Rags to Riches

Becoming an architect

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CHALMERS

'Drowning in a pile of discarded ideas'

Starting a master's thesis is daunting. After a five-year journey on the open sea, the rest of your life approaches on the horizon. You're told that this will be the most important project you've made so far, the one where you prove your worth as an architect. It's in the name, a masters' thesis, where you show your mastery of the skills, where you master the profession and become who you've always been meant to be.

But who was I supposed to have become? All around me boats sailed past, gliding smoothly over the waves, heading straight for the shore. I was on an improvised raft, made from two oil drums, a leaky water can and some debris tied together with old rope, and it was rapidly falling apart.

The fifth and final year perhaps isn't the best time to start questioning life and career choices, but I couldn't help but wonder how I had ended up there, hours away from drowning so close to my journey's end. Hadn't I been excited to start architecture school? I can distinctly remember, in the first year, talking to a guy from the dorm I lived in and saying that I had picked just the right education for me, that I couldn't be happier. It didn't feel like architecture was wrong for me, there were still so many things about it that I enjoyed. Reading about architecture, talking about architecture, the plays of material, light, shapes and colour. In the horizon, I could almost make out the reasons I was drawn to it, but they were blurry, fuzzy, too far away for me to see them clearly. The rope was spinning, spinning, spinning and unfurling, unfurling, unfurling until it was down to the last string. As it broke, the raft gave out underneath me and I was sent plummeting into the ocean. When I resurfaced, I looked at the bits and pieces bobbing up and down along me and wondered how I could put things back together. How could I save myself from going under?

How does one become an architect? Most would probably answer architecture school, and they wouldn't necessarily be wrong. Certainly, graduating with a degree in architecture is the first step to attaining the legally protected title. But is that all there is to it? What is it, really, to be an architect? Who is she; what does she do; what motivates her? What does becoming an architect mean?

Of course, there are as many ways of being an architect as there are architects, and *Rags to Riches* is about me finding mine. It is a story in three chapters, of two investigations conducted in tandem. On the one hand, it is a story about the creation of a workspace, a physical place for the architect to work. On the other hand, it chronicles the search for place also in a metaphorical sense, in finding a personal approach to architecture.

The starting point of this thesis was nothing, and then a rag rug, and the physical workspace has been built successively from there, with more and more objects being added as need arose. The parallel, metaphorical search has centred around reading what others have written on the subjects and themes brought up by the creation of the physical workspace. In that way, the two explorations have intertwined and intermingled, both influencing the other. The story is told through the objects gathered, in reflections on the lessons learnt.

On a personal level, the purpose of this thesis is simply finding my place within the field of architecture. In a broader discussion, this thesis aims to start a conversation on the profession, creativity and artistic education and what it ultimately means for those of us who seek to become architects.

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Sauerbruch Hutton
Internship, 2016-2017
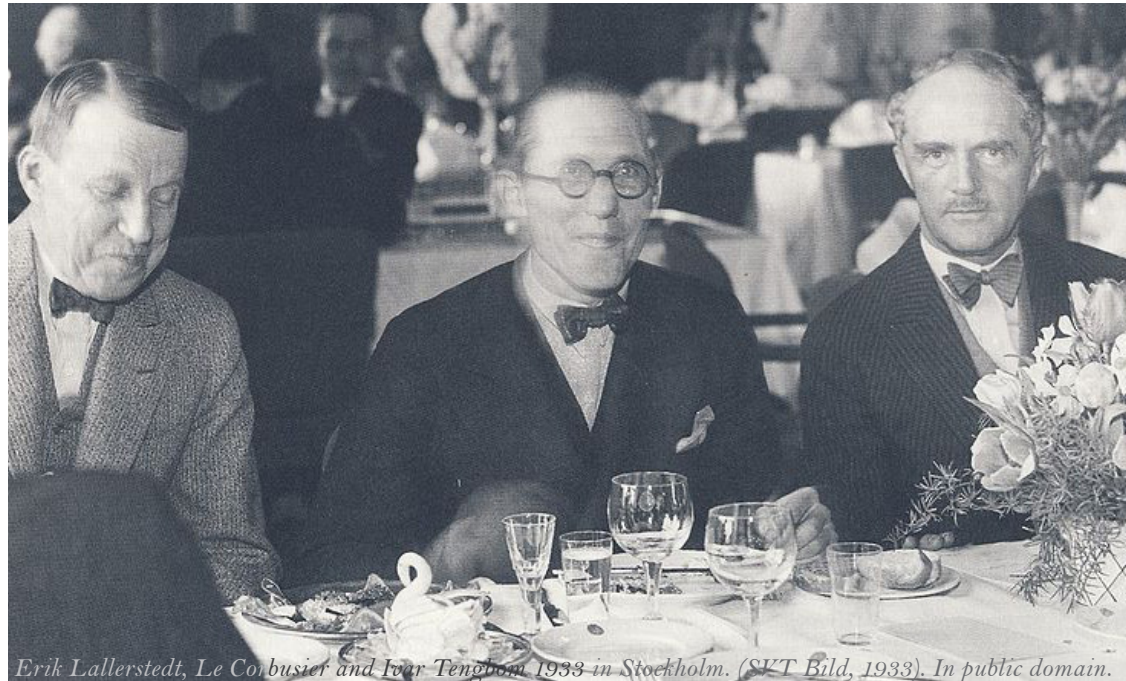Berlin

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Summer internship, 2018
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Rags

"To be or not to be... an Architect?"

(Lewis, 1985, p. 1)

Erik Lallerstedt, Le Corbusier and Ivar Tengbom 1933 in Stockholm. (SVT Bild, 1933). In public domain.

'A pale imitation'

Introduction

"Culture gives us collective dreams" writes Mark Z. Danielewski in his foreword to Gaston Bachelard's classic *The Poetics of Space* (2014, p. xv). Culture and collective dreaming are integral parts of architecture. At the best of times, architecture *is* collective dreaming, people coming together to realise a vision that can help improve their surroundings and their lives. But culture and collective dreaming are not only integral parts of architecture in its relationship to society, but also *within* the field.

The history of architecture stretches back virtually as far as civilization itself, and the history of architects, while not quite as long, also goes back millennia. And it is important to speak of a history of architects. Personalities matter in architecture. As with any discipline of art, the creator behind the work is equally important as the work itself. Perhaps the importance is less so now than before, when the profession and knowledge was passed down through practice and apprenticeship, from individual to individual through the generations. Still, it's not been completely erased, indeed, it's still prominent. In *Actions of Architecture*, Jonathan Hill quotes Reyner Banham speaking of the *" father-figures"* of modernism - le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, Richard Neutra and Mies van der Rohe - who *"commanded awe and suspicion, affection, respect and the normal pains for the generation gap"* (2003, p. 10). Even today, the greats that came before us are ever-present, as role models for us to look up to and learn from, emulate and follow in the footsteps of. They established norms, theories and movements, creating and shaping the culture and collective dreams of the profession.

In *Actions of Architecture*, Jonathan Hill goes on to explore one aspect of the culture of architecture: the relationship of the architect to the user. The user is typically seen as passive, as malleable and predictable, as someone whom the architect can direct and influence as she pleases.

The user is abstracted, from an infinitely diverse range of possibilities to one set of standardized measurements and experiences. The user becomes everyone and no one at the same time, and thus easily disregarded. It's no coincidence that architectural photography mostly features seemingly uninhabited spaces (Hill, 2003, pp. 10-28).

The user isn't, however, the only thing abstracted by the architect, the spaces themselves are as well. There is no one way that all architects work, no one process that we all follow. However, one tool continues, and will probably continue in the foreseeable future, to be the main mode of investigating, presenting and representing architecture: the image, the sketch and the drawing. We communicate architecture though visual media. Open any architectural review, monograph or office website and they will be filled with images, be it photographs, plans, sections, elevations, details, perspectives, renders… Go to any final presentation and you'll see boards and more boards, meters upon meters of paper printed with the same.

For architects the drawing is a useful abstraction to be able to deal with the complexities of the three-dimensionality of space. Short of models, it is probably our most effective tools for understanding space and to convey our ideas to others. Reading a drawing is one of the first things you learn as you start architecture school, and afterwards, you can get a wealth of information from a single sheet of paper, reconstructing an entire building in your mind.

Some level of abstraction is, of course, a necessary part of architecture. The representation of architecture is the only way to communicate architecture before it is built. Images, sketches and drawings are a necessary step on the way from idea to reality. But when the user is abstracted to the point of obsolescence and the representation of architecture becomes so prevalent that *"[the] reputation of an architect is, in part, dependent on his or her ability to generate a good photograph"* (Hill, 2003, p. 21), how do you draw the line between image and reality?

In his seminal work *The Eyes of the Skin*, Juhani Pallasmaa (2012) explores the role of the image and the visual in architecture. He describes the ocularcentrism of the field, the privileging of vision over our other senses in the conception of architecture. He also describes the connection between vision and knowledge in Western philosophy, in the ideas of the eyes as an objective observer. Sight is thus something that implies distance, something that *"separates us from the world"* and *"[pushes] us into detachment, isolation, and exteriority"* (Pallasmaa, 2012, p, 28, p. 22)

Sara Westin explores this, what she calls the *Eye of the Architect*, further in *The Paradoxes of Planning* (2014). The architect is ocularcentric, she moves in the visual field, and only experiences

the world in its limited, two-dimensional abstraction. Westin writes:

> *When referring to the eye of the architect, I have chosen to use 'the eye' in singular and not the architect's eyes in the plural because the architect seems to operate with a Cartesian or transcendental eye, a kind of internal, disembodied eye synonymous with the intellect. I interpret the planner and an unembodied self – 'an onlooker' – an observer [...] without being in direct contact with anything (2014, p. 58)*

The *Eye of the Architect* desires *" form, order and visual beauty"* in her role as the *"'moral guardian', a superego of society"* (Westin, 2014, p. 93).

Westin contrasts this with the *Body of the Flâneur*. The *flâneur*, she argues, moves in the visual world – reality in all its three-dimensionality and complexity – and is *"an embodied self, 'implicated in bodily desire and the gratifications and frustrations of the body.'"* (Westin, 2014, p. 58). Rather than form and order the Body of the Flâneur craves the chaos of the motion of the city (Westin, 2014, p. 92)

The Body of the Flâneur is as real as the world that she roams. *The Eye of the Architect* makes her as abstracted as the images she creates.

One of the true highlights of architecture school is the study trips you get to take. I've gone on a few during my studies, to cities, towns and villages all over Europe, and I've seen some marvels, some masterpieces of architecture. I've followed in the footsteps of the greats, I've visited their works to learn and to be inspired. And still, if I really think back on the places I've been, most of them were somehow forgettable. A lot of them were simply another building in a long line of buildings I'd seen that day, and some were downright disappointing, not managing to live up to the expectations built up from images I had seen. If I'm being honest there are only two places that stand out in my mind.

According to Juhani Pallasmaa, ocularcentrism *"[pushes] us into detachment, isolation, and exteriority"* (2012, p. 22). Jonathan Hill writes that abstraction stops us from *"[reaching] a level of mature self-awareness"* (2003, p. 26). Sara Westin goes, perhaps, a step further and calls planning and architecture a neurosis, rising from the repression of the senses in favour of the intellect (2014).

I can't say for certain why the two visits that stand out in my mind differ from the other buildings I've seen. They are both certainly great works, but so were the rest, and they still didn't leave an impression. Both did, however, come at the end of long, gruelling days. One, after a day on the Danish countryside, when the wind was so strong you could barely walk and the rain so heavy I was soaked within minutes. The other, after a day hiking and flitting across the Swiss Alps, with too packed a schedule and too few a meal break. Both days I was cold, tired, miserable and thoroughly uninterested in

whatever we were going to see. In a way, I think, in those moments, that I forgot to be an architect. I think in those moments, I forgot that I was there to follow in the footsteps of the greats, to learn and to be inspired. I forgot to look at them with my *Eye*, and could, for once, instead experience them with my *Body*.

As I read of the *Eye of the Architect* and the *Body of the Flâneur*, it was as though something fell into place. How many times hadn't I sat at my desk at school, drawing the same thing over and over and over again? How much time hadn't I spent crumpling up pieces of tracing paper, one after the other, filled with useless ideas and sketches that seemed to get me nowhere? In my sketching process I would constantly feel trapped, caught in a vicious circle that I was unable to get out of. My mind would race, thoughts never slowing down, but no matter how fast the wheels were spinning, they only burrowed further down into the mud. Still, I kept at it. What else was I to do, within the hegemony of the abstracted image? It is, after all, how architects are supposed to work.

As I read of the *Eye of the Architect* and the *Body of the Flâneur*, I for the first time started to ponder, if perhaps it was not? At least not how I was supposed to work. Perhaps the reason looking at the problems I was trying to solve through the *Eye of the Architect* never seemed to work for me, was because it was not actually the way that my mind understands the world? Perhaps there was another way to work, better suited to me, if I could just let go of the image of who an architect is supposed to be that built up in my mind over the previous five years.

But what would it mean to work with the body, as an architect? How would I go about it? All I had ever been provided with was a desk and a chair, a pen and some papers, and a computer to finalize my drawings and explore the spaces I had created through the abstracted, virtual space of a 3d model. It was all I had ever known; how would I even start to find another way of working?

Suddenly, the thesis that I had dreaded, ignored and banished to the recesses of my mind, felt like it couldn't have come at a more opportune moment. As soon as the seed of the idea was planted, it had taken root and a plan had begun to form.

That was how this thesis started out, with an idea to design my own workspace, centred on bodily experience and how to understand and create architecture with the senses rather than with the mind.

Now, this thesis, like many other theses, started out one way, took a turn and changed into something else, but I couldn't have known that, back then. And that was part of the plan too, to leave my inhibitions behind and take a leap into the unknown, to challenge

myself, for the first time in a long time, to take the plunge. Part of the plan was to not have a plan. If the *Eye of the Architect* sought structure, order and direction, then the *Body of the Flâneur* was aimless, feeling and fickle. The *Body* was intuitive rather than rational, so intuition rather than rationality would be my main guiding principle. For the first time in a long time, I decided to listen to my gut feeling, instead of ignoring it. And for the first time in a long time, I had a good gut feeling about what I was doing.
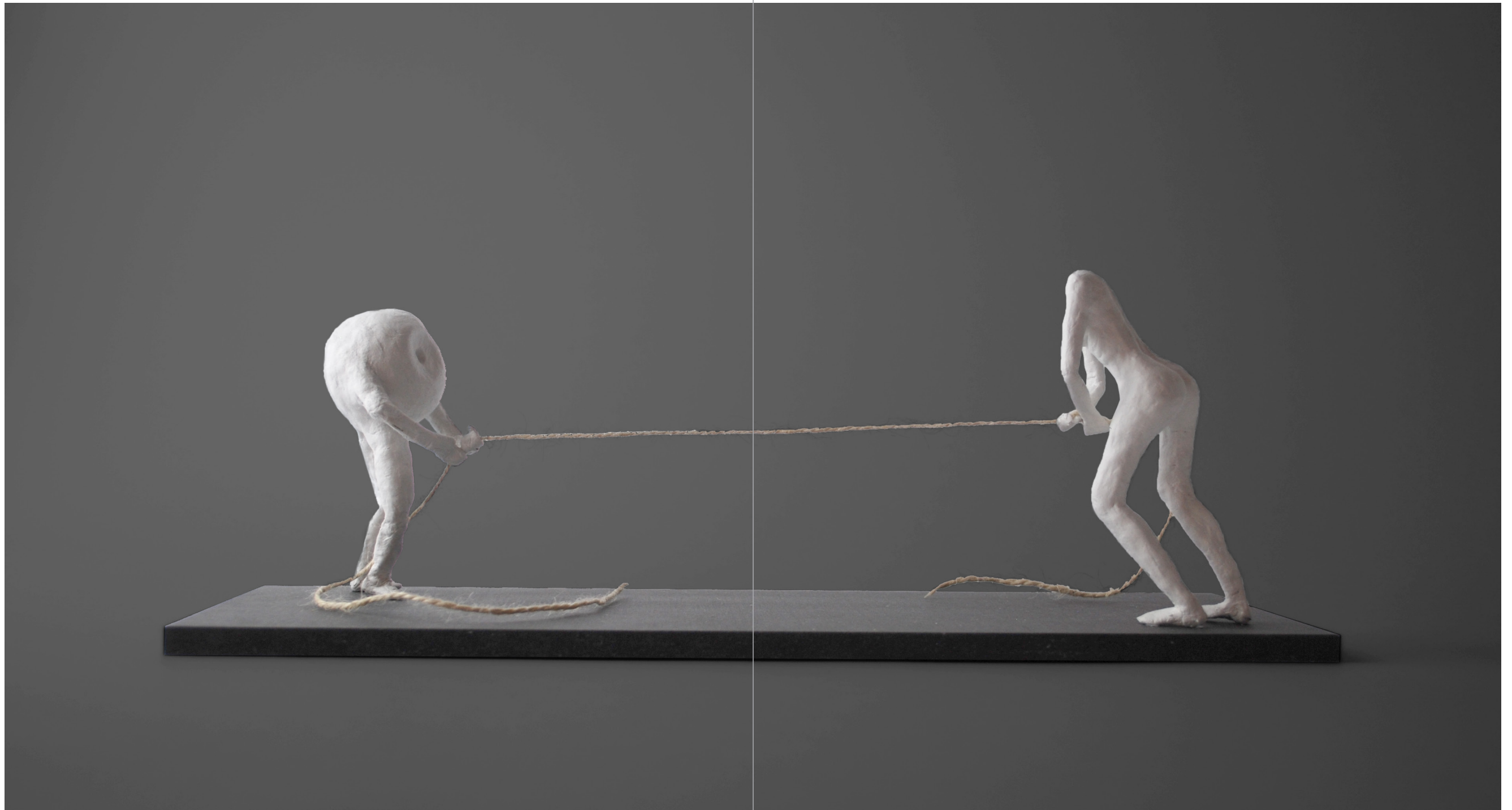
'Tug O' War'

Let's take a step back, before this thesis continues, and consider what this thesis *is* and what this thesis *is not*. This thesis is a story of becoming an architect, and the story is told through the objects I have gathered as part of creating my workspace. Even though this thesis has changed and shifted, morphed into something I never knew it would become over the course of my work, the object, the artefact, has stayed central, and in a way, become increasingly significant during the process.

It should come as no surprise to any architect that *"[the] things of this world are not simply neutral objects which stand before us for our contemplation"*, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes in *The World of Perception* (2004, p. 48). Architects and theoreticians have written at length about the implications and effects of the built environment: on our mood, on our culture and on our values. All artefacts are man-made, which imbues them with meaning. The same goes for the objects found in the spaces we work ourselves.

Perhaps controversial in a thesis within a design profession, the objects are not only made and created by me, but also bought and brought. As Merleau-Ponty continues on the subject of objects:
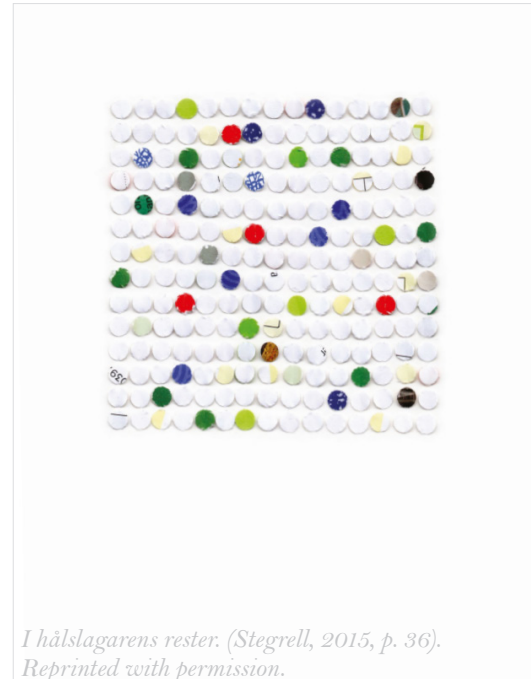
> *Each one of them symbolises or recalls a particular way of behaving, provoking in us reactions which are either favourable or unfavourable. This is why people's tastes, character, and the attitude they adopt to the world and to particular things can be deciphered from the objects with which they choose to surround themselves (2004, p. 48).*

This thesis is a personal story of becoming an architect, and all objects I have chosen to surround myself with, no matter their origin, are a part of that story. Some of the objects may seem banal, inconsequential or unimportant, but to me all of the objects hold significance, and selected items are accompanied with reflections on what they represent to me and what thoughts they have given rise to in my search to understand what it is to be an architect. The reflections are presented in the form of three chapters, *Identity*, *Joy* and *Honesty*, covering three themes I've found to be pivotal in my story of becoming an architect.

One might ask how a personal story of becoming an architect is relevant to anyone but me. This thesis can be read as many different things: a critique of artistic education, a commentary on the profession or a diary of the process of creating a workspace. But for me, you, the reader, can take from this what you will. This thesis is not a general remedy to the plights of architecture students who have lost their way. I don't claim to have all the answers; I have, at best, *an* answer, to the question of how one becomes an architect. It is, however, my sincere hope and genuine belief, that my story of

becoming an architect can trigger reflections on your own story of becoming, or being, an architect. Culture and collective dreams are integral parts of the field, but are parts we rarely, if ever, discuss.

More often, we seem to be expected to absorb and adapt to that culture, to conform to become the generalized image of the architect, to follow in the footsteps of the *' father-figures'* of architecture. More often, we are expected to stay objective, to not be personal, to favour *Eye* over *Body*. But becoming an architect is a personal story, and if we can never be personal about that story, how are any of us ever to become one?

Över berg eller hav. (Stegrell, 2015, p. 16). Reprinted with permission.

I hålslagarens rester. (Stegrell, 2015, p. 36). Reprinted with permission.

Selected items (Atelje Schultz Lindberg, 2015). Reprinted with permission.

Something, Somewhere
Hanna Stegrell, 2015

In her master's thesis *Something, Somewhere: An exploration of the sketch and a search for creative joy*, Hanna Stegrell explores the sketch as a tool with a personal approach. She gave herself the assignment to make two sketches a day: one general sketch and one self-portrait. Her aim was to find her way back to the creative joy she felt she had lost during her years at architecture school.

In parallel to her personal exploration of the sketch, she read about and reflected on the sketch as a creative tool, about creativity and creative working processes and her own work.
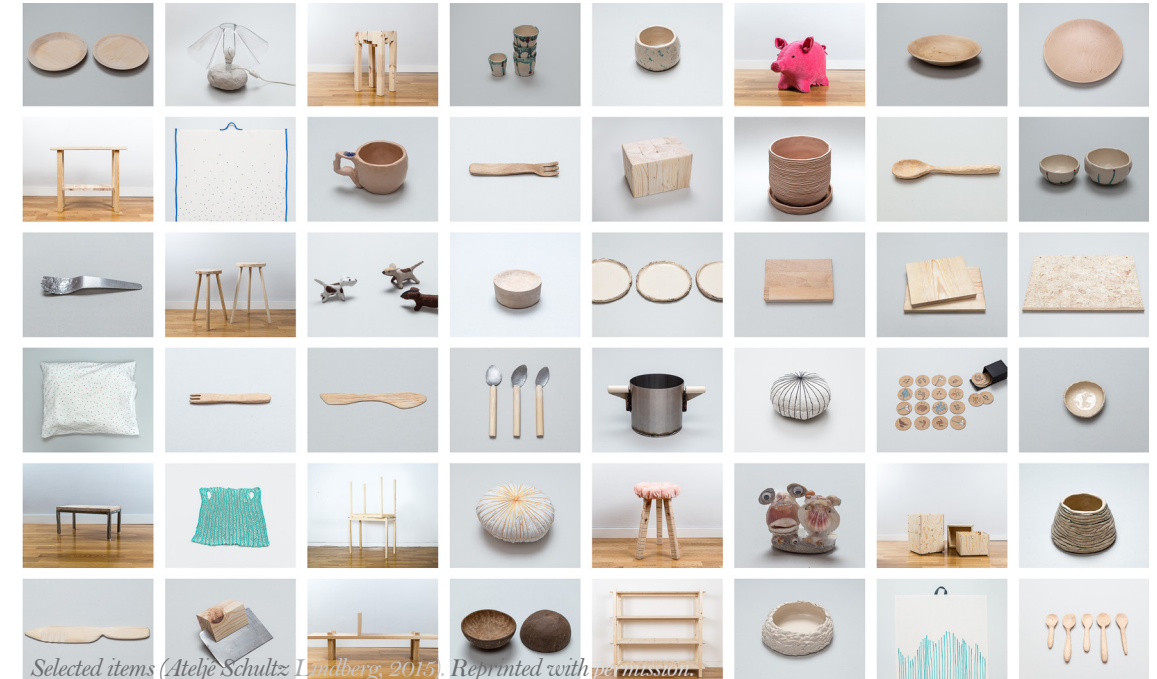
100 days of need and greed
Kristina Schultz, 2015

In her thesis project *100 days of need and greed*, industrial designer Kristina Schultz emptied out her apartment and gradually filled it again, but only with things she created herself. At the start she fulfilled only the materials needs of her family, but quickly realised that the emotional needs, the greed, was equally important to satisfy (Blomberg, 2015).

> *From the start I thought that greed is only shallow and not rooted in anything deeper. That it's only about identity and façade. But I've come to understand that there's something very deep in wishing for things to feel nice and express something. Through the project I understood that missing something nice or beautiful is not about not having something snazzy to show off when people visit us. But that we don't really feel at home. Sure, we can live this stripped down and make do. But we don't feel good. (Blomberg, 2015)*

The project aimed to question the material culture of the home and the profession of industrial designer, as well as critique the construction of the home as a status symbol. (Schultz, 2015)

The first Granby Workshop product range, developed as part of the Turner Prize exhibition "Showroom" (Assemble, n.d.-a). Reprinted with permission.

Working in Sugarhouse Studios (Assemble, n.d.-b). Reprinted with permission.

Assemble
2010-

Assemble is a London-based architecture and design collective that was founded in 2010. The studio works in a collaborative manner, in the relations between members as well as users and community. They also frequently collaborate with local manufacturers and artists to develop their projects (Charles, 2018).

Another distinguishing trait of their work is a hands-on approach. The studio often self-builds projects and, in that, develops custom and hand-made products, like ceramics, furniture, materials and details. By mixing industrial and traditional techniques they create unique products with imperfections and quirks that give both product and project a special character and identity (Charles, 2018).

I. Identity

"[You] may obtain an insightful glimpse of the type of architect you are or might become."
(Lewis, 1985, p. 229)

'*Love at first sight*'

1. *Carpet*

"*Does a story have to start with childhood?*", Russian poet Velimir Chlebnikov asks himself in one of his pieces (1996, p. 11). Perhaps some of them do, but not all. For me it didn't, for me it started with a carpet.

When I started my work, I started from nothing. If you have a blank slate, a completely fresh start, where do you begin? How do you begin to define yourself if you've stripped away all the things that made up the person that was you?
Maybe it's obvious for an architect to start with the subject of physical space, and maybe my education has taught me to overestimate the impact of space in a person's life. But they ring true, the emotions, values, histories and identities that we ascribe to space. We identify with our country of origin, the city where we grew up, our apartment, our home.

There's something intrinsically human about the need and will to dwell. As Bachelard writes of the house: "*It maintains [man] though the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul. It is the human being's first world.*" (2014, p. 29). We need the stability of a physical space to call our own in order to be able to find our place in the world.
And perhaps *place* in a better name than *space* for what I was looking for, where I started my search. It's certainly a better name than infinite, unbounded space, and better, even, than architectural enclosed space, which can be place, but isn't so by default. No, place, as Dean and Millar write in their book of the same name, is "*something known to us, somewhere that belongs to us in a spiritual, if not possessive, sense and to which we too belong.*" (2005, p. 14). Place, rather than space, is that house that maintains us, it is that first world of Bachelard. And just as much as we inform place, place informs us.

There are as many ways to construct place as there are people on this planet. No one person finds their first world in the same way. For me, it was a carpet, an old colourful rag rug that I found at a second-hand furniture store. I'd gone out looking for a carpet, imagining to myself a shaggy carpet, fuzzy and fluffy and warm, but when I got to the store, I saw the rag rug and I just knew it was the one. It was the one that belonged not only to me, but that I belonged to, as well. It was my place, wherever I laid it down was a place meant for me, and wherever I laid it out was the place I was meant to be.

When I started my work, I started from nothing and, thus, I became no one. I had nothing, no objects, no place, nothing that defined me. The only thing I had was the carpet.

Now, that's not strictly true, I did quite soon end up bringing my usual things from home, the things that I always bring at the start of a new semester: some pens, some paper, some of the things that enable you to do any work at all. Those things didn't really matter though, they were more of a holdover from days past, a remnant of who I used to be and how I used to work. Frequently I didn't even use them, it was just me, my carpet and some books to revel in, to try to understand what to do and where to go from there.

Soon, I started moving around the building, taking my carpet and a few of my things with me. I, according to plan, had no real plan, I just picked a spot that felt right for the day, laid my carpet down, sat on the floor, and worked on whatever tickled my fancy. I moved around the building, without a real plan. It was one of the most intimidating, most demanding things I had done since I started studying architecture. It was one of the most liberating things I had done, as well.

As time went on the other things I had brought become even less important, and the carpet even more so. It truly became my first world, in both a figurative and a literal sense. It became the basis for all my work, the foundation that it all relied on. It became more than a neutral object, as it gained personal meaning, it became a symbol, something I could not work without, something I could not be without, a new fixed point in my story.

With that new fixed point established, the story could progress. I started to explore the relation of my body not only to place, but also in relation to architectural space. I sketched, for lack of better word, in real time, in real life, shaping and moulding my surroundings to my liking. My *Body* was front and centre, guiding all of my decisions.

'Mum's handiwork'

18. *Socks*

Once you've started to question one aspect of your life, it's easy for the rest to follow. Everything seemed to come into scrutiny. The way I dressed, walked, held my body. I was already taking my shoes off for the carpet, and one day I decided to stop wearing shoes altogether, instead putting on a pair of wool socks that my mother knitted for me.

It was exhilarating, it was a rush, I was almost dizzy with the feeling. I had never realized how much something as simple as a pair of shoes was holding be back. A whole new world seemed to open up to me, an endless amount of unexplored opportunity. I didn't walk down the halls, I slid, a couple quick steps to gain speed and then gliding over the linoleum floor. I pressed the elevator button with my toes. At one point, I stopped, had a look around to make sure no one was watching and did a cartwheel. Why not? My shoes were off, and my head was in the clouds. Nothing was stopping me anymore.

Even on the hottest summer night I always need a duvet to be able to sleep, or at least a sheet that covers my body. Else, I somehow end up laying sideways across the bed, with my head hanging over the edge and my legs up the wall. It's like I need something to weigh me down for me to still, to relax, to quiet down. Otherwise my mind starts floating off into space, bringing my body with it.

My experiments and experiences, moving around the building from place to place, playing around with spatial configurations, even something as small as taking my shoes off, had allowed me to cut some ties to ideas that were weighing me down. It had let me start to explore the relationship of my body to the world. However, it also left me with my head in the clouds, with my mind floating in space and stopped me from settling. It was neglecting that human will to dwell. I needed to find my own place in the world not only physically, but also mentally and emotionally.

'Kicking my caffeine addiction'

13. *Tea*

This thesis, like many other theses, started out one way, took a turn and changed into something else. The general idea, an exploration of the architect's workspace, was of course there from the start, completely changing your idea after you've already started your thesis is not to be advised. But as with any open-ended question, the answer might not be the one you thought you would find, and you won't know that until you start looking for it.

When I started my work, it was focused on a spatial exploration of the workspace. I was still creating my own place of work, but with a greater emphasis on building, interior and furniture design, process and embodied working methods. Looking back, I think it was in part to justify my work as relevant, as architectural, at least tangentially. But I genuinely also thought this was what interested me, that this what was I needed to do to understand my place within architecture, that this would be sufficient. That by creating my own world physically would be enough to make *"enough of another world […] to again experience for the first time our world"* (Bachelard, 2014, p. xvi). But the thoughts that arose as I worked weren't related to space, materials or form. They were about my socks, were about my own views on the profession, about my creativity, about my insecurities and frustrations.

After moving around the building and playing around with spatial configurations, I created my first prototype workspace, one that I thought would be the first in a long line. Afterwards, I felt strangely empty and lost. I felt sort of done, finished. I could go on, creating more prototypes, but it felt like any additions would be superfluous. It would be creating simply for the sake of creating, but without adding value, creating simply to please and appease others, to dispel questions of relevancy and importance.

When I started my work, it was focused on a spatial exploration, but as I worked it was obvious that my frustrations with architecture ran

deeper than the purely spatial. I genuinely thought that this what was I needed to do to understand my place within architecture, but as I worked it became increasingly clear that it was not. What I actually needed what to more accurately understand my views on architecture. I had already fulfilled that physical need for place, what was lacking was the emotional and mental.

When I started my work, I was also sure that I would not sit among the others in the studio. As I moved from location to location, I avoided the studio like the plague. I felt out of place, sitting on the floor on my carpet. I felt looked at, I felt vulnerable and I felt judged. I forced myself to sit in the studio one day, to face my fears. I found a secluded corner, tucked away halfway behind a shelf. I laid my carpet down and sat down, facing the wall. I may have been sitting in the studio but I could still do everything in my power to pretend that I wasn't. I shied away from my peers, because they didn't feel like my peers. They seemed to have things under control, while I was in the dark. While they were starting their thesis work with site analyses, model studies and presentation dummies, I was sat on a carpet making a small clay sculpture of an eye with arms and legs. They seemed to be doing everything right and I seemed to be doing everything wrong. They weren't peers, they were superiors. I was sure that I would sit by myself, alone on my own little world. I would gather everything could I possibly need, in order to complete my isolation, to make sure that I would never have to leave my safe haven and never have to see another soul.

One of the things I was going to buy, one of the things I was going to need, was a kettle. Nothing calms me down like a hot drink, and I imagined I would sit in my workspace, in my own little world, sipping my tea. Perhaps every now and then some friends would come by, and I could offer them to sit down and have something to drink. Maybe I would get a French press as well, for those who preferred coffee.

After the desk, when I realised that I needed to settle, I realised that one of the things I was lacking was companionship and a sense of belonging. Suddenly the studio didn't seem so uninviting, suddenly I didn't feel as intimidated. I had taken my shoes off, I had put my socks on, I had let go of the expectations I felt I had to live up to and was ready to become an architect on my own terms.

I took my carpet, my newly constructed desk and my other bits and bobs and moved back to the studio. I laid my carpet down again in that corner behind the shelf and set my workspace up, settling down and settling in. This time I didn't face the wall, this time I turned towards the room, re-joining my peers as an equal.

Moving back to the studio rendered the kettle something of a moot point. There was a shared one in the kitchenette just around the corner. For a moment I considered getting one anyway, to mark my independence, but that wasn't what I craved anymore, because in a way I had already gained it. I decided against it, opting instead to use the shared kettle for making my tea, staking my claim within the field of architecture, affirming that I belonged here, in the studio, among my peers and equals.

"Does a story have to start with childhood?", Russian poet Velimir Chlebnikov asks himself in one of his pieces (1996, p. 11). Perhaps not all, but a lot of them do. At least for architects. For Alvar Aalto it was the large, white drawing table in his childhood home and for Daniel Libeskind it was in his mother's studio in her shop in his native Poland (Hentilä, 1993, p. 1; Karody, 2015). Architects frequently bring up the importance of childhood memories and personal experience on their work in adult age. As Peter Zumthor writes: *"The roots to our architectural understanding lie in our childhood, in our youth; they lie in our biography"* (1996/2011, p. 38).

For me, the story started with childhood as well, it just took me some time to realise.

When I started studying architecture it came as something of a surprise to myself. I was a logical, analytical, rational person; I'd never been one to draw much, had never been a creative person. That was my sister, I was more into maths. I even took the long way around into architecture, applying for Architecture and Engineering at Chalmers to still stay close to my roots, as I branched out into this new unknown.

It did not, however, come as a surprise to my mother. I asked her once, a few months into my studies, if she ever found that it was as though Amanda and I had switched places. I'd gone into architecture, she had done engineering physics. If you had looked at our childhoods, our interests when we were kids, it should have been the other way around.

But instead of agreeing she turned and looked at me.

'Don't you remember?'

'Remember what?'

'You were always making things as a child. Don't you remember all those things you would make with Sofia? Puppet theatres, Advent calendars and your own magazines. You were always so full of ideas, always up to something new.'

I pondered that conversation again after I had started my work. I did remember that girl that used to be me, and I realised that we had lost touch a long time ago. And perhaps that was where the real issue lay. I thought back again to those two study visits that had snuck up on me and blown me away. Forgetting to look at them with my *Eye* and experiencing with my *Body* was probably part of the reason I had finally been able to enjoy architecture fully, but perhaps the main reason was simply that I forgot to be an architect, and was for once just *me*?

Pallasmaa expresses a similar sentiment to Peter Zumthor: *"Architecture […] arises from existential experience"* (2012, p. 107).

Pallasmaa also taught architecture and had a clear opinion on the subject of how one becomes an architect:

> *The duty of education is to cultivate and support the human abilities of imagination and empathy, but the prevailing values of culture tend to discourage fantasy, suppress the senses, an petrify the boundary between the world and the self. […] The main object of artistic education is not in the principles of artistic making, but in the personality of the student and his or her image of themselves and the world (2012, pp. 105-106)*

When I started my work, I became no one, but in a sense, I had been no one for much longer than that. I had been an idealized, abstracted, unembodied self, not much more than no one in the end. I didn't have an image of myself and the world, I had lost it somewhere along the way, somewhere along my five-year journey. Or perhaps even before that, sometime between being that girl that used to be me and the person who I was now. When it happened wasn't what mattered, it was the fact that it *did*.

So perhaps my question wasn't so much how to become an architect, as it was how to become myself? At least as a start. Remembering who my own self was, seemed the key to realizing who the architect within me was. Becoming myself *was* becoming an architect.

1. Carpet

12. Mugs

13. Tea

14. Artificial sweetener

18. Socks

30. Desk I

42. Plant

53. Desk II

II. Joy

"[It] is worth recalling what makes architecture such an appealing profession to so many: the excitement and rewards of creativity though design"
(Lewis, 1985, p. 251)

'A dream come true'

'You never know when you'll need to make something waterproof'

'Cheaper than wood stain'

'They seemed useful'

23–26. *Art supplies*

After I assembled my first prototype desk in my corner of the studio, I felt done and finished with the search for physical place, but that didn't mean that my workspace was done and finished. There we still so many aspects that I wanted to explore and discover. The itch to create was still there, now I just knew that I needed to create on my own terms rather than to try to live up to expectations and follow in the footsteps of the '*father-figures*' of architecture.

And yet, I found it hard to start creating. The itch was there, and still I repeatedly found myself with a book in my hands. I wasn't even reading, the book was an alibi. The heavier, denser, duller the better, the more important what I was doing looked. It felt like a rehashing of the issues I had always had before, albeit having taken another shape. Hadn't my goal been to get away from the endless loops of going through the motions but never moving forward? Still, I found myself there again, only this time with a book instead of a pile of useless scribbles.

It should be obvious that you need tools in order to create, but it took me much too long to realise that the reason why I always ended up with a book in my hands, was because books was all I had on hand. I had an itch to create but not the tools to do so. I had ideas but not the means to realise them. The only things I had but for the carpet and my books, were the tools that I had brought from home, those holdovers from days past. But in my search for a new path they were of no help, providing me with only the same possibilities and opportunities that had failed me before.

One of the central ideas of Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* is that of the *poetic image*, our daydreams and visions. As he writes: *"For here the cultural past doesn't count. The long day-in, day-out effort of putting together and constructing his thoughts is ineffectual."* (Bachelard, 2014, p. 1). The

poetic image cannot be searched for and found, it's *"a sudden salience on the surface of the psyche"* and as such *"[one] must be receptive, receptive to the image at the moment it appears"* (Bachelard, 2014, p. 1).

The *Eye of the Architect* is defined by a certain passivity, it structures, organizes and plans meticulously, acting only when a solution to the problem has already been found. The *Body*, on the other hand, is defined by action, the movement of the aimless wandering of *flânerie*. However, there is a certain passivity to the *Body* as well: it can only act within the conditions of its surroundings, at the mercy of the environment it moves in. The *flâneur* is confined to the closed system that is the network of streets in his city, and similarly the architect is limited to the tools she surrounds herself with.

The *Body* is defined by action, it wants to move, to grasp, to reach out and react to the poetic images as they appear, but can do so only in the right environment. When I reached out to react to the poetic images I grasped only air, and the poetic image would pass into oblivion. The *flâneur* is confined to the closed system that is the network of streets in his city, but as an architect I can choose to gather more and new tools. I gave myself the task of going out and buying new supplies. I gave myself a spending limit, not a maximum but a minimum: not enough to put a painful dent in my budget, but enough to leave me free to buy things that had seemed unnecessary, superfluous and indulgent before.

I failed to reach my spending limit, but I still opened doors that had previously been closed to me. Not only did the new supplies I had bought give me new opportunities, but I also realised that my indulgent purchases were far from unnecessary. They were things I had wanted for a reason, things that enabled me to do the things I daydreamed of, that allowed me to reach out and react to the poetic images that came to me. The *flâneur* is confined to his city, but new tools gave me new streets to stroll aimlessly down. For once, I was in control of my own destiny.

In her work, philosopher Hannah Arendt writes about *homo faber*, the creating man. The term was, however, coined long before she wrote about it, by Appius Claudius Caecus, in the sentence *'Homo faber suae quisque fortunae'* which means *'Every human is the maker of his or her destiny'* (Tönsing, 2017, p. 2). Hannah Arendt built upon this and defined the creative work of the *homo faber* as what separates us from a purely labouring animal, and lays the foundation for our humanity (Tönsing, 2017, p. 2).

   Sara Westin also writes about *homo faber*, and links it to ocularcentrism and *the Eye of the Architect*. The architect is a *homo faber*, as *"the fabricator of the world"*, *"a working, producing human who judges everything 'in terms of suitability and usefulness for the desired end, and for nothing else'"* (Westin, 2014, p. 65). The *flâneur* is instead the *homo ludens*, the playing man, who *"[acts] according to personal whims and fancies"* (Westin, 2014, p. 65):

> *Man does not play 'in order to…'; his play is not a means; it has no goal beyond itself. Its opposite is not seriousness but utility. Planning however, is fundamentally a means to achieve a pre-formulated end. The end of planning, in its most basic form, is to bring order, to build a predictable society.* (Westin, 2014, p. 66)

However, the meaning of the artefacts created by *homo faber* is not defined by *homo faber*. As Tönsing writes:

> *However, because the* homo faber *creates instruments, the purpose of these instruments is not yet defined. For Arendt, the purpose of the action of humans, in order to be truly human, must be the freedom to act as a human, and therefore humanity comes to itself only as a zoon politikon, acting in the public realm out of and for freedom.* (Tönsing, 2017, p. 2)

While in the work of Arendt, the work of *homo faber* is not what defines our humanity, it is an integral and necessary part of our humanity (McGowan, 1998, p. 43).
Sara Westin also acknowledges this:

> *"We are all* Homo Fabers, *and we are all* Homo Ludens; *we normally have both these attitudes within us. The question is to which of these we allow most influence."* (2014, p. 66).

In my mind, however, the play of *homo ludens* requires the freedom granted by the work of *homo faber* to be considered true play. To be able to *'act according to personal whim and fancy'* you need *'the freedom to act as a human'*, which is only possible in *"the solidity and relative permanence of made things"* (McGowan, 1998, p. 43). In that sense, I agree with Arendt, that the work of *homo faber* is what enables our humanity, even if it does not define it. I believe that creativity and creation is one of the strongest outlets for a playful mind. To Sara Westin the opposite of play is utility, but things can be both at once. There is joy and play in creation, in a free exploration of expression and ideas.

As evidence of this we need look no further than the creations of the original *homo ludens*: our own selves as children. Children are the symbol of the truly free thinker, with an unsullied mind capable of understanding beyond the reach of adults. As Tom Sandqvist puts it: *"That is: children are generally more alive than adults thanks to not having 'dry' adult knowledge"* (1998, p. 10). As adults *"[we] don't see the trees for the forest"* (Sandqvist, 1998, p. 9).

   And maybe that why the architect's story starts with her childhood. As we create, we take inspiration from that time when we were able to truly experience the joy and play of creation.

'A splash of grey'

46. Pouf

An ongoing project is like a promise. It's a promise of something else, it's a promise of something new, it's a promise of something better. What you're working on still has potential, the result can still become the best thing you've ever made.

An ongoing project is hard to finish because it's like a promise not yet broken. What if the result doesn't live up to the potential it used to have, your expectations of what it would become? What if the promised else, new, better instead turns into more of the same or, even, worse?

The idea of the pouf came to me as a whole, ready-made. The styrofoam was left over from making the prototype desk and I had seen the grey batting when I'd been out to buy supplies earlier. The idea didn't strike like lightning, it was just there, obvious and as clear as day. I figured, how hard could it be? The list of required shopping was short and it would take minimal labour and effort. I set out, to gather the things and to get started.

It took me two weeks to finish the pouf. I trudged along, dragging my feet. I shaped the styrofoam, cut the padding down to size and glued it on. But then I thought back to the desk. The pouf was now functional, same as the desk had been. What would be the point in adding more to it? To make it pretty? Would that be creating for the sake of creation? Is beauty a value in and of itself? And if so, what if I broke that promise of beauty?

It's easy as an architect to develop a fear or working, a fear of breaking that promise. Roger K. Lewis calls it *pencilphobia*, a reluctance to commit to an idea as *"a defense, a way of avoiding the risk of failing, of being criticized."* (1985, p. 71-72). Even with a promise and potential of else, new and better, creating *nothing* seems preferable to creating something *bad*.

An ongoing project is a promise not yet broken, but a broken promise is one not fulfilled. Creating nothing might seem preferable to creating something bad, but at the end of the day both will leave you *without*. There is joy in creation, and there is pain. There are times when the promise will be broken, times when ideas will fall apart in your hands, when changes will ruin a good thing, when all you're left with is expensive scraps in the bin. But what of the other times, when you get just what you had been promised?

Finishing the pouf took a leap of faith, but in the end, it turned out exactly how I had imagined it, if not better. But more than anything I was no longer *without*, but *with*.

    There is joy in creation, not only in the playfulness it offers, but in the act itself. As an art educator quoted by Tom Sandqvist puts it: *"We feel joy when we leave traces behind! Traces of our bodies. We feel good when we can see that we exist!"* (1998, p.10). It is, as James Dodd writes, a *"traditional philosophical [theme] having to do with the relation of finite mortal life to the transcendent patterns of cosmic and historical existence"* (2017, p. 30). Dodd, however, goes on to also point out that *"fragility belongs to the essence of the durability of things"* (2017, p. 31). Part of the value we place on made things stems from their permanence, the traces of our bodies and our existences that they represent. Another part stem from their impermanence, their transience, the fact that we could lose it all in the blink of an eye. We treasure made things because they will always be there, and because we will inevitably lose them.

A promise is a promise because it enables things that we shouldn't be able to have. A promise is a promise, precisely *because* it can be broken; otherwise it would simply be a plan. That's why the promise of the ongoing project entices us and that's why it terrifies us. There is joy in creation, and there is pain. The two are intrinsically linked, enabling and feeding into one another. There is joy in creation, and you have to suffer through the pain to get there. That just makes it all the more joyous, in the end.

19. *White clay*

23. *Bone folder*

24. *Acrylic paint thinner*

25. *Varnish*

26. *Stipple sponges*

27. *Acrylic paints*

28. *Palette*

31. *Terracotta clay*

32. *Pottery tools*

33. *Rolling pin*

40. *Acetone*

44. *Acrylic pouring medium*

45. *Acrylic paint*

48. *Resin*

59. *Gilding size*

III. Honesty

"We can and must analyse the ambiguities of our time and strive to plot a course through them which we can follow truthfully and in all conscience"
(Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 81)

'Lost a few brain cells to this'

41. *Pen bowl*

I originally didn't want to become an architect. I originally just wanted to live in a beautiful house surrounded by beautiful things. The issue was that there were so many beautiful houses and so many beautiful things, that I quickly realized that I would never be rich enough to own all of them. I watched *Grand Designs* every day after school and ooh'd and aah'd and hemmed and hawed. I was just about to open a savings account for a future house fund when the idea struck me. As a private person I would never be able to design more than one beautiful home, but as a professional, as an architect, I could design and experience hundreds.

When I started architecture school though, I quickly learnt that there's no such thing as a pretty thing. Things cannot be pretty for the sake of being pretty, they need to be well-argued. *'I liked it'* is not a reason good enough to justify your design. As Yael Reisner writes on our *"troubled relationship"* to beauty: *"Indeed, architectural discourse is dominated by the commentary of almost every aspect of the architectural process except aesthetics"* (Reisner, 2010, p. 12). Admiring beauty is *"adoring empty vessels rather than admiring 'content' produced by intellectual activity"* (Reisner, 2010, p. 14).

And yet, beauty is considered one of the cornerstones of architecture, defined as one of three main characteristics of good design by Vitruvius. Ever since ancient times we've had an established notion of beauty in the West, based upon unity, truth, symmetry and harmony (Sandqvist, 1998). The rules of architectural beauty aren't as rigid today as they have been historically, but we still value symmetry, proportion and composition, and regard them as aspects that make up the beauty of a building. What is then the opposite of beautiful? Tom Sandqvist explores this in his book *Det fula* (*'The Ugly'*, 1998). The ugly is that which is not unified, true, symmetric or harmonic. It is imperfections and flaws, that threaten all beauty with its imposing, engulfing ugliness, reminding us of the imperfections and flaws of the world (Sandqvist,

1998). The beautiful is the order and structure of the *Eye* while the ugly is the chaotic reality of the *Body*.

Of course, not everyone subscribes to this notion of beautiful and ugly. Assemble give their projects what *AnOther magazine* calls a *"make-shift aesthetic"* (Johnson, 2015). Kristina Schultz also speaks of the aesthetic of the hand-crafted items of her thesis as an important design element (Blomberg, 2015). While there can be ugliness in imperfection and flaw, there can also be beauty. There is a character and a story in the uniqueness of a hand-made object that cannot be replicated, even in another hand-made object.

As Yael Reisner writes, the discourse in architecture *"is dominated by the commentary of almost every aspect of the architectural process except aesthetics"* (2010, p. 12). Still, most eras have their prescriptive vision of aesthetic principles. In the words of Garry Stevens:

> Of course *a building must be proportioned according to principles derived from the human body (Vitruvius)*. Of course *a bank must have a Renaissance façade (Beaux-Arts)*. Of course *Gothic is the architecture of the industrial age (Viollet-le-Duc)*. Of course *we must have white walls*. Of course *there must be no decoration*. Of course *a building should express its function. (1998, p. 99)*

Yet, what Reisner remarks upon after her research is the diversity of opinion (2010, p. 21). Some will find the beautiful beautiful. Some will find the ugly beautiful. Still, we all end up with a dominating vision on the aesthetic principles, while we're busy discussing all the other *'aspects of the architectural process'*.

I didn't originally want to become an architect, but I did want to create beautiful homes. In my five years at architecture school I don't know if I have. I tried again now, in this thesis, to create beautiful things. The pen bowl was my first attempt. Is it beautiful? Is it ugly? Neither? Both? I don't know. At the end of the day I look at my bowl, and it makes me happy. Can that be enough?

51. Miniatures

Part of the abstraction of the *Eye of the Architect* is the removal of the user and all traces of real life. As previously stated, it's no coincidence that that architectural photography mostly features seemingly uninhabited spaces (Hill, 2003, p. 21). The drawing and the image exist within the realm of the *Eye* and espouse all the structure, order and sterility that demands.

At first glance the model would seem part of the realm of the *Body*: solid, tangible and present in its three-dimensionality. But frequently the architectural model is just as abstracted as its corresponding drawings, just another medium for the architect to express the perfection of the form. In that sense the models are the true *'empty vessels'* of architecture, hollow boxes void of all the trappings that make as real building real.

The first models we come across in life are the toys we play with as children. As model-making goes, they're hardly perfect: not always to scale, not always a perfect representation of the object it mimics. They are often poor imitations of the real-life objects, good enough only for children to be convinced of their realness. And yet they provide us with an entry point into the world of our parents, into the real world of the adults.

As model-making goes, the toys we play with as children are poor imitations of the real thing, but they help us understand the world. The life within a child's dollhouse shows a great deal of empathy for the lived experience of space. Probably more so than any model I've made during my years at architecture school.

'A constant companion'

17. *Notebook*

Every year, at the start of every semester, I've gone out and bought a new notebook. Not because the old one was full, but because this would be the year when it was. I would draw more, all my sketches meticulous and beautiful and at the end of the semester my notebook would be there at the final presentation, right along with my posters and my models. It would be full, to the brim, and a perfect document of my process.

Of course, it never was, but I kept on buying notebooks. This semester was the first time that didn't buy a new notebook, but rather brought an empty one I already owned from home. It's also the first time that I actually filled it. When you're reading this you can no longer tell, but most of this thesis has been written and worked out by hand. The notebook is not neat; it's scribbled, it's crossed out, it's arrows pointing in every direction. It's honestly barely understandable to me, but is, for once, a perfect document of my process. It's not neat and meticulously beautiful, but I guess that's just not what my process is.

Architects seem to be preoccupied with honesty. It's one of the main tenets of Western architectural beauty, and we apply it to things beyond the purely visual. All materials should be solid, for an honest materiality. The structural principle of the building should be somehow visible, for an honest structure. The building should never claim or appear to be something it's not. A dishonest building becomes not only ugly, but usually also bad architecture.

Yet, as architects we lie all the time. Who hasn't fibbed a perspective that just didn't seem to work out in the way you expected? Who hasn't scaled furniture to fit more neatly into the plan, who hasn't post-rationalised a concept diagram or two? The principles of honesty only seem to apply to the architecture we create, and not to our practice.

Some of the lies we tell are those kinds of falsehoods and half-truths. Some of the lies we tell are by omission. When we avoid certain topics within the architectural discourse, we are in a way lying because we are not telling the truth. There are do's and don'ts in architecture, but we never talk about them. There is culture and collective dreams, but we never discuss them. We preserve the *status quo* and trudge along in the footsteps of our '*father-figures*'. The hegemony of the *Eye* prevails and the *Body* remains in the shadows.

When this thesis started I felt like I was the only one left behind as all the other boats headed for shore. My peers weren't my peers, but my superiors; they all had things under control and I was the only one who hadn't yet figured out how to become an architect. Everyone else was living the universal experience of architecture school, and I was alone in the dark. As I've worked I've more and more come to realise that the real universal experience of architecture school is that we all have times when we feel alone; when we feel like we're the only ones who don't understand.

But when we do, we tend gloss it over, we pretend that's not the case; we lie by omission. What Yael Reisner discovered in her inquiry into one of the oft-ignored aspects of architectural discourse was diversity in the answers she got to her questions. As architects we have diverse opinions on architecture, but for the sake of preserving the perceived universality we tone it down and conform.

In *The Favoured Circle*, Garry Stevens writes about the semi-autonomy of the field of architecture. He points out that architects are often criticised for considering themselves to be artists who demand too much freedom to express themselves, but argues that what the field actually needs is *more* autonomy. In the semi-autonomous field only the '*father-figures*' have the influence to direct the discourse, leaving the rest of us with the task of balancing the incompatible demands from within and without the field (Stevens, 1998, pp. 94-96).

If we as architects strived to be honest not only in our aesthetics but also in our practice, our possibilities to express ourselves honestly in our aesthetics would expand as well.

In the beginning of this thesis I focused on being honest with myself, to become myself to become an architect. I focused on being honest with myself in who I wanted to be, what I wanted to do and how I wanted to work. But this thesis is about also being honest with you, the reader. In the introduction I wrote that it is my sincere hope and genuine belief that this thesis, though personal, can trigger reflections on your own story of becoming, or being, an architect. In order to do that I need to be honest with you about all aspects of my work, to appeal to the universality in diversity.

I think we owe it to ourselves as architects to be honest with ourselves, and we owe it to others to be honest with them, to grant them that same opportunity.

34. Clay samples

35. Letter rack I

41. Pen bowl

56. Banner

57. Fruit bowl

58. 'Chat' bowl

46. Pouf

47. Brush holder II

49. Coasters II

60. Letter rack II

50. Models

51. Miniatures

54. Flags

Riches

"[A process] starts where the architecture student develops at a personal level. The process is driven by the common goal that the students have: to become architects."

(Hentilä, 1993, p. 2)

1. Carpet

2. Glue bottle
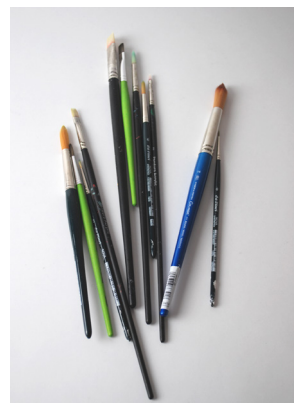

3. Glue stick

4. Masking tape

5. Knife

6. Cutting mat

7. Pens

8. Pen box

9. Brushes

10. Watercolour paper

11. Water cup

12. Mugs

13. Tea

14. Artificial sweetener

15. Calendar

16. Mock-up

17. Notebook

18. Socks

19. *White clay*

20. *Steel ruler*

21. *Super glue*

22. *Twine*

23. *Bone folder*

24. *Acrylic paint thinner*

25. *Varnish*

26. *Stipple sponges*

27. *Acrylic paints*

28. *Palette*

29. *Coaster I*

30. *Desk I*

31. *Terracotta clay*

32. *Pottery tools*

33. *Rolling pin*

34. *Clay samples*

35. *Letter rack I*

36. *Sand paper*

37. *Small box*

38. *Medium box*

39. *'Tripod'*

40. *Acetone*

41. *Pen bowl*

42. *Plant*

43. *Brush holder I*

44. *Acrylic pouring medium*

45. *Acrylic paint*

46. *Pouf*

47. *Brush holder II*

48. *Resin*

49. *Coasters II*

50. *Models*

51. *Miniatures*

52. *Paper clips*

53. *Desk II*
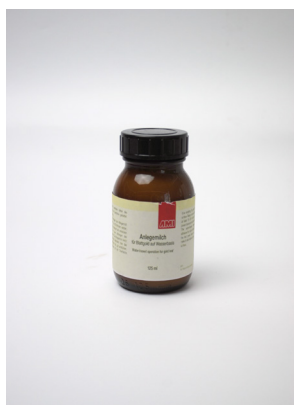
54. *Flags*

55. Bunny

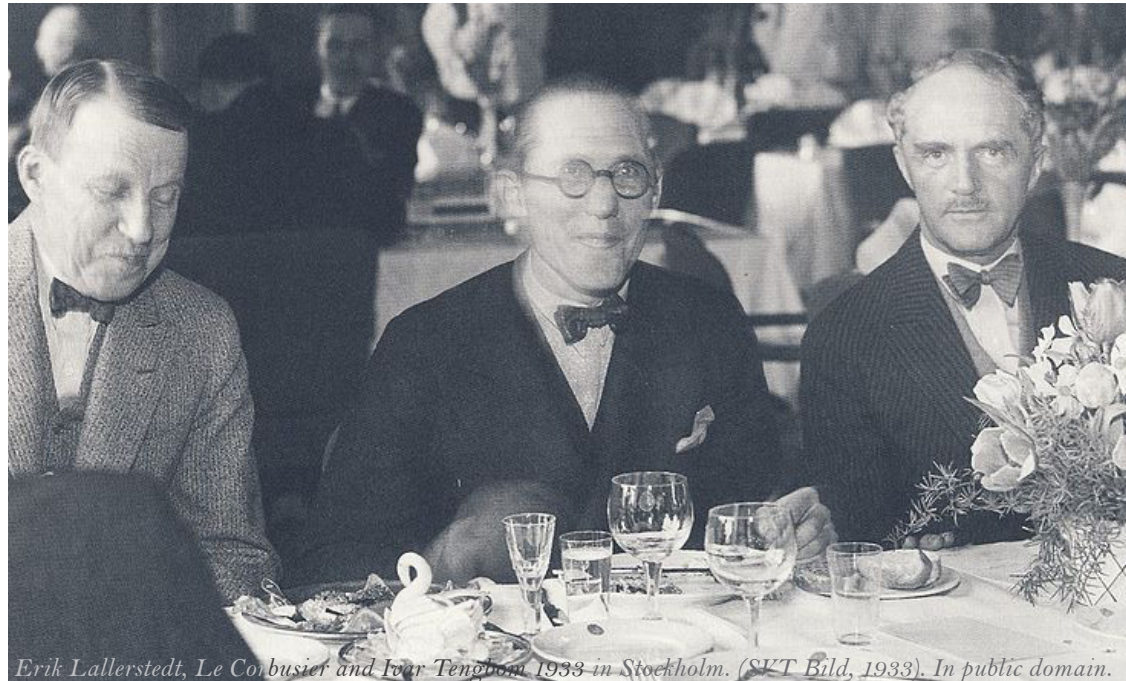*56. Banner*

57. Fruit bowl

58. 'Chat' bowl

59. Gilding size

60. Letter rack II

Erik Lallerstedt, Le Corbusier and Ivar Tengbom 1933 in Stockholm. (SVT Bild, 1933). In public domain.

'My own woman'

Conclusion

As any architect can tell you, a building is only ever as good as the foundation it's built on. I think for the architect that foundation, like Zumthor and Pallasmaa have already pointed out, lies in the personal and in the individual. Your designs inevitably originate from you and thus need to be built from you; You the architect needs to be constructed from You the person.

The architect I used to be was not. It was a house of cards, a very carefully constructed house of cards, but a house of cards all the same. When that gust of wind finally hit, it all collapsed, crumbling down to the ground.

This thesis has been an attempt to rebuild, better and stronger, to find that personal and individual foundation to become an architect. The three aspect I've pondered and rediscovered as part of my attempt have become the three chapters of this thesis: *Identity*, in terms of gaining confidence in your own self and forging your own path; *Joy*, in terms of finding a fulfilling and rewarding method of working; *Honesty*, in terms of developing and openly communicating your individuality. There is another fourth theme, that's been a constant throughout the whole thesis and runs as an undercurrent through all chapters: that of childhood.

The foundation of the architect lies not only in the personal and individual, but as Zumthor specified: *"[the] roots of our architectural understanding lie our childhood, in our youth; they lie in our biographies"* (1996/2011, p. 38), and those roots need to be carefully nurtured during the education lest they be crushed under the millennia of culture, collective dreams and expectations, stunting our growth into architects.

I noted in the first chapter that the story of the architect starts in her childhood, but why does it start there? I wrote in the second chapter about the joy and play of creation that we feel as

children and in the third chapter about how that play allows us to understand something of the world. The child persists as the symbol of the truly free thinker, perhaps especially within creative fields like architecture, but why do we so often express a preoccupation with regaining something of our own childhoods? Why do we wish to be inspired and let our roots take hold in our biographies? Perhaps we gleaned something of that, too, in chapter two: in the permanence and transience it offers. We can forever try to eternalise our childhood, but it will remain forever lost to us. Youth is, as they say, wasted on the young, and wisdom, equally so, on the old. Like durability and fragility, they are two sides of the same coin, simultaneously creating and destroying each other. The roots of our architectural understanding lie in our biographies because childhood is the only way to grow old, and childlike play is the only way to grow wise.

Another ubiquitous theme has been that of the *Eye of the Architect* and the *Body of the Flâneur*, based on the writing of Sara Westin. This kind of division into our rational side and our sensing side, has a long history within Western philosophy, stemming from Cartesian mind-body dualism. This thesis quite clearly positions *Body* above *Eye*, and presents is a truer way of interpreting the world. Ultimately, however, I'm not a proponent of dualism. I don't believe in the either-or dichotomy, I think that both influence each other in a way where they cannot be separated. We are both our minds and our bodies. The favouring of *Body* over *Eye* in this thesis was rather based on the fact that it was the side of me that was underdeveloped and needed more nurturing to reach its full potential.

I do feel, however, that in my work *Body* and *Eye* do sometimes function as parallel entities rather always than one and the same. At the start of this thesis I looked at my former sketching as working with *Eye* over *Body*, but looking back now, the issue was perhaps rather that I was trying to combine them in an incompatible way. My sketches were to be both well-considered and sensuous, both thinking and feeling all at once. In this thesis, even as I've favoured *Body*, my *Eye* has never stopped working. It's present in the writing, in my thoughts on the work of my *Body*. And perhaps that is a better way for me, to keep the two working within their own domains: *Body*, with my hands making my models and miniatures; *Eye*, with my hands scribbling away in my notebook. In that sense, this thesis is not favouring one over the other or forcing them to meld, but rather balancing and synthesizing the two.

The name of this thesis is *Rags to Riches*, chosen to represent the transformation I desired at the start of the semester in my views on architecture and my future professional life. I'm also not above

good pun, the idea of starting from a just rag rug and ending with a wealth of objects. After my work in this thesis I have achieved the aforementioned riches. I've found all I had previously lost, and along the way I've developed not only as an architect but also as a person. There is, however, one major difference between the idiomatic rags to riches and mine. In the phrase the newly rich are implied to have left their former rags behind, separating themselves from their backgrounds. My work has centred around no longer fighting my background and instead embracing it. My rag rug is still there as the symbolic base of my workspace, and my biography is the new foundation of my architectural and creative understanding.

A scrutinizing eye will have noticed that not all objects featured in the complete list have appeared in the corresponding chapter lists. While all the objects I have gathered in my workspace do hold importance and meaning to me, not all have been a part of giving me a deeper understanding of my views on architecture. A lot of those objects were the brought objects, the things I already owned and that have in some cases been with me for all five years of my architecture studies. They didn't give me any deeper understanding but have still been equally important to the realization of this thesis. They are the unsung heroes of this thesis, in the same way that rags is the unsung hero of architecture.

If you've read this far, something must have caught your attention, and something must have led you to keep on reading. Still, it's possible that you're still wondering about the relevancy, point or purpose of this thesis. I could try to convince you, in the same way I tried in the *Introduction*. I could wax poetic, I could quote Vitruvius on the importance of architects writing, I could quote Hesse and Bachelard on the freedom found in absurdity, I could write pages upon pages in defence of my own work.

But I won't. Because honestly, if you're still having doubts I can't blame you.

As my work has progressed, I've had more and more doubts myself about what I was doing. The first couple of weeks were the most challenging, but at the same time it felt like I was doing the right thing for the first time in a long while. As I kept working and settled into my new role, the work got easier, more fun and rewarding, but at the same time I questioned the thesis more and more. Was this a missed opportunity? Had I squandered my chance to make the best project I'd ever made? I looked at the projects being worked on around me and they all seemed so worthwhile. My peers had firmly grasped this unique opportunity to follow their own interests and hearts and had gained so much new knowledge that I had missed out on. I wondered

if I had made a mistake in not designing a building, during the one chance, possibly ever, I'd had to make it completely my own.

A few weeks before this thesis ended my sister asked me to design a summer house for her. We had jokingly talked about it before, planning for a distant future, for when we were older and wiser. This time, however, we sat down and actually talked about what the house would be, bouncing ideas and visions. It was as close to a business meeting as two sisters chatting in a childhood bedroom can get. Of course, even if it felt serious this time, I don't know if it's actually going to happen. There's no plot, and no money to even buy one. Still, I can't help but wish that it will. I'm itching to make volume studies, to research local histories, to pick out tiles and taps and trim.

To me, the ever-growing doubts in my thesis are, paradoxically, the sign that it was absolutely the right thing to do. I remember how I felt before this thesis started, when I plummeted into the ocean as the other boats sailed past. Before the thesis started I felt utterly incapable of design, the mere idea of creating a building filled me with a paralyzing sense of dread. The fact that I'm now excited at the prospect, tells me that this was exactly what I needed to do.

So, is this it then? Did I finish my journey; did I reach the shore; did I become an architect? My answer is neither yes nor no. For one, I still feel trepidation mixed in with the excitement over designing the summer house. I don't know if I'm prepared for the task, if I feel like I know enough. After this thesis I've also come to wonder if I ever will. Some would say that going to architecture school is how you become an architect, and maybe that the only reasonable answer you can give. I think a keen mind is never done. An architect should be ever eager to learn, and if you are, you will never truly reach the shore. Wherever you debark will only be a step on the way to your next destination.

I'm still bobbing along in the ocean. The shore is still some ways to go, and without a boat I don't have much choice but to drift and see where the current takes me. But the sea is calm and the skies clear. I might be mistaken, but the horizon seems to be drawing closer…

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