

I wander around until I find a place, the wind blows less, I am covered, sheltered against the outer surroundings. My weight feels heavy, sinking into the sand, leaving traces, falling downwards. I listen to the world. Impossible to be alone, thoughts claim my inner space, people walk with their children and machines are nearby with their intruding existence. Fragments of nature before my sight, set in motion by the wind that blows on the words that I am writing, covers and uncovers them. Nothing is static. Sounds keep wandering in and out of my ear. Toes in the sand, creating patterns, growing roots.

My back curled up against the wind. My head is tilted forward due to the weight it carries within. My knees are tucked up, I feel protected, in a comfort zone. The wind is blowing my mind to pieces while my body is sitting still, I am writing free. My inner thoughts go out to meet the outer world. We are belongings, connected through a long time, we exist apart and yet are part of each other. My mouth feels dry, looking out at all this water, the big sea, wish that I could place my mouth close to it and drink from it, let it enter, let the sea become part of me and I part of the sea.



Soundscape

A short introduction to Jacob Kirkegaard

Silence is not the absence of sound, silence is the absence of distraction. (Ernesto Pujol).

Working in landscapes, the sound or absence of sound becomes relevant in its way of revealing the existence of life and unidentifiable or unnoticed elements. After a talk with the Danish musician and composer; Maja Romm, I started to research acoustic sounds in the landscapes. Using this method I discovered sounds by creating awareness through sensory observations where I used my body as a tool for investigating the soundscape.

To emphasize the sound experience I also researched with live field recordings. to reinforce existing natural sounds and set them up in artificial settings. I was interested in researching a cross over between acoustic soundscape where the element of surprise is in play and the recorded sound that can highlight details and expand a specific sound over a longer time.

During the residency, I invited Jacob Kirkegaard to talk about his work as a sound artist. I was curious to hear about his relationship between sound and landscape.

Jacob Kirkegaard's spatial installations, photography, and sound sculpture are created through field recordings that capture profound dimensions of the world around him. His works reveal unheard and unseen phenomena and present listening (to both sound and imagery) as a means of experiencing the environment. (Fridman Gallery NYC 2021)

When you look at the work of Jacob Kierkegaard you feel a connection between sound and form, his work is known for uncovering the more hidden layers of environments and to reveal a complex and detailed soundscape. In his talk, Jacob explains that he often works from a curiosity to let the sound immerse by itself by staying over a longer time in one location and that he often leaves the site to not disturb the recording session. Jacob dares to go places that are unpleasant, as in his work, OPUS MORS a project that portrays four sound environments: a morgue, an autopsy, cremation and decomposition. In this work as in others, Jacob meets his surroundings with an openness which brings him to unexplored areas.

As the Vietnamese American poet, Ocean Vuong writes; I'm thinking now of Duchamp, his infamous "sculpture". How by turning a urinal, an object of stable and permanent utility, upside down, he radicalized its reception. By further naming it Fountain, he divested the object of its intended identity, rendering it with an unrecognizable new form. I think Jacob Kirkegaard, like Duchamp, is one of those rare artists who is able to transform a perspective of a matter by simply noticing it.



Jacob Kirkegaard, hydrophone lowered 20 meters inside glacier crack, Greenland, 2016.
Photo by Arild Midtbø Kalseth.

Jacob talks about his interest of documenting and recording sound since early childhood, in his talk he shows some video's from the places he has been working in and we listen to different sound works that reveal new aspects of the shown element or landscape. Being introduced to his work, my curiosity starts to awake, I feel a new awareness and need to understand material, body and nature through sound.

In 1981, at the age of six, Kirkegaard made his first sound recordings and in 1994 he was introduced to the world of sound art. His works have treated themes such as radioactivity in Chernobyl and Fukushima, border walls in global and metaphorical contexts and melting ice in the Arctic. Two of his recent works are immersive acoustic explorations into global waste management and of processes related to when a human being dies. Since 2006 Kirkegaard has also been extensively researching, recording and creating works using otoacoustic emissions; tones generated from the actual human ear. The core element and method of his work derive from the use of sound recordings of the tangible aspects from its intangible themes. (fonik.dk)

Land Depot

(DANISH VERSION)

JORD DEPOT, JORD LANDSKABER, TYNGDE DER SØGER NEDAD, UKENDT LAND, FREMMEDE LEGEME, KØBENHAVNS PROTESE, ALT ER BERØRT, DEL AF DENNE SAMME CYKLUS, DEL AF DETTE GENBRUGS SYSTEM DER ROTERER, BLIVER FLYTTET PÅ, GRAVET OP, LAGT FRI OG SYNKET NED. JORD DEPOTET, UDEN IDENTITET, DEL AF EN NY SKABELSESPROCES. I UDKANTEN AF EN STOR BY EKSISTERER JORD DEPOTET SOM ET UKENDT LANDSKAB, AFVENTER, DEN LANGE NATURLIGE PROCESS AF OMDANNELSE, SKABELSE, OMDANNELSE, SKABELSE, OMDANNELSE, SKABELSE.

(ENGLISH VERSION)

EARTH DEPOT, EARTH LANDSCAPES, WEIGHT SEEKING DOWNWARD, UNKNOWN LAND, FOREIGN BODY PART, THE PROSTHESIS OF COPENHAGEN, EVERYTHING IS AFFECTED, PART OF THE SAME CYCLE. PART OF THE SAME RECYCLING SYSTEM THAT ROTATES, THAT MOVES, THAT IS BEING DUG UP, LAID FREE AND SUNK DOWN, THE LAND DEPOT, WITHOUT IDENTITY, PART OF A NEW CREATIONAL PROCESS, ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF A BIG CITY IT EXISTS AS AN ALIEN LANDSCAPE, AWAITS THE LONG NATURAL PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION, CREATION, TRANSFORMATION, CREATION, TRANSFORMATION, CREATION.



STRUCTURES

A NIGHT WALK - BEYOND THE LIMITS OF THE FANTASY OF CIVILISATION

FOUR LIVING CANVASES SET IN THE LANDSCAPE ON REFSHALEØEN

Concept and creation: Mille Lundt

Performing: Tora Balslev, Daria Lavrennikov and Mille Lundt

Walking guide: Nana Francisca Schottländer



Photo by Adrien Lecouturier

The engaging art practice of challenging social issues of aesthetic experience requires a knowledge of behavioural psychology and creative skills. (Ernesto Pujol).

We were all invited to create a trace at the end of the residence. I decided to create a performative night walk in Copenhagen. I chose Refshaleøen as a location to present the night walk. The history of the Island was that in 1624, a blockhouse was built on the original island to guard the entrance to Copenhagen harbour together with St. Ann's Fortress (now Kastellet) on the coast just north of the city. Reclamation increased the size of the island considerably in the 1870s when the port's waterways were made deeper. Burmeister & Wain established a shipyard on the island in 1871. At its height, the shipyard employed 8,000 people, and so appears as an icon of Danish Industrial history. Now it is a thriving area where abandoned buildings are home to a mixture of creative entrepreneurs, small craft, flea markets, storage facilities, food markets, cultural and recreational uses.

To withdraw a focus on the visual and on the sound in my walk, I decided to share the night time with my visitors. The walk counted four separate chapters placed in different locations close to the old shipyard. Observing real-time events I re-constructed my own performative actions that each advocated the verbs; past, present and future as a link between destruction and becoming, life and death. The four individual actions were worked in-situ relating to the integrity of the whole landscape.

My night walk was an invitation to observe the protruding architectural encroachment on nature, with the question; How do we co-exist?

Trevor Davies:

Mille chose to make her "trace" after a month-long residency as a series of night time performative scenes located in the post-industrial landscape of Refshaleøen.

As an audience, we were invited to walk through the desolate area encountering four visually strong and atmospheric scenes which built on the latent imagery of this area with its redundant water filled docks, overgrown asphalted wastelands, ominous storage buildings, distant waste disposal plants.

This unfinished landscape is powerful in its own right and has many potential narratives and Mille found the right balance opting for a suggestive approach to every scene which gave us the chance to build our own narratives on the basis of the characters, actions and situations she choreographed in-situ.

She struck a perfect balance with an overpowering sense of imagery balancing between the fragility of the figures in the work, each caught in a precarious and even desperate situation. But at the same time eluding both serenity and innocence facing the unknown. A shadowy figure slowly rowing her in the huge dock to disappear under a bridge, a figure sitting in a disused container looking into a mirror, a figure laying on the asphalt, caught in the headlights of a car. Haunting images and highly suspended situations, just long enough to make a strong imprint on the memory and short enough to trigger the imagination.

NATURAL HABITAT

A series of landscape and sculpting body photographs.

Composed by the performer Mille Lundt and the photographer Thomas Juul.

This project was initiated as part of the research on landscapes during the residency period.

Natural Habitat is an investigation between human and nature and how to co-exist on equal terms. The project is a series of body and landscape photographs that aims to create an utter and urgent stillness as a contrast to our fast-moving society today. This project grows from an interest to place the human body back to its former habitat; the natural landscape. The work focuses on a deep relational pattern system that combines the naked human body set in natural surroundings. A search for nature and human to merge together through movement.

The photographs are shot at Kalvebodfælled in Copenhagen and are part of a larger work in progress. The location Kalvebodfælled is an area that consists of reclaimed sea bed, with a number of former islets making up small isolated hills. Most of the area lies as lightly maintained parkland featuring a range of nature types, from young forests to tidal marshes.

In some of the photographs the city takes over the position of nature, the intention is to place the human in nature as a witness to the ever-increasing and growing city landscape. The images point out the need for more human relationship towards others and towards the environment.



Photo by Thomas Juul

In these photographs, I approach the setting, by sculpting and folding my body into the environment. I work with the naked body to reinforce the relation between body nature, colour, form and structure. I compose the likeness between these elements to create awareness and co-existence. The Natural Habitat project arises from the desire to investigate art in an equal meeting between human and nature.

A Natural Habitat is land and water areas where the ecosystems biological communities are formed largely by native plant and animal species and human activity has not essentially modified the area's primary ecological functions. An aspiration grows from this knowledge to create a reflection upon the human habitat versus a natural habitat.



Photo by Thomas Juul

Thomas Juul grew up in a small station town in the outskirts of Copenhagen and was already as an adolescent interested in composing and searching for the right light through photographs. Thomas is educated, in 2003, alongside the photographer Peter Krasilnikoff. Thomas moved shortly after to Barcelona to sparkle his inspiration with new contrasts and a different lifestyle. He now leads an International career working within advertising, still life photographs and developing his own artistic projects with a base in the heart of Copenhagen. His work includes the clients: Audi, Asics, BMW, Dell, Halberstadt Diamonds, Ikea, Mercedes-Benz, Mattel, Novozymes, Peugeot and Pfizer.

His work illustrates a distinctive and uniqueness in the way that the photographs stand out with a clear and aesthetic line. His focus on the Nordic light, colour, shadow and movement comes from a minimalistic approach that creates fascinating pictures. Thomas regard for the detail is unique in the way he catches a movement and transform it into still images. His fascination of nature that forms the basis of this artwork is a strong factor and drive in the work Natural Habitat.
