



HDK - HÖGSKOLAN FÖR DESIGN  
OCH KONSTHANTVERK

# Harmony, a sense of time difference in urban society

By Jens Erlandsson

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Examensarbete:	15 hp
Program:	Konstnärligt kandidatprogram JÄRN & STÅL / OFFENTLIG
Nivå:	GESTALTNING, HDK vid Steneby 180 hp
Termin/år:	Grundnivå
Handledare:	Vt 2015
Examinator:	Pär Gustafsson
Opponent:	Heiner Zimmermann
Rapport nr:	Michael McFalls
	2015:18

## Abstract

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## **Abstract**

In this text I will describe my work process, which for this project is based on how to use the traditional technique of blacksmithing in an innovative way. I want to help people forget their surroundings for a brief moment and get a sense of harmony, by constructing a decorative panel design from recycled iron and steel, which can be applied to building facades in public space. My goal is to create a peaceful and harmonious look that will reduce the feeling of stress in everyday life.

I denna text kommer jag att beskriva min arbetsprocess, som i detta projekt bygger på hur jag kan använda det traditionella hantverket smide på ett mer nytänkande sätt. Jag vill låta betraktaren glömma sin omgivning för ett kort ögonblick och uppleva en stund av harmoni, genom att utforma en dekorativ panelkonstruktion tillverkad av återvunnet järn och stål, som kan placeras på husfasader och dylikt i det offentliga rummet. Målet är att skapa ett stilla och meditativt uttryck som reducerar känslan av stress i vardagen.

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## Background

I grew up close to nature, and nature was also my workplace for many years. I have mainly worked with conservation, in nature reserves and periurban places. With nature as the lead designer I have cleared pastures overgrown with thorn shrubs, using chainsaws and brush cutters, and opened up wetland areas to create biotopes for listed species requiring a particular environment for survival. At each site I had a particular goal: to make my contribution almost invisible, creating the impression that nature itself had formed that space. In order to achieve this goal it is very important to notice the lines of nature and the essence of each site. The goal is to create spaces and esthetics that look natural, even though they actually are man-made.

During my many hours out in the woodlands, I have always felt a sense of harmony. This is a feeling I have a hard time finding within urban society, where the pace seems much faster than in nature. So many things constantly call for your attention, and there is always something that wants a little bit of your time. I feel that this society consumes you as a person.

Parts of this working method I brought with me to the field of art, for example how I look at the structure of a line and the idiom. This way of thinking leads me to create work with quite calm and peaceful expressions even if there are a lot of details or movement.



*One of the old meadows in Borga hage nature preserve on Öland where I grew up, and worked for several years.*

Through my thesis, I want to create a piece that gives people a sense of calm. I might describe this feeling by comparing it to the experience of approaching a red light in your car. You gently press the brake pedal and the speed decreases so softly that you barely notice the little tug that often occurs when you are not easy enough on the brake, right at the moment when the car is fully stopped, at the intersection of movement and stillness. When you feel the slight pressure from the seat release, it is almost like experiencing weightlessness for a moment. All the kinetic energy acting on your body just disappears into the void. I want to create an artwork that catches your eye and makes you stop for an instance, to breathe and focus on something else entirely. If this happens only for a brief moment, I have achieved my goal.

For quite some time, I have experienced a growing interest in wall-mounted works. The idea is to use several forged elements to create compositions that can decorate walls indoors as well as outdoors, instead of more traditional ways of creating facades such as wood paneling, plaster and dry-stone walls, etc. I have been thinking about forging pots and irrigation systems to give the impression of a rock wall with various hanging and clinging plants. I am looking for ways in which to use my craft in a manner that is both traditional and novel.

During a class in color theory at HDK Steneby, I choose to make a painting on sheet metal, which gave me many ideas on how I might use plate as a canvas but also create the images themselves out of metal. I believe that many of the buildings where we live and work today resemble expressionless storage boxes. To counterbalance this, I wish for art, sculpture and other design to find a new and larger room for exposure. Maybe we all would become more open-minded if the surfaces surrounding us were not as standardized as they currently are.



*Self-portrait, acrylic on metal sheet.*

Here, a great source of inspiration is the artist Anselm Kiefer (born March 8, 1945), a German painter and sculptor. Kiefer studied with Joseph Beuys and Peter Dreher during the 1970s. His works incorporate materials such as straw, ash, clay, lead, and shellac. The poems of Paul Celan have played a role in developing Kiefer's themes of German history and the horror of the Holocaust, as have the spiritual concepts of Kabbalah.<sup>1</sup>

With his enormous artworks – some of them paintings combined with sculpture, since he worked with three-dimensional elements – he possesses, as I see it, a limitless approach on how to treat materials compared to their traditional use. The scale on which he works is also fascinating. From a documentary on Kiefer, *Remembering the Future*, he is asked if scale is important to him:<sup>2</sup>

“You like scale don’t you? I know you are in denial about it. Is it important to you, scale?”

“I don’t look like it like you do. It's my gesture, it's my body, who is implicated. You know the quotation of Nietzsche: ‘The philosopher has to dance’” ... “so it's ... the physical part, it’s very obvious, and the scale is the product of the dance ...”

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<sup>1</sup> Anselm Kiefer.(2015,17 March) In Wikipedia, retrieved (April 29, 2015) from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anselm\\_Kiefer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anselm_Kiefer)

<sup>2</sup> BellisElegance (2015,02 January) Search for Anselm Kiefer *Remembering the future*. Retrieved (April 29, 2015) from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5o9FmCCWij0>

I find his answer absolutely amazing. The body takes up the space it needs to move, and its surroundings are forced to relate to this body. The body cannot be pushed aside without feeling forgotten and left out. What I want to express must be accommodated within the object.

Anselm Kiefer's paintings or wall sculptures catch my attention much more than traditional paintings tend to do. I have long felt something lacking when I work with drawing or painting, but as soon as an element of sculpture enters the picture, something exciting happens. My approach to sculpture is very different from that to painting. When I view sculptures I cannot just observe and reflect on artistic values, since the craftsmanship is so deeply rooted within me. I find it very difficult not to focus on the design and quality of the craft. In other visual arts I lack technical knowledge, and therefore set less stringent demands on what I see. In sculpture, if I see a mistake in the execution of the craft that is not intended and connected to composition or expression, it bothers me very much.



Anselm Kiefer, *The Secret Life of Plants*, from the Grothe Collection.





Anselm Kiefer *Dat rosa miel apibus*, 2010-11 Oil, acrylic, terracotta, salt, lead, and resin on canvas, 330 x 1710 cm. © The artist, photo: Ben Westoby. Courtesy White Cube.

### **Purpose**

To create an image that catches your eye and makes you stop, breathe, and focus on something outside your everyday life, if only for a brief moment. My hope is that this moment can give you a similar sense to what I experience in nature. For the sake of the environment, I want to use recycled materials as much as possible, and attempt to create large artworks on a very small budget.

### **Goal**

To construct a decorative panel from scrap iron and steel, which can be applied to building facades in public space. To create a peaceful and harmonious design that will reduce the feeling of stress in everyday life.

### **Problem formulation**

What is the significance of scale for the experience of this piece?

How do I create a composition that gives a sense of peace and harmony?

What creates a sense of harmony?

Are there any essential elements, like certain directions, balance and weight ratios?

How does the way I treat the materials determine the result?

In what way does the site influence the composition of the panels?

## Approach

I began this project by reviewing the materials of steel and scrap I had in stock. It takes a very long time before iron decays enough to become useless as a material. Therefore, it is very well suited for recycling. I am passionate about this type of work, and strive to rekindle people's interest in repairing instead of buying new things, a mindset where you want to recycle an old rusty piece of iron and turn it into something new and beautiful. I took a trip to a scrap yard near Munkedal in Dalsland, Hedekas: Kjell Andersson Stål Råvaror AB.

Just by looking at various pieces of steel and mixed scrap metal I got lots of ideas about what each piece could become. During my wanderings around the junkyard I gathered all my impressions from the surroundings and stored them away in my mind for possible projects and objects. What I saw in these piles was all about repetition, storage and composition. I also saw a lot of nature's beauty, as it slowly begins to break down the material, bringing it back to its origin. There was also a powerful feeling of time having stopped. But maybe that's unavoidable in a cemetery for metal.



I had 6 rusty plates measuring 1 m<sup>2</sup> each in stock, and as these were excellently suited to mount on a wall, I decided they would serve as my "canvas." On these plates, I would make compositions of forged elements. I built a framework of square pipes which I mounted on a wall in the smithy. To be able to hang each sheet individually on this framework, I designed a robust hook system in two parts, A and B, that fit into each other much like a conventional plug. The A-part was mounted on the frame and the B-part on the plates. Each hook was designed to hold up to 500 kg.



*My sketch and work place with sheets for panels, tubes for frameworks and materials for the forged elements.*

I began the project by assembling the panels on the wall. First I laid them out on the floor to determine how to mount them in relation to each other. I decided to leave a gap of 10 cm between each plate. This gave a better perspective to work with the composition, and allowed me more freedom in the decision of whether I would work with each plate separately or treat them as a whole.

This also made me more open to accepting failure, since I had more room to rework a single panel. Working like this, sketching can continue almost into a finished state. The gap between each panel, which makes them individual units, adds complexity to the piece as a whole. Within this composition I can build bridges from one panel to another.



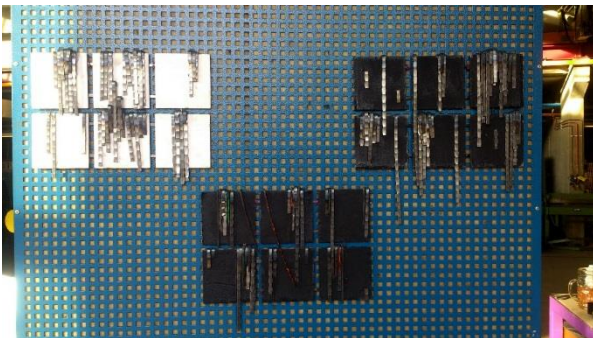
*The panels mounted on the wall, total dimension 3.20 x 2.10 m.*

In order to quickly try out different compositions I first worked with models at a scale of 1:10. But with the actual panels on the wall, I found it easier relate to the whole and to the spatial aspect, which was difficult on a smaller scale. In relation to the full scale, the objects radiate a kind of aura that is essential to my work; it is the most important link in the communication between me and the object I'm creating. Once I've found this feeling, it is easier to continue on a smaller scale.

As I have gathered from previous work, people can perceive my sketching process as fairly minimal, based on the sketches that I produce both in 2D and 3D formats. But I run a rapid and steady stream of options through my mind, and after about 17 years of metalworking experience, I have a great reference bank of expressions and techniques. The things I find difficult to just imagine I test through the making of various models. I may even go up to full scale for certain parts when these models are still not enough. There is a palpability in the larger scale that I find difficult to experience through small sketches.



*Inspiration from hanging plants.*



*Left: 3 pcs, models in 1:10 scale, where the black ones are primed with wood glue, graphite powder, and clear coat. Right: material samples with blasting sand, plastic granules and graphite powder. Study of different surfaces.*



*Study of the composition. Corrugated paper tubes, wire and stretch film.*

Working from my small mockups I tried out full scale compositions directly on the panels. All the strip lights in the workshop were recently replaced, resulting in a large amount of leftover paper covers. I hung all these paper tubes over the panels, along with stretch film and thin steel wire to get a sense of different possibilities and compositions. I had a vague aim to create the feeling of a waterfall, a continuous flow which can be almost hypnotic. During this process, I replaced the paper with steel rods in my mind, contemplating how to use them to create a similar feeling. I thought about how I should forge them and what kind of pattern I would leave on the bars. I was thinking about how they could be mounted on the panels. I also considered – though only very briefly – whether I should skip the forged rods altogether and use another material than metal.

As I was facing all these corrugated paper tubes I noticed the little vertical lines in the structure of the paper. These lines would be very well suited to be scaled up in the forged bars, to express the idea of a frozen waterfall or hanging plants, something quite easy to achieve with a power hammer.

I sketched in this way for a day or two, moving the material around on the panels, adding more, removing and so on, until I started to get a clearer picture from which I felt comfortable to start working in metal, towards a finished piece. I chose to portray the flow I had in mind with slender, hanging rods.

Four years ago, I had the opportunity to empty scrap bins with very thick tail bits from Karlskoga Hammar och Hejarsmedja in Granbergsdal, where they manufacture small-scale series of special bolts in very large sizes, axels and special tools.

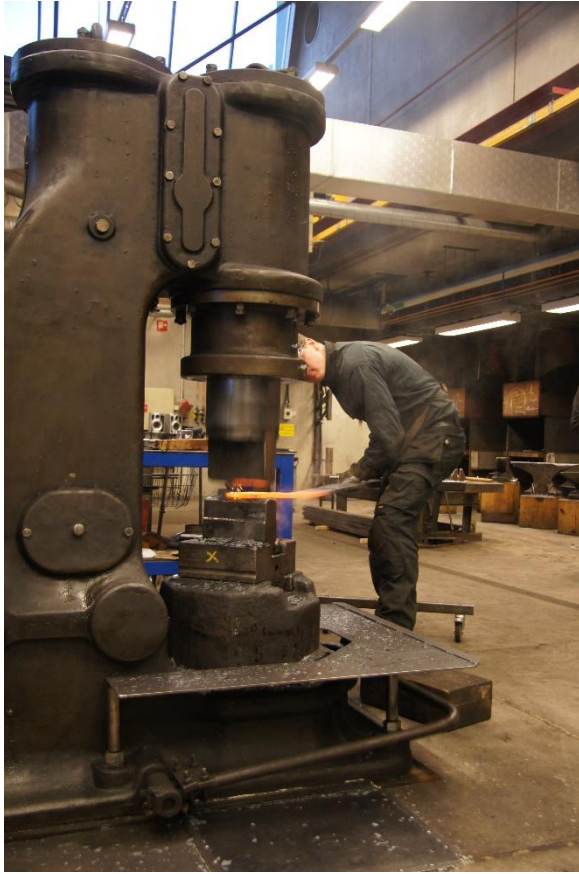
I decided to use this material, of which I have an entire pallet, a mix of different grades of steel. The decision was mostly based on the very small budget for this project, as I wanted to explore ways of creating large work in a more sustainable way, and do my best with the limited resources I have.

I have a love for form and aesthetics – this is very important to me. I always like to put effort into making a simple object such as a tool beautiful, to increase its value and the enjoyment of its use. A major aspect of forging is creating different tools. The blacksmith must create the tool required for making a certain shape. If I put effort into it, both the tool and the shape can be beautiful and have specific tactile surfaces.

The expression of the metal right out of the steel mill is very cold and quiet, and I didn't feel that this would suit my intentions for this project. Therefore, I chose to process the material by hot forging before I started working on the composition, an act that adds a life and soul I find incredibly important in work like this. It creates a depth which allows for more interpretations. The repetitive pattern contributes a rhythm, and the production itself becomes almost like a ritual, where each step must be performed in a certain order to achieve the design I'm working on. I also decided to process the mockups in the same way, as the expression would be very different if I were to leave the industrial flat surface untouched.

However, my choice of material made the work rather complicated. I had to forge each piece for so much longer compared to if I had bought thinner material, like round or square bars. But for other reasons it was advantageous. While I forge, I had a lot of time during several stages to think about and experiment with how to treat the material. I had enough material to investigate along the way, and if I wasn't satisfied I could keep forging in a different way with the same piece. I didn't have to throw it all away and start over with a new one.

Most of the tail bits I had were short and chunky so I welded a steel rod onto one end to use as a handle. Once I had five pieces welded with handles, I put them in the propane forge. When they reached around 1000 C° I started to forge them under the power hammer into square, round and flat bars of various dimensions. When this stage was done I cut off each handle and reused it for the next round.



*Forging in the big 125 kg Bêche power hammer.*

In the next step I started to forge the pattern, mainly using two techniques in the power hammer. In the first case, I rotated a round bar for about 5-10 minutes on the dial for each blow, and in the same turn pulled the bar towards me about 10 mm. the result of this technique was a nice and rough spiral pattern. In the other case I first forged the bar flat without moving it, and after that moved the bar towards me a little more than the width of a hammer die and forged it flat again. I sometimes chose to turn the bar a little but mostly kept it flat on the same line. From this I got a wavy pattern with a small ridge between the flat surfaces. The result varied quite a lot depending on the size and shape of the steel bar.

When all this was done after a long week of heavy forging, it was time to put the bars up on the panels and try out the composition. I heated the end of each bar and bent it 180 degrees over the anvil. I made a gap so the bar would fit over the edge of a panel. I did this piece by piece until I had large bundles hanging all over the panels.



I moved everything around until I found the composition I wanted, a sense of flow, or what once was flowing but now frozen to ice. An idea I had in my mind was that of giving up on gravity, of no longer striving to stay upright, like ivy hanging from a pot, or being right on the verge of falling asleep, when it feels like your body sinks into the mattress.



*Experimenting with the composition.*



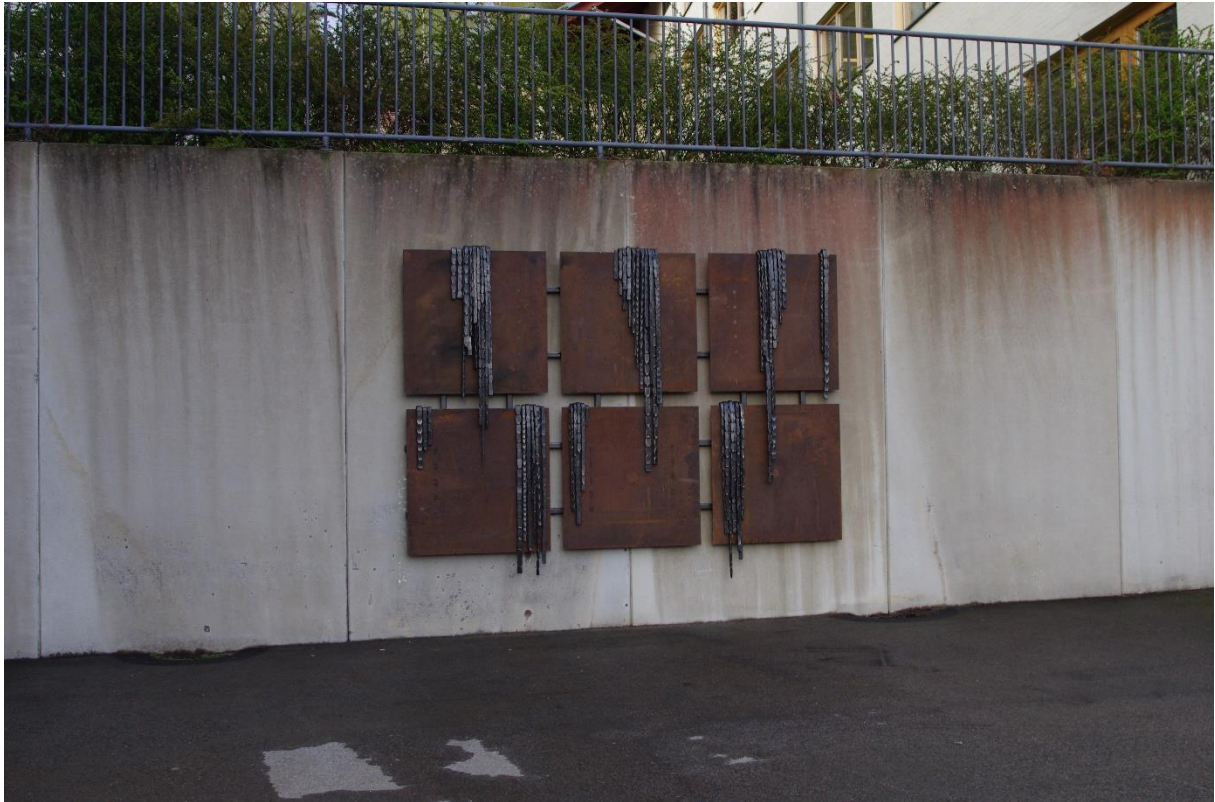
*This is the composition I chose for my presentation.*

Once I felt the composition was done I photographed it carefully because I was going to take it all apart again. It was time to put a nice finish on everything. I wire-brushed all the hanging rods and ground off sharp edges. I cleaned up the rusty panels and put some rusty patina on the bolt heads that popped out like shiny buttons on the corroded background. I wanted them to disappear because I don't like it when an unintentional detail sticks out and draws the eye.

Now it was time to put all the hanging bars back on the panels and weld them together in bundles. Then one more touch with the wire wheel, followed by rust protection using a product called Owatrol Oil. This will prevent the bars from rusting, at least in the near future. I also gave the framework a touch with the wire wheel and a few coats of the oil. The panels I left without any rust protection, just as they were.

At the last minute I tried to add some color to a couple of bars in two of the bundles. I wanted them to pop out a little more. I worried that the overall expression would be too subdued if all the forged pieces were the same natural raw color, and I really wanted people to notice this sculpture. I put some intensely green oil paint on these bars, and that really made them pop – way too much! So I wiped the paint off, though some remained in the pores of the material, which gave it a very soft feeling, almost like it was overgrown with algae. I liked the look of this and left it for the moment, though I felt that I might need to revisit the decision later on.

Finally, I mounted the finished piece just outside the entrance to the smithy, on a retaining wall. The experience of looking at something you made is so different once it finds a place outside the workshop. The change of environment lends a completely different perspective. I was satisfied with the work and thought it looked really good. But did it express what I wanted it to?



*Installed at its final place between Svartbyggaet and Nybygget at Steneby.*

## **Results and reflections.**

During the process, I didn't have a clear insight into what this project really was about. My ideas had one direction, but the physical result went in another. The inherent theme of the sculpture was noted by some viewers, but what I presented verbally and in the first part of my report was something different.

Impressions of nature and a sense of time standing still was something I needed personally after my intense exchange semester at the Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, USA. In hindsight I probably needed a longer break before getting started, because I wasn't really ready to begin my degree project. Hence the five week period of procrastination, spent buying machinery and planning my forging business, before I actually made an effort to decide what the work would be about.

During an apprenticeship with Master Blacksmith Alfred Bullermann in the summer of 2012, I eventually asked for some feedback. I had been assigned several tasks and was working fairly independently in the smithy, but occasionally lacked the guidance I thought necessary, as I still viewed myself as a beginner. At this point I had 14 years of experience forging.

I generally need a fair amount of affirmation, to be assured that what I do is good enough. This acknowledgement gives me confidence and encouragement to do even better. That's how it's always been for me, and probably always will be. I simply wanted to know if what I made was all right, and whether there were parts of my craft that needed improvement.

Alfred's response was unexpected. He basically had nothing to add regarding my craft – it was perfectly fine, nothing to worry about. He said I was very motivated and didn't give up easily, working through any challenges and difficulties I was faced with, judging from the time I had spent at his workshop. But the most important thing he told me was to believe in myself! My confidence was simply too low, considering my level of knowledge.

Because of this lacking confidence, I often have a hard time standing up for what I've created, and also to make bold decisions. In my mind, my work is not refined or complex enough to deserve a place in the art world. Art, as I perceived it at Steneby, was imbued with an air of pretention that completely excluded blacksmithing, which was much too traditional. It didn't matter what I accomplished, it still remained merely craft.

That impression has made me hide behind elaborate explanations and references to deeper sentiment, in an effort to somehow be accepted as an aspiring artist with blacksmithing as my means of expression. This, however, never really worked, since I'm a very bad liar. Anyone can see through me right from the start.

Therefore I often look for role models; in this case Anselm Kiefer. I try to somehow emulate a winning concept rather than building on my own personal experience, where I would have the confidence to express who I really am.

My external reviewer, Michael McFalls, was probably the first person to address this in a way I could understand. He was able to uncover the truth behind my presentation since he had seen something different during the process. He suggested that I was responding to the physical gravity of Kiefer's work rather than being inspired by the artistic aspect. Michael viewed my work as much more controlled, method-wise, than the art by which I claimed to be inspired. He emphasized the importance of separating these aspects in your work. To take a step back and try to answer the question: What am I doing? Does it connect with what I'm trying to convey? And if not, what is it actually about?

When I think back, my supervisor, Pär Gustavsson, also tried to point this out while I was working on the project. I proposed several ideas for what to work on, which he repeatedly questioned. *Is this really what your project is about? It's most certainly not about a door with a steam engine as a locking mechanism! You need to focus on the true subject!* What he meant was that I approached the problem from the wrong angle. But at that moment, I wasn't able to understand his viewpoint. I had started by thinking about a cool thing I could make from a more design-oriented perspective. It would be a door with a lock powered by a steam engine, where the art element would be about the tactile and emotional experience of passing through various types of doors. This time I really wanted the work to have a more conceptual substance, but this would have required me to approach it from that angle from the beginning. Art concept first and object second. I often work the other way around.

The true meaning of the project, in hindsight, was to build a bridge from my practice at Steneby to my business Skulpturj rnverket, figuring out how to make this kind of work outside Steneby. But above all, how to find commissions similar to our assignments at the school. I didn't want it to end, this amazing opportunity to evolve. At the same time, I was bursting with excitement to start my own forge. Maybe the whole thing was a minor life crisis.

The environmental aspect of the project was honestly not that important to me. I had a material in stock that I had to adapt to. And in the end the result wasn't particularly environmentally friendly, considering all the gas and coal needed to forge all these pieces. The environmental impact would probably have been smaller if I had chosen to use new material, closer in dimension to the finished product. From a financial perspective it would have been cheaper to start with thinner bar stock. But you don't think about things like that when you're not the one paying for fuel – it's another thing entirely when you're in your own smithy and have to deal with the costs yourself.

During my presentation, which I still felt went pretty well, something exciting happened. In the examination with Michael McFalls, everything was put into a different perspective, which was very difficult for me to understand at the time. The reflective section of my report was not done by that point, and Michael had only read the first three parts. Because of this, he asked questions which turned out to be very important to me, but which I couldn't answer at that moment.

"A central focus of Anselm Kiefer's work is atonement for WW II," he said, "which is emphasized by his materials and their physicality. How do you connect your own work and the things you want to express with Kiefer's subject matter?"

Thinking about it now, I am not referencing Anselm Kiefer so much for his artistic expression as for how I'm personally inspired by the soul and confidence in his way of creating, and how this makes him able to convey the gravity and sensibility I see in his work. I lack that confidence in my own artistic practice.

*"You like scale, don't you? I know you are in denial about it. Is it important to you, scale?"*

*"I don't look at it like you do. It's my gesture, it's my body, who is implicated. You know the quotation of Nietzsche: 'The philosopher has to dance'" ... "so it's ... the physical part, it's very obvious, and the scale is the product of the dance ..."*

*I find his answer absolutely amazing. The body takes up the space it needs to move, and its surroundings are forced to relate to this body. The body cannot be pushed aside without feeling forgotten and left out. What I want to express must be accommodated within the object.*

The above is probably the most important and most honest part of my report. This is exactly what my work is about, when it comes to

most of my major projects. And when I create things, this is the emotional space I want to occupy, to the extent that it's possible.

Maybe it's more about a certain way of working than about artistic expression – what Kiefer describes in his comparison with Nietzsche. The physical presence and activity of creating is what's important to me. How do I describe that feeling through a forged sculpture? The aesthetic value of harmony I write of seems secondary in this case. Or maybe employed to fit into the subject of a thesis. The formats in which Kiefer work appealed to me a lot, and his description of the artwork as a consequence of physical activity gave me a sense of affinity. I interpreted the thing he was describing as the same feeling I experience when I'm working, which I very much would like to share with other people.

The experience and goals of my work in nature conservation may have had an outside influence on this project: having for many years worked under the assumption that a successful result is one where your own impact is invisible. I have a tendency to search for the same type of result or sensibility when creating art. Everything turns out much too subdued. When that sense of harmonious security arrives, my work is done. It's so successful you don't even know it's there.

This is something I need to learn to control. Harmony, sure! But things can get so harmonious that they're barely noticeable. So in this case, placement is exceedingly important to accentuate the work. This is done to great effect where my sculpture is currently mounted, between the buildings Svartbygget and Nybygget at Steneby. A grey, smooth concrete retaining wall with a nondescript railing and a hedge on top. In this environment, the work stands out just the right amount.

In our exhibition at the Trädgårdsföreningen greenhouse in Gothenburg, however, along with all the other great degree projects, I experienced my piece as fairly anonymous. This despite the fact that it was mounted on a wall straight across from the entrance and was one of the first and largest works seen when visiting the show.

In other ways, the sculpture turned out to have more potential than I initially expected. It can function as a platform for more interactive projects. This was made clear during my presentation, after I showed a film of myself moving the forged elements around in search of the right composition.

At first, I was kind of annoyed at my professor, Heiner Zimmermann, for changing the direction of the conversation led by Michael McFalls – about how I take my knowledge and the craft for granted despite

its significance for what I do. He wanted to talk about participation and playfulness, and how to give people a chance to be a part of what I had created and let them play with the composition. It was never my intention to let anyone else fool around with my work, when I had made such an effort to achieve the effect I wanted.

But Heiner made a very valid point. The best pieces and projects I've made have been about participation, where collaboration with others has been an important aspect of the process. Maybe this is the best way for me to share the "dance" of my creative work – that same feeling I experience in nature.

Michael thinks I am too restrained in my working process. I need to allow myself to lose control in order to fully express what I'm striving for. Things become too tame. The time I spent exploring my composition with cardboard, stretch film and wire was, in his opinion, the phase when I was farthest from my comfort zone. At that point I let go. But in forging I held back. Maybe my project should have been about what art is, and maybe who I am, because I wonder if I've truly understood that myself. I really wanted to show that I had learned something during my five years at Steneby. But that knowledge had not yet matured. Maybe I realized this, somewhere in the back of my mind, but lacked the ability to admit it.

Michael also described a desire and a need to talk more about the physical act of the craft – not the technical aspect, but its spiritual and mental experience and value. What is it, for me personally, that makes forging so important? Because the main focus of what I do lies in forging.

That question left me at a loss. I had never really considered this; to me it was as natural as eating breakfast. It's just something I do. It was because of this he thought I'm taking craft for granted.

To a large part it's probably a matter of confidence in the ability to be able to realize all my ideas. I don't need to ask someone else for help to make things. Learning to manipulate steel is a great challenge, requiring lots of time and many mistakes, but at the same time it's a very enjoyable pursuit, and the satisfaction of solving a difficult problem is hard to achieve in another way. I haven't mastered many other methods. Creating things with my hands is vital to me. Another important factor is that forging has always been fun, ever since I was a child, banal as it may seem.



## Conclusion

It's interesting to see all the turns an artistic process can take during a project like this, and that I was able to produce a "finished" result at all, considering I barely knew what I was doing. This has given me a new perspective on who I am in the art world. It has also brought to light a working method which I want to explore further, and possibly a new direction for my business.

Talking about the deeper experience of forging seems somewhat trivial to me. It's been such a long time since I had that wow-feeling, like when I tried it for the first time. By this point, forging is routine, like riding a bicycle. What I like talking about these days is how to construct specific tools for various forging processes to reach new and exciting results. Conversation so nerdy and dry it's practically dusty.

Someone who visits an exhibition of forged sculpture – if they're not themselves a blacksmith or have knowledge on the subject – often marvel at how you can make such a hard and rigid material so soft and organic. These questions easily distract from any artistic considerations and lead to purely technical explanations of how you, as the blacksmith, achieved these results. I've been thinking about this for a while, and still can't quite figure out why this is often the case. Maybe one person out of a hundred wants to talk mainly about the expression and emotion of the work. Apparently the subjects of technique and art are hard to combine.

I assume the poetry and philosophy that can be gleaned from the experience of creating things from hot steel rarely are given the attention they might deserve, and therefore are easily forgotten. Or maybe it's just the nerd in me who rejects these poetic subjects. I may need some practice before I'm able to change this tendency in myself. Because the direction of these conversations is most likely a matter of my own choice.

Thank you for reading my report!

Maybe you are in the middle of your own degree project at this moment: this is it, time to outdo yourself. I would urge you to trust your intuition, focus on the work you enjoy and feel comfortable with. Talk and write about it in your own way, and please, dare to be banal, because the simple can be hard enough!

Jens Erlandsson