

“Waterfalls and steady logs” is a continuation of my investigation of readymade ceramic tiles in combination with sculptural elements in clay.¹ I have explored ceramics that imitate other materials and other materials looking like ceramics, by themselves and in combination with clay. Identity, heritage and the concepts of true and false remain ongoing themes but opposites like tranquillity and power, safety and excitement, chaos and order have also become important key-words. My focus in the project has mostly been on formal matters, which I felt a need to give attention.

Previous works have typically been flat and often wall-pieces. In *“Waterfalls and steady logs”* I aimed to work more three-dimensionally. The main challenge was the gallery itself, which is full of character with its wooden floor, old windows and tiled stoves. I decided from the start to focus on the floor and made the decision that the works should be placed directly on it. This decision forced me to create works that left the walls and were scaled up with more volume. It also turned a problem (the floor's strong character) into potential in an inspiring way. The project raised several basic questions regarding volume, composition and the relationship between an object and a room. How colours and materials correspond with each other was also of importance. Even though these questions are all crucial to visual artistic practice in general I felt a need to give them attention to achieve a new turn in my practice. Previously I focused on conceptual values.

Presenting sculptures directly on a gallery floor is not new to me, or to anyone else. My new experience was to make works with a specific and characteristic room in mind and to make them correspond with it so the floor became part of the work. To achieve this I have used both contrasting and corresponding colors and materials where the limits between wood and ceramics are sometimes blurred or exaggerated.

In recent years the Ceramic Art world has seen an enlarged interest in presentation, where complex supports are often made a part of the artwork. Wooden materials are common and also regularly combined with ceramics in installations and sculptures². Although my installation did not include any supports or constructed surroundings I can easily see the exhibition in the light of this tendency if we consider the floor as a part of the artwork.

Working consciously with the floor as focal point challenged my old working methods and techniques because it required larger volumes, steady constructions and structured plans for how the pieces should be presented. Even though every single piece bears its own story, each has a conscious relation to the floor (and in most cases to each other) in terms of color, shape, installation and expression. Hence the working-process has been focused on what would work in the end. Even if it contained experimental phases it demanded a constant return to the aim of working with the room and the floor as a counterpart.

The site specific approach raises questions on how the works can function in other environments. What would happen to them in another room and why would that be interesting to research? One possible question to investigate is how the pieces themselves can carry a feeling of the room they originally were made for if they are placed in another context. Since many of them play with the looks of wood there might be a potential for this to shine stronger when not competing with the real thing. There are also other material imitations and qualities that probably would fetch different stories if they were presented in a more neutral room or in an industrial environment. I am doubtful about the meaning in transferring the exhibition into another setting, however I often re-use and re-work older works into new ones. The physical construction of the works also makes them rather easy to de-construct and use in multiple ways. A new room might require a rethinking of the works and this is something with lots of possibilities and interesting angles to investigate.

In addition to the exhibition space, architecture is another inspiration. I have been thinking of how surfaces combine, how materials and styles meet and how this becomes a tale about time and value in the urban landscape. Especially Postmodern and eclectic architecture relates to my interest in truth and fiction. The combination of materials and references can be rather wild and it is this lack of respect I appreciate in those styles. Interest in materials that are true or false, authentic and inauthentic is wide spread. Artists like Hanne Mago Wiklund³ and David Bielander⁴ are examples from the crafts world. In their work the imitation raises questions about value and perception. To me a failed imitation is of as much interest where it holds the story of being several things at the same time. Furthermore, non-planned groupings of buildings and materials is another source of inspiration. For “Waterfalls and Steady Logs” I tried to capture this with surprising combinations and illogical compositions.

Earlier projects and exhibitions like “A more beautiful truth” (Jan.2017) and “Som blågrå dyning” (March 2016) considered how concepts can linger and be present in metaphoric, more or less obvious, ways. With “Waterfalls and steady logs” I restricted myself to focus more on formal problems. I think both these ways of working are based on an interest in equivocal and multi-layered expressions in ceramics which at the same time holds strong storytelling qualities. To “shape up the formals” helped me look at my work from another view. It was not always an exciting experience but in many ways rewarding, even if I am unsure of how this focus shows in the final result.

Visitors commented on the show that it was tied together as a whole and that there was a pleasant feeling entering the room. There were also some associations to city-landscapes. During an artist talk in the exhibition several questions and comments from the audience focused on the odder or more irrational pieces and we discussed their importance. Even though I strived for consequence and consciousness in most of the works I too appreciate pieces that do not really live up to those requirements, and their ambiguity adds the blur I often talk about as something positive in my own and others art. Maybe it is complexity or a combination between the outspoken and unspoken I mean when I talk about blur. It also regards my need for double-ended natures, with clear meanings and openings to the multilayered at the same time, which I also tried to capture in the title of the show

Exhibition text at Nääs Konsthantverk Gallery

Waterfalls and steady logs

I build steady and safe. Constructing a safe ground and take it from there, further. I raze and destroy, turn down. To come forth. Free from the old.

To rest in what there is or to break free. The will to be alike but fail, but be happy with what came instead. There is place for something more in the gap between aim and result. There is a power in the will to go elsewhere and a strength to rest and be safe in the prevalent.

Notes

1: See earlier posts on <https://gupea.ub.gu.se/browse?type=author&value=Carlsson%2C+David>

2: A few examples of this can be seen here:

http://www.saramoller.com/?page_id=5271

<http://www.naomatsunaga.com/#/new-page/>

<http://nicolecherubini.com/work/138>

3: <http://hannemagowiklund.com/works.html>

4: <http://www.ornamentumgallery.com/exhibitions/david-bielander2/selected-works?view=thumbnails>

Jag har tänkt en del på arkitektur, på byggnader och hur stadsladskapet flätas samman. Ytor som står mot varandra, material och stilar som möts och blir berättelser om tid, värde och värderingar. På sista tiden har jag sneglat mot postmodernistiska hus, blivit visuellt inspirerad och även anat en koppling till mitt gamla tema om äkta och falskt. Hos postmodernismen är stil- och materialkombinationerna ibland hejdlösa, precis som i alla ny och blandstilar genom historien men kanske mer respektlösa. Det är intressant att lära sig mer om men jag har ingen ambition att förhålla mig vetenskapligt till denna stil, det är först och främst en konstnärlig, visuell inspiration och samtalspartner.

Arkitektur har varit samtalspartner förut. Det första jag gjorde som nybliven keramikkonst-student var en servis inspirerad av miljonprogrammet. Det är snart 20 år sedan och inget som jag jobbat med sedan dess. Det ska bli intressant att se hur jag använder en liknande inspirationskälla idag och om jag kan använda mig av erfarenheter från det tidigare arbetet nu också.

Mitt projekt kommer vara en fortsatt undersökning av samspelet mellan existerande keramiska former, främst kakelplattor och skulpturala element i lera/keramik. Jag har tidigare undersökt detta tvådimensionellt och även strävat efter att lyfta ut objekten från väggen och låta dem ta plats i rummet. Det blev rumsligare, men fortfarande ganska platt, kakelplattorna blev oftast ytor, bakgrund eller scener för skulpturerna. Jag vill gå ytterligare ett steg mot tredimensionalitet, låta skulpturer/lerpartier och plattor mötas på samma sätt som i väggobjekten, men fristående och med mer volym.

Jag kommer att arbeta inför en utställning på Nääs konsthantverk vintern 2018. Gallerirummet tilltalar mig och skrämmer mig. Det är väldigt karaktärsfullt med sin äldre arkitektur och framförallt mycket vackert vilket gör det lite svårare gentemot en mer neutral miljö. Jag älskar det åldrade trägolvet, ljudet när en går på det och hur det med åren blivit slitet och ojämnt. Just för att golvet är så fint, och betydelsefullt för upplevelsen av rummet är det frestande att inte använda det som utställningsyta men jag tycker det vore en spännande utmaning att jobba enbart med objekt som placeras där. Inte på podier utan direkt på golvet. Det skulle också tvinga mig att lämna väggarna och de vägghängda objekten.

Berättelserna om äkta och falskt, hur kakelplattorna imiterar andra material och hur jag kan bygga vidare på detta med mer eller mindre illustrativa skulpturala element utgör fortfarande en bakgrund, ett tonläge. Men jag vill tillåta mig att ge mer utrymme för formundersökande, använda andra typer av (kakel)material om det passar och fördjupa mig i objektens rumsliga och formmässiga värden och problem. Som sig själva och i kombination med varandra.

I arbetet kommer frågor om tredimensionalitet, höjd, volym och placering att vara intressanta. Hur upplevelsen av ett objekt förändras genom placeringen, eller görandet inför en tänkt placering. Kan ett objekt lika "platt" som de vägghängda upplevas annorlunda då det placeras på golvet? Hur fungerar objekten mot sin bakgrund (golvet), med sina olika element och med varandra som delar och helhet? Det är ganska basala frågeställningar i arbetet med visuell gestaltning, men det är vad jag måste fokusera på för att komma vidare i arbetet med rumslighet och tredimensionalitet.



Gallerirummet på Nääs

