



HDK-VALAND – ACADEMY OF ART AND DESIGN

TO DWELL AMONG TREES AND VAESSEN

-Explorations in unknown forests

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Abstract

The subject of my Bachelor thesis is the forest. My relation to the forest, or humanity's relation to nature. My focus is the tension between the forest as welcoming, warm, safe, something that we long for, that we use for recreation and contemplation, to relax. And the forest as frightening, dark, unknown, full of secrets. A place where you can get lost.

With the starting point in my personal experience of the forest I examine this tension, the concept of getting lost and my/our longing for the unknown.

Key words

Forest, lost, longing for the unknown, footsteps, portal, presence, Shinrin-Yoku

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Introduction

“Det finns mitt i skogen en oväntad glänta som bara kan hittas av den som gått vilse”¹.

Tranströmer, T. (1978) In *Sanningsbarriären*.

Since partly moving to Dalsland 2,5 years ago the nature around Dals Långed has had an important impact on me and my daily life. Whenever I feel down, tired, stressed, nervous, out of inspiration or just need a break I take a walk in the forest around school, and it always makes me feel better. I get hold of my thoughts, relax and find inspiration. I long to get out in the forest, and I also think that I need the forest to stay healthy. But the forest also easily scares me. When I look up and realise that I have lost track of where I am, or when it's getting dark and I don't know how long it will take to get back. Sometimes I just get an uncomfortable feeling of being watched or a feeling of not being alone. Suddenly I don't feel safe and welcome anymore, almost like the forest doesn't want me there.



Fig. 1

¹ *“In the middle of the forest there is an unexpected clearing that can only be found by the one who got lost”, my translation*

1. Background

In the end of year two in my education at Steneby we had a course where I investigated the concept of Shinrin-Yoku, forest bathing in a metal art context. The experience of that course has influenced me a lot and have made me think about my own relation to nature, and the forest in particular. I read a book about relations between religion and nature. The author David Thurffjell, whom I will return to later in this text, has interviewed people about their relation to nature. They speak to him about spirituality and feelings of affinity. They say that being in nature is like coming home, it is a place where you can be yourself.

I find these reflections very interesting; why do we have to go out in the forest to find comfort and to be ourselves?



Fig. 2

1.1 Among trees and vaesen

David Thurffjell (2020), researcher and professor in religious studies at Södertörn University, has done a study where he interviewed people visiting forests and wooded areas near Stockholm and Uppsala about their thoughts and feelings around nature and spending time in nature. The respondents express how they seek away from the city to spend time in nature, and how they there connect with lost memories and dimensions inside themselves. Some of them say that they sometimes get emotionally touched in a deep and intense way, for example by the beauty of the landscape. They describe this as a spiritual feeling or experience (Thurffjell, 2020, pp.31-32). They talk about relations and connections, feelings of affinity with the nature. Some talk about feelings of being connected to something larger, others say that they get a feeling of dissolving as a self when in nature. They also say that being in nature is like coming home. The forest and the trees are just themselves, and then you get to be yourself too. Some of the respondents in Thurffjells study refer to trees as “friends”, or beings they have a relation to. They talk to them, touch them, they feel safe and seen by the trees (Thurffjell, 2020, pp. 40-51).

In the Nordic countries the forest is often seen as a special and mythical place, a haven for recreation, contemplation, healing and inspiration. We like to call ourselves a nature loving people, we say that the relation to nature is an important part of our culture. At the same time, we continuously exploit and kill the forests and the nature around us. Thurffjell talks about the folklore beliefs from times when people believed that nature was inhabited with spirits and vaesen like wood wives, trolls, lantern men, fairies, gnomes and goblins. These vaesen and spirits lived in forests, meadows, in or close to lakes and streams, on mountains, underground and in caves. Some of them were seen as kind and protective, as long as they were not provoked. Others were thought to be sneaky and vicious overall (Rech & Sidén, 2020).

Today these beliefs are just fairy tales and legends. But what if they were true? What if these beliefs were actually knowledge and that these creatures and spirits did exist. And maybe they still do but we have lost the knowledge, we don't understand, we can't see. Maybe we (still) share the world with these vaesen and spirits, and when I'm out in the forest and get this uncomfortable feeling, is there actually something there?

1.2 To become one with nature

Some years ago, in 2015, I went to an opening of three public artworks in central Göteborg. I knew one of the artists and originally, I went to the opening to see her work. But instead, I was absolutely blown away by one of the other artworks. That piece, *Oraklet* (*The oracle*, my translation) by Tilda Lovell has been with me since (Göteborg Konst, 2015). I visit it regularly and I have used it as inspiration and reference throughout my whole education at Metal art. It is a figurative sculpture made in bronze, about 120 cm high. It depicts a small creature sitting on a rock. In front of the figure, you find another rock, where you may sit down. As if to converse with the creature. It is placed at an intersection where several pedestrian streets meet, a little bit in a corner with the cathedral behind it. The creature has a kind of defiant “I take no bullshit” attitude and would never give an answer to why it has risen from the abyss of the sea to sit right there.

The sculpture as a whole is made up of smaller parts, the surface is raw. The parts consist of casted sea animals; clams, shells, small crabs, an octopus shape the hair and a whole fish make up one of the creature's shins. The parts are detailed and nicely casted. It is a swarm of shells and small sea creatures. The parts themselves are beautiful, together they create a whole that feels more raw and rough. From a distance you can't see the small parts. I interpret the creature as a female, and I appreciate how her appearance is raw and grotesque. The creature is “ugly” and does not at all conform to the various norms of how females are expected to look and behave. The sculpture has a clear presence on the site, owns the space. It also has a presence in itself, as if it were alive. I get the feeling that if I sit down there in front of this oracle to ask my innermost questions, I'm sure I'll get true answers, but maybe not the ones I want to hear. Nothing nice or wrapped in kind words, but straight, raw, unpleasant.

This piece speaks to me about something that is on the border between worlds, between human and nature. Something that belongs to another world and just happened to end up here, in a city street in Göteborg. Something that is more nature than human. I wonder if this is what the respondents in Thurfjell's study long for, to become one with nature, to melt together, dissolve, to come home.



Fig. 3-5

2. Purpose

My purpose in this project is to investigate the tension between the forest as a both unknown/frightening and safe/welcoming place. I want to portray this tension through making sculptural objects in organic material, rocks and metal. I hope to convey my experience of the forest as something I long for, need, to be well but that also easily frightens me with its secrets and darkness. I want to indulge myself in the forest, challenge myself to get lost and then find my way back.

3. Objective

My goal with this project is to investigate and experience the forest as unknown and frightening as well as welcoming and safe, and to convey the experience of this tension through an installation of sculptural objects. I want to bring the atmosphere of the forest out of the forest into our urban world. The installation will be made up of three individual parts: footsteps, a portal and presence.

4. Question formulations

How can an experience of the forest as both unknown/frightening and safe/welcoming be portrayed through an installation of sculptural objects?

- How can these objects portray a longing for the unknown?
- How do I get the forestry feeling that I am after while using inorganic material as copper and bronze?

5. Approach

I am going to use the forest bathing/Shinrin-Yoku approach that I learned in the PD course last semester as a method to gather experience. Shinrin-Yoku means being in nature, taking in the forest atmosphere with all the senses, like a slow walk in a park or forest, connecting with it through sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch and in that way bathe in the forest (Friluftsförbundet, n.d.). It could also be called “gå på tur”, hiking or just plain take a walk. I choose the Japanese term because it gives me a sense of it being something more than a walk in the forest, a method or structure to follow that I find helpful and constructive.

I plan to work with bronze casting, copper wire, rocks and organic material that I find in the forest. I want to use material from the forest as inspiration, originals for casting and as part of the sculptural objects.

6. Result of Process

In October 2022 I bought a cottage in Näsinge, outside the small town Strömstad in northern Bohuslän. My small house is surrounded by lakes, mountains and forests. The forests are still unknown to me. On the map I have seen a path going from the road close to my house through the woods to the tip of the nearby lake Färingen. My plan for this project is to take that path to the tip of the lake. From there I will make excursions and longer walks, collect material and practice Shinrin-Yoku. I will return to the same spot by the lake several times and enlarge the area of my explorations around it.

At my first visit in this forest, I outlined three areas of interest that I wanted to work with. The first thing I thought about was all directions, and paths in the forest. Tracks of someone or something traveling through the forest. I wanted to follow all the paths to see where they would go. Sometimes the path I followed just disappeared or split up. I wondered who had walked there before me, where the path leads and where it comes from. I became aware of my own footsteps and my walking. This led me to start working with footsteps.

The next thing I thought about was holes in the ground, small caves, the spaces below the lowest branches on the big pine trees, branches and small trees forming openings and entrances. This made me think about dimensions and rites and raised questions about what I could find on the other side, what happens if I enter one of these entrances, can something from somewhere else enter into my world. I started to collect material to build some kind of portal.

The third part of the installation I call presence. It is the presence of the forest itself, it is also about me, my presence, and it is the presence of *that something* that I sometimes experience in the forest. This can also be about that spiritual feeling that the respondents in Thurfjell's study talk about.

February 18, in the forest at lake Färingen, Strömstad

"It took me about 30 minutes to walk from the house to the place that I had seen on the map and chosen for my project. It was a nice walk; I easily found my way to the lake. When I got there, I found out that I wasn't at all the first one, there was even a small fireplace, a canoe and a few rowing boats laying there. Apparently, I had walked part of an old road from the bronze and early iron age, when the sea was closer, and the lake was part of a shallow bay. At the fireplace there was an information sign about that.

I walked further into to the forest to get away from the fireplace. I crossed a lively stream and followed the lake a bit and then moved inwards/upwards. The area close to the lake is quite steep. After a while I came by an open area with a big rock. I decided to make that as my base. Close to that were also a very John Bauer-looking big rock. I walked around in different directions for about 30-40 minutes, then headed back towards the base.

My first reflection afterwards was that I wanted to walk barefoot next/one time. And I started to think about building a portal".

6.1 Footsteps

6.1.1 Bronze clay experiment

I wanted to do an imprint of someone who had walked or passed by but was no longer here. I started with the imprint of a hand and two footsteps. In my mind I had a picture of a piece of rock with an imprint of a hand. I also wanted to try out the bronze clay that I had bought before. Bronze clay is very fine grinded bronze powder mixed with a binder and water. It is used mostly for jewellery and small work, but I wanted to try to do something bigger.

I used clay to make imprints of my hand and feet, which I then filled with plaster to get the positive form. On that positive form of my hand and feet I worked out a thin layer of bronze clay and left it to dry for about a week. It had to be completely dry before I could fire it.

While drying a lot of cracks appeared so I had to continuously wet it and put on more bronze clay and keep cover/uncovering it to try to fix the cracks. I think they came out of the kiln beautiful and kind of as I wanted, though they were completely cracked and broken. I tried to solder the hand together but that did not work, and that imprint did not survive. The heat was either too cold so the metal did not melt out as it should, or too hot so that the thin bronze just burned up.



Fig. 6

Since I did want to save the footsteps, I contacted a previous master student that I knew had experimented a lot with, and even made his own bronze clay. The clay shrinks when fired, and as I had put it onto a positive form that didn't allow it to shrink it cracked, it was also too thin, and I had ignored the use of activated charcoal that the instruction said was needed. I'm glad that I spoke with him afterward, otherwise I would not have tried, and I learned a lot just from him showing his experiments. In the end I used glue to mend the footsteps and I like how they turned out. Their expression suits my project, dark and cracked, strong and fragile, delicate and raw at the same time.



Fig. 7

6.1.2 Moss experiment

I need more footsteps. Two signals a person standing more than walking, and I want the feeling that someone has walked by. The ground in the forest was covered in lichen and moss and I got the idea to make some kind patches of moss with imprints of footsteps on them. I also remembered hearing about growing moss. So, I started with making more footsteps in clay, covered it with plaster to make moulds and later casted concrete in them. If the moss didn't want to grow on that I thought that I might just use the plain concrete.

With guidance from the book *Mossa. Från skog till trädgård och kruka* by Ulrika Nordström I went out in the forest to collect moss. I harvested only small amounts from the same spot, trying not to harm neither the moss itself nor its environment. At one place some animal had scratched off big patches of moss from the underlying rock, and since it was already loose, I thought that I could take some bigger patches without harming anything. Some of the moss I cleaned and dried and some of it I started to transplant onto concrete with the help of wallpaper glue. The dried moss I grinded and mixed with beer, and then spread that onto the concrete. All according to instructions from the book.

Will the moss survive on the concrete, and start to grow there? I water the moss every day, it stays in the shadow under the table on my balcony. I find the daily care for it comforting and this whole moss experiment fills me with joy. I like how I now have a part of the forest with me even when I'm not there. I'm thinking of returning the moss and the concrete footsteps to the forest when this project is over.

What else of my work would I be willing to leave there? How would it effect the space?



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

6.2 Knitting

I started to get a bit stressed about my project. Was it too big and too sprawling, too diffuse? Would I be able to get it all together or would I end up with moulds and half-finished pieces? I felt that I had to speed up and work simultaneously on all parts at the same time.

I started to knit. I knew that I wanted to use knitted copper wire somehow, and the act of knitting also helps me focus and think. To me the knitted metal wire has the expression of something organic, growing, unstructured and tangled but it also has a structured, industrial cold metal look to it. I appreciate the way I can play with patinas on copper.



Fig. 11

April 6, Oraklet. Kyrkogatan/Korsgatan, Göteborg

It's nice to see you again. I think it's about a year since I was here last time. You look smaller than I remember. I want to sit down and talk to you but there is this couple who also looks at you that bothers me. And a lot of other people in the area. I park my bike at the church and stay around for a while anyway.

I'm working on something. I think it's your sibling. I know the depths and darkness of the ocean is your world. I used to think that was my home too but now I've found the forest. I think I love the forest. It's presence is the same as yours, but also not.

April 12, in the forest at lake Färingen, Strömstad

"Short visit, it is late and will get dark soon. I am tired after a long day in the workshop, but I want to do it today. It's nice and also uncomfortable. The ground is wet and the lichen that covers the ground all over this part of the forest is very slippery. I almost fall several times. I see many fallen trees and some trees that has fallen but keep on living in strange positions. I touch the bark of the trees. I also see tracks of some kind of vehicle, a tractor maybe. I wonder why and how it came up here. The tracks bother me. I don't want to follow them, I don't want them there.

I think about my root for the portal. If my casting doesn't work out I will come back to this place and find another root and use it as it is. Maybe that is a better idea than my original idea.

I head back before I reach my base place, it's too far".

April 14, in the forest at lake Färingen, Strömstad

"I walked into the forest further down this time and did not come by the fireplace at all. It was nice to see the forest in morning light again. The lake looks different here, wilder. The smell of the forest is strong. I don't even remember thinking about smell before.

The light in the forest is grey, the ground is grey. It feels like the forest is longing for spring, to be green.

I brought one of the objects with me, the hand. I wanted to see it out in the forest and also tried to take some photos of it. On a rock, in deep moss, in a small hole below a pine tree, on the ground. Last time when I worked with Shinrin-Yoku, in the PD course, I had this idea of bringing the objects with me to kind of “load” them with the forest, with the experience and I somehow decided to try that again. Does it work? I think it’s an interesting thought and the answer doesn’t really matter.

On my way back I remembered that I wanted to walk barefoot the first time, so I did that now. It just felt a bit cold and prickly. I wonder why I felt so strong about that”.



Fig. 12

6.3 The Portal

My idea is to make a portal with a combination of a rock, casting of a tree branch that I will bend and a tree trunk or a root, also casted in metal. I went out in the forest to collect material for my portal. I came back with a very nice tick, a small spruce and a 2,5-meter branch. In the end I did not use all the material I gathered. I also found an old tree trunk, more like a root of an old tree that I really liked. It was quite big. First, I tried to make a cast of the root with plaster binders on site in the forest, but it was too cold for the plaster and that did not work at all. I went back later with a saw.



Fig. 13

I want to try to cast both the branch and the root directly into metal, and not go through the wax stage. I know it is possible, but I have never tried before. The branch is no problem to figure out how to do it, but the root is tricky. I dream about the root at night. It is too big to do in one piece, it is too big for a ceramic shell casting and it doesn't fit into any of our kiln in school.

Do I have to go somewhere else to do it? I don't want that. A mould in pieces would be possible, but it would be quite a puzzle and a lot of moulds to cast and a lot of welding afterwards. A silicone mould would be easier, but expensive. My first thought was to cast the root in bronze but then I changed my mind and thought that I would try to cast it into aluminium, in one piece. I started to experiment to see if this would be possible. First, I covered the upper part of the root in a plaster-and chamotte mould. My plan was to burn all the wood material away, fill the void with a thin layer of wax and do a ceramic shell mould on that side. Another thought I had was to just fill the whole void with aluminium. Both these options mean that I have one chance. The root will be lost forever if it doesn't work out as I hope.

After some discussions in the workshop, I did try to burn out the wood and then decided to try something else. The plaster mould started to break in the edges when the wood burned. I crashed the plaster mould with a hammer to get it off. A few pieces came off relatively intact, and I got the idea to cast metal into them and try to do the root as a combination of wood and metal. I think tin or pewter would suit this experiment best. Tin has a low melting point; I can melt it in a pot on the kitchen stove and then slowly pour it into the mould pieces.



Fig. 14

I'm struggling with presentation of my work. If I place the footsteps inside of the portal, then the viewer cannot walk through. It becomes more of a scene of something that has happened, not something to interact with. Do I want the viewer to interact with the piece? Or just look at it? What do I want with it?

April 21, Rya Skog, Göteborg

I decide to visit another unknown forest, the nature reserve Rya Skog in my hometown. I have known about it for years but never understood where it actually is. It is very small and secret for a nature reserve, squeezed in among the industries and oil refineries in the harbour. First, I got disappointed, but it passed further in. Anemones all over, happy birdsong mixed with noise from the industries, swamp, old trees.

After a while I got to a clearing with sandy ground. It made me think about Winnie the Poh and the story about a sand pit. They try to “un-hop” the tiger? Or they want to kidnap the kangaroo kid and swap it with Piglet, because? Don´t remember. Sad. Winnie the Poh was one the first books I read as a child.

This is not a place to get lost, it has a clear border to the outer world. The noise , the high buildings outside always in the corner of my eye. Despite that, I manage to take the wrong path twice and end up at a fence.

I brought the knitted copper with me this time. It looked completely out of place.

The place is strange.

6.4 Presence

Papier mâché; newspaper mixed with wallpaper glue, is something that I love working with. The sticky mess of it, how it is just old leftover paper, how it becomes hard and sturdy when it dries. Unless it gets wet again, then it easily destroys. I use papier mâché in moulds of plaster, it becomes like casting paper. As in all casting processes I lose a bit of control over the material and the end result. I don´t know exactly what will happen in the process. It always shrinks a little, it gets a little warped and crooked. When the papier mâché pulp dries it creates cracks and holes in the surface that I think turns out interesting and beautiful. I have casted papier mâché originals into bronze before and I decided to use that technique for the presence part of my exam work.



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

When I am out in the forest, I like to touch it. I like to feel the bark of the trees with my hands, pick up small sticks or pinecones and fiddle with them as I walk, chew on berries or pine needles, crush them between my fingers and smell them. I decide to cast my hand and face as an answer to this. Unlike the casting of the branch and the root for the portal I want a stage in between the original and my object. I use castings of my own hand and face, but I want the result to be something else than a casting of me. When going through the papier mâché stage in between I think that “I” disappear from the result, it is no longer me. It is someone, or something else. When casting the root and the branch for the portal I don't want this stage in between, I want it to be the actual piece of wood that is transformed into the metal directly.

The hand will be on the rock in the portal, carved into it so it will come together with the stone. I want to connect the faces to a knitted copper wire. I want the knitted wire to be hanging from the ceiling and crawl out on the floor. I want the contrast between the long, thin, straight wire reaching high up, as trees reaching up in the sky and the organic, unstructured growing on the floor below. The faces will be somewhere in the middle. I think about bark, or something organic, decomposing. Dark and smelly. I want it to have a feeling of uncertainty, unknown.



Fig. 18

April 25, Dals Långed

I decided to visit a well-known forest, close to school in Dals Långed. I brought my two footsteps with me this time. It felt exactly as it used to. Happy at heart, easy to breath. Then I got overwhelmed by emotions for this place.

Can I come back only to see the forest?

April 25, in the forest at lake Färingen, Strömstad

Late, almost dark. I deliberately take a path I don't know, towards a smaller lake. I want to reach the lake and then go back; I say that is good enough. I push myself further in. A roebuck is calling nearby, black trees, reed, wet. Some trees further away seem to glow as if on fire. Exam stress doesn't leave me. Why do I do this, what's the purpose really? I got my ideas for my work at the first visit in this forest. If I run or hasten my steps, I will be scared. Force myself to walk calm and not think about exam. My eyes unconsciously search for a B-plan root.

It doesn't feel very Shinrin-Yoku-ish at the moment.

April 26, in the forest at lake Färingen, Strömstad

Last visit. I walk through the forest same way as the first time. I get a feeling of recognition, like home. It feels nice. A smell of warm pine reminds me of my grandmother.

Fireplace and the base place with the rock, say hello to the John Bauer troll-rock. Stress leaves me at the road, focus on here and now. A place where I can get lost without getting lost is perhaps what I long for. I want to stay longer.



Fig. 19

I think about the concept of getting lost. The American writer Rebecca Solnit, (2012), talks about the importance of allowing ourselves to get lost, and to keep a door open to the dark and unknown. In her book *Gå vilse. En fälthandbok*, (*A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, original title) she discusses different aspects of how to or how to not, get lost. She also talks about the difference between getting lost and to lose something (pp.10-12). I wonder if we have lost the ability to be lost. Or have we lost the ability to navigate through life and therefor are completely lost all the time?

When you get lost you may find something unexpected, as in the poem by Tranströmer in the beginning of my report, something that you didn't knew you needed, something new and important. But you may also die or never find your way back. It is this balance, to be on the border or in between, the tension between known and unknown, safe and frightening that I find so interesting.



Fig. 20

7. Discussion and reflection

I started my exam process by a long and slow walk in a forest that was unknown to me. My first impressions from that visit were that I wanted to work with footsteps, my own or others, the feeling of some kind of presence and a wish to build a portal. A portal to me is a link that goes between worlds or dimensions, between something that I know and something that is unknown. Something that is inviting and frightening at the same time. As a reference I had the piece *Oraklet* by Tilda Lovell, that I now think about as someone or something that may have passed through a portal like this.

I am glad that I made my first visit to the forest already in February because throughout March and into April the snow was deep, and it would have been difficult to experience the forest. What I didn't think about was that as soon as I had been in that forest once, it was no longer unknown to me. I even know the names of the people who live in the red house where you turn off the road into the forest. We met one day. This is probably why I chose to walk into the forest from different places after that. I wanted to avoid the fireplace that I came to the first time. I was also afraid to run into someone there, I wanted to be alone. Perhaps this is also why I have unconsciously chosen to schedule my visits to the forest early in the morning and in the evening. In the evenings I did it mostly because the dark forest scares me though.

Throughout the process I've been trying to keep the future viewer of my work in mind. Which has been hard. For a long time, there were so much going on inside my head but all that came out were more and more moulds. Will the viewer of my work see or sense what I see, what role do I give to the viewer? What do I want the viewer to see and what do I want from the viewer?

In my purpose I said that I wanted to indulge myself in the forest, challenge myself to get lost and then find my way back. While knitting and working on my castings, I have been thinking a lot about this longing to get a (little bit) lost, to be just on the border between safe and frightening, known and unknown. Solnit says that to never be lost is to not live. We need to get lost to find the important things we don't know we need to find (Solnit, 2012. p. 19). I have also thought about what the respondents in Thurfjell's study say about connecting to their true selves, to nature, to something spiritual while spending time in the forest. Is the problem that we don't get lost, or that we have lost ourselves in a world of hurry and stress? Is that why we need to go out in the forest to think, to be ourselves, feel at home and to have peace to cry?

8. Conclusion and result

My purpose in this project has been to investigate the forest as unknown and frightening as well as welcoming and safe, and to convey the experience of this tension through an installation of sculptural objects. I wanted to bring the atmosphere of the forest out of the forest into the exhibition room. And I wanted to portray my experience of the forest as something that I enjoy, need and long for, but that also easily frightens me with its secrets and darkness. For this project I had chosen a specific, previously unknown part of the large forest close to my newly bought cottage in northern Bohuslän. At my first visit in that forest I outlined three areas of interest: footsteps, portals and presence, and my finished exam work is an installation made of these three parts. My material has been bronze, copper wire and tin in combination with a rock, a birch branch, a root from a pine tree and moss from the forest.

Throughout the process I have spent many hours out in the forest, both known and unknown and I have thought a lot about the concept of getting lost, spirituality in relation to nature and my own feelings of longing, comfort and fear. A while into the process I decided to bring the objects with me out in the forest. The hand, the faces, the knitted wire and the bronze clay footsteps have all been with me in the forest. I think that this adds a value, both to the walks and to the objects. It becomes like amulets, a connection between me and the forest through the objects. My experience canalized through them.

The starting point for my exam project was my personal experience of the forest, but I want to connect my work to the larger context of sustainability of nature, the forest in particular. People commonly say that they love and care about the nature, but we keep ruin the forests and nature around us. But most of all I want to connect my work with the sustainability of ourselves. What kind of world have we created for ourselves when we need to go out in the forest to breathe and think?

Some of the questions that I talked about with my opponent at the exam presentation was my works relation to space, relations between negative-positive and inside-outside. I think these reflections are very relevant to my work, especially since my focus was the tension between safe/welcoming and frightening/unknown. During my work with the castings, I had to consider positive and negative form a lot, to get the right expression. My opponent suggested that I should take the whole exhibition room in consideration for my installation. Putting the parts wide apart, connecting with the whole space around. That would make my work more interesting and as a viewer you would feel more welcome to interact with it, relate to it.

He also pointed out that the two faces are a positive form, and the footsteps are negative imprints. Imprints of something no longer there. He also saw a lot of body in my work about the forest, which is true and something I find interesting. I remember that one of the respondents in Thurfjells study referred to the spirituality he experienced in nature as a bodily experience (Thurfjell, 2020. P. 52).

I think there is a lot more in this subject for me to explore, I find it interesting and relevant. I still want to get lost, in the forest or elsewhere and then find my way back.



Fig. 21

9. Reference list

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10. Image Index

All photos taken by the author.

Fig. 1 Copper hand on tree. A piece from the PD course in year 2. Dals Långed, 2022.

Fig. 2 Knitted copper wire in the forest. From the PD course in year 2. Dals Långed, 2022.

Fig. 3-5 Oraklet. Public art by Tilda Lovell, Göteborg.

Fig. 6 Detail, footstep in bronze clay. HDK-Valand, campus Steneby, 2023.

Fig. 7 Two footsteps in bronze clay, mended. HDK-Valand, campus Steneby, 2023.

Fig. 8 Plaster mould of imprint of footstep. HDK-Valand, campus Steneby, 2023.

Fig. 9 Imprint of a footstep in concrete. HDK-Valand, campus Steneby, 2023.

Fig. 10 Footstep in concrete with moss and bronze clay. Steneby Konsthall, 2023

Fig. 11 Knitted copper wire. HDK-Valand, campus Steneby, 2023.

Fig. 12 The bronze hand laying on a rock. Forest at lake Färingen, 2023

Fig. 13 Sketch of the portal. HDK-Valand, campus Steneby, 2023.

Fig. 14 The root with tin additions. HDK-Valand, campus Steneby, 2023.

Fig. 15 Papier mâché original. HDK-Valand, campus Steneby, 2023.

Fig. 16 Bronze cast. HDK-Valand, campus Steneby, 2023.

Fig. 17 The faces, bronze. HDK-Valand, campus Steneby, 2023.

Fig. 18 The branch, bronze. HDK-Valand, campus Steneby, 2023.

Fig. 19 Copper wire. Forest at lake Färingen, 2023.

Fig. 20 Face in my hand, bronze. Forest at lake Färingen, 2023.

Fig. 21 Installation, exhibited in Steneby Konsthall, 2023