

Agave Growing Through the Roof

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Summary

During spring term 2021 I had two exhibitions in Helsinki, Finland, that were part of my practical MFA thesis work and were held in spaces run by the University of the Arts Helsinki: Exhibition Laboratory on Pursimiehenkatu, and Project Room on Lönnrotinkatu.

The first exhibition was part of the annual Academy of Arts event 'Kuvan Kevät' where participating students exhibit their final thesis work. Second part of my thesis was titled 'Excavations' and it was the first exhibition to be held at Project Room the following week after the closing of 'Kuvan Kevät 2021'.

The exhibitions followed a relatively similar path during the process of making the works. I considered them as part of a narrative, as they were materially and conceptually linked. All of the works exhibited were produced for these exhibitions.

At the core of these exhibitions was my interest in working with recycled wine bottle stoppers and textiles. Using these as the main materials, I produced a series of sculptures and textile works with the latter having the potential of functioning both as a wall hanging and a wearable item.

Inspiration for using these materials stemmed from an autobiographical narrative, which also functioned as an inspiration for the work in general. My interest working with cork stoppers initially began around the time of my BA studies. I found the material intriguing, as it is relatively unseen in the context of contemporary art. Working with cork introduced me to a new type of approach in making art that I had not experienced before. Inspired by my travels and living outside of my native Finland over the span of two decades, I wanted to create work and solve issues related to nomadic concepts. Working with cork and textiles catered for this, as the actual working processes required very few other materials and tools, such as glue or a sewing machine.

Exhibitions

Kuvan Kevät 2021 – MFA Thesis Exhibition

Exhibition Laboratory

12 May – 6 June 2021

Excavations

Project Room

18 June – 4 July 2021

Supervisor

Matthew Cowan

Examiners

Sanna Lehtinen

Juha-Heikki Tihinen

Works Exhibited

Kuvan Kevät 2021

Sentinel

Recycled cork bottle stoppers,
oil colour, PVA glue, chalk
powder
195/38/26cm
2021

Gator

Recycled cork bottle stoppers,
oil colour, PVA glue, chalk
powder
106/52/33cm
2021

Amphora

Recycled cork bottle stoppers,
oil colour, PVA glue, chalk
powder
157/20/25cm
2021

Leaning Torso

Recycled cork bottle stoppers,
oil colour, PVA glue, chalk
powder
152/35/17
2021

Andalusian

Recycled cork bottle stoppers,
oil colour, PVA glue
163/34/28
2021

Utility Blanket (olive)

Recycled aluminium and
cotton, polyester
135/82cm
2020

Utility Blanket (white)

Recycled aluminium and
cotton, polyester
152/93cm
2021

Utility Blanket (black/navy)

Recycled aluminium, wool,
viscose, cotton, polyester
157/90cm
2021

Utility Blanket (khaki)

Recycled aluminium and linen,
cotton, polyester
149/85cm
2021

Utility Blanket (black/red)

Recycled aluminium, cotton
and polyester
170/80cm
2020

Utility Blanket (peacock/rose)

Recycled aluminium, cotton,
polyester
175/84cm
2021

Excavations

Hoe

Recycled cork bottle stoppers,
oil colour, PVA glue
53/21cm
2021

Satellite

Recycled cork bottle stoppers,
oil colour, PVA glue, spray
paint
59/14cm
2021

Sticklick

Recycled cork bottle stoppers,
oil colour, PVA glue, spray
paint
59/17cm
2021

Monolith

Recycled cork bottle stoppers,
oil colour, PVA glue
193/27/29cm
2021

Acid Poncho (yellow)

Cotton, polyester, fabric colour,
cork dust, PVA glue, oil colour
153/88cm
2021

Acid Poncho (khaki)

Cotton, polyester, fabric colour,
cork dust, PVA glue, oil colour
155/89cm
2021

Acid Poncho (black)

Cotton, polyester, fabric colour,
cork dust, PVA glue, oil colour
155/89cm
2021

Acid Poncho (green)

Cotton, polyester, fabric colour,
cork dust, PVA glue, oil colour
155/91cm
2021

Scaffolding 1

Recycled cardboard tubes,
recycled cork bottle stoppers,
PVA glue, oil colour
Various dimensions
2021

Scaffolding 2

Recycled cardboard tubes,
recycled cork bottle stoppers,
PVA glue, oil colour
Various dimensions
2021

Scaffolding 3

Recycled cardboard tubes,
recycled cork bottle stoppers,
PVA glue, oil colour
Various dimensions
2021

Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 7
Building Foundation	Page 13
Sourcing Material: Interdisciplinary Matter	Page 19
Nomadic Studio	Page 23
Inspiration & Relation: Excavating Techniques From an Autobiographical Narrative	Page 30
Blankets and Ponchos: Stitching Memories	Page 36
Documentation of Works	Page 41
List of Illustrations	Page 60
Bibliography	Page 62

Introduction

It is instinctive for me to allow the process of making art to be equally important as the final outcome, or possibly even more so. I aim to have a practice where the materials I use, the processes I create, and the motivation and inspirations I have blend together with my everyday life. The various aspects might not always translate as such, nor do they have to, but mostly the concepts that I'm interested in derive from an autobiographical narrative.

I enjoy working on several projects simultaneously. This gives me sense of fluidity and space to explore as the works I make feed off each other. The approach is tied together with my interest in collecting things, accumulating information from various sources, and making connections with them. Whether I'm researching the history of art, listening to techno from the 1990s, or watching a 1980s sci-fi movie, I nigh always have a need to learn more about the subject, e.g. in what geographical location something happened in, which often leads to a new discovery.

I think fundamentally I wish to make work that exists on several levels and overlaps concepts. Whether I work with sculpture, textiles or installation, is not necessarily important. It is more about the overall vision I have and how to solve issues related to construction by utilizing the tools and knowledge I have acquired, and make the materials and concepts co-exist.

During my years of living in London, I would religiously see museums and exhibitions. I'd often visit TATE Modern to see works by modernist artists such as Cy Twombly, Mark Rothko, or Constantin Brâncuși. My visits undoubtedly influenced me, but they weren't meant as a study trip. I'd often go to these places to hang out and absorb what it was the art handed out on that particular day. Whether I was measuring a sculpture by Donald Judd. Admiring the simplicity of Lucio Fontana's 'Spatial Concept'. Or counting the threads on a piece by Louise Bourgeois, was not necessarily important. Art and creativity is a daily phenomenon for me. It meant that I was not only interested in the art, but also in what conditions they were made and seen in. Being interested in art history as a contemporary artist, meant that I was also referring to the sociological aspects of the time, and making comparisons to it today. At times on a less busy day, the Rothko room at TATE Modern would provide solitude and quiet in a metropolitan city, something I regard as highly valuable in today's world.

Some of these artists' works seemed so care free when examined from an aesthetic point, which I found myself drawn to. As if it somehow liberated me. The reason why I believe I read the works this way was because the artists' had honed their skills to a level that imaginatively made the actual process of making the works appear easy. The elegance of Brancuși's sculptures, large squares by Rothko, or Twombly's messiness – whether it was in painting, sculpture, or even photography – all felt very approachable and simple, which obviously they're not. Doing further reading on the artists' also made me realise their devotion for their practice. An unflinching determination in finding their own path was very apparent and inspiring to me.

I would often find myself marvelling at pictures taken in the artists' studios, and was impressed with the self-portraits Brâncusi took of himself in the studio whilst surrounded by his sculptures. These images filled me with imagination and a desire to work in a similar manner. I became fascinated how an artists' inspiration can reflect from one sculpture to another as they are spread around the studio and seemingly having a dialogue.

And though I tried to avoid a clear formalist aesthetic in my work for Kuvan Kevät, I ended up making *Andalusian*, an unintended homage to the artist, which I humorously called 'Brancusi's Horse'.



Andalusian 2021

Cy Twombly's poetic ease of using materials and referring to subjects from Ancient Greece to the present inspired me greatly. It is like reading an endless treasure map. Twombly's fascination with the Mediterranean also resonated with me, and I could really feel this in the artist's sculptures. By setting on a similar path in life, I've found myself being inspired by numerous subjects over the years that influence my art. The study of architecture and specifically the vernacular architecture in Ibiza, Spain, have made a notable impact on me. The minimal simplicity of the buildings and how daily life was connected to them made sense to me ever since I became conscious of their aesthetic. It was romantic, functional, care free, easy to maintain, from the earth – almost literally, and humane. Like an object that

functions on rationality. The feeling of being inside one stayed with me and has become my mental space for calm and inspiration.

During my studies at The University of the Arts London, Wimbledon, my then tutor and artist Jennet Thomas held a lecture on Mike Kelley.

Although I was aware of Kelley's work prior to my studies, it was not until Thomas showed a clip from Kelley's full-length movie 'Day is Done' (2006)¹, and I became fascinated with the artist's work. The clip only lasted for few minutes, but it made an immediate impact on me. Kelley's work touched me on so many levels visually, theoretically and emotionally. The use of pop culture icons, such as vampires, or gothic and punk references resonated with me, as they were subjects I could relate to from my youth. The first *Utility Blanket* I finished I also nicknamed as (Sir) Christopher Lee due to the actor's long history of portraying Count Dracula, and the distinctive black and red cape worn by the character.



Utility Blanket, 2020



Christopher Lee as Count Dracula

¹ karton00000, "Mike Kelley - Party Train," YouTube (YouTube, February 25, 2015), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Py73uQ6jMjc>.

Mike Kelley, who had been labelled as a blue-collar artists for using lesser, or dirty materials², held similar ideals to what I was interested in and related to in the context of identity and craft. Through Kelley I began to understand an autobiographical approach to making art, though Kelley stated that initially his work was misunderstood, but because the crowd thought that the work was autobiographical he decided to continue with the theme³. Later in his career Kelley also explored memory in the context of architecture in 'Educational Complex', which moved me due to the feelings we might attach to our spatial experiences.

Eventually I became more fascinated with crafts, and observing life through them by 'being crafty' with materials in general. Always seeking for a way to improve on things, regardless of resources. I found inventiveness in this type of approach as it gave me an opportunity to create something of my own by using the various skills I had learned over the years.

Eventually working as a pattern-cutter for fashion or making costumes for theatre. Producing visual displays and decorations for high-street shops and fashion shows in London. Or taking part in the production of clothing or costumes for famous designers and performing artists', have all influenced me immensely.

² art21. "Mike Kelley: Bad Boy | art21 'Extended Play.'" YouTube. YouTube, August 6, 2010. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3E0_C-y9ng.

³ SCI-Arc Media Archive. "Mike Kelley (December 6, 1995)." YouTube. YouTube, February 20, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFFaY7kuOF8>.



Building Foundation

From the beginning of my studies I knew I wanted to work with cork. Or more accurately described; used wine bottle stoppers that are ground to a coarse pulp. I discovered cork in the context of sculpture prior to my BA studies. The material resonated with me and I had a strong feeling that there was something to be drawn from it. Initially it's spongy texture, earthy colour, and how it is harvested felt approachable, romantic and primordial. I felt that through cork I was able to connect with something that was ancient and agricultural. My feelings for culture and history around the Mediterranean were captured in this material and simultaneously able to be explored in a contemporary context. Due to the simple act of cork being used as stoppers for wine bottles or as buoys, gave me a feeling of the materials unrecognised significance over centuries. The modesty and irrelevance of cork made me want to push it further.



Studio at Elimäenkatu March 2021

“Cork is a natural product obtained from the outer bark of an oak species, the cork oak. It is a Mediterranean-born species with natural distribution that has been restricted to the western part of the Mediterranean basin and the adjoining Atlantic coasts. Some of the cork oak’s distinct properties have been known to man since antiquity.”⁴

Today cork is used for various industrially produced products such as insulation, soles for shoes, and various designed objects. Initially this felt like a dilemma, but thinking about it further, I almost see it as a metaphor for my art. In a way I mimic the process of harvesting cork, but in reverse. The sculptures I made for Kuvan Kevät 2021 have no support structure to rely on, such as a wooden frame that would prevent it from collapsing, but are solely about the materials used. Thus recreating a *bark* that supports itself – much like the bark that is carved out from a cork tree during harvest. In an indirect similarity the bark that is extracted from a cork tree require a notable time to grow until ready for harvest. It did not take several years for me to make the sculptures at Kuvan Kevät 2021. But the way the sculptures were made was by adding layers of material at certain intervals, which was a time consuming process. When cut open one can see the cross-section of the material and observe the layers through the various colours that have been tried during the process of making the sculpture – much like the layers in a cork bark.

Cork is not a new material, but it is relatively unseen in the context of art history. Pakistani born, now New York based artist Huma Bhabha is possibly one of the most well known contemporary artist using cork.

⁴ Helena Pereira, *Cork Biology, Production and Uses* (Burlington: Elsevier, 2007), Page 1.

Bhabha's processes include stacking and then carving large compressed blocks of cork and applying colour on the surface after. Resulting in a traditional way of making sculpture, similar to carving stone or wood.⁵ For an artist to achieve creating works in this scale, they need to have a notable amount of space and resources to work with, which eventually results in questioning economic and spatial solutions. Similar concerns can be directed at most materials related to sculpture. Whether it is wood, metal or stone, all require a notable amount of resources to be worked with. These approaches can be challenging, as their weight is not only physical. Juxtaposing with economic concerns, whether they are personal, global, or industrial, can also be a mental burden. The first objects I made with cork were very humble and small, such as bowls similar to ceramic ones. When making these I tested material compositions that could be used for binding the ground cork, but in the end would not overshadow its texture. The objective being to have the texture of the ground cork notable and the colour embedded so that it would appear to be part of the material. Thus hoping to make the audience consider what the material and process might be. If I had painted



Bowl, 2015

⁵ Museum, Hirshhorn. "On Art and the Alien: Artist Talk with Huma Bhabha." YouTube. YouTube, September 23, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptwyL5bJpMg>.

the surfaces of the sculptures after making the form first, then the end result would have become very different. As the paint would have not been absorbed by the cork but remained on the surface of it and thus leaving the brushstrokes visible and obvious that the sculpture was painted at a later stage. It could have been a conscious decision to paint the surfaces of the sculptures after, but for Kuvan Kevät it felt conceptually more accurate and in line with my theory to continue with the former and focus on the process and the potential of the material. As my desire was for all of the materials together as a whole (cork + PVA + colour = X) to be seen as something new, instead of showing their pre-supposed qualities that could easily be deconstructed to their basic form.

As I was grinding the wine bottle stoppers, I could not feel as if I was preparing dough to bake bread, or other domestic task. The process of producing the ground cork became an instinctive act. Something that initially felt relatively laborious suddenly turned easy, as I had become familiar with the technique and patience it requires to achieve a certain amount of material to work with, without necessarily realising it. The scent that was released from a cork whilst ground, whether it was from red wine or a champagne bottle, was also notable. It brought a whole new dimension to my working, as it unlocked and expanded my imagination and brought me closer to a process that felt agricultural.

As the process evolved I began to realise further possibilities that entailed me to consider issues related to construction and gravity and the ratio of materials used. This became near obsessive, as I would set a rule for myself not to use any material on a finished work other than cork, PVA glue, oil colour, and at times chalk powder. I wanted to push the materials to their limit, and see how far I was able to take them in a relatively short period of

time that I had left before the opening of Kuvan Kevät 2021. As I battled various issues along the way, such as the sculptures eventually not having any support structure to rely on and as a result potentially topple over, I still wanted to continue and not give up on my vision due to my ideology of making sculptures with as few materials as possible. I found this extremely interesting and satisfying, as I had discovered a technique that was economically sustainable, clean to work with, and was not reliant of the location it was made in. I saw this approach contemporary in the context of the production having a potential of being nomadic and democratic in relation to economical and ecological concerns. In limiting myself to a set of materials and techniques, I found rapture.



Sourcing material:

Interdisciplinary Matter

“We fail to notice plastic because plastic artefacts are entirely consumed by the present. Whereas wood and stone retain something of their origins in their texture and density, plastic is cut off from its past and absorbed by the present.”⁶

The process of making a sculpture began by having to have wine bottle stoppers to work with – which, in most cases, I would have a previously collected stock of. I would often find myself asking for stoppers from various sources. Most notably private events, restaurants, or people who I had told about my work would donate varying amounts. Though I had already worked with cork for some time, it was not until I started receiving larger quantities of the material that I became more aware of the dialogue I was having with people about my practice.

Describing my work process and theory about economic and spatial issues would often be met with varied understanding, or a contradicting reaction concerning the relevance of the material and process-led work that I do. At times it was challenging to get across that what I seek for in my work is not only a formal or representational gesture by i.e. using cork to cover a form made from wood. But also to have a better understanding of how the process affects me as an individual and as an artist by sourcing and storing the material, creating techniques, problem solving, making conceptual links and thinking about how the process exists in and out of the studio throughout my daily life.

⁶ David Farrier, *Footprints: In Search of Future Fossils* (4th Estate, 2020), page 103.

Having to explain the work in broader terms expanded my awareness of the potential understanding and reaction people might project in relation to contemporary art practices and their origins prior to knowing more about the work. When mentioning cork, I could potentially make an assumption of a literal presupposed and generalised narration of the material, i.e. cork is a cylinder shaped material and therefore is dominated by its shape. Somehow the realisation of the material being cork was capable of triggering confusion and frustration. I read this as a form of refusal for the ideological concept I had previously tried to explain about the process. Most likely the focus of the critique was directed on the crafty-ness of the process, whilst neglecting the history of similar techniques used in contemporary art such as ceramics or paper-mâché.

It is curious how the becoming aware of a material can trigger emotions that make it appear as if it is the material that defines the art. Seeming that if there is a lack of status for the material, then it cannot be worthy. Suggesting a subconscious social validation for materials and techniques that are accepted in the context of sculpture. The material cannot be held responsible, but what is being done with it is the artists' responsibility. The material is not necessarily important either, but how it can be *hidden* is the trick. If a visitor's initial reaction about my work is to object cork, then I feel I have failed. Yes, I use cork, and the material has become important for the qualities it provides. But my objective is to see over this and explore all the various techniques it is capable of being used in, rather than taking it for granted in a repetitive manner.

Themes related to recycling and nature are present due to the material, but it is concerning if a work is read so literally without there actually being clear indication for the subject matter. It is problematic that the climate crisis has become supposedly acknowledged, so much so that everything that has a potential to be related with it is now labelled as such. Yes, the earth is in flames, and these are big issues that we are dealing with during our lifetime. But surely the solutions are not found solely in criticising how things are made and consumed. Over consumption is a problem, but the larger issue lies in how people think and act. We live in an age of existential crisis where avoidance is seen as the solution rather than turning within and observing our thoughts, and figuring out how to better ourselves intellectually rather than physically.

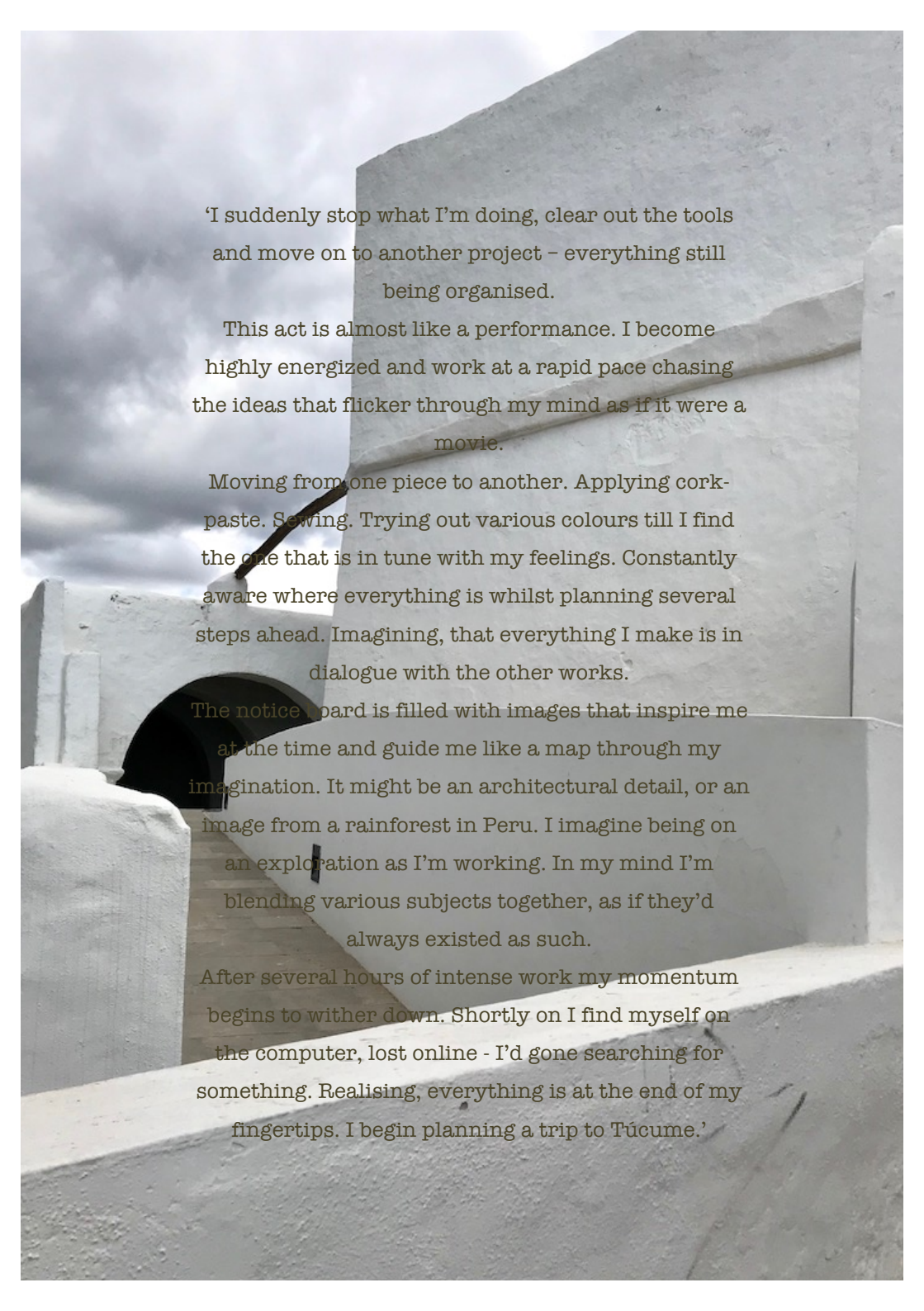


Nomadic studio

Where I make art at a certain time is an important part of my practice. This does not necessarily mean that the space has to be mine, as the materials and techniques I use cater for a nomadic approach. However, the space has to be organised because it functions as a blank canvas for me. I get great pleasure from cleaning and organising my surrounding. It reminds me of a practice where cleaning for several hours is seen as a meditative act. The process is physical, but it also clears the mind and makes me focus on the tasks I have set for myself.

I typically began my daily process by organising the space from what ever was left from the previous and assess what it is that I was working on. Being organised is a tool for me. It keeps me calm and in control, and conscious of the materials, books, and tools I have on hand. I do this for practical reasons, but it also gives me clarity. Wasting time searching for things is a pointless exercise. This is also a good example of my motivation to use as few materials as possible; if there is nothing to look for, it is out of the mind.

Similarly to the materials and processes that are fairly minimal, the space I work in is without unnecessary clutter. Table, chair, noticeboard and a shelf for storage are enough. Rest of the space is for the work. I work on several projects simultaneously and want to be surrounded by them. Moving from one piece to another, eventually seeing them inspire each other, or perhaps become one. The work is the work, but it is also a utilitarian concept, as the process might trigger an idea to work with another material;



'I suddenly stop what I'm doing, clear out the tools and move on to another project - everything still being organised.

This act is almost like a performance. I become highly energized and work at a rapid pace chasing the ideas that flicker through my mind as if it were a movie.

Moving from one piece to another. Applying cork-paste. Sewing. Trying out various colours till I find the one that is in tune with my feelings. Constantly aware where everything is whilst planning several steps ahead. Imagining, that everything I make is in dialogue with the other works.

The notice board is filled with images that inspire me at the time and guide me like a map through my imagination. It might be an architectural detail, or an image from a rainforest in Peru. I imagine being on an exploration as I'm working. In my mind I'm blending various subjects together, as if they'd always existed as such.

After several hours of intense work my momentum begins to wither down. Shortly on I find myself on the computer, lost online - I'd gone searching for something. Realising, everything is at the end of my fingertips. I begin planning a trip to Tucume.'

Working in different surroundings has made me spatially more curious and aware. Having a studio in a run down building prior to my studies, I often found myself analysing how I could make the space more functional and what are the rational choices for organising it. Similar approach was also influential for my exhibition layout at Kuvan Kevät and Project Room. As I was working in my studio at Elimäenkatu, I constantly kept in mind the way I would transport and install the works. I wanted both exhibitions to be solely about the works, i.e. no plinths or other objects that might influence the setting. As if the works were brought there, and then suddenly they were gone. Feel of lightness and clarity as one moves through the space, and a feeling that the work is about focusing on the pieces as a whole, but also as individual ones.

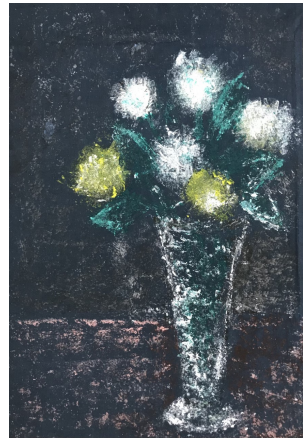


Studio Elimäenkatu April 2021

Excavations at Project Room had a similar setting to Kuvan Kevät. Though it appeared more as an installation, the structures were designed and built in the studio keeping in mind that there would be a good flow through the exhibition space. The built structures were sculptures, but functioned also as plinths for other sculptures and archived leftover materials that were used in the exhibition, aiming to show the recycling of these particular materials and thus creating a material feedback.

This feedback was present in everything that was exhibited in *Excavations*. The surfaces, or *peaks* of the surface on some of the objects were highlighted in a contrasting colour by rolling paint over them with an ink-roller. The same approach was applied on *Acid Ponchos* by placing cotton between a large sheet of cork and an ink-roller. Thus the peaks of the cork sheet were transferred on to the fabric and creating a type of aesthetic that reminded me of impressionism and abstract expressionist paintings, such as Claude Monet's poppy fields.

My initial motivation was to expand on this idea and create paintings onto the ponchos with this technique. Some inspired versions were exhibited, but the ideas were not fully realised due to the limited amount of time I had to produce *Excavations* simultaneously with Kuvan Kevät. As a result I toyed with the idea and created abstract paintings, or prints, on to the ponchos that reminded me of a landscape or plants, but also had a feeling of it being treated with acid, or other corrosive substance.



Print made using cork, 2021

Acid was also a reference to Acid House, a subculture of electronic music. Raves held in disused warehouses in England during the late 80s. Relics of the Industrial Revolution, the spaces would often be fitted with varying structures made with scaffolding to support the messengers of a new culture. By using cardboard tubes as scaffold, I mimicked the aesthetic of an industrial environment in a prop-like manner and domestic scale.



Studio at Elimäenkatu June 2021

Similar to scaffolding on a construction site, or traditional wood joinery used in vernacular architecture influenced the use of cardboard tubes for the structures also. I sought for pragmatic solutions to how everything was made – much like in the architecture referred. The cardboard tubes were cut to desired lengths and then identical slots were cut at the needed locations of the tubes so that when placed against each other the tubes would slot and hold themselves together without the need for any other attachment. Aesthetically I could have used e.g. twine to highlight the connections. But similarly to my theory about making sculptures with few materials, I wanted there to be a conceptual lightness and sensitivity and avoid any unnecessary solutions. As a result, the structures became solid and were held together by basic physics.



Inspiration & Relation:

Excavating Techniques From an Autobiographical Narrative

“Thanks to the great anonymous builders of the Mediterranean, who made it easy to photograph, so reasonable to believe, yet so mystical to interpret.”⁷

I began the process of making sculptures by toying with forms and colours that had their inspiration from various sources such as abstract expressionist paintings, sculpture, architecture, cinema and nature. These mock-up sculptures were mainly made using found cardboard and other softer materials I could easily get hold of. Some of the found cardboard, such as a box designed to contain a rolled kebab, already had a shape I found appealing and would be left as such. There was a sense of approval that the dimensions felt correct as they had been designed for a purpose and thus giving an anthropological sense in the context of contemporary living. The requirement for the materials used was that they needed to be relatively light and malleable. This would allow me to cut and reshape them easily if needed and also to be pulled out from the sculptures after the applied cork mixture had settled.

Initially I was steering towards making formalist sculpture with some resemblance to modernism. Though I simultaneously tried to avoid this relatively obvious aesthetic, I believe that the actual removal from it did not happen until the final layers of material used were applied and the sculptures got their finished texture, colour, and exposed hollow interior which divert

⁷ Myron Goldfinger, *Villages in the Sun: Mediterranean Community Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), page 7.

the thought away of it being either cast or made with a support structure. In the end I examined shapes that for me exist in a gray area between formalist sculpture and abstract painting.

As I was making forms that suggested abstract or anthropomorphic qualities, I also wanted to continue working with basic block shapes that guided me in scale and provided comparison for the other forms. The shapes functioned as building blocks for the sculptures and were done in relation to my interest in architecture and archaeology studies. I was inspired by images found in old architecture books, photographs from my travels, and other found imagery. These architectural concepts were also highly influenced by my own experience of the Mediterranean island of Ibiza, and having an interest in the old ways of living that the natives had. The history of vernacular architecture was a constant source of inspiration, and in Ibiza it is the result shaped by its settlers and invaders over centuries. Throughout history being over shadowed by Mallorca, Ibiza has maintained its idiosyncrasy, including its indigenous language Ibizenco. It is believed that an Ibizencan finca, or a casa payesa, a farmhouse, originated from times when the island was colonised by the Phoenicians. The influence left on the island is most notably seen in the architecture, but it can also be found today in the local pottery. The modular minimal constructions were typically built on a field or a hill, and within a notable distance from neighbouring fincas. The main hall, porxo, where dining and daily tasks would occur was seen as the heart of the house. From here the kitchen and other rooms would be built as extensions and eventually the number of rooms would be increased out from necessity and according to the number of inhabitants. The main entrance being also the largest opening into the house would provide most

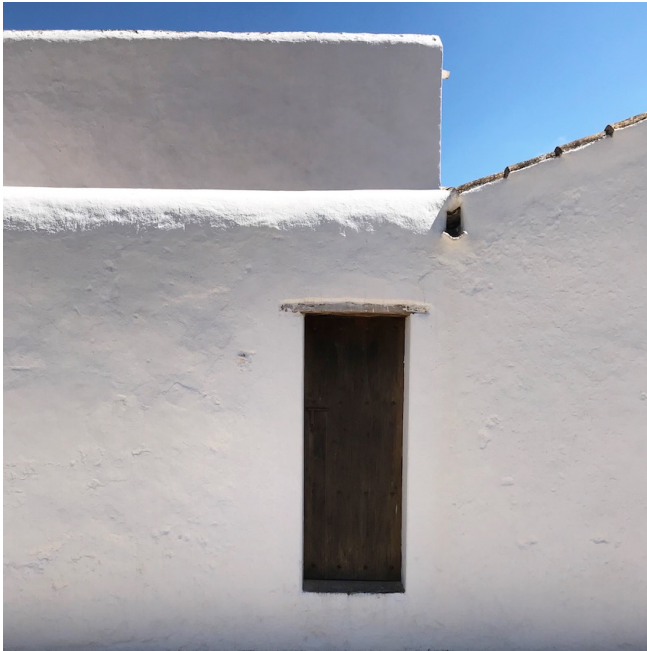
of the daylight coming in. Typically facing south and often sheltered by a small roofed terrace looking on to a field or a garden. The windows are very small and mainly built for the purpose of ventilation, as thick white walls keep the house temperature cool from the sun that is burning the life out everything outside it.⁸

Fincas are often riddled with various solutions for living. Architectural idiosyncrasies are as notable outside as they are inside, and no finca is the same as another. A bench could be build as if it was extruding from the wall, or a series of narrow steps would lead to a small inset where an antique wash basin carved from stone is placed. Rooms on varying levels, due to the level of the ground the finca was built on. With the inside practically being the same as the outside, your transition to the space is almost seamless, other than the intense brightness of the sun being cut as you step inside and blinding you for a split second, until you are able to adjust your vision back to normal in the dim indoors.

The simplicity of craft is visible as one is in contact with a finca, and its idiosyncrasies are what make it so fascinating as their raw functionality makes one act rather than the house act for the inhabitant. The angularity and quirks of the houses reminded me of the sculptures by Rachel Whiteread, as the buildings are typically painted white inside as well as outside and could imaginatively be turned inside out at any given moment. Surfacing the thought of a negative space similar to Rachel Whiteread's 'Ghost' (1990), 'House' (1993), or 'Untitled (Upstairs)' (2001).

⁸ Administrador, "The Ibizan Finca. A Guide to the Traditional Home of Ibiza," Kelosa, August 21, 2020, <https://www.kelosa.com/blog/en/architecture/the-ibiza-finca-a-guide-to-ibizas-traditional-rural-home/>.

Built using materials found locally, such as marine plants, wood, earth and stones, a finca would never meet the requirements of today's architectural expectations. Working on my sculptures I felt kinship with the builders of these houses. By using a reduced amount of materials made me feel as if I was creating sculptures that are in dialogue with a finca - and whilst doing this, I'd be wearing a *Utility Blanket* or an *Acid Poncho* as work wear. I feel that from the sculptures I made, the most direct reference associated with a finca can be seen in *Gator*. By placing *Gator* and *Sentinel* next to each other at Kuvan Kevät, I imagined as if I was exposing a ruin. *Gator* being an abstract construction of a ruin whilst *Sentinel* guarding it in a posture similar to an Ancient Greek Kouros statue.



An entrance to a finca, Ibiza, Spain, 2019

Known around the world as a party island since the 1960's, Ibiza has survived over centuries with it's own resources, such as harvesting sea salt – which influenced *Amphora* for the varying turquoise and rose colours occurring at the salt flats of Las Salinas. Before the 1960s the island was regarded as a haven for those who knew of it's existence, and even as far back as 1930s numerous artists' and thinkers, including Raoul Hausmann and Walter Benjamin, lived on the island for periods of time and documented it's culture and the lives of the natives. The beauty of the indigenous architecture often highly praised.

The fincas shine on the hills of Ibiza as if an alien spaceship had just landed on a dense pine forest. Appearing misplaced at first, but on a closer inspection the building radiates calmness and it's positioning could not be more accurate – after all, it might have been standing there for hundreds of years.



Finca in Santa Agnés de Corona, Ibiza, Spain



Blankets and Ponchos:

Stitching Memories

My background as a maker of garments for fashion and theatre has given me a solid foundation seeing the potential in materials from a technical perspective. The architectural approach to drafting patterns, cutting and stitching material into a desired form is essentially a relatively simple creative act, but also very precise and educational. Whatever material one chooses to work with, they need to understand its characteristics and how it might co-operate with other materials.

I find that textiles have an inherent possibility to support and bear physical and psychological burden by giving comfort and shelter, or function as storage or as a form of architecture. As I began sewing *Utility Blankets*, I was not entirely sure which direction I was steering toward. I did however have a strong feeling of trying to embed various subjects that influence me and capture these in a rectangular painting-like form, as if mimicking minimalism with textiles.

It was obvious that due to working with textiles before, I wanted the works to have a double meaning via the possibility of being worn. I began harking back to my past and remembering how various fashions, styles, and pop cultural references have influenced me over the years. The initial inspiration for *Utility Blankets* and *Acid Ponchos* stemmed from my experience with aesthetics in rave culture, and how certain styles serve their part, especially when examined through a lens for subcultures. Depending on the type of electronic music or the scene it exists in would influence the material,

colour, cut, and details of the outfit; straps, pockets, rivets, buckles, and so on.

Clearer references were also present, such as apparel for hiking or camping, and my experience of often being in the presence of horses. The concept of utilitarian wear for an animal interested me due to their almost made up need that feels somehow abstract. This abstraction influenced me to sew details that felt as if they would be used for something, but it was also vague what it could be for. However my objective was not to represent these aesthetics directly but to give clues and intellectual currency to steer at a direction the viewer felt was represented. Similarly to my sculptures, I don't intend the blankets to be a literal documentation or metaphor for something. I wanted there to be familiarities that the viewer could project through their own experiences. Possibly to consider a context the blankets could be used in. One could imagine going on a voyage of discovery. Pack all the essentials in a blanket and fling it over their shoulders for warmth.

Rave as a subject or inspiration for contemporary art and pop culture has become relatively popular in the past decade. The trend is also visible today in the revival of the 1990s and early 2000s fashion, and in styles that are relatable to e.g. Berlin rave scene. Cargo trousers and tight tops with straps and chains enhancing the outfit are commonly seen together. Most recently on the runway shows of Balenciaga, a Parisian fashion house originally from San Sebastián, Spain.

The style can be linked to Austrian born Helmut Lang, now turned artist, whose early fashion collections had a notable influence on Belgian born Raf Simons in the 1990's. During the earlier years of his career, Simons focused on representing emotions and aesthetics that felt relevant to his life through

performance-like fashion shows.⁹ Often incorporating aesthetics from rave, sportswear, English school uniforms, goth and other subcultures.

Around the same time British artist Mark Leckey made 'Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore' (1999)¹⁰. The movie is a study of subcultures via the use of found footage, some of which existed mainly in Northern England and the English Midlands. The work could also be seen as a semi-autobiographical work fuelled by Leckey's nostalgia for England and subcultures, and depicting how Leckey's own belonging to a subculture, such as The Casuals, influenced his journey *becoming* Hardcore (a type of electronic music and concept with several subgenres).¹¹

'Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore' begins with found footage from a Northern Soul event: possibly one of the first movements to have rave-like appearances before the emergence of techno from Detroit, USA. The events would take place in large dance halls with DJs playing American Soul Music, ironically from Detroit. The way people dressed for a Northern Soul event was an important part of the culture. Extremely wide trousers and voluminous skirts were worn so that the striking dance moves became highlighted through the expansion of the fabric as it flew in the air. Some of the styles seen today are a clear evolution from this.

On a more recent context, Jeremy Shaw's 'Phase Shifting Index' (2020) and Michele Rizzo's 'HIGHER xtn.' (2018), both explore the liberating and cult-like vernacular of rave, and other subcultures, through dance. It appears

⁹ "Raf Simons Autumn/Winter 2001-2002 'Riot! Riot! Riot!'." YouTube. YouTube, April 14, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXsQ4NMQ6B8>.

¹⁰ Leckey, Mark. "Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore." YouTube. YouTube, June 3, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dS2McPYzEE>.

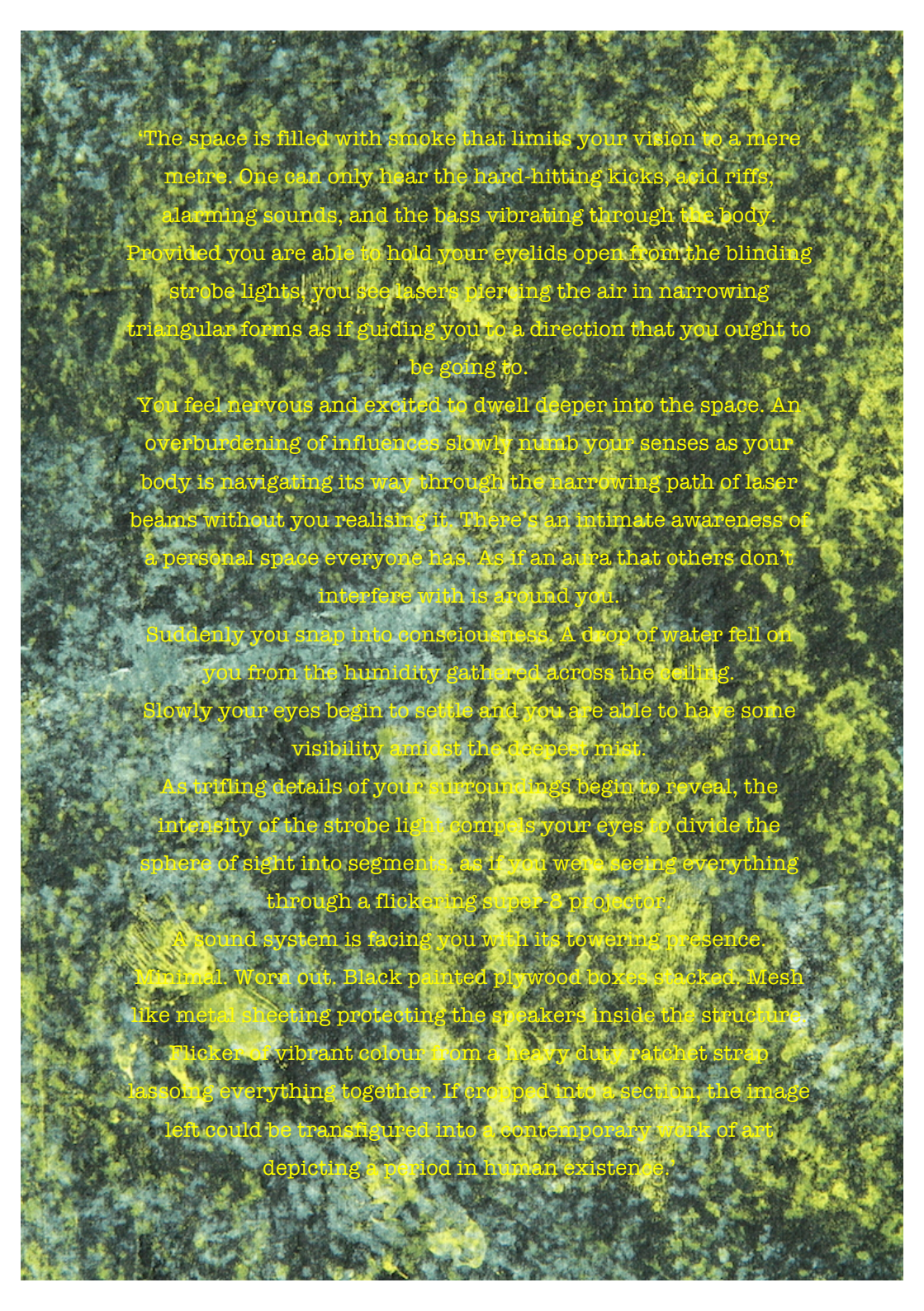
¹¹ SHOWstudio, "Mark Leckey / Jason Evans / Lou Stoppard in Conversation: Mad about the Boy," YouTube (YouTube, May 11, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFJ3D00YCbE>.

that rave has reached an age that it has the capability of being examined as a notable historical event since its birth, and is now seen as a topic of sociological importance in contemporary history. After all, it is relatively amazing that e.g. a Roland TB-303 or TR-909¹², machines that make rigid sounds, are capable of producing such things in ones mind that they make you move and feel almost spiritual.

Nostalgia was certainly present as I was making *Utility Blankets* and *Acid Ponchos*. During the working process I would listen to rave, acid, and hard trance from the 1990's and 2000's. Songs such as 'The First Rebirth' by Jones & Stephenson, 'Acid In Paradise' by Nostrum, and 'The Having It Large EP!' (Mad Gay Mafia Mix) by Dj Mishka, took my imagination back to the raves and clubs I went to in my late teens.

The sounds are indescribable, but as soon as I hear any, the feeling draws back....

¹² Diagonal, David. "David Diagonal Acid Techno TB303 and TR909." YouTube. YouTube, December 5, 2007. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQnnNRPE54w>.



"The space is filled with smoke that limits your vision to a mere metre. One can only hear the hard-hitting kicks, acid riffs, alarming sounds, and the bass vibrating through the body. Provided you are able to hold your eyelids open from the blinding strobe lights, you see lasers piercing the air in narrowing triangular forms as if guiding you to a direction that you ought to be going to.

You feel nervous and excited to dwell deeper into the space. An overburdening of influences slowly numb your senses as your body is navigating its way through the narrowing path of laser beams without you realising it. There's an intimate awareness of a personal space everyone has. As if an aura that others don't interfere with is around you.

Suddenly you snap into consciousness. A drop of water fell on you from the humidity gathered across the ceiling.

Slowly your eyes begin to settle and you are able to have some visibility amidst the deepest mist.

As trifling details of your surroundings begin to reveal, the intensity of the strobe light compels your eyes to divide the spheres of sight into segments, as if you were seeing everything through a flickering super-8 projector.

A sound system is facing you with its towering presence. Minimal. Worn out. Black painted plywood boxes stacked. Mesh like metal sheeting protecting the speakers inside the structure.

Flicker of vibrant colour from a heavy duty ratchet strap lassoing everything together. If cropped into a section, the image left could be transfigured into a contemporary work of art depicting a period in human existence.







































List of Illustrations

All images by Jere Vainio unless otherwise stated

Page 9. Andalusian, 2021

Page 10. Utility Blanket, 2020

Christopher Lee as Count Dracula.

- Piercy, Waylon. "Transylvania Tuesday: Christopher Lee's Dracula." The Midnight Rant, January 1, 1970.

<http://midnightrant.blogspot.com/2015/10/transylvania-tuesday-christopher-lee.html?m=1>.

Page 12. Gator, 2021. 35mm film documentation.

Page 13. Studio at Elimäenkatu, 2021.

Page 15. Bowl, 2015

Page 18. Sentinel, 2021. 35mm film photography.

Page 22. Andalusian, 2021. 35mm film photography.

Page 24. Santa Eulària des Riu church, Ibiza, Spain, 2019.

Page 25. Studio at Elimäenkatu, April 2021.

Page 26. Print made with cork, 2021

Page 27. Studio at Elimäenkatu, June 2021.

Page 29. Leaning Torso, 2021. 35mm film photography.

Page 33. Santa Agnés de Corona, Ibiza, Spain, 2019

Page 34. Finca in Santa Agnés de Corona, Ibiza, Spain

- "Santa Agnès De Corona, the Village of Contrasts." Ibiza, February 15, 2021.
<https://ibiza.travel/en/2021/02/santa-agnes-de-corona-the-village-of-contrasts/>.

Page 35. Amphora, 2021. 35mm film photography

Page 40. Acid Poncho (detail), 2021

Page 41. Utility Blanket (black/navy), 2021

Page 42. Utility Blanket (khaki), 2021

Page 43. Utility Blanket (white), 2021
Page 44. Utility Blanket (olive), 2020
Page 45. Kuvan Kevät Installation 2021
Page 46. Sentinel, 2021. Gator, 2021. Utility Blanket (white), 2021.
Page 47. Amphora, 2021. Utility Blanket (khaki) 2021.
Page 48. Leaning Torso, 2021
Page 49. Acid Poncho (yellow), 2021
Page 50. Acid Poncho (khaki), 2021
Page 51. Acid Poncho (turquoise), 2021
Page 52. Acid Poncho (black), 2021
Page 53. Monolith, 2021
Page 54. Excavations, Scaffolding 2, 2021
Page 55. Hoe, 2021
Page 56. Satellite, 2021
Page 57. Sticklick, 2021
Page 58. Excavations, Scaffolding 1 & 2, 2021
Page 59. Excavations, Scaffolding 3, 2021

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