

**Department of Fine Art**

# **Rooms for one**

***A journey through visible and invisible space***

**MA – Project in Fine Art / Thesis**

**Linn Björklund**

**Spring 2015**

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**Linn Björklund**

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## Abstract

The need for space can be different depending on where you are situated geographically. My life is in two places, Iceland and Sweden. As a result I often find myself in a state of temporary presence or interim between different cities, countries and languages.

Central to my research about personal spaces are thoughts regarding scale and how such a space, within human contexts, can be created in the easiest way possible.

I have searched for traces of different kinds of spatial creations within for example childish play, contemporary building techniques and rituals of the past. I draw parallels between contemporary artist practices and historical fragments as well as philosophical influences and movies. The material is thematically connected as it describes how people of different ages, from various cultures and times relate to space and their dwellings.

I believe that the question of space is not only connected to the spatial structures that we inhabit but also to a sense of psychological boundaries, that in part defines oneself in one's own environment. The materials that I have collected strive towards the idea that the forming of an identity is also leaving a physical mark in our shared environment.

I envision the building of a pillow fort, a "koja", as a very basic construction of a private space. Maybe this is the closest we can get to visualize and operationalize the human instinct to nest, established as a part of children's play but having a deeper root in the way we shape identity and model a self-image.

In the project *Welcome here* I created these pillow forts and my own borders for a personal space by crossing others on an already existing map. I cut through the city landscape as well as the borders of people's homes and workplaces. I found that the personal space is not always visible and can be claimed by other means than material ones. In the exhibition I invited people to continue the journey I had taken. Through sound, text and images the audience could move between nine different locations guided by a collection of written down stories and the sound of my footsteps.

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## **Introduction**

### **A prologue**

When I left home I had just turned nineteen. It was a jump out of a secure environment that in some ways had become too familiar. I packed a 55-litre backpack and moved away with all of my belongings tucked down and tightly attached to my back. I headed out to find a new spot, one that I could make my own.

During the past few years I have come to think about how I define my need for space and how it can be different depending on where I am and in which country I am at the moment. In Iceland I seem to strive for having as little physical space as possible, a living area that I can easily overview and in possession of only a few selected objects. In Sweden, where I grew up and where my family live, I have a tendency to collect more things, filling relatives basements with stuff that might come in handy – leading to an expanding need of space. The search for, and claim for space is something that is present in my everyday life as I often find myself in a state of temporality that sprouts out of living in different places and switching between different cities, countries and languages.

I think the matter of space is not only connected to spatially or what kind of structures we inhabit but also as a sense of psychological boundary, the redefinition of yourself in a new environment, the forming of a self image. From that perspective would psychological and physical spaces be dependent on each other. Together they create a personal room that helps to define – and support – the creating of an identity.

A starting point for previous work has been the idea that the construction of and need for personal space is something you can find in every being. I started off by looking at this urge from a sculptural point of view, imitating shapes and forms of nests and cocoons (fig. 1) creating installations of these antisocial colonies. As a bird methodically gathers material for its nest and a badger digs its sett, both have the intention to create a space to live while simultaneously create a shape to meet their own special needs.

How can thus a similar manipulation and adaption of space be translated into human conditions? Can traces of these different kinds of spatial creations be found within for example childish play, contemporary building techniques or rituals of the past?

### **Philosophical influences**

Gaston Bachelard's book *The Poetics of Space* offers a romantic and vivid description of human relationship to the places we inhabit moving methodically between the cottage, house and castle<sup>1</sup>. The exploration begins in the most secluded part of the basement and moves through the house up to the attic where Bachelard believes all our most inner memories are stored. The very basic version of a shelter is carefully considered illustrated by the shell and the mollusk that inhabit it. According to Bachelard this is the most simplified and yet strongest symbol of a secluded space and a dwelling. In his poetical approach to space Bachelard portrays the house as a symbol of intimacy with references to the poet Rainer Maria Rilke;

When we dream of the house we were born in, in the utmost depths of reverie, we participate in this original warmth, in this well-tempered matter of the material paradise. This is the environment in which the protective beings live. We shall come back to the maternal features of the house. For the moment, I should like to point out the poetics of space the original fullness of the house's being. Our daydreams carry us back to it. And the poet well knows that the house holds childhood motionless "in its arms".<sup>2</sup>

Bachelard research inspired the German philosopher Otto Friedrich Bollnow, but Bollnow's take on humans and their relationship to space also includes fields of architecture, anthropology and philosophy. Previous research focused on space in relation to time, as Bachelard does when he refers to childhood memories, or space in a mathematical sense that is countable and measureable, illustrating the temporality in human existence. Bollnow experienced a lack of a coherent systematic interpretation of space and writes from the perspective that space is more of a question of belonging to a certain place – which leads us to questions about how we inhabit space, something that is deeply rooted in human behavior. He writes:

... it is a question of the relationship between the human being and his space, and thus also of the structure of human existence itself, insofar as this is determined by his relationship with space. It is in this sense that we

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<sup>1</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Translated by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

<sup>2</sup> Bachelard, page 43.

... speak of the spatiality of human existence. This /.../ is in itself something spatially extended, but that it is only with reference to a space, that it needs space in order to develop within it.<sup>3</sup>

## Understanding the creation of space

### Size and movability

Two years ago a documentary called *Microtopia – a documentary about micro dwellings, downsizing and living off the grid* premiered. The concept was unfamiliar to me and watching the movie was somewhat of an eye-opener. The themes I had worked with in the early stages of my Bachelor level studies suddenly did not only connect to this basic instinct of shelter for animals and organisms that I had been occupied with, but were also attached to modern human society and a new radical tendency of inhabiting physical space, this as reaction to cities growing bigger and an over populated planet. *Microtopia* tells the story of a movement spreading throughout the United States and Europe bringing people from different fields, like architects, visual artist and environmental and political activists together under the flag of a *Tiny House Movement*. It is both a matter of a freedom quest and architectural experimentation as well as a critique of consumer society and capitalist structures. Many of the active people within the movement work towards re-appropriating existing objects; make new value out of garbage, a new readymade architecture seeing potential in old shipping containers and truck trailers.

On the contrary to Bachelard's idea of the primordial dwelling, the idea of living small does not necessarily only have imply taking a step away from society or moving backwards in development, but rather the opposite. It could be seen as a concentrated existence that is easily transferable and moveable. New technology makes it possible to store a lot of the memories that we might carry with us embedded in objects or possible to fit onto a hard-drive the size of a matchbox. One of the artists featured in this documentary is the architect Jennifer Siegel, she says:

There is a movement that is pervasive through out this country where people are looking to be able to create their environments without having rules pressed upon them. Within that thinking there is a difference in terms of scale. Less about bigger 'is better' and more about 'smaller is smarter' and that is connected to the dwellings that

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<sup>3</sup> O.F. Bollnow, *Human Space*, Translated by Cristine Shuttleworth (London: Hypen Press, 2011) page 23.



we have around us. So the less stuff we have, the lighter the materials are, the smarter they become, the less encumbered we become as people.<sup>4</sup>

In the artist Andrea Zittel's work (*A-Z Living Unit II*, 1994) simplicity of dwelling is a factor enabling her to ask questions about the necessity of living large and presenting solutions for future housing problems. Art critic Catherine Osborne writes on Zittel's work:

While Zittel's works are undeniably fun, they are also illuminating studies of how we attribute significance to things, including the structure we live in and what we actually need in order to exist in comfort without being surrounded by accumulated belongings.<sup>5</sup> (fig. 2)

Through the building of a house, or the creation of an object for inhabitation, the artists mentioned above have made connections simultaneously to architecture and sculpture. With slim designs and compact-living solutions they ask questions of how much space an individual actually needs. The cocoons and nests of my own practice never surpassed a certain size and were not made for human inhabitation. Thoughts of scale and size became building stones for the work *Campus Radix* (fig.3) in April 2014 when I for the first time created a human size space with connection to tents and outdoorsy materials. Important in connection to the outdoors is to not increase the carrying load by bringing unnecessary belongings with you that would make it harder to move through the terrain. With this sculpture, I increase the notion of security in a psychological way by a human fitted structure shaped as a cocoon. The tent canvas material created a thin layer between the inside and the outside space.

The movement and fragile membrane of being on the in- or outside of personal and physical space is explored further in the works of Polish/Canadian artist Ana Rewakowicz. She states; "Shelter is the most basic human need,"<sup>6</sup> while putting on her sleeping-bag-dress that when inflated changes into a cylinder in which a person can sleep (fig. 4). She explains that her work comes from personal experiences of moving between different countries and language environments. This brings up questions about belonging and ideas of what a shelter is, how much space and how much comfort one actually needs. Furthermore, her work incorporates the idea that

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<sup>4</sup> Jonas Kellagher, *Microtopia-a documentary about micro dwellings, downsizings and living of the grid*, directed by Jesper Wachtmeister (Sweden: Solaris Filmproduktion, 2013.)

<sup>5</sup> Catherine Osborne, "Andrea Zittel wins Frederick Kiesler Prize for Architecture and the Arts." *Azure*. 11 2, 2012. <http://www.azuremagazine.com/article/andrea-zittel-wins-frederick-kiesler-prize-for-architecture-and-the-arts/> (accessed 11 12, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Jonas Kellagher, *Microtopia-a documentary about micro dwellings, downsizings and living of the grid*, directed by Jesper Wachtmeister (Sweden: Solaris Filmproduktion, 2013.)

finding places where we are comfortable does not necessarily have anything to do with origin or homeland. In her nomadic approach to home, Rewakowicz is able to inflate her sleeping bag dress, capturing the feeling of being in-between; public but still in a private sphere. On the inside there is only room for her and almost no belongings. She ends the interview by saying:

Today we have expanded the possibilities of moving between different places, countries and continents more than ever before. One could look at this as a kind of modern nomadism, which denies the idea of the motherland as the place to be. The modern nomad from the viewpoint of a person that does not get stuck in particular structures and has the possibility to move with the flow. This uncluttering also opens up the possibility to dispose of or do away with the collection of memory, holding onto belongings and to live more lightly.<sup>7</sup>

Danish artist Ion Sørvin presents an example of a rolling house influenced by the Inuit igloos in Greenland. With this movable space he is aiming to work around some of what he believes are repressive forces within society and bureaucratic structures that keep us in one place. For him, the way to do so means to change the way we think about our structures, trying to live with as little concentration of power as possible, get rid of ideas of landownership and big bank loans. His way of doing this is playfully similar to how children love to build a little cave, a closed space where you can hide away from grownups; “I’m still doing that, just a little bit bigger”, he says.<sup>8</sup>

## Staying and belonging

In a radio broadcast on Swedish radio P4 under the title *Children who build huts grow to be stable children* the importance of building independent spaces, tree houses and pillow forts, in Swedish referred to as “koja”, is discussed:

The seclusion that the child can get through the control of this physical space is probably necessary for a healthy mental development and a sense of independence. It is an important part of identity construction as the child is allowed to decide and set boundaries of a physical space. There are studies that show that children with access to their own places where they themselves decide can more easily develop a sense of independence.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Kellagher, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Kellagher, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> “Barn som bygger kojor blir trygga barn” Sveriges Radio P4 Örebro, 15 July 2005 kl 08:08, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=159&artikel=657915>. (accessed: 18 01 2015)

Within the play and construction, alone or together with other children, it becomes possible to control and create a space of your own. The size is tailored according to the builder's own size and fantasies. Gaston Bachelard writes similarly on the subject of secret hideaways and the imaginative: "An imaginary room rises up around our bodies, which think that they are well hidden when we take refuge in a corner. Already, the shadows are walls, a piece of furniture constitutes a barrier, hangings are a roof."<sup>10</sup>

Connections can be drawn between the behavior of a child and more general structures of how humans inhabit space. The building of a simple hideaway is often based in more serious situations. The British artist Antonia Dewhurst's work is inspired by her Welsh background and the sense of rootlessness coming from growing up in a family on the move. In the project *Ty Unnos*, 2012<sup>11</sup> (fig. 5) she is building a so-called Welsh one-night-house. The early nineteenth-century Welsh's tradition states that "if a shelter was constructed on common land after sunset, and the chimney was smoking by sunrise, then a claim could be made to own the land."<sup>12</sup> With the house constructed, the land that could be enclosed by a hammer or axe throw from the four quarters would also be included in the property. The tradition is believed to date back to around the 9th and 10th centuries and functioned as an informal law into modern times. Around the turn of the 19th century, a big part of common land passed into private ownership. This led to poverty and homelessness and also in the extent to a peak in the Ty Unnos tradition. These buildings were always constructed with whatever materials were around like turf, stones and old planks. When the claim was established, the house could be upgraded and made permanent with better material. This ancient squatting technique is visible in Dewhurst's work using found materials for building.

In history and in stories of settlement you can find traces of old traditions and rituals that have been performed by people aiming to claim a piece of land in our shared environment. Similar examples like the Welsh one-night-house can be found in various other places around the world often as results of poverty and privatization of land that have forced part of the population outside of the system. An almost identical action can be seen in the Italian movie *Il Tetto* from 1956 where a young couple in search of a place to live, decide to try to build a house overnight on the outskirts of Rome. The movie shows that there is a thin line between being homeless and

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<sup>10</sup> Bachelard, page 136.

<sup>11</sup> Antonia Dewhurst, Culturehall, 2010, <http://culturehall.com/artwork.html?page=22712>. (accessed: 18 01 2015)

<sup>12</sup> Gill Perry, *Playing at Home, The House in Contemporary Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013) page 62.

having a home, depending on whether you manage to put a roof over your head, not only because law enforcement might threaten to tear it down, but for a psychological sense of belonging to a place<sup>13</sup>. This leads us to think about claiming spaces in a less material way than to put up stable barriers and walls.

### Invisible spaces

Perhaps many of the borders that exist between us in every day life are just ingrained attitudes and habits. Stepping into someone's comfort zone or not respecting another person's integrity could be examples of such culturally and socially inherited boundaries that become more visible when broken. In an ended relationship one could talk about the danger of 'losing ground' when something collective becomes individual, friends might be divided, new boundaries must therefore be defined and the struggle to have access to both physical and immaterial spaces re-fought. International and political disputes over landownership and privatization of space seems to be something fundamentally human, dividing people into groups based on nationality, race, religion or gender. If we look backwards into Icelandic history there are other examples.

For an unmarried settler woman in Iceland, the area she could circle between sunrise and sunset, walking with a pregnant heifer decided how much land she was entitled:

In the year 950, a settler woman named Þórgerður from the isolated fjords of Norway, stepped ashore at Ingólfshöfði. By law, a settlement woman could make claim to land if she was able to lead full calf heifer from sunrise to sunset. Þórgerður led her heifer from Kvía and west towards Jökulsfell and claimed all the land of Ingólfshöfði between Kvía and Jökulsá.<sup>14</sup>

We can see this story as an example of how through immaterial means and with help from ancient rituals a person can claim a space. Supposedly that is the first step to occupying a personal dwelling (fig. 6). More contemporary, in the practice of the British artist Richard Long, walking through a landscape is a method for creating a sculptural artwork: "*In A Line Made by Walking* (1967), a work made at the age of 22, Long changed our notion of sculpture and gave new meaning to an activity as old as man himself."<sup>15</sup> (fig. 7)

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<sup>13</sup> Cesare Zavattini, *Il Tetto*, Directed by Vittorio De Sica, DVD. (Italy: De Sica Produzione, 1956.)

<sup>14</sup> Glóey Finnsdóttir, Kristinn Stefánsson, "Skaftafell", *Morgunblaðið, blaðauki* 23 June 1995, <http://www.mbl.is/greinasafn/grein/208889/> (19 01 2015)

<sup>15</sup> Sean O'Hagan, "One step beyond." *The Observer*. No5 Vol 10, 2009.

<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/may/10/art-richard-long> (accessed 11 12, 2014).

If the acts above, where two individuals are moving within nature in order to mark their presence, are compared through gender perspective; then entering into a landscape and claiming ownership over a space gets a special meaning.

Þórgerður walked a remarkable area in the southeast fjords of Iceland with a cow, pregnant with a calf, in tow. The additional burden of the cow, one could imagine, was meant to make her chances of capturing a considerable landmass more difficult. As a counterpart we have Richard Long who sets out to question the boundaries of sculpture. His work could also be seen as colonizing or claiming the landscape – a stereotypical masculine act. In ancient Greece – as in many other parts of the world – the place of the man was outside of the home, working to protect his family and the country. It was carefully staged as to avoid getting mixed up in what could be considered domestic and/or female duties, as those could question masculinity.<sup>16</sup>

I found the story of Þórgerður by coincidence but it immediately caught my interest. It gives an idea of the workload for a woman at the time of settlement in Iceland and is an example of the ritual she had to perform in order to be independent and earn the right over a piece of land. For Þórgerður this walk was the first step in gaining a shelter. Maybe later this space would become a place for settling down with a family, where she would mostly be in charge of the domestic chores. Some might consider Richard Long's performance to be a similar action, as he enters the landscape, physically marks it, defines it as a sculpture and leaves it behind. But Þórgerður marks her place and stays, whereas Long marks his space and carries on to find a spot for his next artwork. It is interesting to compare the meaning of these two journeys, one being a refugee and the other a colonialist. From this viewpoint, a female artist would not enter the field of land art on the same terms as Long as they do not share the same historical connection of conquering landscape. Furthermore, Long makes his mark permanent, Þórgerður's act was physically invisible.

### **Sculptural Space**

I explored the invisible space and emotional relationship to memories further in my solo exhibition *Sketches for Habitat 1*, 2014 (fig.8). In this work the action of crocheting and sewing – which I see as a movement of binding and making knots – the procedure of making was very

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<sup>16</sup> Mark Wigley, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender." In *Sexuality & Space*, Beatrice Colomina, 327-389. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), page 335.

important part of the process of creating secluded spaces. The material is woven into a context in direct connection to the movements of the body and is at the same time part of an organic process where the shape grows. The hollowness that is created by this method, the fact that inside each sculpture there is a cavity that is not used, makes them powerful. For me it is a subtle existential activism where a space is claimed by movement and a shape is created in the process.

In the process of building a house over one night you can see similar space activism and a movement towards stretching and expanding your own physical room. If we apply this attitude to more nomadic ways where people through bodily movements mark a space, it is possible to see this as a methodical gathering, a creation of boundaries, and the stretching over specific areas. The walks of Richard Long, when seen as sculpture, are comparable movements since the act of walking is the method of his 'sculptural' work;

*The line made by walking* is also a sculpture – a very transient and humble one for sure, but a sculpture nonetheless. As an imprint, a form or shape, a physical fact both 'inside' and added to the landscape, its ambiguity serves as a clear marker for the artist's aspirations and stretch and test the boundaries of the expanding field of sculpture.<sup>17</sup>

Maybe we can create a new understanding if we connect the woman in the old myth walking through the Icelandic fjords to the work of Long – connecting and bridging movement and the landscape - with the acts of movement and sculpture. Long is using his body as tool for shaping the environment in the same way as Þórgerður marked her land by walking. The movements are transformed to a kind of craftsmanship that is the foundation for the creation of the home as well as for the art piece. This we see very clearly in the movie *Il Tetto*, where the young couple are trying to gather as many people as possible to help with the construction, but also in the video documentation of Antonia Dewhurst's work with the *Ty Unnos* built from scratch with only hand tools. As the walls of her house mark the borders from inner and outer space, the walk to mark a territory creates a distinct shift between the private/familiar and the public/foreign since you are marking the land for yourself as your own.

From that perspective a child building a pillow fort, constructing a house, walking and making a sculpture are all related to one another - working within the sculpture medium can be seen as a way of gradually and systematically claiming a piece of the environment and delimit it

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<sup>17</sup> Dieter Roelstraete, *A Line Made by Walking - Richard Long* (London: Afterall Books, 2010), page 10.

as your own. All represent steps in gradual movement towards the capture of a piece of the environment, to gain control over your surrounding.

## **A room for one**

### **Connection to influences**

The examples of contemporary artist practices, historical fragments, theories and films mentioned above makes the foundation for my MA project. They are thematically connected and stand as examples of how people of different ages, from various cultures and times relate to space and their dwellings. I am looking for the connections between these stories and the more general studies of humans and their relationship to space as demonstrated in the theories of Bollnow and Bachelard. The materials that I have collected strive towards the idea that the forming of an identity is both leaving a physical and a psychological mark in our shared environment. In the examples of works by Rewakowicz, Zittel, Dewhurst and Duprat we can see this idea manifested in a direct physical state. Through the building of a house, or the creation of an object for inhabitation, the artists have made connections to architecture and sculpture as well as ingrained thoughts of identity and belonging.

### **“Koja” from my point of view**

I envision the building of a pillow fort, a “koja”, as a very basic construction of a private space. Maybe this is the closest we can get to visualize and materialize the human instinct to nest, established as a part of children’s play but having a deeper root in the way we shape identity and modeling a self-image. Being built inside another building it provides the possibility to take temporary control over a small piece of the surroundings by creating a smaller space in a bigger room. Bachelard is considering this temporary control in connection to dreaming about something essential during childhood:

For instance, in the house itself, in the family sitting room, a dreamer of refuges dreams of a hut, of a nest, or of nooks and corners in which he would like to hide away, like an animal in its hole. In this way, he lives in a region that is beyond human images.<sup>18</sup>

But then again, for me this construction does not necessarily have to be connected to naïve childhood longings since I see this as an action towards an attempt to break up fixed ideas of how we live and the connection between the ways we set up shelter and how that shapes who we are in community. If humans natural urge is to create intimacy, it might seem as a contradictive behavior that contemporary architecture nowadays is largely characterized by open spaced studio apartments where everything seems bigger than it really is. Dividing space into smaller rooms has been fashionably erased.

The structures I intend to build do not go in line with this fashion. They are places for protection and to create a place for the individual, not from a place of affliction or sorrow, but as an opportunity to move backwards to finding a root for existence and then move forward. The claiming of space through a “koja” also highlights a temporary element since it is not a question of ownership to the area where it has been put up, you are only borrowing it for a short time as a site for resting. In this temporality there is an embedded possibility and allowance to make mistakes, change ones mind and start over from the beginning.

## **Relationship to the material**

### *Older work*

As previously mentioned, my source of inspiration in several previous works has been related to animals and how the creating of a nest, a cocoon or hole takes it's special shape depending on the species making it. This has also resulted in choosing material that would come natural to them and that would be available in their natural habitat.

In the work *Trichopterae* (1980 – 1996) of the French artist Hubert Duprat a caddis larva is placed in a tank with pearls and gold flakes (fig. 9). The larva has a special tendency to adjust its use of building material to its environment. The result is that the larva starts using the new materials as its building material for the cocoon and ends up with a sarcophagus decorated with gold and pearls.

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<sup>18</sup> Bachelard, page 30.



In the attempt of trying to create a place for myself I ponder over what would be a natural material for me to work with. As mentioned above, in preparation for my solo exhibition last year I kept working with this theme of the natural nest but stretched the idea further relating it to humans by making small shelters or human cocoons using torn up old clothing and home related fabrics (fig. 8). I imagined that these are the materials that would be close at hand for humans if they were to build a nest for dwelling. Furthermore it is a material that could be seen to function as our second skin or a human substitute for fur. In the creation process I was surprised by the intimacy in the act of tearing someone's old bedding apart or cutting up an old wool sweater. The objects were loaded and impregnated with a history from their former owner.

### *New project*

Keeping the materials of the homely environments and playful architecture in mind, I have started experimenting with building pillow forts with furniture and domestic fabrics. The outcomes of these spontaneous actions have been diverse since the material around me depends on where I am situated at the specific moment in time (fig. 10) and in the places that I visit my work is adapting to its surroundings. To only use materials available on site and by that letting the structure to become a natural part of its environment functions as a framework for my project.

The architecture of the "koja" holds connections to micro dwellings and sensitive human relations as we can also see in the works of Rewakowicz and Zittel also working with downsized structures. The aim is to try to expand the possibilities and also to create a secluded space in the simplest way possible. As I in previous work only allowed the outer surface of the private space to be viewed, I now want to visualize and investigate the feeling of these places from the inside; a place made for human dwelling. On the inside I hope to get closer to an intimacy and a sensibility that links back to basic human emotions as well as the formation of new life strategies.

I imagine that the places I intend to build could also be thought of as opportunities. Opportunities for temporary isolation where one gets to close one off for those who wish for solitude. The sculpture that before was hollow and exclusionary now instead fills a function to be confining, enclosing a person inside as the body disappears into the structure.

I have yet to decide where and how to find the locations for this exploration. Depending on how I choose to do this, the building spots could be very diverse places – both public and private

ones where I ask permission to come, build and spend a pre-determined amount of time at the location. In opposition to some of the walks of Richard Long I would not leave a trace, nor anything behind. It could therefore be regarded as an opposite action. These acts would only be visible through careful documentation by photographing and recording my stay. The result would be the story of a dwelling that took place in a specific spot, like Þórgerður's walk, only existing as a fragment of an action having taken place. It would be a private space for a temporary stay.

## **Welcome here**

It was small and crowded in the two-bedroom apartment where I lived with my parents. My mother worked from home drawing maps. She had her work desk in the living room filled with stuff that would be dangerous for a two year old to play with: sharp scalpels and toxic glue. Therefore she took an ordinary pencil, drew a line across the living room floor and told me I was not allowed to cross. I often stood by the line and looked over to the other side but I never took that small step over it. She had by a simple action made claim to the area, simultaneously she had also defined the borders of my space.

In the project *Welcome here* I created my own lines and borders by crossing others, both private and public, on an already existing map. I cut through the city landscape as well as the borders of people's homes and workplaces. My body was the prime tool for doing so and the outcome, that I think of as sculptural, was partly immaterial.

When entering the gallery space the visitor is exposed to nine large photographs installed in a corner, seven images on one wall and two on the opposite one. Under each image a coordinate is written marking the exact location for the image being taken. Small shelves are installed in the far ends on each wall holding books with collected short stories. Freestanding in the middle of the room is the sound sculpture; a wooden signpost attached to a concrete foot pointing in four different directions, south, north, west and east. A pair of headphones is attached to the pole.

Central in my research have been thoughts of scale in connection to personal spaces and, within human environments, how such a space can be created in the easiest way possible. I have found that the personal space is not always visible and can be claimed by other means than

material ones. As stated above in this writing, movement is a common factor in the exploration of space. This can be seen in the story of Þórgerður walking the fjords and in the work of Ana Rewakovicz as she is working with the notion of home and at the same time dealing with increasing flexibility between countries.

It is not always a claim connected with materially owning something, but a psychological sense of positioning yourself in a place and experiencing it. If you say: - I know that this exists because I have seen it, or; - I remember it therefore it is true, you are referring to a memory you have of that event happening or the place you visited. The memory is your proof. I own it in the way that you own your memories or experiences. Seen from that position the work is about borders that are not really visible, but become visible when crossing them. It was therefore a conscious decision to not make an actual sculpture in the museum. The result is instead three different ways of documentation: sound, image and text (fig. 11).

#### *Sound sculpture – 27 km*

The work began by me choosing nine different locations, as far apart within the Reykjavik city borders as possible. In the exhibition I have named each location after their coordinate number on the map. At sunrise I began to walk from the location furthest west, and from there towards the point a bit further south before heading east. I finished at sundown at the same spot I had started at in the morning coming down from the north. By this method I circled and connected the points through walking, making a claim to the space with my presence.

The whole walk, that took approximately eight hours, was recorded and installed as a real-time sound work. The listener is able to hear me walking as well as all the surrounding sounds like the traffic along Suðurlandsbraut, people jogging at Sæbraut or seabirds calling somewhere close to Nauthólsvík. All became parts in an unmasked sound landscape.

I chose to present this journey as a sound piece in affinity with the story of Þórgerður. I wanted the viewer to get the opportunity to imagine the walking through the sound from the recording in the same way that you can imagine Þórgerður's story when told or read – to hear a fragment of an action taking place. I also wanted to give a clear idea of the actual work such a walk would entail and enable the visitors to be part of it by imagining taking the walk themselves (fig. 12).

### *Photographs*

As I reached each of my destinations, often homes of people I had contacted through friends but also schools and office buildings, I asked permission to put up a temporary personal space.

In this part, the work took on a material form and I took an image at each site like you would take a snapshot from a place that you visited and wanted to remember. I think of these images as points on a map or coordinates rather than photographs.

I used bed sheets, blankets and furniture for building, which meant that the person inviting me in had to lend me a bit of their space and give me access to material for building. Similarly to Hubert Duprats experiments with the 'caddis larva' mentioned earlier on, the structures adjusted to their surrounding.

On a social level, we had to interact, get to know each other and they had to trust me with working in their homes or offices. When entering someone else's home you also enter into their personal sphere. As the unfamiliar guest I left my comfort zone and, through the construction of the pillow fort, I rebuilt it inside another persons home. (fig. 13).

### *Text*

The social interactions became more and more important and interesting to me as the project developed. The sketchbook that I had brought with me to the sites to record memories from the building of the pillow forts became filled with thoughts of these stilted social interactions. I wrote down the different reactions from the people I visited, ideas and suggested topics of conversations. Something I had read in the paper or things that I had found out about connected to their home all became part of an unofficial script, which, was initially designed as good to remember should things become weird. These were fragile social situations where I found a mutual concern in that the stay went down smoothly both from my side, and from the person I was visiting. I wanted to use this material and decided to rework the texts into a poetry or short story format, something that would give a fair description of not only the performance of building these resting spots but also the meeting between two strangers sharing a place and experience (fig. 14).

*Welcome here* is not exclusively about the photographs, sound or stories in the exhibition. Together these different material manifestations created a multi-layered artwork that represented

the journey through the documentation of it taking place. What you can be seen in the museum exhibition is the remains of documentation from all the places I visited and a glimpse into the boundaries of the borders set up between me and the participants in the project.

When I visited The New Museum in New York earlier this spring I found an example of a contemporary perspective of how space and identity are connected in the show *Surround Audience*<sup>19</sup>. This exhibition explored the effects of an increasingly connected world and how that affects the images of self and our ability to see and be seen. The self-image has in some way turned into a commodity, marketed through social networking sites. You could for example take a lot of space digitally without ever leaving your bedroom. In this way one can say that our spaces have become both compressed and expanded at the same time.

The Caribbean-American writer and civil rights activist Audre Lorde writes on the importance of defining your own personhood in a safe environment: “When we define ourselves, when I define myself, the place in which I am like you and the place in which I am not like you, I’m not excluding you from the joining - I’m broadening the joining.”<sup>20</sup>

I understand that the pillow fort structures like the ones photographed in *Welcome here* have the ability to communicate many different things depending on their context. This could be discussed from a privileged point of view or from a place of need. It depends on from what kind of perspective it is read, as a cozy collection of homely fabrics or as a shed for someone without access to a home. Someone who is used to see poverty and the shelters of homeless individuals in the streets probably connects differently to the work than someone who is not exposed to such in their everyday life. Regardless of the chosen perspective, my hope is that the basic standpoint of the work is still relevant for both approaches; That the inherited instinct to build and shape a personal room is important to the sense of belonging in a place and essential for a person's wellbeing as previously referred to in connection to Bollnow's research.

In the gallery space I could see people entering the installation being immediately drawn to the books and short stories. After reading they had gained one piece of the puzzle, by listening to the sound they received another one and so forth.

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<sup>19</sup> “2015 Triennial: Surround Audience,” The New Museum, 25 February 2015, <http://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/view/the-generational-triennial>

<sup>20</sup> Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007), page 10.

By not putting the text in direct connection to the images, I wanted to open up for the possibility of freely connecting text and image, maybe new stories could come out of that. People would pick up a book, read and then walk around to find the picture connected to the text. In that way the journey I had taken continued within the museum and ended with lots of people walking to the sound of my footsteps between nine different locations.

Looking back at this process that led to the final installation in Gerðarsafn it has triggered my interest in working with sculpture and space in an indirect way. The method might be text or sound based but letting the medium describe a structure rather than making it, letting the mind do the three-dimensional work.

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## Visual Appendix

**Figure 1:** Linn Björklund, *Nesting*, digital print, Listaháskóli Íslands, 2010.

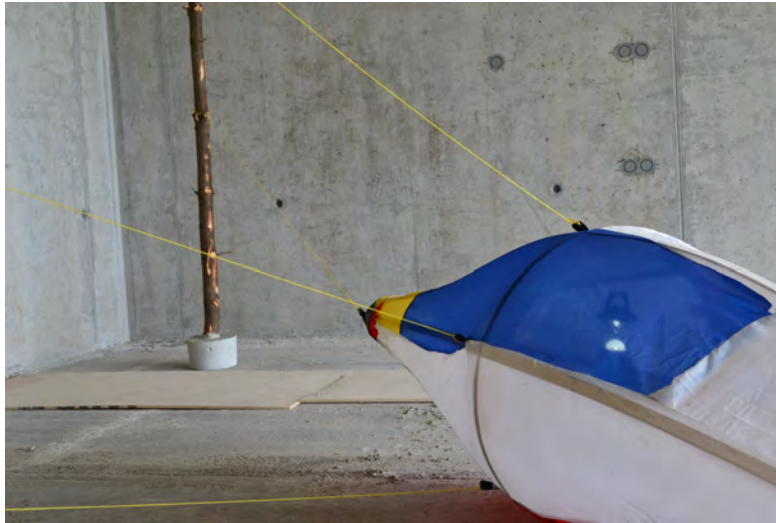


**Figure 2:** Andrea Zittel, *A-Z Living Unit*, 1994.





**Figure 3:** Linn Björklund, *Campus Radix*, Fjarvera nærveru/Absence of presence, 03.05-11.05, 2014.



**Figure 4:** Ana Rewakowicz, *Sleeping bag Dress* prototype 1-2, 2013.

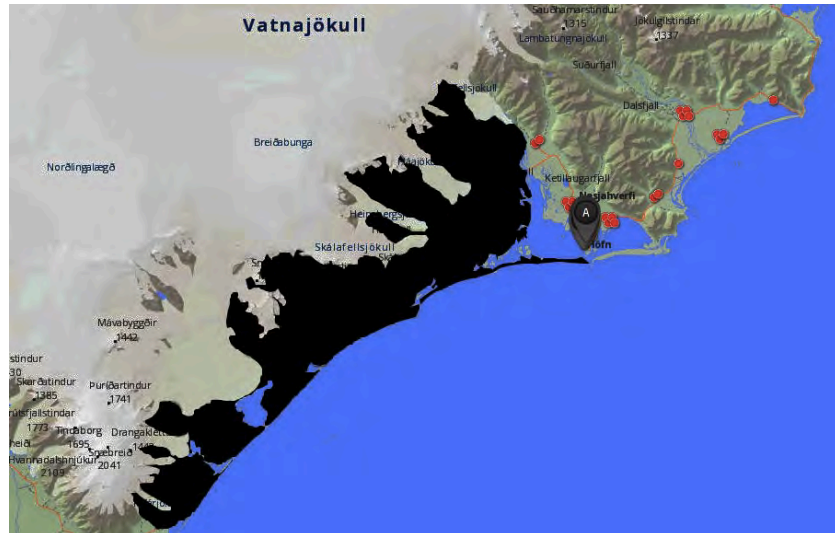


**Figure 5:** Antonia Dewhurst, *Ty Unnos build*, Newtown, Wales, 2012





**Figure 6:** Mapping of the walk a woman might have made in the year 950.



**Figure 7.** Richard Long, *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967.



**Figure 8:** Linn Björklund, *Sketches for Habitat 1*, Sculpture and video installation, Spark plugs/Kveikjuþræðir, 14.03-18.03, 2014.





**Figure 9:** Hubert Duprat, *Trichopterae*, 1980 – 1996.



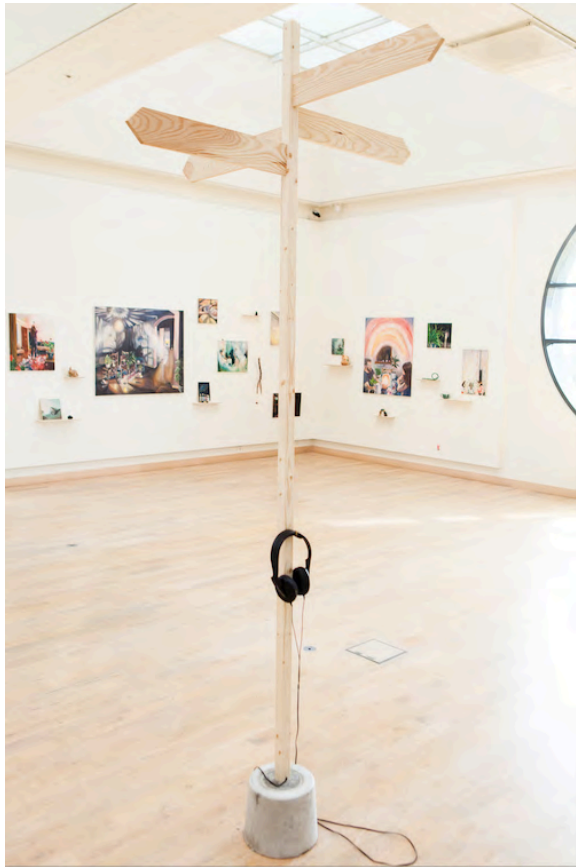
**Figure 10:** Linn Björklund, *Koja*, work in progress, 2015.



**Figure 11:** Linn Björklund. *Welcome here*, Sound, photographs, book. Gerðarsafn. 19.04-10.05.2015

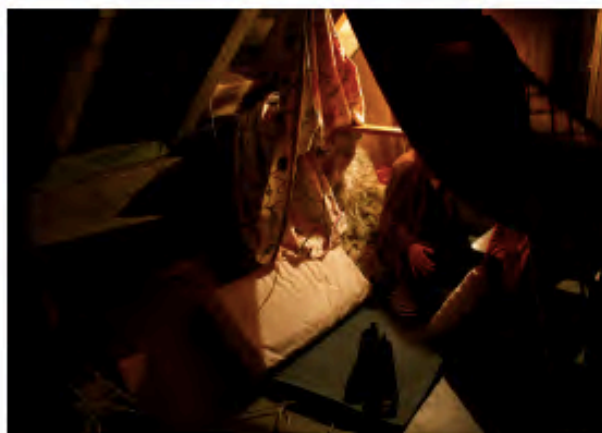


**Figure 12:** Linn Björklund. *Welcome here/27 km*, sound/sculpture. Gerðarsafn. 19.04-10.05.2015





**Figure 13:** Linn Björklund. *Welcome here*, photographs. Gerðarsafn. 19.04-10.05.2015





**Figure 14:** Linn Björklund. *Welcome here*, book. Gerðarsafn. 19.04-10.05.2015



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Figure 3: Linn Björklund, *Campus Radix*, Sculpture, 2014.

Figure 4: Ana Rewakowicz, *Sleeping bag Dress prototype 1-2*, 2013, Sculpture. From: Ana Rewakowicz webpage, <http://rewana.com/prototypes-sleeping-dress.html> (accessed: March 15, 2015)

Figure 5: Antonia Dewhurst, *Ty Unnos build*, Performance, 2012. From: Culturehall, <http://culturehall.com/artwork.html?page=22713> (accessed: February 13, 2015)

Figure 6: Linn Björklund, *Mapping of the walk a woman might have made in the year 950*, Work in progress.

Figure 7: Richard Long, *A Line Made by Walking*, Sculpture, 1967. From: Tate Museum of Modern Art, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/long-a-line-made-by-walking-p07149> (accessed: February 28, 2015)

Figure 8: Linn Björklund, *Sketches for Habitat 1*, Sculpture and video installation, 2014.

Figure 9: Hubert Duprat, *Trichopterae*, Living sculpture, 1980 – 1996. From: Cabinet Magazine, <http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/25/duprat.php> (accessed: April 14, 2015)

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Figure 14: Linn Björklund. *Welcome here*, book, 6x120x60 cm, 2015