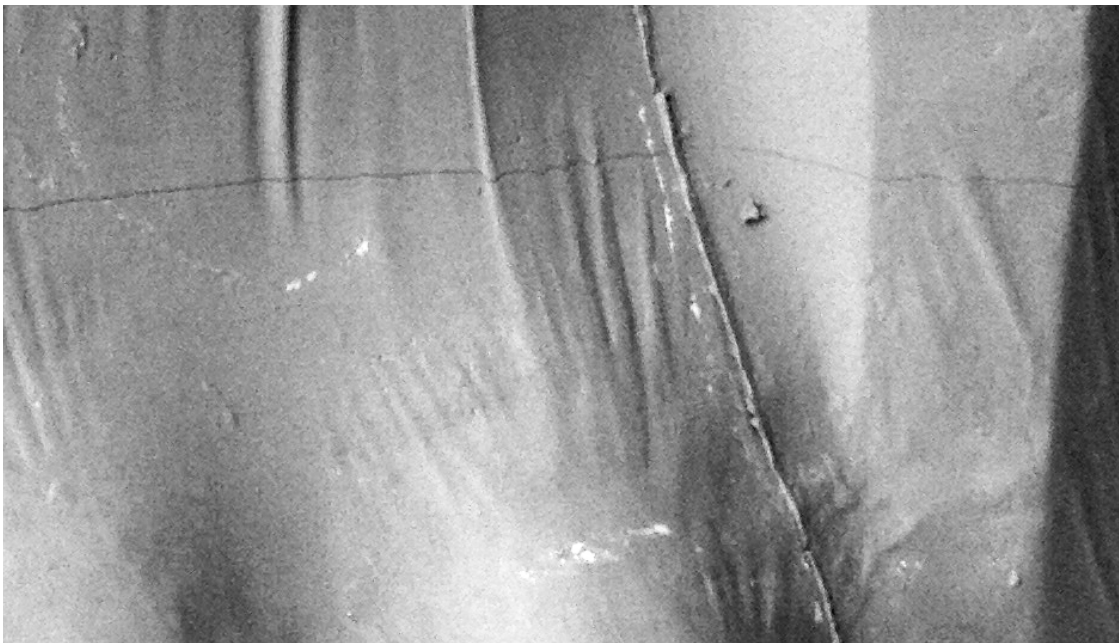


TIMELESSBAG
MADE TO BE DIFFERENT!



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1.1 INTRODUCTION

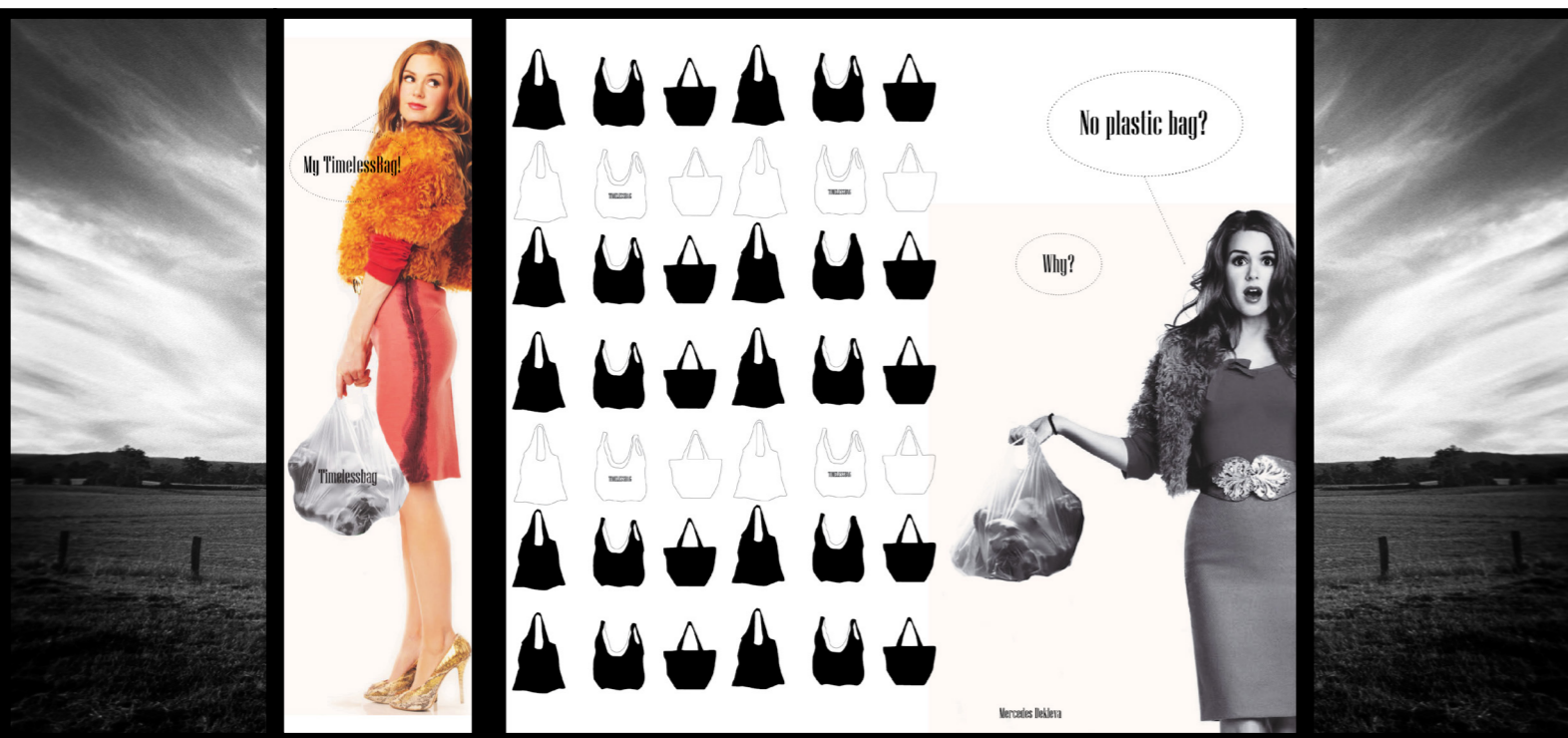
I wonder how an artist can raise awareness in society using own skills and aesthetic values. Being a ceramist has very little to do in the fight for the environment, even though many artists have the sensitivity towards nature. Ceramics can last forever and therefore every piece of ceramic art that lives long can be a reflection of previous years.

I am interested to make an object that makes people aware of environmental issues. I was thinking what object can serve as an icon for environmental pollution. I thought about plastic bags. In our society it perceives as something that does damage to nature and wild life. There is a lot of information on the internet that people exposed to on daily basis. Like pictures of swimming bags in the ocean, birds that died because they ate plastic and etc.

My aim is to show a contrast between very temporary (plastic bag) and permanent object (ceramic art piece). Plastic bag is something that we usually use once but its life continues after elsewhere. Piece of art, especially from such a durable material as ceramics, is permanent and usually stands in a gallery for observation. It can break any moment though and become a waste, like a plastic bag.

1.2 MY APPROACH

The main task of our existence is creation, which is the air that our intuition breathes. It is our fingerprint which beams us out to somebody who is watching us from the outside. It gives an insight to our little world. Its process is like a conversation between the material, the clay and us. We call something non-existent into existence. These masterpieces are always honest and they are never copies. They are real fingerprints which are not to be adulterated. They contain all information about us. Although it is hidden, the experts can decipher the message from them. They are mirrors about us to a hidden inner world. The path of our lives is set already; we only have to walk on it. Our goals are already determined, which we can achieve and fulfill by diligent and constant work. My task is to walk on this path which brings me step by step closer to the finish line, to my mission. I started my path with ceramics at the age of 13, and I have been a lover of clay and design since then.



o.image

1.3 TIMELESSBAG

I decided to express a plastic bag in a clay sculpture. The aim is to point to a problem and make people think about temporary item that becomes a statement, a reflection of our time and society. I have named it Timeless Bag because of several associations: It's made of clay and it can last for thousands of years. "Plastic bags degrade after 1000 years."¹ We also see the plastic bags all around after their use is not relevant anymore. We think about that they pollute our environment after they have no use anymore. Sculpture is not usable as well. It's a statement and a trigger for thoughts or discussion.



1.image



2.image



3.image



4.image



5.image

¹ <http://www.statisticbrain.com/plastic-bag-statistics/>

2. MAIN THESIS

During my process I used several thesis except the plastic bags problem. I was thinking about gravity and how plastic bag can change according to its content. I was wandering what makes us curious to look on objects and how a sculpture can provoke curiosity. It is very important that the eyes of the observers will stuck more than for two seconds on the art piece in order to provoke reflective thoughts."I was looking at pop art where there was use of everyday objects as art pieces."²

2.1 Plastic bags

"The dark side of our rich society is all the waste we produce. Nonetheless, waste represents a major environmental problem and a challenge in terms of values. Plastic bags are rarely made out of environmentally friendly materials; by using them we are increasing more problems. It is one of the most dangerous substances to our environment. It seems silly that plastic bags could do so much harm. First of all, plastic bags litter the environment. Forests, rivers, lakes, and oceans are littered all over the world. Wind carries these bags to everywhere. We are destroying our own planet and most people do not even realize the harmful effects of these bags."³

"Today, supermarkets in Sweden earn 430 million kronor a year selling plastic bags at the checkout, for people to load their groceries into. Reporters asked Ingmar Kroon about this situation and he has an idea how to solve this problem. Maybe if bags would cost much more than "people would be more willing to reuse the same plastic bag several times but we haven't tested that," he says. He thinks that appropriate price for a plastic bag should be not one-and-a-half or two kronor. There is a survey of 1,000 people, 4 out of 5 said they wouldn't use more bags if they were cheaper."⁴

² https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/pop-art ³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plastic_pollution

⁴ <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2054&artikel=5526272>

2.2 Gravity and transformation

Gravity or gravitation. These words were important key words. I started to think about how it is possible to express this theme in an art piece.

"In fact all physical bodies attract each other"⁵. Obviously gravitation is the one of the most necessary elements in our world. It's as important as the air. Without it we can't live.

I found very fascinating movements and transformations in objects that respond to gravity. It is especially interesting when one object pulled by other. What happens to lighter object when the heavier pulls it and how it transforms. We can also recognize objects by their gravity. And we know how certain weight affects the material its pulling. That's when I started to think about bags. When a bag lifted from the ground and we see the contours of objects inside we can approximately know what weight they have and assume what these objects made from. There is a difference between glass bottle in the bag or lighter plastic bottle. These things we can mostly see in plastic bag. Plastic, unlike fabric, stretches to the heaviness of the objects.

The weight of an object is usually taken to be the force on the object due to gravity. So weight is also depends on gravitation. A bag full of products can symbolize how the gravitation and mass work together and how they affect the bags' shape. The bags' shape can transform according to the components inside it.

2.3 Everyday things

Reflection of simple situation, like groceries in a plastic bag, through art object can emphasize its importance. In the previous century the material for grocery bags wasn't the same. People were using baskets or other non-transformable containers to bring groceries home. Now a plastic bag associated with buying in the supermarkets. It is our main necessity to bring home the products. It is interesting how new materials which become part of our everyday life can affect our observation and perception.

5. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gravitation>

I was looking in to pop art to find out more about how different pop art artists used every day things or packaging.

Reproductions of banal objects in art nowadays usually connected with Jeff Koons's name and Pop Art. It is based on Irony and Parody. Pop art employs aspects of mass culture, such as advertising, comic books and mundane cultural objects. It is widely interpreted as a reaction to the then-dominant ideas of abstract expressionism, as well as an expansion upon them. And due to its utilization of found objects and images it is similar to Dada. Pop art is aimed to employ images of popular as opposed to elitist culture in art, emphasizing the banal or kitschy elements of any given culture, most often through the use of irony. It is also associated with the artists' use of mechanical means of reproduction or rendering techniques.wikip.

"Jeff Koons is an American artist who use every day object reproduces them in another scale or shows them from an abstract perspective."⁶

Some images which had inspired me:

6.image: julie brookman:

http://www.juliebrookman.com/projects/Glass_Bags.html#1

7.image: jeff koons:

<http://misformust.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/jeff-koons.jpg>

8.image: tapio Wirkkala:

<http://www.pinterest.com/pin/9288742954162405/>

9.image: coosje van bruggen:

<http://kunstgeschiedenis.jouwweb.nl/beeldhouwkunst/20-eeuw1/dada-pop-art>

6. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Koons

2.4 Curiosity

I am interested in that kind of aesthetics when you want to read hidden shapes in objects. I was reading about pleasurable aesthetics and its connection to evolutionary psychology. There are psychological reasons why we find certain shapes attractive. Human beings faced many adaptive problems in order to survive: avoid predators, selecting good food, finding a mate and etc. Psychological mechanisms evolved to solve these problems. Adaptations evolved to serve functions beneficial to our survival. For helping to develop these adaptations it had to be beneficial to humans. That's why we experience aesthetic pleasure when we seek patterns or features which are beneficial to our adaptations. Our senses are gathering information about the world which is beneficial to our survival. It is essential for us to see what is what and distinguish for example a tiger hiding behind the trees. That's how we learned to see unity in variety and vice versa. Because making connections and see order in chaos is beneficial to our survival we experience pleasure in finding these connections. That's why we like crosswords and puzzles and also people and objects that not give everything at once.

Plastic bag that contains objects provokes curiosity. We can partly recognize familiar shapes in wrapped silhouette. It makes our sight stuck for a while, guessing what the rest of the objects are. It is interesting that the objects inside the bag don't exist inside but the observer will still perceive it as a full heavy bag. (Paul Hekkert 2006)⁷

Some images which had inspired me:

10.image: christo and jean claude:

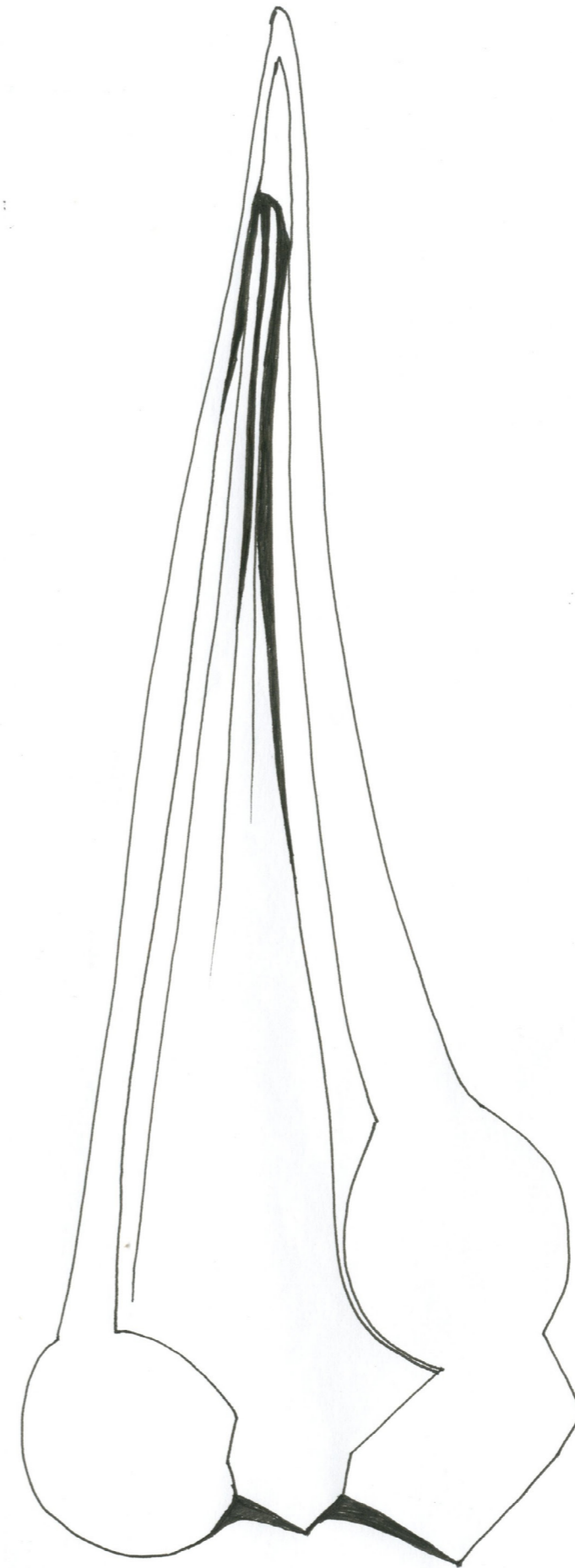
<http://fotodepartment.ru/?p=13416>

11.image: installation:

<http://www.britishwomenartists.com/art-show.php?art=3195#sthash.ApK->

⁷Article: Design aesthetics: principles of pleasure in design. Paul Hekkert.

12..image: my sketch.



3. PROCESS AND METHODS

When I started the making process I was confused about the technical methods. I didn't know which way is the best to produce a clay bag. I have tried different options for achieving the plastic bag feeling. My aim wasn't to copy the bag exactly. I had a vision about an abstract form. I was sketching a lot at that time and imagined how abstract it can be.

Different making methods:

1. Using the real bag and make a negative exactly from it.
2. Sculpturing by hand from an image.
3. Making a negative from the bag and use it as a pressing mold.

I started with the third method. I used a negative shape from the real bag as a pressing tool. I made the negative mold from the real plastic bag that I filled with products and groceries. I chose the thin transparent bag because I needed to have it as thin as possible, because then the content will show more details and I will have more fine wrinkles. I carefully chose which kind of shapes I want to have in the bag. I put some apple and fruits in it but after a while I decided to use a box also to have more different shapes in the bag, a round and a square shapes as well. Meeting points of these different shapes will show more visual conflict and various impressions. It will result more interesting and complex shape.

It was important to use a bigger bag because after firing the model will shrink some percent, depending on the clay's shrinking data.



13.image: my stoneware model



14.image: plastic bag with products



15.image: other stoneware

However in the first piece I didn't think about the size so it became too small. The movement of the bag was more important at that piece. I made it more intuitive but it wasn't successful with the third method. I realized I should make a casting mold.

Despite what I realized I still decided to give the third method a chance. I made one more stoneware sculpture by pressing the clay in to the negative mold. I was aware that this method will give more "hand built" expression, which means not exact surface and not realistic wrinkles. I wanted much more precise surface so I worked around two weeks to achieve the plastic bag wrinkles.



15.image: porcelain modell

The most challenging part was to correct the wrinkles which came out from the pressing form partly destroyed. I needed to work with the surface more and more and fix all the lines. Stoneware was much better choice for this kind of method in comparing with my first built model which was in porcelain and cracked in a lot of different places. I have achieved a desired surface and shape in the second sculpture. I still had some problems with the movement and size. After firing I didn't like the color. It was a dirty beige.

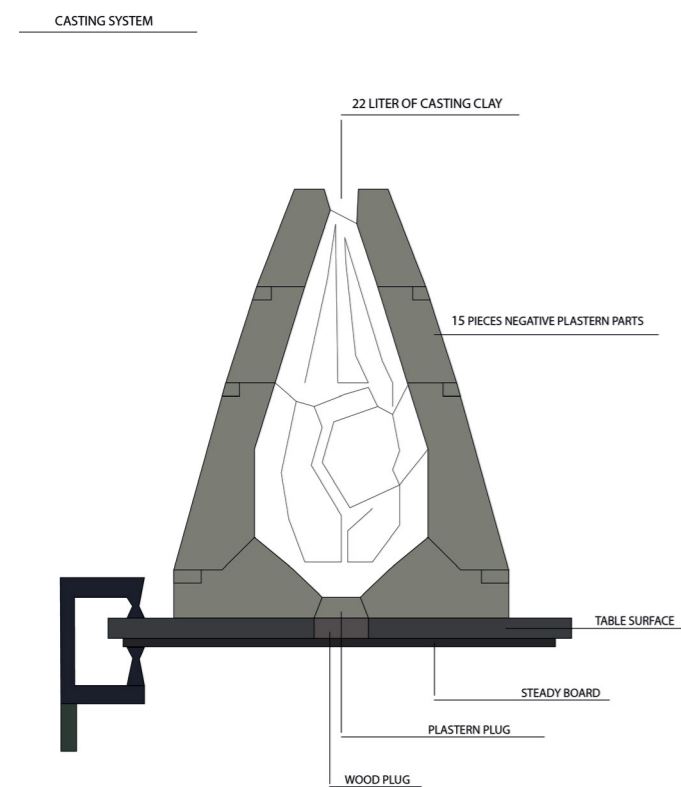


16.image: stoneware modell



As a result I decided to use the casting solution and porcelain. I have decided which products I would like to put in the real bag to make a mold from it. It became a huge bag which weighted around 30 kg.

I hanged it and made negative shapes from each angle. The process was slow. I have used a huge amount of plaster. Afterwards I started to make the rough negative and then I pressed clay into this negative. When I finished my clay model I made another casting negative. Finally my model consisted from 15 different parts and became absolutely huge shape. To fulfill this shape I needed 25 liter of liquid slip clay.



17.image: my illustration of the casting system



18.image: plaster casting mold



19.image: casting moments



Problems: porcelain, pressure, negative walls meetings, material choice.

The first casting surprised me because I wanted to use porcelain clay but it seemed that the porcelain was too sensitive to use for this complex shape. It cracked in the form.

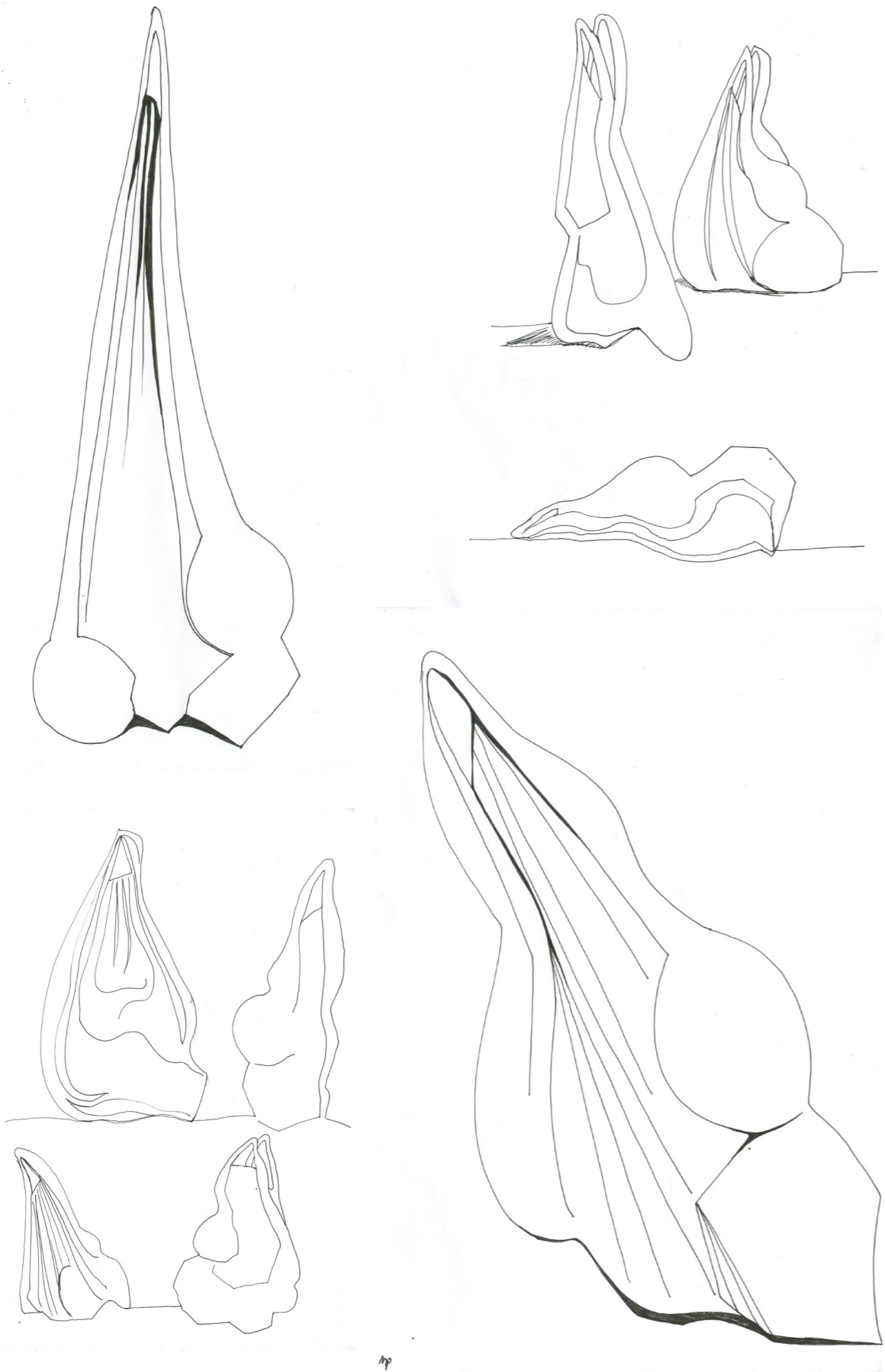
Stoneware was a better choice for casting. I had a problem with casting in this case because my mold was leaking. While casting, the pressure was big and the pieces of the mold weren't perfectly matching. Finally I was able to cast in two steps and join together the two parts.

Next time I would like to be able to cast the whole piece at once.

I tried to use paper clay by using the form as a pressing mold.



20.image: stoneware casted model

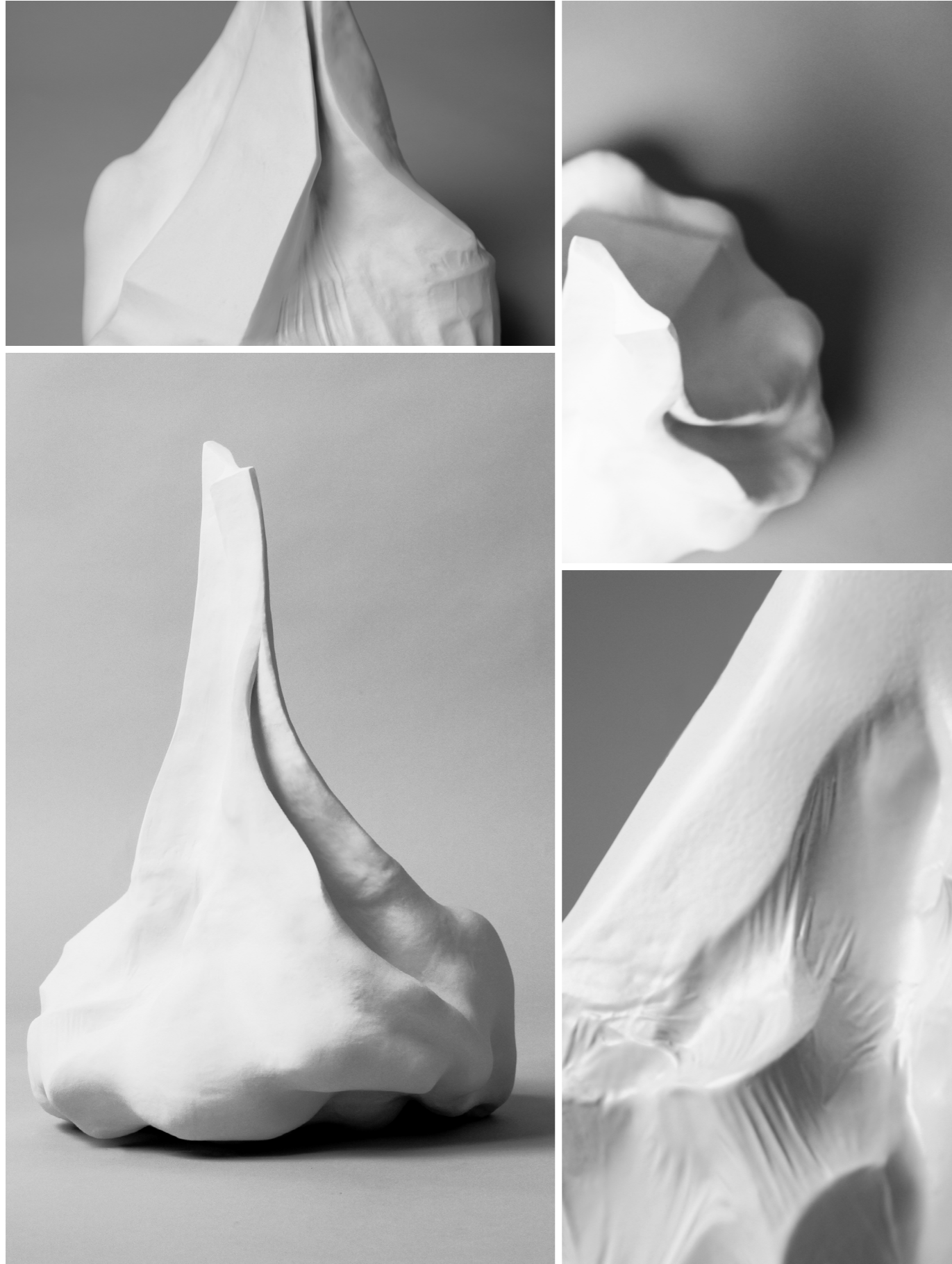


21.image: my sketches

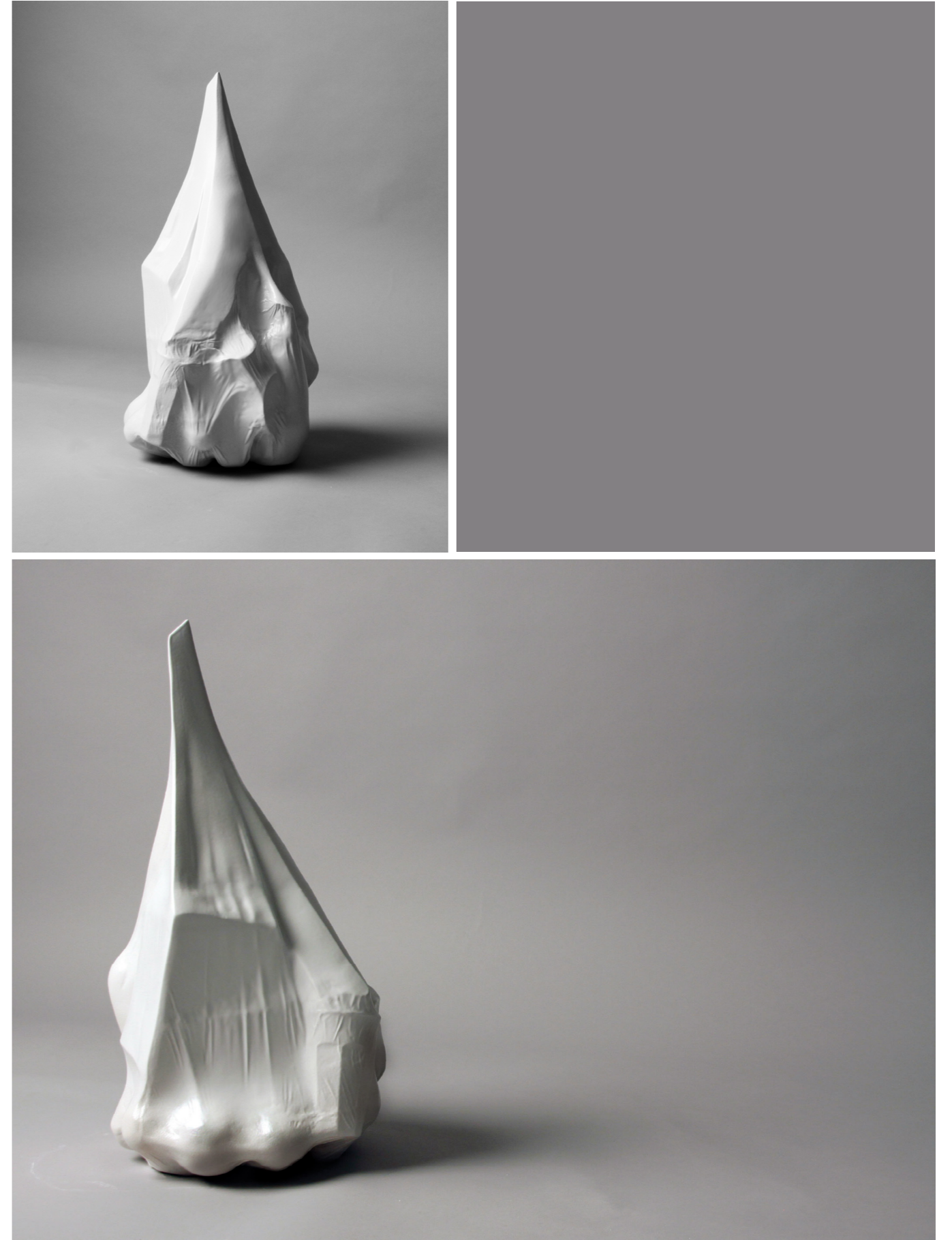


22.image: making process and julie brookman's photos

Paperclay models



Slipcasted model with glaze





4.CONCLUSION

To present my sculpture I will use a pedestalsince it gives a meaning to objects. The things that people have thrown away come to light. It is a meeting between waste and art. My project is a journey from fake expression towards a sculpture. The differences between plastic and porcelain are great, both as regards their properties and social status.

The function of this work is the expression.

This project made me realize how challenging can it be to create plastic bag sculpture in this scale and complexity of forms.The most precious moment is when you realize how much effort you put in a seemingly simple idea. In the future I will continue creating different frozen movements ofbagsin different positions. I would like to make an accent on the content of the bag. Things we buy tell a lot about us. I'm thinking of different bag owners and how I can reflect their personality in a bag sculpture.

4.1 THANKS

I would like to thank my parents and those who helped and supported me during the master project.

Barbara Häggdahl

Mia E. Göransson

Pia Törnell

Joachim Harrysson

Shani Shtaingart

Satu Heikinheimo

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